



**Media information, 29 January 2015**

## **Industry invests in farming women**

A programme to improve on-farm performance and profitability of sheep and beef farmers by developing the business skills of farming women is being funded by the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP).

Funding from RMPP will see up to 160 sheep and beef farming women throughout New Zealand complete the Agri-Women's Development Trust's (AWDT) Understanding Your Farming Business (UYFB) programme during 2015.

Successfully piloted last year with 90 women by the AWDT, in partnership with Beef + Lamb New Zealand, the programme equips farming women with the business knowledge, skills and confidence to better engage as critical farming partners.

The Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP) is a unique collaboration between nine industry partners and the Government who are coordinating efforts to increase profitability and productivity in the red meat sector. All investment is centred behind the farm gate, aligning with the recommendations in the Red Meat Sector Strategy. The UYFB programme is one of the first RMPP-funded activities to roll out to farmers.

"We welcome this investment in women who make up 50 percent of our sector but who have usually gained their skills through default rather than design," AWDT executive director Lindy Nelson said. "The RMPP support enables us to extend our targeted development to women in farming partnerships while creating change agents to help achieve the Government's goal of doubling agricultural sector exports by 2025."

RMPP General Manager, Duncan McKinnon said the AWDT programme fitted extremely well with the aims of the RMPP. "We've done some very comprehensive research into the characteristics of high performing farmers and a common factor is the family farming partnership. Those businesses where the husband and wife and wider family unit work together in the business are generally pretty successful."

Nelson said the demand for this type of development was huge. "The UYFB pilot could have been filled three times over last year in each of the three regions it was delivered.

"Over the next five years AWDT aims for at least 10% of NZ sheep and beef farming women to complete the programme; support from the RMPP is a positive step towards achieving this."

The programme, consisting of one day workshops run by industry experts over three months, empowers women to view themselves and their roles differently, while giving them technical and communication skills to make a greater contribution. They gain a better understanding of what drives a farming business, how to measure farm performance and potential, and how to assess financial information. Women learn how to play a greater role in decision making, and apply communication and change-making skills to help improve profitability. Their partner gets involved through homework between workshops and a get-together in the last session.

The pilot programme produced impressive results. “All of the participants now measured and monitored their farm business performance, 95 percent understood how banks assess risk and 80 percent had made budgeting changes,” Nelson said. “Programme evaluations estimated that business changes initiated by women on the programme added up to \$20,000 profit to the farm bottom line.”

Beginning in late February, UYFB will be held in Amberley, Ashburton, Hamilton, Te Kuiti, Wellsford and Kerikeri with four further venues to be confirmed later this year. There is no cost to participants and each programme is limited to sixteen women. Programme information can be found at [www.awdt.org.nz](http://www.awdt.org.nz)

## **Background**

Since its establishment in 2010, AWDT has delivered leadership, governance and business training and support to almost 700 people throughout New Zealand, with support from industry partners including ANZ, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, DairyNZ, FMG, Agmardt, LIC and CRS Software.

The Red Meat Profit Partnership is one of the Government’s Primary Growth Partnerships. It is a unique collaboration of nine industry partners and the Government to invest in a \$65 million programme to drive sustainable, long-term profits for New Zealand’s red meat sector. The partners are Alliance Group, ANZ, ANZCO Foods, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Blue Sky Meats, Greenlea Premier Meat, Progressive Meats, Rabobank, Silver Fern Farms and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

The red meat profit partnership will arm farmers with knowledge and tools to encourage greater efficiency and profit – not production for production’s sake.

In March 2013 farmers voted to contribute a total of \$19.7 million dollars to the programme, funded from New Zealand Meat Board and Beef + Lamb New Zealand reserve funds.

Farmer investment is approximately 30 per cent of the total cost of the red meat profit partnership. For every \$1 of farmer investment, there is a further \$2.33 of government and industry partner funding.

A national extension network for farmers will link meat processors, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, banks, universities, researchers, farm consultants, vets and fertiliser reps to provide the best information on which to base farm business decisions.

New technologies will be developed to help farmers measure and monitor on-farm activities and there will be more focus on agriculture in education to secure a flow of talented people into the sector.