

+ Prime focus

First Start Loan the ‘perfect’ option for building beef business

Growing up working alongside her father in the beef industry, Louisa Backus knew she wanted to create the same lifestyle for her children one day.

When the opportunity arose for her and husband Cameron to purchase half of her parent’s Central Queensland property they explored multiple financial lenders but knew a First Start Loan was the right one for them.

“This place belonged to my parents and in 2010 we organised the purchase of the property. Originally the property was 20,000 acres so there was a subdivision that went in with the succession and Cameron and I purchased half of the property, 10,000 acres,” Louisa said.

Cameron and Louisa (pictured) looked at various financial options to purchase their half of Nardoo Cattle Company but QRIDA’s First Start Loan was the most attractive.

“This was our first rural enterprise, we were newlyweds and it was the most perfect one [loan] for us at the time,” Louisa said.

Cameron said receiving the loan was a great help in starting their own primary production enterprise at an affordable rate.

“Every succession is different; we’ve been very fortunate that ours really didn’t have many hurdles. We worked well with Louisa’s parents before they retired and then, when it was time for them to leave the place, they really helped us in planning out our financials and working out how much to pay for the place,” he said.

“It’s been a massive leg up for us being able to do that. We were really struggling to make the figures add up until we came across the First Start Loan.”



See the Backus’ story
Watch Cameron and Louisa’s video story on the *News, events & stories* link on QRIDA’s website to find out more about how a First Start Loan helped lay the foundation to build their beef business.

Having a reliable and friendly face to turn to when they had questions was an important part of their journey with QRIDA.

“We were really struggling to make the figures add up until we came across the First Start Loan.”

“Working with QRIDA has been amazingly easy, with our local Regional Area Manager Bradley Whittington in Emerald it’s made it so easy for us,” Cameron said.

“Brad knows the rural industry, he knows us, he comes out and visits.”

Since purchasing Nardoo, Cameron and Louisa have carried out development work to increase the efficiency of their operation.

“The paddocks were too big for our enterprise so together with the Fitzroy Basin Association we’ve done a lot of riparian fencing to fence off waterways,” Louisa said.

Reducing paddock sizes to a more manageable scale and fencing in laneways to the cattle yards has also formed part of their development work on the property.

Low interest First Start Loans are available up to \$2 million to help aspiring producers purchase their first block of land, carry out family succession planning or achieve standalone viability.

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To update your details email contact_us@qrda.qld.gov.au or Freecall 1800 623 946.

+ QRIDA news

Since our last edition of *Prime Focus*, a lot has happened at QRIDA and there have been positive announcements of additional funding for Queensland's agricultural industries.

In May, we joined beef producers and industry representatives from across the country at Beef Australia 2021 in Rockhampton. Following the cancellation of many events in 2020, it was great to be able to talk with producers and industry partners in person about the assistance we have available for Queensland beef producers.

Also in May, the QRIDA Board visited the Central Highlands for our regional Board meeting, providing another rewarding opportunity to connect with local producers and clients, as well as see the assistance QRIDA has provided in action. One such client was agricultural robotic company SwarmFarm (pictured with the QRIDA Board) who received a Regional Economic Development Grant to help build a purpose-built office facility at their headquarters in Gindie, near Emerald.

As QRIDA embarks on the new financial year, it is timely to highlight some of our key achievements from 2020-21.

Overall, we delivered more than \$305 million in grants and loans to more than 15,000 clients across rural and regional communities and businesses throughout Queensland. As part of this, we:

- approved more than \$103 million in First Start and Sustainability Loans to Queensland primary producers
- administered more than \$3 million in disaster recovery assistance for producers affected by Tropical Cyclone Niran and the Southern Queensland Severe Weather event
- provided ongoing support to producers facing financial difficulty through the Farm Business Analysis Assistance and Farm Business Debt Mediation programs
- continued to manage the \$1 billion COVID-19 Jobs Support Loan Scheme portfolio, assisting almost 7,000 Queensland businesses.

With the recent announcement of an extra \$20 million available for First Start and Sustainability Loans from 1 July 2021 (taking the scheme from \$100 million to \$120 million annually), as well as QRIDA's administration of a new suite of drought assistance measures (detailed in the article below), we look forward to working with Queensland producers well into the future to support their ongoing recovery and resilience.

Cameron MacMillan
QRIDA Chief Executive Officer



The QRIDA Board visiting the SwarmFarm team during their recent trip to the Central Highlands.

New drought support coming for Queensland

Significant drought reforms will help Queensland primary producers better manage future droughts through a suite of new drought funding measures to be administered by QRIDA that will open for application soon.

These new measures will be open to primary producers across all agricultural sectors to manage future droughts better, provide drought support and help with drought recovery efforts.

These assistance measures, as detailed adjacent, are still being finalised with more details to be available on QRIDA's website soon.

The current Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) will also continue to be available to primary producers in drought declared regions of Queensland.

Farm Management Grants

Rebate of 50% to a maximum of \$2,500 for the cost of developing a Farm Business Resilience Plan for the property.

Drought Preparedness Grants

Rebate of up to \$50,000 for on-farm capital improvements identified in the Farm Business Resilience Plan that will improve the drought preparedness of the property. This grant is up to 25% (maximum of \$50,000) of the infrastructure cost in a year or spread over five years.

Drought Ready & Recovery Finance Loans

Concessional loan of up to \$250,000 to undertake drought preparedness measures identified in the Farm Business Resilience Plan. This can also be used for recovery when seasonal conditions improve, assisting in restocking or replanting.

Emergency Drought Assistance Loans

Interest-free concessional loan of up to \$50,000 as emergency finance for carry-on activities like paying wages or creditors during drought.

Drought Carry-On Finance Loans

Concessional loan of up to \$250,000 for drought carry-on finance during drought. These loans will be available where the \$50,000 available from the Emergency Drought Assistance Loans Scheme is insufficient to manage drought conditions.



Vegetable operation expanding with room to move

A Far North Queensland family farming enterprise that started with a patch of cucumbers has grown ten-fold and diversified into a thriving paddock to plate vegetable business.

All produce grown at Crystal Creek Plantation at Rollingstone, north of Townsville, is destined for local markets with owners Kerry Boswell and Sven Fehrenbacher picking and selling their vegetables directly to local customers.

The 100-acre farm, known locally as Rollingstone Ranch, is home to small crops like Asian vegetables, baby leaf spinach, kale, rocket, lettuce, bok choy, zucchini, cucumber and tomatoes.

It's 10 times the size Kerry and Sven started out with eight years ago.

"We started with a small patch of cucumbers on Sven's parents' farm and we've never looked back," Kerry said.

The couple accessed a Sustainability Loan from QRIDA to purchase the land which allowed them to be self-sufficient and diversify into new crops with plenty of room for future growth.

"We didn't have enough ground to grow all the crops we wanted to, we needed more land and the only way we could do that is with the assistance of QRIDA," Kerry said.

"Without that loan we wouldn't have been able to expand. We would have been at a standstill. QRIDA really helped our business grow."

Kerry said while the business was expanding, a lack of space on Sven's parents' property limited their options and the decision was made to buy their own farm.

"We found this one at about 2am on a Sunday morning on the way to market and we knew it was ours. We've gone from a small 10-acre block to 100 acres which is nice, and we have a lot of room to expand and fulfil our dreams.

The farm allows plenty of opportunity to diversify into new crops while Kerry and Sven have plans to move into the fruit tree market in the future.



North Queensland producers Kerry Boswell and Sven Fehrenbacher used a Sustainability Loan from QRIDA to build their farming enterprise, Crystal Creek Plantation.

"Without the loan we wouldn't have been able to expand... QRIDA really helped our business grow"

"Now we have the extra land we can rotate our crops, rest the ground longer and grow cover crops. Through that, we use less fertiliser and pesticide," Sven said.

The early Sunday morning trip to the Townsville markets is still a constant for Kerry and Sven, who are loyal to their local customers.

Sven said the decision to only supply to local markets meant they were able to grow to meet demand and enjoy the benefits of higher returns on their produce.

"You can control your own market and you're not relying on a second or third party. We grow for what the market can handle, and we can see what it handles every week as we see it firsthand," he said.

QRIDA Far North Regional Area Manager Sam Spina was able to meet Kerry and Sven on farm and help them through the application process.

"Sam came to our home, sat down with us and helped us go through the loan application. He went above and beyond," Kerry said.

"With Sam's help and the rest of the team in Brisbane we were able to make our deadline and sale contract date, we had lots of assistance and nobody was too busy to help you. QRIDA gave us solutions instead of problems."

"I would highly recommend other producers to contact QRIDA. They were extremely helpful to us. It's been amazing and has made life a whole lot easier," she said.

For more information see qrda.qld.gov.au or Freecall 1800 623 946.

Find out more

Watch Kerry and Sven's video story on QRIDA's website to learn more about how they expanded their vegetable growing operation with a Sustainability Loan.



+ Regional update

Our team in regional QLD, helping yours...

QRIDA has a network of 11 Regional Area Managers (RAMs) based throughout Queensland who can provide you with the latest local knowledge and expertise on our programs and services.

With offices based in Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cloncurry, Emerald (with an office in Longreach), Innisfail, Kingaroy, Mackay, Rockhampton, Roma, Toowoomba and Townsville, we've got Queensland covered.

In each newsletter we feature an update from three of our RAMs. To find details of your local RAM, contact us on **Freecall 1800 623 946** or visit the 'your region' page on our website where you can search by region or postcode.



Brian Coe
South East & Lockyer

Across South East Queensland, I'm proud to be able to provide assistance to a wide range of primary producers in the local government areas of Brisbane, Scenic Rim, Gold Coast, Redlands, Moreton Bay, Ipswich, Somerset and most recently the Lockyer Valley.

Getting to know producers personally and chatting about their specific needs helps to provide tailored assistance throughout the application process and I'm looking forward to meeting even more producers in my region this financial year.

Having already attended a wide range of industry events and conferences has highlighted the opportunities primary producers are looking at to improve their enterprises with new projects, technology and infrastructure. It's particularly encouraging to see more sustainable practices on-farm taking shape.

QRIDA's low interest loans with flexible repayment terms are worth considering for your next productivity improvement on your enterprise. Get in touch on my contact details below.

Talk with Brian

☎ 0427 763 787

✉ brian.coe@qrda.qld.gov.au



Sam Spina
Far North

It's been a busy time in the Far North Queensland region, with Tropical Cyclone Niran impacting many producers in my area earlier this year.

Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Grants of up to \$75,000 and low interest Disaster Assistance Loans of up to \$250,000 are available from QRIDA for cyclone affected producers in the Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Hinchinbrook, Mareeba and Tablelands Regional and Shire Councils.

This assistance is designed to help affected producers with their clean up and recovery efforts following the cyclone. I encourage producers in these eligible regions to visit the Disaster Recovery page on our website or contact me about how to apply for the assistance.

I also remind aspiring producers to look into our low interest First Start Loans as a way to get started in primary production. These loans allow for property purchase on a staged basis or entering into a lease or share farming arrangement (including from family members). Please get in touch for more information.

Talk with Sam

☎ 0429 497 757

✉ sam.spina@qrda.qld.gov.au



Jessica Christeson
North West & Gulf

In April I returned to the Cloncurry office after a period of maternity leave and I've hit the ground running.

I'd like to thank my colleague Pip Gilmore who held the fort while I was away. She did a fantastic job and I am sure many of those in my region had the pleasure of getting to meet and work with her.

I've already had the opportunity to get back out on the road attending the Winton Show and Richmond Field Days in my region.

It was great to be back visiting primary producers in their local communities, catching up on the past 12 months and seeing how QRIDA could help them improve the productivity and profitability of their primary production enterprise.

If you've been thinking about getting in touch, drop me a line or send me an email to get the conversation started on how QRIDA can help build your primary production business. I'm always ready for a chat!

Talk with Jessica

☎ 0427 007 240

✉ jessica.christeson@qrda.qld.gov.au

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