



# MALT Farm

Trustee for Mansfield Agricultural Land Trust

- **Biodynamics**
- **Permaculture**
- **Community**
- **Education**

SPRING 2006

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Your donations are now tax deductible**
- **120 chickens delivered by 120 clucky primary school students**
- **Permaculture and BD experts visit the MALT Farm**

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## Progress on the Farm

MY aim is to make Biodynamics (BD) understood out in the wider community. There are a lot of people looking at better ways to do things and there are others who are concerned with what they're eating and where their food is coming from. There are plenty of people with great ideas and skills—the MALT Farm aims to bring all this together.

The idea of our set-up, where you have a Land Trust and a community involved in its operations, means that it is possible for people to become farmers, even if they don't have the land base to start from.

We don't have enough people involved yet. We jumped right in with the land purchase and have been flat out getting the farm established, taking care

of practical aspects like fencing and stock.

We will use a mix of permanent and electric fencing, and introduce a cell grazing system. The sheep will be rotated onto the paddocks where the cattle have been, to utilize their different grazing patterns and manage the worm burden.

Another problem at the moment is sourcing BD feed for the chooks. I'm currently buying a pre-mix from Western Australia—with huge freight costs = lots of food miles!



The pastures are mixed annual grasses but I am improving them. This year I re-sowed three paddocks for hay and green manure. The chooks need green pick year round so I will need to irrigate.

I have just started applying the BD preps; I've sprayed Horn Manure 500 a few times. Because the farm is not in great condition, we can provide a good example of what BD can do on this sort of country.

It's not easy country to make a living from and if we can make a difference here, it will give hope to others who are farming in marginal country. **Pat Dowling** is Trustee, committee member and manager of the MALT Farm, pictured with Steve Kapolice.

## Biodynamics vs Organics

THE demand for food grown under an organic regime continues to rapidly increase; in fact, demand often outstrips supply.

In response to this growing demand, more producers want to gain the understanding and ability to manage their farms without the use of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, genetically modified products and other denatured inputs.

Organic farms are inspected and annually audited by one of the many certification bodies operating in Australia. An organic farm will display a certification number on its end product, which enables anyone to trace that product

back to the paddock – not possible when purchasing non-organic, conventionally-grown produce.

However, once farmers have gained the ability to manage their farms organically, they often then adopt a Biodynamic (BD) regime. Why?

Simply put, while an organic regime replaces synthetic chemical inputs with accredited, more natural inputs, it is still a high input system.

BD is a regime that attempts to close the gate on inputs. The ideal BD farm is a closed system, with the fertility required to feed the soil or the plants generated on the farm. Manure and organic matter is collected and compost is

made. BD preparations work in a homeopathic way to help create a microbially rich, living, balanced soil. The preparations connect the farm with the cosmos. Under a biodynamic regime, the farm becomes individual.

For this reason, vignerons often choose BD, which reduces their off-farm inputs and enables the land to express itself; the vineyard and the wine become distinctive; wines show individuality, not sameness. Committee member, **Steve Kapolice** (Dip in BD Ag) is a certification officer of the Tasmanian Organic Producers' Cooperative, cattle and sheep stud operator and commercial market gardener.

## From the beginning...



Trustees, Pat Dowling and Bob Appleby

All donations to the MALT Farm are now tax deductible. All capital improvements to the Kubiels Road property through donations and investment will remain the property of the Trust in accordance with the Trust Deed.

THE story of the MALT Farm is essentially a story of good will.

The MALT Farm vision developed from an awareness that conventional agriculture is degrading our land, water and air, and having a negative impact on the nutritional value of our food.

In 1996, Pat Dowling attended a permaculture course, presented by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, co-originators of permaculture. It was at this course that Pat first started thinking about establishing a community trust farm 'by locals for locals, with people doing it for themselves.'

In 2002, Pat attended a biodynamic course, held at the Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES)

in Brunswick, run by Ian Cumming, with fellow-student Hugh Bevege. Biodynamic practicals for the course were held at the organic vineyard, Streamville Estate, with Steve Kapolice. Ian, Hugh and Steve are now MALT Farm committee members.

Soonafter, Pat worked with Annette Herschtal to put together a proposal for the community trust farm. With his wife, Kerrie, Pat presented the proposal to Sandy and Lindi Tod, and not long after, Bob and Isabel Appleby.

Bob decided to invest in the project, which he sees as an opportunity to give back to the community and help ensure health and well-being for future generations.

In 2004, Pat and Bob began looking for a suitable prop-

erty and Richard Merton and Karla Goodberry were invited to help establish the Trust Company.

In April 2004, Bob purchased 138 hectares at 46 Kubiels Road, Merton, which has been leased to the MALT Farm on the basis of a peppercorn rent of \$1 per year for the first five years, with an option for a further five year lease at terms to be negotiated.

Ongoing generous contributions of Bob Appleby (approx \$60,000pa) and Pat Dowling (matching in-kind labour) to the establishment of the MALT Farm should be acknowledged.

The ultimate aim of the Trustees is that ownership of the Kubiels Road property is transferred to the MALT Farm.

## Environmental Trust

FOR Richard Merton, the MALT Farm is as much about growing community, as it is about growing food.

'I see the farm as an important basis for community. I know about Biodynamic farming and the spiritual aspects associated with Biodynamics, but my interest is along the lines of developing more intelligent ways to live as a community,' said Richard.

According to Richard, the crucial aspects to MALT Farm's successful development are establishing legal and administrative structures, broad community involvement and consolidating land tenure.

'We set up MALT farm on a strong legal, tax and administrative basis from the outset.'

An Holding Company run by three directors was set up to purchase the land and own the Trust. These directors (Bob Appleby, Patrick Dowling and Richard Merton) are also on the MALT Farm committee.

'We are now a registered charity and Environmental Trust, which means all donations are tax deductible,' said Richard.

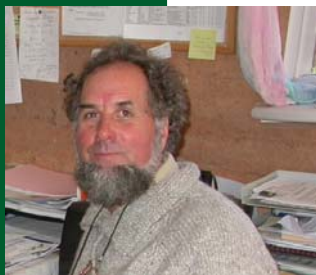
With all the legal and administrative requirements in place, the MALT Farm can present itself as a properly constituted body with a business plan and structural organization in place. It also gives

committee members a defined focus for action.

'It is vital to set up the legal and administrative side of things up front, so you don't run into problems later,' said Richard.

'It makes the energy of the organization cleaner and clearer in the way we operate. It gives others confidence and clarity about our role, purpose and direction.'

**Richard Merton** is a Trustee and committee member of the MALT Farm. He has a long history of learning and working in Steiner Schools and an interest in organic gardening.



Richard Merton, Trustee

# World of Difference



**Kerrie Dowling enjoys a moment with the chickens**

AROUND 50 young minds, from across the state participated in the seminar **World of Difference – the challenge of sustainability**, which included one day at the MALT Farm.

With motivational speaker, Michael O'Meara, participants

explored the process of generating ideas, exploring innovative possibilities for themselves, as well as for the MALT Farm and their own communities. Michael also accompanied the participants on a ski trip to Mt Buller the following day. Ideas and proposals that were presented to the Trustees and invited community members at a 'business breakfast' in Mansfield the following day.

Proposals being considered by

the Trustees include: a village of eco-cabins where young people can learn about sustainability on location; a 'back to the future' setting where participants can experience life as it may become; a tourist precinct that raises awareness of biodynamic agriculture; and a 'virtual realm' where young people can become immersed in a lifestyle not demanding high resource use. **World of Difference – the challenge of sustainability** was a Community Enterprise Project (CEP) initiative coordinated by Peter Olver

**Isa Browns hens are excellent layers. Chook**

**sponsors receive 1/2 dozen**

**Biodynamic eggs**

**every week for a**

**year, for an**

**investment of**

**only \$200.00**

## Egg-static about our Isa Browns

INCUBATORS, wet bulb thermometers, scales, brooding lamps, candlers, feeders... 160 students from Mansfield, Merrig and St. Mary's primary schools are now egg-sperts in incubating and hand-raising chickens.

In early August, 24 dozen Isa Brown eggs were delivered to the schools and 21 days later hatching began—much to the excitement of students, teachers, other grades, parents, sisters and brothers!

Not everything went completely to plan of course, with a few sad moments as kids

learned first hand about 'survival of the fittest'... However, for the surviving 160 chicks there was a steady stream of visitors every day, every chick had a name and special 'chick time' was established in classrooms.

Strong attachment to the chicks meant that the second stage of the journey was perhaps the most difficult... delivering their chicks to the MALT Farm, where a BBQ softened the blow of saying goodbye.

The kids made individualised chick carriers for carrying their little mates on the bus and coloured leg bands in an attempt to

tell them apart.

While IT had been an integral to the project (recording and sharing data between the schools, weekly emailing of progress reports to Farmer Pat) it has now become an imperative, with kids eagerly awaiting weekly updates from Pat.

And the project continues... when roosters become apparent there will be more decisions to be made by the kids. Leslie McGregor, Educator - Mansfield Cluster, helped to coordinate the 'egg project', funded by the Community Education Project (CEP)

## Who's been to the MALT Farm?

THE last few months have seen literally hundreds of visitors at the MALT Farm, with visits from 120 local primary school students, 50 north east-secondary college students and just last week another five Mansfield Secondary College students, studying sustainable farming.

WWOOFer, Marina Salvat, from Paris enjoyed a week at the farm—completely trans-

forming the house vegetable garden. Thank you Marina!

We have welcomed professional educators including Ben Darby, teacher, Collingwood College and John Russell, professor, Latrobe University.

David Holmgren, co-ordinator of Permaculture, visited the Farm and touched base with a view to getting involved in the Whole Farm Plan.

'From the start I have wanted David to be involved—it was

great to get him here!

'He had a good look around and got a good understanding of what we are trying to do,' said Pat.

'He gave us some great ideas about the dam, pasture, trees and talked about environmental initiatives overseas.'



**John Russell, Hugh Beverage, Graham Kipping, Steve Kapolice, Pat Dowling, David Holmgren and Bob Appleby**





**MALT Farm**

- **Biodynamics • Permaculture**
- **Community • Education**

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**SIGN ME UP**

**YES!** I would like to get involved with the MALT Farm through stock sponsorship, corporate sponsorship or a **TAX FREE** donation.

Please sign me up to:

- Make a TAX FREE donation \$**.....
- Sponsor** ..... **cow/s** @ \$1,500 each in return for two certified Biodynamic calves over three years.
- Sponsor** ..... **sheep** @ \$250 each in return for two lambs over three years.
- Sponsor** ..... **hen/s** @ \$200 each in return for ½ dozen Biodynamic eggs per week for one year.
- Become a corporate sponsor.**

**Name** .....

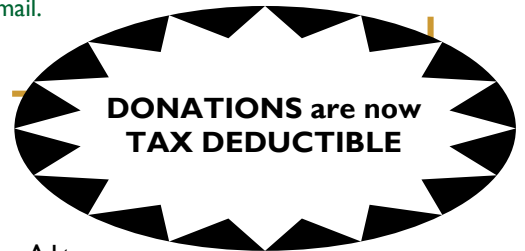
**Address** .....

.....

**Phone Number/s** .....

**Email Address** .....

**YES** I would like to receive the quarterly MALT Farm newsletter by email.



# Get behind our future

HAVE you been looking for a way to get involved at the MALT Farm? Well, here's your chance!

The drought has brought a new dimension to the challenges we are facing in establishing the community farm—already under the pump meeting the incredible level of demand from educational organisations throughout the north-east and Steiner schools in Melbourne.

While we will continue to seek government funding for drought relief, educational and accommodation facilities, we are also looking to our community for additional support.

For those with spare time, we are looking for volunteers to help with the running of

the MALT Farm—from home or on site, depending on the job. If you only have a few hours per week, you may be able to help. We are hoping to fill the following positions:

- Administration
- Sales & Marketing
- Event Coordinator
- Education Coordinator
- Farm Hand



**French WWOOFer, Marina Salvet, worked wonders in the house vegetable garden**

Alternatively, if you can make a tax deductible donation, your support would be greatly appreciated.

Of course, the opportunity to invest in the MALT Farm, in return for organic beef, lamb or eggs, is also available—and corporate sponsorship is sought for anything from composting toilets to student transport, printed materials, feed or seed!

We hope to bring you workshops, open days and festivals, including equinox and solstice celebrations...

We hope to plant market gardens, a nursery, hothouse, orchard, vineyard, olive grove and nut grove... and more.

All we need now is your help to make it happen!

Thank you to our newsletter sponsor »

