



Participants in the recent Sustainable Farm Families program in Inglewood were able to try out some new safety gear for farmers.

Healthy farmers, healthy communities

A HEALTHY farmer makes for a healthy farm and this is what the Sustainable Farm Families program is focused on ensuring for its participants.

The Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) program is an award winning initiative of Western District Health Service, Hamilton, delivered in partnership with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries and other support agencies.

Last year, the year one workshop of the three-year program was run for farmers in Inglewood and surrounding districts.

Locally, the program support agencies have been Inglewood and Districts Health Service, and the Inglewood branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation.

The SFF program is focused on improving the physical and mental health of farmers and their families.

With farmers experiencing higher injury, and earlier illness and death than workers of other industries, the SFF program is aimed at addressing the health,

wellbeing and safety issues that faces the industry.

This includes providing research-based, up-to-date information on major health issues, and demonstrating the relationship between family health, health as a social issue in rural communities and farm productivity.

Last year's participants from Inglewood, Bridgewater on Loddon, Newbridge and surrounding areas, returned to IDHS last week to take part in the year-two workshop with some positive results.

Day one of the year-two program covered physical evaluations, which included check ups on cholesterol, blood sugar, blood pressure, eyesight, weight and height.

The participants also recapped on what was learnt at the year-one workshop and discussed whether they had achieved any of the goals they had set in an action plan last year.

Then it was into a session on mental health and wellbeing, depression and anxiety.

In the afternoon, there was a repeat of a men's health and a women's health session held last year, but the difference was that this year the men learnt about women's health and the women learnt about men's health.

Day one concluded with individual health assessments.

On day two, the first session covered the topic of diabetes whilst the next session focused on health and farming business.

The day concluded with each participant setting a new action plan to work on over the next 12 months before receiving their individual health assessment results.

All anecdotal and quantitative data received from participants through the SFF program is collated and recorded over the three years, and compared.

According to IDHS community health nurse Anne Donaldson, the data collected from last week's workshop demonstrated that there had been positive improvements in health and the introduction of good health practices amongst participants.