



Healthy farmers

GROUPS of farmers are now invited to apply to have the award-winning Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) program, bringing better health, well-being and safety, delivered in their communities.

The straightforward, no-fuss program offering practical advice has already proved life-changing for many past participants and now an additional 500 farmers will benefit by participating.

Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) project manager Emily Moule said workshops were broken down into yearly sessions with long-term follow ups focusing on practical steps to improve the lives of farm families in areas undergoing significant change.

"Farmers will learn how to understand their own health risks, how to manage them and integrate them into farming life, which can be difficult given the pressures they face," Ms Moule said.

"We want to ensure farmers are in good health, increasing their chances of living longer and ability to run their farm businesses more effectively," she said.

Ms Moule said during the sessions, farmers were tested for fasting-glucose and cholesterol levels as well eyesight checks and height, weight and body mass measurements.

"Other sessions include discussions on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, stress, nutrition and physical activity, anxiety and depression as well as farm safety."

Wycheproof farmer Denis Ryan, who has completed the program, said farming men and women often worked long hours, usually far from town and as a result their health could be neglected.

"Making time for health and well-being is extremely important and I would encourage other farmers to take up the opportunity and make it a priority," Mr Ryan said.

Farming industry and community groups that have up to 24 individual farmers who would like to participate in the program are encouraged to contact the DPI now on 136 186.

Applications close on March 27, 2009.

More information on the SFF can be found at www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au

The SFF program is part of the Brumby Government's Future Farming Strategy investment of \$12 million to improve the health and wellbeing of Victoria's farmers, farm workers and their families.

The program is an award winning initiative of Western District Health Service delivered in partnership with the DPI and local health agencies.