

Bid to elevate health as a key farm issue

By JOHN PARRY

A PROGRAM to raise the health status of farmers has been launched in Victoria.

The Sustainable Farm Families project will run for three years and focus on the health of men and women on farms.

Western District Health Service community services director Susan Brumby said the project aimed to address the anomaly between the resources devoted to improving farm management and the little done on people themselves.

"There is no point in having a more

profitable bottom line if you are not there to enjoy it," Ms Brumby said.

The program will be undertaken primarily with Farm Management 500 members and other farmers in groups within a 100km radius of Hamilton, Benalla, Swan Hill, Horsham, Hamilton and Clare, in South Australia.

Farmers will participate in an initial two-day health check program, with reviews at 12 and 24 months.

Ms Brumby said farm families would have the opportunity to look at the relationship between their environment,

workplace, health and risk factors.

"It promises to be fun, worthwhile and to produce positive benefits for rural farming communities," she said.

The project is organised jointly by Western District Health Services, RMIT Hamilton, Farm Management 500 and Land Connect, with funding from the Rural Industry Research Development Corporation.

"The project is a diverse partnership with industry, health, training, research, education and farming organisations all coming together to assess and challenge the health

status of farmers," Ms Brumby said.

RIRDC is providing \$206,000 over three years and industry another \$100,000, bringing the total budget to \$310,000.

Farm Management 500 will include the results in its business planning indicators for financial and natural resource management.

The project also has support from the Victorian Farmers Federation, Australian Women in Agriculture, FarmBis, the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women and the Department of Primary Industries.

For details, phone Ms Brumby on (03) 5551 8460.



Susan Brumby