

## **Farmers and farming families - how's your health? Improve your health and your industry –**

Statistics indicate that being a farmer is one of the most dangerous occupations in Australia.

A new project which aims to raise the health status and awareness of cane farmers and their families is being launched by the Sugar Research and Development Corporation.

The **Sustainable Farm Families Project** explores links between family health, farm related accidents and farm sustainability.

The project takes farmers and their family members through an intensive health evaluation, education and training process, which identifies potential health and well-being risks.

SRDC's Program Co-ordinator, Dr Les Robertson, says that 'despite a perception that the country is a healthy place to live, the reality is that farming families have more health problems than city residents.'

"Sustainable Farm families projects held in other farming industries have attracted a great deal of praise and support from local communities as well as delivering measurable improvements in the health and well-being of farming families. This is a great opportunity for Cane growers to benefit." he added

Cane farming individuals and families, are invited to participate in the "Sustainable Farm Families" program in Ayr on 8-9 May or in Ingham on 11-12 May 2006. A one-day follow-up program for all participants will be held in 2007.

The key benefit of this program is improved understanding of your health, a personal health check, to identify risks to your health and health and safety and a personal program to improve the health and wellbeing of you and your family on the farm.

"The workshops are a fun, informative and relaxed way of increasing awareness levels of potential or real health related issues for farming families. All personal information discussed during the duration of the project is strictly confidential.

Previous participants have reported significant improvements to their health, stress and wellbeing. Comments from male and female farmers after the course include:

- "...every farm family should be offered this course..."
- "...without my health my business fails..."
- "...thoroughly enjoyed the workshops - I believe it would be valuable for the whole community – the workshop empowers people to make informed decisions about their health..."
- "...health issue is a subject I didn't know a lot about..."
- "...improves our lifestyle by leading to a more productive farm..."
- "...a person's well-being is directly related to their health and so then impacts on every aspect of their working and community and family life..."
- "...we now have a greater knowledge of dangers in our lifestyles..."

To find out more, or to register for the program, please contact Les Robertson (3225 9442; [lrobertson@srdc.gov.au](mailto:lrobertson@srdc.gov.au)) or Tracy Henderson (07 3225 9443; [thenderson@srdc.gov.au](mailto:thenderson@srdc.gov.au)). Registrations close 21 April 2006.

This program is funded by the Farm Health and Safety Joint Venture of which SRDC is one partner and is an initiative of Western District Health Service, Hamilton. For more information go to <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/farmhealth/index.html> and <http://www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au/>