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More Vic farmers receive health care access

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An additional 500 farmers will get access to free health assessments and workshops as part of a State Government commitment to rural health.

Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said the Brumby Government would invest \$2.18 million over the next four years to ensure the program continued.

"As part of the Brumby Government's \$205 million Future Farming Strategy launched earlier this year, funding will be used to run workshops with a focus on practical steps to improve the lives of farm families, targeting families in areas undergoing significant change," Mr Helper said.

"The Sustainable Farm Families program has already worked with almost 1000 farmers across Victoria and as a result of its success, further workshops will be rolled out over the next four years."

Mr Helper said the program provided an opportunity for farmers to understand their own health risks and how to manage them, which in turn would result in better performance for their farm.

Results from farmers who participated in previous workshops revealed 73pc of men and 61pc of women were classified as overweight or obese, instantly putting them into a high risk category for cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and osteoarthritis.

Just over one-third of participants were also identified as having high blood pressure.

High-risk participants such as these were referred for follow up with appropriate health professionals.

"There were some cases where participants had malignant skin cancers identified at the workshops, which could have otherwise gone unchecked," Mr Helper said.

Sustainable Farm Families' workshops cover a range of health topics including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, stress, depression, anxiety, nutrition and exercise.

