

Beef & Cattle

Section edited by Gemma Gadd 0409 287 090 or gemma.gadd@ruralpress.com

Meat with a green pedigree



■ Bob Davie, Bimbadeen, Ventnor, pictured with some of his Nairn Park-blood Angus herd, believes the potential for Enviomeat is enormous. Enviomeat, supplied by 25 Gippsland producers is carving a niche in the domestic market and investigating the possibility of exports.

By SALLY WHITE

BEEF that doesn't cost the earth. That's the marketing pitch of a group of Gippsland producers trying to build a beef brand based on their environmental credentials that targets the "ethical consumer".

Enviomeat is now being produced by about 25 producers under an accredited environmental management system (EMS) and animal welfare principles.

The brand accepts all breeds and animals are graded by Meat Standards Australia which guarantees the product.

What sets it apart from the other branded product hitting retailer shelves and restaurant plates is that its producers all comply with a strict environmental management systems.

Phillip Island producers Bob and Anne Davie have been one of the champions of Enviomeat and say its potential is enormous.

"It's got huge supply potential - it has to," Mr Davie said.

"You've only got to look at what's happening in other parts of the world where consumers are looking for the sustainable option.

"We feel we're finally at that stage now where we're building up momentum and it's about to take off."

The Davies run 120 Angus breeders based on Nairn Park blood on several properties totalling about 170 hectares near Ventnor.

Mrs Davie first heard about the program at a Victorian Farmers Federation forum in Traralgon with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority in 2004.

As long-time Landcare devotees - in 2005 they won the Landcare State primary producer title and the regional sustainable farming award - and having long had an interest in trying to set up a brand themselves, they knew straight away Enviomeat was for them.

It meant adopting an EMS - and passing external scrutiny of their farm management practices.

The Gippsland group had already developed an EMS for beef production to help producers document

Enviomeat

- ◆ Grass-fed free-range beef
- ◆ Produced in an environmentally sustainable manner
- ◆ All producers follow an externally audited environmental management system compliant with ISO14001
- ◆ Beef is all Meat Standards Australia graded
- ◆ Guaranteed tender
- ◆ No artificial hormones

ways they were assessing and managing environmental risks with the help of Meat and Livestock Australia and the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries.

Key for the group was that it complied with internationally recognised ISO 14001 standards - and in fact exceeded them with additional requirements for water monitoring and biodiversity, MSA training, free range grazing and a ban on hormonal growth promotants.

The group began selling the brand at farmers markets.

and it may be that we end up developing something like a Western District Enviomeat line."

Already its beef products have won a spot on the menus of two Melbourne restaurants - Oyster on Little Bourke St and Tjanabi in Federation Square.

And its taste may not be limited to Australian palates.

On a recent visit to the Middle East, Mr Davie signed a memorandum of understanding on behalf of Enviomeat with the Brunei Government to co-operate in supplying Enviomeat to the Brunei halal export brand.

Mr Davie said its Government was aiming to develop a brand recognised by consumers worldwide as premium quality halal meat produced with ethical values in mind.

Enviomeat's participation now rested on Radford's abattoir at Warragul - where its product was processed - getting halal accredited, which it was currently in the process of doing.

In the meantime, Mr Davie said the group was getting inquiry for halal meat from markets outside Brunei - a demand it hadn't even tried to tap yet.

To date suppliers to the brand have achieved premiums of anywhere between six and 45 per cent, with the brand charging 7-10pc above market price to retailers.

Budgets by the group suggest suppliers need to be selling about 14 bodies a year to cover ongoing costs such as external EMS audits.

"We've got to get that premium return for it work," Mr Davie said.

"To our knowledge there's no other beef available in Australia that is produced under an ISO14001 compliant EMS and that's MSA guaranteed and free of hormones.

"And there are costs involved in doing that."



It was launched in stores - initially three specialist butchers and fine food supermarkets - in late 2005 with the first beasts bought from the Davies' Phillip Island farms.

Its main retailers are Rendinas in Balwyn along with Glenferrie Gourmet Meats in Hawthorn and Hillies Meats in San Remo - the latter of which supplies five other stores and supermarkets with product.

By-products are sold to Pie in the Sky in Olinda to be made into "Enviro Pies".

All product is packaged and marketed with an Enviomeat label which spells out the brand's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Envirosnags, Enviomince and even Envirolamb are also on the group's marketing agenda for the future, with several mixed graziers already accredited and other lamb producers interested in signing up.

"Lamb will be the next thing for us," Mr Davie said.

"We're getting a bit of interest from producers in other areas -