Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in the West and North West region of Tasmania, 2013

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Research by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences

About my region 13.46
March 2013
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1 Regional overview

The West and North West region of Tasmania is located in the north-west of the state and includes King Island (Map 1). The region covers the nine local government areas of Burnie, Central Coast, Circular Head, Devonport, Kentish, King Island, Latrobe, Waratah-Wynyard and West Coast and the major regional towns of Burnie, Devonport, Queenstown, Smithton, Ulverston and Zeehan. The region covers a total area of around 22 500 square kilometres or 33 per cent of Tasmania’s total area and is home to approximately 109 200 people (ABS 2011).

The total land held by farm businesses was estimated to be 297 071 hectares in the West and North West region in 2010–11. Agricultural land in the region was mainly used for grazing (232 436 hectares), with some cropping (25 882 hectares) also taking place. In addition, 17 043 hectares of land held by farm businesses was set aside for conservation (ABS 2012).

Map 1 West and North West region of Tasmania

Employment

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data from 2011 indicate that around 45 800 people were employed in the West and North West region. The West and North West region accounts for 21 per cent of total employment in Tasmania and 31 per cent of all people employed in the Tasmanian agriculture, forestry and fishing sector.

Manufacturing was the largest employing sector (5596 people) followed by retail trade (5262 people) (Figure 1). Other important employment sectors in the region were health care
and social assistance (4954 people), education and training (3654 people) and construction (3509 people).

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector employed 3258 people, representing 7 per cent of the region's workforce. Of this 79 per cent were employed in agriculture, 7 per cent in forestry and logging, 5 per cent in support services for the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, and fishing, hunting and trapping and aquiculture industries each employed 4 per cent of total agriculture, forestry and fishing employment. In addition, an estimated 2179 people were employed in food product manufacturing and 489 people were employed in wood, pulp and paper product manufacturing in the region (included in manufacturing sector employment).

Figure 1 Employment profile, West and North West region, August 2011

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics
2 Agriculture sector

Value of agricultural production

In 2010–11 the gross value of agricultural production (GVAP) in the West and North West region was $459 million, which was 40 per cent of the total gross value of agricultural production in Tasmania ($1.2 billion) for 2010–11. This is the most recent year for which data are available from the ABS on GVAP for this region.

The West and North West region has a diverse and important agricultural sector. In 2010–11, the West and North West region accounted for around 61 per cent of the total value of Tasmanian milk production, 56 per cent of the total value of vegetables for human consumption and 56 per cent of the total value of vegetables for seed.

The most important commodity in the region, based on the value of agricultural output, was milk (Figure 2). In 2010–11, milk contributed 41 per cent ($189 million) to the total gross value of agricultural production in the West and North West region. Vegetables accounted for 22 per cent ($102 million) with the major crops being potatoes ($44 million), onions ($20 million) and carrots ($15 million). Cattle and calves accounted for 20 per cent ($90 million), nurseries, flowers and turf 4 per cent ($20 million) and other crops 3 per cent ($13 million).

Figure 2 Value of agricultural production, West and North West region, Tasmania, 2010–11

Number and type of farms

ABS data indicate that in 2010–11 there were 1498 farms in the West and North West region with an estimated value of agricultural operations of more than $5000 (Table 1). The region contains 37 per cent of all farm businesses in Tasmania.
Table 1 Number of farms, by industry classification, 2010–11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Classification</th>
<th>West and North West region</th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef cattle</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other crop growing</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other livestock</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed livestock</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurseries, cut flowers and turf</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit and nuts</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Agriculture</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Where the estimated value of agricultural operations is more than $5000.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Farms are classified in Table 1 according to the activities that generate most of their value of production. Beef cattle (535 farms) were the most common, accounting for 36 per cent of all farms in the West and North West region, and 46 per cent of all beef cattle farms in Tasmania.

A large proportion of farms in the region are small in terms of their business size. Estimated value of agricultural operations (EVAO) is a measure of the value of production from farms and a measure of their business size, and is somewhat similar to turnover. Around 41 per cent of farms in the West and North West region had an EVAO of less than $50 000 (Figure 3). These farms accounted for only 3 per cent of the total value of agricultural operations in 2010–11. In comparison, 24 per cent of farms in the region had an EVAO of more than $350 000 and accounted for an estimated 79 per cent of the total value of agricultural operations in the region in 2010–11.

Figure 3 Distribution of farms by estimated value of agricultural operations, West and North West region, Tasmania, 2010–11

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics
Farm financial performance—Tasmania

Each year, ABARES interviews Australian broadacre and dairy producers as part of its annual survey program. Broadacre industries covered in this survey include the grains, grains–livestock, sheep, beef and sheep–beef industries. The information collected is a basis for analysing the current financial position of farms in these industries and expected changes in the short term. This paper uses data from the ABARES Australian agriculture and grazing industries survey (AAGIS) and Australian dairy industry survey (ADIS) to compare estimates of financial performance indicators (Box 1) for broadacre and dairy farms in Tasmania.

Box 1 Definitions

**Major financial performance indicators**

- **Total cash receipts**: total revenues received by the business during the financial year.
- **Total cash costs**: payments made by the business for materials and services and for permanent and casual hired labour (excluding owner manager, partner and family labour).
- **Farm cash income**: total cash receipts – total cash costs
- **Farm business profit**: farm cash income + changes in trading stocks – depreciation – imputed labour costs
- **Profit at full equity**: return produced by all the resources used in the business, farm business profit + rent + interest + finance lease payments – depreciation on leased items
- **Rate of return**: return to all capital used, profit at full equity * 100 / total opening capital
- **Equity ratio**: Farm capital minus farm debt expressed as a percentage of farm capital

**Industry types**

- **Grains**: farms mainly engaged in producing broadacre crops such as wheat, coarse grains, oilseeds and pulses, and including farms running sheep and/or beef cattle in conjunction with substantial broadacre crop activity.
- **Sheep**: farms mainly engaged in running sheep.
- **Beef**: farms mainly engaged in running beef cattle.
- **Dairy**: farms mainly engaged in milk production.

Performance of broadacre farms—Tasmania

Tasmanian broadacre farm cash incomes are projected to increase slightly to average $93 000 per farm in 2012–13 (Figure 4, Table 2), around 40 per cent above the average farm cash income recorded for the 10 years to 2011–12.

Overall, receipts from wool, sheep and beef cattle are projected to decline due to lower prices in 2012–13. However, receipts from cropping are expected to increase and, together with reductions in interest payments and expenditure on purchases of sheep and beef cattle, result in a slight increase in average farm cash income in 2012–13.
Figure 4 Real farm cash income, broadacre industries, average per farm

Table 2 Financial performance, Tasmania broadacre industries, 2010–11 to 2012–13, average per farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance indicator</th>
<th>units</th>
<th>2010–11</th>
<th>2011–12p</th>
<th>RSE (%)</th>
<th>2012–13y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cash receipts</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>303 170</td>
<td>277 000</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>270 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cash costs</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>204 210</td>
<td>185 200</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>177 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm cash income</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>98 960</td>
<td>91 800</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>93 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms with negative farm cash income</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(48)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm business profit</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>51 380</td>
<td>46 300</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>26 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit at full equity - excluding capital appreciation</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>77 520</td>
<td>65 800</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>45 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm capital at 1 July a</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>4 077 130</td>
<td>4 591 700</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm debt at 30 June b</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>293 900</td>
<td>255 200</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>262 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity ratio b</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of return - excluding capital appreciation c</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-farm income of owner manager and spouse b</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>41 380</td>
<td>32 700</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a Excludes leased plant and equipment. b Average per responding farm. c Rate of return to farm capital at 1 July. p ABARES preliminary estimates. y ABARES provisional estimates. na Not available. RSE Relative standard errors, expressed as a percentage of the estimate provided.

Performance of sheep industry farms—Tasmania

In 2011–12 a reduction in average prices received for adult sheep and lambs, combined with a decrease in the number of animals sold, resulted in a small decline in average farm receipts and a decline in average farm cash income despite a reduction in average cash costs due to reduced expenditure on crop and pasture chemicals, fertiliser, repairs and maintenance. Farm cash income for Tasmanian sheep industry farms declined to an average of $107 200 per farm (Figure 5).

In 2012–13, farm cash income for Tasmanian sheep industry farms is projected to increase to average $116 000 per farm, which is around 28 per cent above the industry average for the previous 10 years of $91 000 per farm.
An increase in sheep and lamb turn-off is projected to outweigh lower prices for adult sheep and lambs leading to an increase in sheep and lamb receipts. Crop receipts are also projected to be higher on Tasmanian sheep industry farms.

Figure 5 Real farm cash income, sheep industry, average per farm

![Graph showing real farm cash income for sheep industry, average per farm, 2000-01 to 2012-13. The graph shows a fluctuation in income with a peak in 2005-06 and a trough in 2000-01. The data is split by Tasmania and Australia, with Tasmania generally showing a higher trend. Note: p Preliminary estimate. y Provisional estimate.]

Performance of beef industry farms—Tasmania

In 2011–12, beef cattle turnoff increased on Tasmanian beef industry farms and, in combination with an increase of 5 per cent in average sale prices received for beef cattle, resulted in beef cattle receipts increasing by 14 per cent. The increase in farm receipts was partially offset by higher cash costs in 2011–12, due mainly to increased expenditure on hired labour, chemicals and interest payments. Overall, average farm cash income for Tasmanian beef industry farms increased to an average of $80 900 per farm in 2011–12 (Figure 6).

In 2012–13 drier seasonal conditions are projected to lead to an increase in beef cattle turnoff and a slow-down in the rate of increase in herd sizes in Tasmania. Lower average sale prices for beef cattle are projected to more than offset the increase in turnoff to result in average beef cattle receipts declining by around 6 per cent for Tasmanian beef industry farms. However, reduction in expenditure on purchase of beef cattle together with lower interest expenditure is projected to more than offset the reduction in beef cattle receipts and result in average farm cash income for beef industry farms increasing slightly to average $84 000 per farm in 2012–13. This is around 82 per cent above the average for the previous 10 years, in real terms.

However, the slower growth in beef herds resulting from increased cattle turnoff will also result in a reduction in the build-up in trading stocks on beef industry farms. As a consequence, farm business profit for the Tasmanian beef industry is projected to decline from an average of $30 400 per farm in 2011–12 to $15 000 per farm in 2012–13.
In 2011–12, a small increase in average farm cash income is estimated for dairy farms in Tasmania. Increased milk production more than offset lower farmgate milk prices and increases in cash costs. Farm cash income for Tasmanian dairy farms is estimated to have averaged $157 300 per farm in 2011–12 (Figure 7, Table 3), around 42 per cent above the industry average for the previous 10 years.

In 2012–13, despite an increase in milk production of around 2 per cent, a reduction in the forecast average farmgate milk price of around 7 per cent, together with increased farm cash costs, particularly increased expenditure on fodder, are projected to result in reduced financial performance for dairy farms in Tasmania. Farm cash income is projected to decline to an average of $96 000 per farm, 16 per cent below the average for the previous 10 years.
Table 3 Financial performance, Tasmania dairy industry, 2010–11 to 2012–13, average per farm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance indicator</th>
<th>units</th>
<th>2010–11</th>
<th>2011–12p</th>
<th>RSE (%)</th>
<th>2012–13y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cash receipts</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>754 500</td>
<td>909 400</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>868 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cash costs</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>607 280</td>
<td>752 100</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>773 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm cash income</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>147 220</td>
<td>157 300</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>96 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms with negative farm cash income</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(98)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm business profit</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>87 930</td>
<td>103 900</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>- 10 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit at full equity - excluding capital appreciation</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>257 530</td>
<td>265 600</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>138 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm capital at 1 July a</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>4 775 790</td>
<td>4 932 000</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm debt at 30 June b</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>1 756 170</td>
<td>1 743 900</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>1 824 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity ratio b</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of return - excluding capital appreciation c</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-farm income of owner manager and spouse b</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>8 720</td>
<td>6 700</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a Excludes leased plant and equipment. b Average per responding farm. c Rate of return to farm capital at 1 July. p ABARES preliminary estimates. y ABARES provisional estimates. na Not available. RSE Relative standard errors, expressed as a percentage of the estimate provided.
3  Fisheries sector

The West and North West region of Tasmania is predominantly a wild-catch production area for shellfish, in particular Southern rocklobster, abalone and scallop, and finfish. Most of the Tasmanian rocklobster production occurs along the south west coast of Tasmania and at King Island. The Tasmanian greenlip abalone population is abundant along the north coast and around the Bass Strait islands. King Island operates a major kelp industry which generates about $2 million worth of income for King Island. Kelp harvesting also occurs on the West Coast of Tasmania where there are two centres of operation; around Bluff Hill Point and at Granville Harbour. King Island is also a large centre for giant crab production. Atlantic salmon and rainbow trout aquaculture occurs mainly in Macquarie harbour. Part of the Commonwealth-managed Trawl Sector including Danish seine vessels operates along the east and north coast of Tasmania, targeting finfish. Devonport is a landing port for the shark gillnet fishery.

In 2010–11 the gross value of Tasmanian fisheries production is estimated to be around $597 million, an increase of 5 per cent ($29 million) from 2009–10. Tasmania contributed 27 per cent of the total value of Australian fisheries production in 2010–11. In value terms, the wild-catch sector accounted for 28 per cent ($165 million) of the state’s total production and the aquaculture sector accounted for the remaining 72 per cent ($432 million).

Tasmania’s wild-catch fisheries sector is dominated by two main products—abalone and Southern rocklobster—which account for 59 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively, of the total value of wild-caught production in 2010–11. Over the last decade the value of Tasmania’s wild-caught fisheries products has reduced from $261 million (2000–01) to $165 million (2010–11; in 2010–11 terms). The decline in value was driven by a 23 per cent reduction in the total volume of wild-catch fisheries products, moderated partly by increases in the average unit price of several major wild-catch species.

The product for which the real value of production declined most over the past decade is abalone (both wild-caught and aquaculture), falling by $69 million from $171 million (2000–01) to $103 million (2010–11). This was the result of a 35 per cent reduction in the real unit price, despite a 12 per cent increase in volume. A large proportion of abalone is exported, mostly to Hong Kong, China and Japan. Exchange rate movements have a significant effect on the value of abalone exports and, in turn, production.

Southern rocklobster also accounts for a significant proportion of Tasmanian wild-catch production, accounting for 27 per cent and 36 per cent of the total volume and value, respectively, of wild-catch production in 2010–11. However, the value of Southern rocklobster exports almost halved in 2010–11, primarily reflecting a 46 per cent (244 tonnes) reduction in the volume exported from Tasmania.

Commonwealth fisheries active in the Tasmania region include the Commonwealth Trawl Sector (main source of domestic fresh fish for Sydney and Melbourne markets) and the Shark Gillnet and Shark Hook Sectors (supplies gummy shark or ‘flake’ to Melbourne) of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery. The Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery and Small Pelagic Fishery (mostly fishmeal for aquaculture and agriculture) also operate in the waters off Tasmania.

The importance of aquaculture in Tasmanian fisheries production increased over the past decade. In 2000–01, the real value of aquaculture production (in 2010–11 terms) was $153 million representing around 37 per cent of total Tasmanian fisheries production. By 2010–11,
the value of aquaculture is estimated to have increased to $432 million, representing around 72 per cent of the state’s fisheries production. Most of the growth in aquaculture production is attributed to increases in the output of farmed salmonid species, in particular Atlantic salmon.

In 2010–11 the volume of Tasmania's aquaculture production is estimated to have increased by 4 per cent (1403 tonnes) to 38 882 tonnes. Salmonids accounted for 88 per cent of this volume and 93 per cent of the total value of Tasmanian aquaculture in 2010–11. Most Tasmanian salmonid production supplies the domestic market. In 2010–11 an estimated 34 229 tonnes of salmonids valued at $401 million were produced.

In 2010–11, Tasmania’s fisheries product exports were valued at $166 million, representing a 12 per cent decline in real value compared with 2009–10. The main export products include abalone and Southern rocklobster, which collectively accounted for around 88 per cent of the total value of Tasmania's fisheries exports in 2010–11.

Hong Kong and China are the major destinations for Tasmanian fisheries exports, accounting for 35 per cent and 31 per cent of the total value of exports in 2010–11, respectively. Other major export destinations include Japan (10 per cent), Singapore (7 per cent), Chinese Taipei (4 per cent) and Indonesia (4 per cent).

Recreational fishing is popular in Tasmania with Tasmanians spending over $50 million on recreational fishing and an estimated one in every three Tasmanians reported to go fishing. This includes game fishing for species including southern bluefin tuna and, with the seasonal extension of the East Australian Current, tropical species, such as yellowfin tuna and striped marlin. Recreational fishing also includes Southern rocklobster, abalone and a range of finfish species, such as flathead, Australian salmon, flounder and bream.

This region has much less recreational fishing effort than the south east region of Tasmania (Lyle et al. 2009). The most important locations for fishing are on the North Western coast where Australian salmon, flathead and sharks are targeted by line fishing. Lobster pots are commonly used by recreational fishers on the West Coast to target southern rocklobster.
4 Forestry sector

In 2010–11, the total plantation area in the West and North West region was approximately 110 000 hectares, comprised of around 89 300 hectares of hardwood plantations, 19 100 hectares of softwood plantations and 1600 hectares of other plantations. In the Tasmania National Plantation Inventory (NPI) region the main hardwood species planted is blue gum (Eucalyptus globulus) and shining gum (E. Nitens), and the main softwood species planted is radiata pine (Pinus Radiata). Total log supply from plantations in the Tasmania NPI region is forecast to increase to 4.76 million cubic metres a year for the 2015–19 period, producing mainly hardwood pulp logs (73 per cent).

In 2008, there were around 945 000 hectares of native forests in the West and North West region, comprised mainly of rainforest (434 000 hectares), eucalypt tall open (247 000 hectares) and eucalypt medium woodland (188 000 hectares) forest types. The majority of the native forests are privately managed (378 000 hectares), 264 000 hectares are managed for nature conservation and 246 000 hectares are multiple use forests available for timber production. Major timber processing industries are located in Burnie, Hampshire and Smithton.

Sales and service income in the Tasmanian forest and wood product industry was estimated at around $998 million in 2010–11, of which $616 million was from wood product sales such as woodchips and structural woods. The remaining $382 million was generated from the sale of paper and paper products. Increased environmental interest in native forest conservation has reduced the State’s capacity to produce wood products. Exports of woodchips from Tasmania have declined sharply following the global economic downturn, falling to 1.5 million tonnes in 2010–11 with an estimated value of $236 million. In 2011–12, woodchip exports declined further to 419 000 tonnes, valued at $64 million.
References

