

Executive Program for Agricultural Producers, TEPAP **7-13 January 2018** **Report by Bryce Riddell, 2012 Scholar**

Overview

Since 1990, the Executive Program for Agricultural Producers, TEPAP, has been equipping agribusiness leaders to develop professional management practices, improve family communication, and provide a path forward for business growth, transition, and succession planning. This opportunity has been made possible for me by the generous sponsorship from the Lorna & Bert Kelly Memorial Award and also the generous sponsorship from iTravel in Griffith and Nuffield Australia.



Summary

Upon returning from The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP), held by Texas A&M, in Austin, I have come back to our business with fresh eyes and a broadened sense of knowledge. This report has been written following the course, which has allowed me to greater understand and appreciate the opportunity that has been presented to me, as I have now had time to implement some of my learnings into the operations of our business.

The TEPAP program was developed by professor Danny Klinefelter as a method to educate agricultural producers to become more skilled in business and management, and not just in the day-to-day tasks of farming.

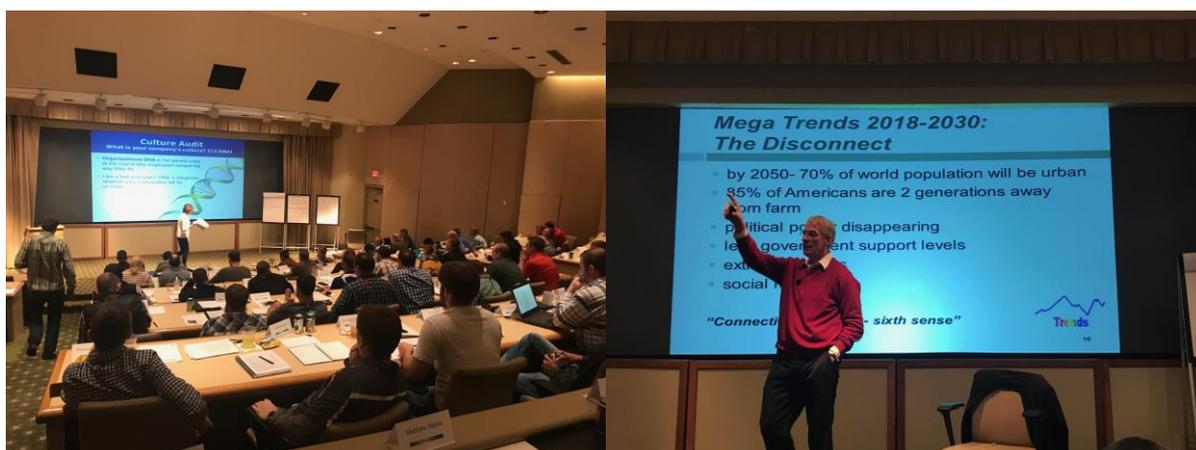
My week at TEPAP educated me on many of the factors that can have large impacts on our agricultural business, and we were privileged to receive talks and presentations from some of the top agricultural and academic leaders in the United States. Each presenter had their own views on agribusiness and life lessons to share throughout their presentation, which was then followed each evening with round table discussions from the days presenters.

Some highlights from speakers included:

Dick Wittman manages a 19,000-acre dry land crop, range cattle and timber operation in northern Idaho. His approach to farm and finance management, along with his farm management proficiency test was excellent. This aims to demonstrate some key strong and weak points of our businesses, such as operation plan and strategic plans, and the importance of having both working concurrently. Dick also taught us the importance of developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for our businesses, even if tasks have been completed for years without one.

Lance Woodbury is a Family Business Consultant with Ag Progress, who specialises in working with family-owned and closely-held agriculture businesses. His presentation on family business management was thought provoking, giving us an overview of the good and the challenging parts of family businesses, and the importance of all family members needing to know and share the overall vision of the business. Also, he focused on developing systems and structure to help family business progress from one generation to the next.

Dave Kohl is Professor of Agricultural Finance and Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. His presentation focused on the megatrends that we can expect to see in agriculture over the coming years into 2030. He highlighted the top economic indicators such as the economic growth of export partners, value of the dollar and what that means for different parts of the agriculture sector as well as the growth of different economies around the world. He also shared what he believes are the corner stones to success for any business.



Allan Gray is Professor of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University. His presentation had a large focus again on strategy and planning and also covered areas such as common growing pains for businesses, and whether our business has them, and if so, how to manage them. He also focused on what organisation structure will support our business strategies. Alan made the comment that sometimes being super busy and working extremely long hours can be a cover up for poor planning and management. To date, this is one of the many quotes that I have taken a great deal from.

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TEPAP was not just about what you learned in the presentation seminars each day, but also largely about the opportunity to network with fellow agricultural producers. These included potato and hay producers in Nevada, corn and soybean producers in Minnesota, or crawfish and sugarcane farmers in Louisiana. Participants had a wide range of business sizes. Some were first generation farmers whilst others were participating from some of the largest agricultural business in the U.S.

I wish to once again thank the generous sponsorship from the Lorna & Bert Kelly Memorial Award iTravel in Griffith and Nuffield Australia. I am looking forward to participating in Unit 2.