

# THE FUTURE OF FARMING AND BIODIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES: THE MUTTAMA CREEK CATCHMENT AREA

## Information Sheet – Project brief

### What is this project about?

This project seeks to understand different farming land use priorities and explore options to integrate profitable farming and successful biodiversity conservation in the Muttama Creek catchment area.

Our project offers an opportunity to come together, discuss and think about the future of farming and biodiversity and the influence that local communities have in this farming landscape. This can feed into a joint vision upon which future catchment planning and funding opportunities can be developed.

### Why the Muttama Creek catchment area?

This landscape, stretching between Cootamundra and Gundagai, sustains many farming families and communities, but also endangered wildlife and native vegetation. This farming landscape has been on a long road of change but is facing increasing volatility and unforeseeable pressures in the future (e.g. climatic and demographic changes and market pressures).

To discuss how the catchment area develops in the future there is an urgent need to incorporate future uncertainties into current discussions within the community, and consider ways to adapt to the changing circumstances.

### What do we want to do?

We would like to facilitate a process during which a group of key people jointly develop different future pathways ('scenarios') for this region. These key people are those who influence biodiversity conservation in farming landscapes and/or are affected by it. The pathways will be plausible stories of the future but not predictions. They will depend on what you, based on your experience and knowledge, consider to be key drivers of change (this could include commodity prices, rainfall variability, collaboration between people).

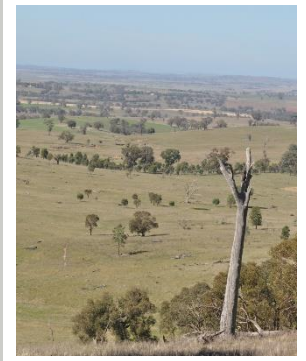
The second component of this project are interviews with approx. 80 people about how successful farming and biodiversity can be integrated in the future. We want to understand what the different viewpoints on this topic are, how they differ and what the commonalities are.

### What are potential benefits of this project for the region?

Jointly developing and comparing plausible stories of the future can stimulate discussions about which future pathways are desirable by local communities but also what is not desirable. Scenario planning is a creative exercise and can support a fresh perspective because it is a structured process which allows discussion and the exchange of ideas.

In addition, we want to raise awareness of various viewpoints, what their commonalities are and how they differ. This in turn can help integrate the different perspectives.

Our project can support long-term planning in the region and has the potential to attract community and governmental support by building a shared vision for the future.



**Contact:** Tamara Schaal  
email: [schaal@leuphana.de](mailto:schaal@leuphana.de)  
phone: 0475 125 534



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### What would we like to know?

- What are your main concerns for the future of this region?
- What would need to happen for you and the local community to be better able to adapt and react to the changing circumstances?

### Who is 'we'?

This project is a collaboration between Leuphana University of Lüneburg in Germany and the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University in Canberra. We combine long-term ecological research in south-eastern Australia with a systems thinking approach to developing community-based pathways for the future.

**Tamara Schaal** is a PhD student in sustainability science. She is passionate about combining farming and biodiversity conservation and is curious how people relate to and influence the landscape they live in.

**Annie Jacobs** is employed as project field officer to support the project through interviews and the organisation of the workshops. Annie is a graduate of ANU Human Ecology. She is very interested in the future of farming and understanding options for biodiversity conservation in agricultural landscapes.

This project is a partner of Sustainable Farms, managed by **Michelle Young**, and supported by ecologists Dr **Mason Crane** and Dr **Ben Scheele**. Scientific advice is provided by the landscape ecologist Dr Jan Hanspach (project lead, Leuphana University) and the world recognised expert in landscape ecology, conservation and biodiversity Prof David Lindenmayer (ANU).

Local partners: The **Muttama Creek Landcare Group** represents the local farming community within the catchment area. It aims to protect and rehabilitate the natural vegetation of the Muttama Creek and its surrounds, to reduce adverse impacts of climate volatility in the area and to increase biodiversity. **Murrumbidgee Landcare** is a grass roots, umbrella organisation representing Landcare in the Murrumbidgee catchment. The community Landcare movement is dedicated to continuing to promote and build community involvement in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management education, on-ground works and practice change.



### Interviews

**What?** Ranking of statements about farming and biodiversity relative to each other

**Outcome?** Understanding different views on integrating farming & biodiversity in the future

**Benefits?** Awareness of different viewpoints, identifying common ground

Interactions  
between humans  
& the environment  
in farming  
landscapes



### Scenarios

**What?** Jointly developing plausible pathways for the future

**Outcome?** Identifying current & future drivers & trends, plausible future pathways, ideas for a common vision

**Benefits?** Fresh perspectives, creative process, identifying what is (un)desirable, support future community actions

Strategies to integrate profitable farming and successful biodiversity conservation in agricultural landscapes

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