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# Carbon farmer as happy as a pig in mud

Edwina Beveridge is bring city efficiency to the country, writes **Claire Dunn**.

Former chartered accountant turned pig farmer Edwina Beveridge is making her mark as a pioneer in the industry, turning methane into money with Australia's first "carbon farm".

Beveridge, who took over from her parents at Blantyre farm near Young in south-west New South Wales in 2007 along with husband Michael, says she was ready to get back to her roots but bringing her city efficiency.

"We've doubled operations since we took over eight years ago, with staff numbers now up around 30," she says. "I love that we still have employees that have been with the family for 27 years."

One of the first changes she made was to the feeding system – moving from manual to automatic, and sourcing 60 per cent of the pig feed from unwanted food waste that would normally go to landfill.

Beveridge soon turned her attention to the opportunities opening up in the carbon market.

With its 22,000 pigs, Blantyre Farm was one the first farms to tap into the former government's Carbon Farming Initiative program, spending almost \$1 million on a biogas generator that captures methane from the manure, turns it into electricity and exports it to the national grid.

"Technology has made a big difference to how we do things. It was a case of right place and time to install the biogas generator and become the first commercial pig farm in Australia to also be a carbon farm," Beveridge says.

The windfall for Blantyre was turning a monthly gas and electricity bill of \$15,000 into a \$5000 credit.

"Not only does it save money, it also reduces odour and is great for

the environment," she says.

With the change of government federally, Beveridge is now tackling the paperwork to allow the farm to continue turning manure into carbon credits under the replacement Emissions Reduction Fund.

Under this scheme, credits are sold to the government by tender rather than on the open market. It's a system not without its drawbacks, says Beveridge.

"The pity is we pay 20¢ a kilowatt when we buy power, but only get paid 5¢ a kilowatt when we sell it."

Unafraid to muck in on political issues, Beveridge is now deputy chairwoman of the NSW Farmers' pork committee. She was also runner-up in the 2014 NSW Rural Women of the Year award and is a newly appointed member of the

**'I love that we still have employees that have been with the family for 27 years.'**

**Edwina Beveridge**

NSW Primary Industries Ministerial Advisory Council.

Janine Price, manager of environment for Australian Pork Limited says: "The pork industry has a strong environmental focus and was the first industry to have a methodology approved under the Carbon Farming Initiative.

"Covering an effluent pond and using the energy for heat and electricity has reduced the greenhouse gas emissions on Edwina's piggery by around 80 per cent. This is a fantastic achievement and reduction in the farm's environmental footprint."



Former chartered accountant turned commercial "carbon farmer" Edwina Beveridge is in pig heaven at the family farm near Young in south-west NSW.

Finding her place in a male-dominated industry has been relatively easy, Beveridge says.

"The pig industry in Australia is very small, with only about 1000 serious farmers. It's certainly male-dominated, but they're a lovely, welcoming bunch of guys."

However, her advocacy makes for little time on the ground, Beveridge concedes.

"I don't do much hands-on work any more, but make a point of checking in with our staff, who in the end are the ones looking after our pigs."

With two willing grandmother babysitters and a husband who loves the dirty work, Beveridge says they have found a good work-family balance.

"My husband jokes sometimes about when I'm going to do some real work, but I really enjoy working at the industry level and talking about what we can do better," she says.

"I also love that our kids can be involved on the farm. My oldest daughter is always asking to have the day off from school to help in the shearing shed."

Australian Pork Limited chief Andrew Spencer says: "APL is proud to work with innovative producers such as Edwina. This kind of biogas system has the potential for Australian pork to have one of the lowest global-warming potentials for pork production worldwide."

Next on Beveridge's list is tackling pork imports, which she says have the potential to contaminate Australian producers with "nasty diseases."

"Disease in US pork products is endemic. The federal government is currently reviewing their bio-

security rules and this is high on our agenda," she says.

More than just a farmer, Beveridge sees herself as an advocate for agriculture.

"I am really keen to promote the pig industry and agriculture as a whole. To this end we have hosted the parliamentary secretary for climate change to officially open our methane digestion system; made professional videos assisted by Australian Pork Limited to showcase our farm; and helped promote the Carbon Farming Initiative with the Clean Energy Regulator."