

Five minutes with:

Susanne Tegan

Susanne Tegan is managing director of Eyre Peninsula business cooperative Free Eyre. The grower-driven company is focused on grain marketing and value adding. We get her response to OUR TOP QUESTIONS.

## SA strengthened by 'can-do' spirit

### 1 What makes regional South Australia a good place to do business?

South Australians have resilience and an ability to come up with their own solutions. The communities are 'can do', because they have been through the good times and those that have environmentally, socially and financially challenged them. Many parts of rural SA still do have water and consistent rains and, in those areas that do not, people are working at coming up with sustainable solutions. Interestingly, people often underestimate SA but I don't see this as a bad thing, that means there aren't any expectations and plenty of room to succeed.

### 2 What excites you about the future of agribusiness in SA?

Innovative, positive people in the industry and that there are several developing countries very close to Australia. Also, I'm excited by that real desire by the business sector, governments and community to work together to deal with some really tough issues that will affect not only the primary producer, but all along the supply chain to the consumer.

### 3 Where do you see your business/sector in 20 years time?

I see Australian agriculture being at the forefront of food safe-

ty. Asia, Europe and the US have had their fair share of food scares. We have been very stringent in Australia and are fortunate to be geographically isolated – so let's use this competitive advantage. In addition, I see an agricultural industry that has dealt with an adjustment due to financial and environmental constraints. As a result of this however, we will be stronger and more focused as an Australian (rather than state-based) industry.

### 4 What challenges do we face and how well-placed are we to survive and thrive?

The real challenges for agriculture lie in dealing with the environmental issues, the speed at which we embrace and drive change due to globalisation, dealing with the cost of production by focusing on scale and/or niche markets. Australia is an innovative country, with continued research and development in addition to maintaining its stance on water and soil conservation and food safety it has the capability to meet challenges head on.

### 5 If you had \$1 million to invest in a rural industry, which one would it be and why?

I would invest it in FREE Eyre and agriculture of course. I am a firm believer in like-minded people taking control and finding their own solutions, not unlike



how Pivot and Wesfarmers started. Adversity is a motivating factor. FREE Eyre is such an Australian approach – see an issue, people take control and work hard at it, celebrate the small achievements. In the end it is all about people. The right people can make whatever rural industry you are in, work well. Rural communities have the desire, the skill and the humour to pull it off.

### 6 What was the best business advice ever given to you?

Stay focused on the important things and your goals, even if you have human/environmental or financial obstacles along the way. It is easier to knock things down than build things up. Keep going despite people around you not wanting you to succeed. Surround yourself with people who celebrate the little wins, live and act by fair principles and values in all that you do. And as Eleanor Roosevelt once said, 'do the things you think you cannot do'.