



Open Day, Mataura, Southland 22 January 2012

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Guest speaker Sid Plant: biography



Overview

Sid Plant has been a beef and grain farmer on the Darling Downs in Queensland for the last 30 years. He has a strong understanding of climate science and its application and a deep commitment to sustainability. Sid's farm borders the expanding New Hope coal mine (currently producing 10 million tonnes of coal a year). The coal mine's continued expansion has meant he now has few neighbours left – except the mine.

Sid has direct experience to share with both activists and farmers in New Zealand in terms of the expansion of the coal industry. A respected figure in the Australian farming community, he has won awards for his work on communicating issues around climate change, giving more than 100 “fair dinkum” talks to farmers. He has been a leading figure in the Australian rural lobby group, AgForce.

Climate Presentations

Created and delivered hundreds of presentations on weather, climate and climate change and their relevance to various situations. This has included probably over 100 two (2) hour “Climate Change in A Nutshell” seminars in response to requests to explain weather, climate and climate change and to give examples of how to utilise such information in farming or grazing decision making. Audiences have ranged from roughly 10 to 1000 comprising a wide variety of interest groups including over a dozen landcare groups, with the presentation adapted to suit (example slides are available).

Nikki Pilcher, Coordinator of the North East Downs Landcare Group Inc said:

"Sid Plant's Climate change workshops have been extremely well attended and received within the Landcare and farming communities. Sid's ability to empathize with landholders over many issues, and his practical experiences have added credibility to his presentation. Sid is a well respected member of the community, with a track record of embracing new technologies and thoughts. There are many farmers who veer off the road to look into Sid's paddock to see what he is up to now!"

Guest Speaker at climate conferences including

- International Workshop on Addressing the Livelihood Crisis of Farmers: Weather and Climate Services organized by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Meteo-France, USDA and others, in Brazil 2010
- WMO Sponsored International Workshop on the Content, Communication and Use of Weather and Climate Products and Services for Sustainable Agriculture 2009.
- International Workshop on Farm Management Decisions with Climate Risk 2000 (sponsored by QG, DPI, DNR, UQ, CVAP, ACIAR)
- Greenhouse 2011

Participated in many forums on climate and climate change topics including:

- Managing Climate Variability National Forum
- Climate Variability in Agriculture R&D Program Scoping Workshop, 24 and 25 May, 2001
- Queensland Premier's Climate Change Summit
- Bureau of Meteorology Conferences
- Cloud Seeding Conference in Melbourne in November 2007

Publications

- Authored and published a reviewed chapter *The Relevance Of Seasonal Climate Forecasting To A Rural Producer* in the book *"Applications for Seasonal Climate Forecasting in Agricultural and Natural Ecosystems"* published by Kluwer Academic Publishing (copy available). Prior to publication this was reviewed by a review panel consisting of 18 scientists from universities across the world.
- Road tested "Rainman" – the very helpful software used to indicate likely SOI phase impacts on rainfall at thousands of locations across the world.
- Conference abstracts and powerpoint presentations circulated with various conference papers

Community involvement

President or on the executive of over 20 local, regional or industry committees at various stages including:

- a foundation member of rural lobby group "AgForce" and board member and Interim Regional Chairman
- Board member of Queensland Livestock and Meat Authority (QLMA) 1991-1997
- Cattlemen's Union State Councillor and branch and regional executive positions and committee positions (including 3 years on the land and local government committee)
- Australian Poll Hereford Society (Board member, Vice President, Treasurer and State President)

- Myall Land Care, e.g. planting several thousand trees on our property, re-fencing to protect the floodplain, changing to minimum tillage on our farmland and hosting a researcher for several months while they researched salinity in the area.
- Served on the local drought committee for many years

Relationships and Networks

Familiar with the work and has forged relationships with some of the world's leading climate scientists eg Professors and scientists at Earth and Environment Sciences at the Columbia University Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (New York), Australian National University Centre for Resource and Environment Studies, The Hadley Centre (UK), University of Southern Queensland, QDPI, CSIRO sustainable Ecosystems, Monash University, Bureau of Meteorology etc including several Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) members.

Played a role and been successful in advocating for funding, emphasis and publication of research due to its importance for applied uses as well as a range of other policy issues, mostly related to climate and / or agriculture, including gathering the political momentum for the establishment of the Queensland Centre for Climate Applications in the 1990s.

Personally hosted (usually at his farm) and spoken to senior delegations from Canada, USA, Japan, China, Mongolia, Korea (LPMO), Argentina, Brazil and Singapore in various capacities as well as domestic delegations such as on natural resource or industry issues or to discuss specific issues such as local potential for cloud seeding with people from Tasmanian Hydro.

Extensive agricultural networks, by virtue of a lifetime in the agricultural industry and being active in industry and community groups (eg AgForce, QFF, MLA, RCS alumni, beef breed societies, landcare etc) and related government departments, officers and relevant politicians over the years.

Awards

- National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) Climate Adaptation Champions Award winner in April 2011 see story here <http://www.nccarf.edu.au/node/790>
- Finalist, Prime Minister's Environmental Awards, 2011 <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/qld/content/2011/11/s3360251.htm>
- "Best communicator's Award" (created specifically for him by one of the climate related forums)