

Taking gamble out of farming

By SIMON KEARNEY

TO take the gamble out of farming New South Wales beef producer Peter Ryan invented a hydroponic fodder factory seven years ago — more recently he built one in Tasmania.

The factory is a large greenhouse which will produce three quarters of a tonne of green feed a day in full production.

“I invented the fodder factory out of desperation because I wanted to take the gamble out of farming,” Mr Ryan said.

He says the idea first occurred to him in 1988. He built a prototype in 1989 and a working model was in production by 1991.

Since then the number of sales has almost doubled each year.

“I sold a few over the

Invention produces green feed

first couple of years. In 1995 I sold 12 and next year I hope to sell 24,” he said.

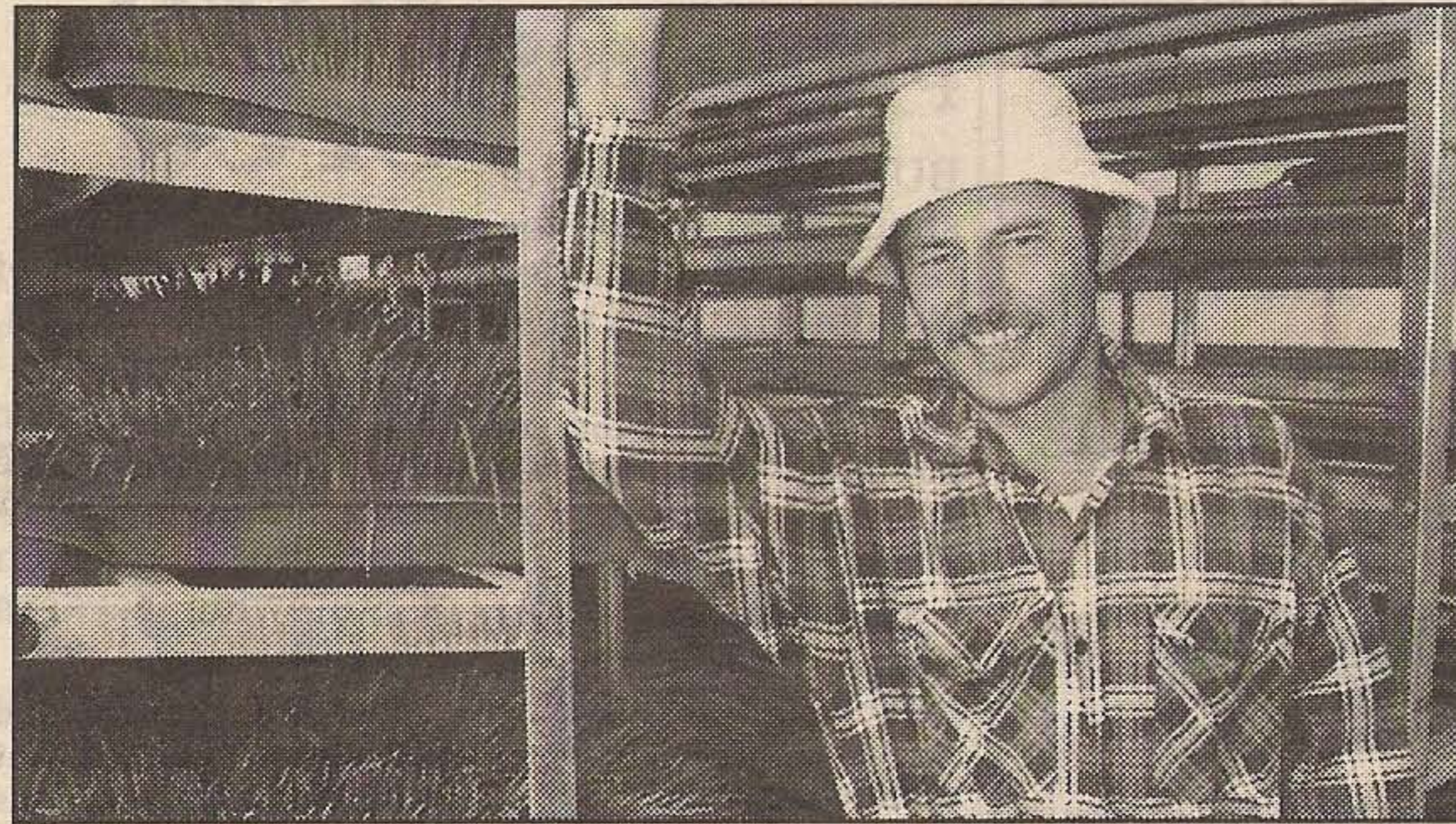
“And, demand is growing all the time.”

The Tasmanian fodder factory was built on Glengarry deer farmer Hans Bertogg’s property.

Mr Ryan said the green feed would help him get a premium for finishing stags over 50 kilograms at 12 months of age.

“He will get about \$1 per kilogram more and it is something which is quite hard to do even on good pasture,” he said.

Mr Bertogg said he decided to buy the fodder



Peter Ryan with his hydroponic fodder factory.

factory after an on-farm water development yielded less storage capacity than he had believed it would, meaning less capacity to irrigate.

The fodder factory uses powdered nutrients but can also make use of

nutrient-rich waste water.

Mr Ryan said they had recently secured a deal to set one up near Hobart using waste water from a trout farm.

“Another thing we have suggested is for people to

use worm juice from an intense worm farm,” he said.

“Hydroponic nutrient solutions are just the easiest way.

“I have also thought that dairy waste could be used in a similar way.”

Mr Ryan farms 205 hectares (500 acres) on the mid-north coast of New South Wales where he runs beef cattle and deer.

Fodder factories have been installed in places as far reaching as Rockhampton to Tasmania with a lot of interest coming from Western Australia as well.

The largest one retails for \$38,500 and there are not a lot of variables.

The company makes three sizes but they mostly build the large size which produces the three quarters of a tonne of green feed a day.

Mr Ryan said a farmer in Dubbo who had one had recorded weight gains on steers of two kilograms a day by feeding one kilogram of the feed each day per 100 kilograms of liveweight.

The climate in the fodder factory is controlled.