

AG-QUIP '98

Interest rate drop 'will do'

CLOSE enough was good enough for NSW Farmers' president John Cobb at Ag-Quip yesterday when the Minister for Agriculture announced a new loan rate for flood-affected farmers.

Richard Amery's announcement of a two per cent drop for loans to farmers and small businesses under the natural disaster relief fund almost met Mr Cobb's expectations.

"Obviously the association and in fact all farmers are very pleased that the minister put it to the Government that it's not appropriate to have an interest rate on a disaster loan that really is almost a commercial rate at the moment," he said.

"We thought three per cent would have covered their costs - but we can live with four per cent."

Mr Cobb said he appreciated what Mr Amery had done but thought it should have happened sooner.

"We acknowledge that the minister went to treasury and has got the go-ahead to drop it to four per cent," he said.



Wingham farmer Peter Ryan's son Ben said his family's Fodder Factory can achieve in eight days what would otherwise take 17 weeks in the field.

Ryan's hydroponic Fodder Factory dumbfounds farmers

PLANT 112 kilograms of grain inside the Fodder Factory and within eight days farmers will have one-tonne of green feed available for grazing stock.

The Fodder Factory is the environmentally-controlled hydroponic brainchild of Wingham farmer Peter Ryan, who has this year launched the "grain greenhouse" onto the lucrative Ag-Quip market.

His son, Ben, said the factory could achieve in a little over a week what would otherwise require 17 weeks in the field. The grain is planted and hydroponically maintained to reach maximum growth

within eight days.

"It has increased protein, increased productivity and it guarantees 100 per cent germination," Mr Ryan said.

"It's a mini green-house that essentially runs itself - it knows when to eat, cool, water itself. The hardest thing is to convince farmers that it works because they are just dumbfounded."

The Fodder Factory comes as a complete package for \$44,000 which, according to Mr Ryan, is "what some farmers would spend a year on grain."