

# FARMING

JUNE 2022

TASMANIA



Read more about our Partners from Enable Ag inside (full story Pages 12-13)



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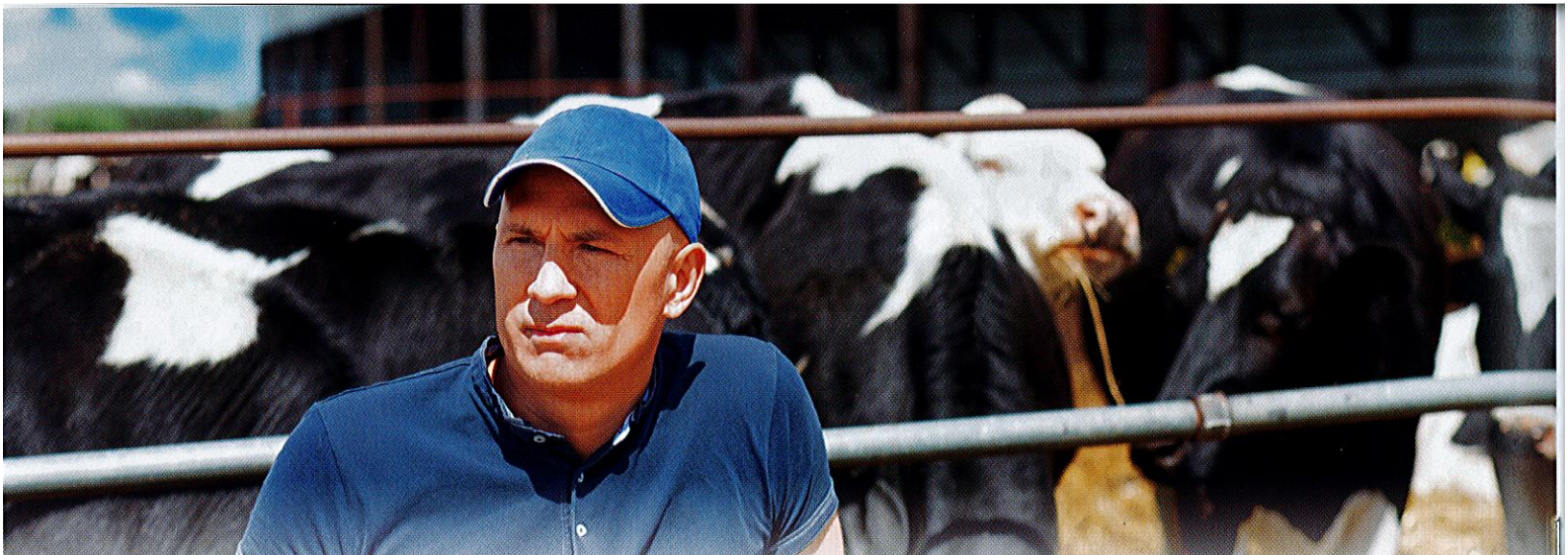
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# The cost of financial freedom shouldn't be your time

By Enable Ag's Farmers Time-Freedom Coach, Ram K Savana

**Farmers are excellent at what they do on the farm. Tasmania's rich agricultural history and primary produce are testament to just that. But oftentimes without even knowing it, farmers fall into an unsustainable cycle of spending too much time on the farm, little time on the business, and even less time with their families.**

This problem is two-fold. Not only do farmers tend to lose out on their health and wellbeing, but they also become the sole source of knowledge on their farm, making delegation – let alone succession planning – a tricky business.

The growing pains associated with reaching financial sustainability, running, and scaling a profitable farm include a whole suite of resource-sapping challenges: Who manages staff? Who orders equipment and pays the bills? Who has the skills to take on the low-value tasks, so time is most efficiently spent? The answer to these questions is quite often the farmer him or herself – and alarmingly – farmers are so often unaware this problem even exists.

## It's part of the culture.

Numerous sources point us to the extent of this problem – researchers operating in Australia and overseas, news media articles, our national statisticians. Just last year Farmsafe Australia reported that “clocking off can seem not to be an option”. This unhealthy norm in the agricultural sector is contributing to an immense amount of on and off-farm safety concerns:

- While Australian agriculture accounted for less than three per cent of our national workforce in 2016, the industry accounted for 21 per cent of work-related deaths (ABS).

- Time off for family vacations is rare or filled with complexity. Over the festive season this year the National Farmers Federation's Charlie Thomas said, “there's really no down time in the production cycle for most farms, there's always work to be done.”

- Family needs, mental and physical health go by the wayside.

The old adage that work makes us money-rich and time-poor has never been truer than for a farmer.

## A lack of systems engrains the issue.

The second part of this problem is borne of the first – when a farmer has spent their entire career focussed so heavily on the operations, what happens when the time comes to pass the torch onto the next generation, or when the unthinkable happens and there's a death?

This scenario hits close to home for Enable Ag's Founder, Ram K Savana. Hailing from a strong farming family in India, in 2019 Ram's father suddenly passed away leaving his mother with all the farm's responsibility and little information on how it had been run.

Returning to his birth country to farewell his father and support his mother, Ram tackled the enormous challenge of searching for the farm's operational answers. But

it wasn't the implementation of new technologies, software or automated tools that was going to help. It was learning how the farm had operated.

In order to get the farm back on its feet, Ram pored over his father's diaries, scanning them for his way of doing things; for his wisdom. This simple act of noting down and handing over processes made all the difference.

## Systems are not software.

Systems, as Ram notes, are not software; rather a linear set of steps which followed consistently, yield consistent results. This systemised approach to Ram's family farm has allowed the farm to thrive, with his mother being awarded the Progressive Farmer Award on International Women's Day 2022.

Whether it's due to fear, unwillingness, uncertainty or cost; traditional industries sometimes don't want to adapt their businesses with new technologies or are simply unsure of where to start. As Ram's early process development shows, without even considering technological solutions, sometimes all it takes is a zoomed-out, holistic review of the day-to-day operations by someone who's not already deeply embedded.

It's not only in situations such as Ram's that a lack of systems has a detrimental

impact on the future of the farm. As farms are handed from one generation to the next, generational friction can occur between fresh ag school graduates and their families' old-school ways. Without a documented process to be followed, the clash between the new and the old can add even more stress to ageing farmers' lives.

### **A big problem, an even bigger opportunity.**

Ram and his wife Mrudula (Em) founded Enable Ag in 2018 after their move to Tasmania. Growing up on an 80-acre farm in India then studying scientific disciplines in Australia, it was difficult for Ram to find meaningful work in his new home of Launceston. This led Ram to reflect on his heritage and his strengths as he embraced the local farming sector.

"When we moved to Tasmania, we really wanted to become a part of our local community, but we also wanted to use the valuable analytical skills we had developed through work in the medical device sector in Melbourne".

"We knew agriculture played a huge role in the Tasmanian economy and as we got to know farmers locally, we saw how difficult it was for them to reach a sustainable work-life balance, which is truly a shame – especially in this stunning state."

To prove himself to the Tasmanian community Ram spent over 4,200 hours gaining extensive on-farm experience directly with the farmers he wanted to help. During his hands-on research he became acutely aware of how much time was being spent on labour-intensive tasks which could easily be delegated, and on manual activities impacting farmers' health. Conversely, he saw how little time was available for farm developments and expansion, and for farmers' lives outside of their work.

### **Beyond the paddock...**

Ram's biggest worry for farmers is that they're not aware of the extent of this problem, and that it's simply taken for granted that farmers work long hours and retire late.

"Sometimes people wait until they become too unwell to work before they consider

making changes or succession planning. This is tragic and it's unnecessary. I want farmers to step back and assess their processes here and now while they're younger and fitter and can still enjoy time with their family and friends. I want to help them take weekends off and enjoy some travel."

"My job is to be your time-freedom coach. I'm not in the business of sales advice or finance – I just want to support you to have freedom of time for your farm and your life. My message is simple: we don't know what we don't know, but you don't have to try and figure it out on your own – you probably don't have time for that!"

Enable Ag has already supported over 30 farmers across the North, North-West and Central Highlands of Tasmania in the four years since it was established.

Within three months of starting Enable Ag's program, it's common for Ram's clients to give him a call with the exciting news that they've booked a holiday, or simply have the time to take a decent break, which they hadn't been comfortable doing before. Within just one month, clients report increased communication among their family and staff along with notable efficiencies in the business.

### **...And into the community.**

Eager to give back to the community that welcomed him when he first arrived, Ram is an avid supporter of

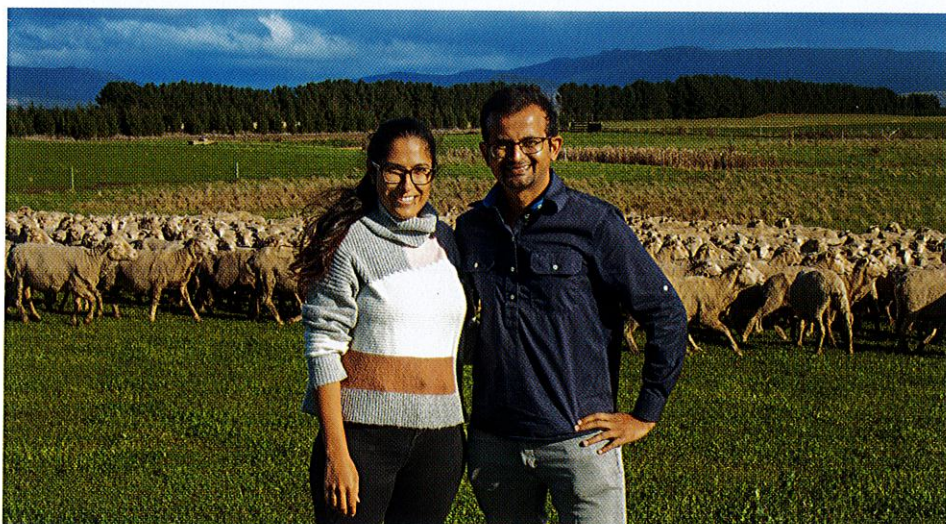
entrepreneurial communities here and abroad. He has told his story to members of Startup Tasmania, he's shared his knowledge and wisdom with the University of Tasmania Business and Economics Student Society, and has been a guest speaker at Oregon State University in the United States and Acharya N. G. Ranga Agricultural University in India.

Ram and Em's impact on the Tasmanian community hasn't gone unnoticed. In 2022 Enable Ag took home the Excellence in a Start-Up Award at the Launceston Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards and were named State Finalists in the 2022 Telstra Best of Business Awards in the Embracing Innovation Category.


### **Sharing the vision.**

Underpinning Enable Ag is the vision to enable farmers and their future generations to have more time for themselves and their families. Ram and Em's hope is that this vision can be embraced and shared so more and more people in the Tasmanian farming community can enjoy a better quality of life.

*Enable Ag is a Launceston-based agricultural consultancy founded by husband-and-wife team Ram K Savana and Mrudula Sant who are proud to call themselves Tasmanian. Visit: [enableag.com.au](http://enableag.com.au) or search Enable Ag on Facebook.*



*Pictured: Enable Ag's founders Ram K Savana and Mrudula Sant in their first client's sheep paddocks (Mayfield Farms, Cressy)*



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