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2017 AARES Distinguished Life Member

Bob Farquharson



Associate Professor Bob Farquharson's career in agricultural economics developed from growing up on farms and concurring with his father's suggestion that this would be an interesting discipline to learn. Bob has studied at the University of New England and the University of California Davis and worked at the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (now ABARES), NSW Department of Agriculture/Primary Industries and the University of Melbourne. Bob's career interest has been in the economics of agricultural production and natural resource use, and new technology assessment in farming systems contexts in Australia and developing countries.

In his time at the BAE in Canberra (1976–1986), Bob was involved in field survey data collection for the Australian Agricultural and Grazing Industries Survey and conducted research using that data. He transferred in 1987 to Grafton at the NSW Agriculture Research and Advisory Station where he worked with other scientists and advisory officers. His work included the evaluations of several beef industry technologies and an assessment of the returns from investment in beef cattle genetics breeding and research for the Australian beef industry. The position also involved presenting at field days, particularly a herd-level economic evaluation of a large

Crossbreeding × Nutrition project. Awarding of an AMLRDC scholarship allowed Bob to study at the University of California Davis and obtain a Master of Science (Agricultural and Resource Economics) degree. Then, at the NSW Department of Primary Industries Tamworth Agricultural Institute (1997–2008), he conducted an analysis of managing soil fertility as a natural resource under cereal crop production in northern Australia (PhD thesis topic, studying under Oscar Cacho and John Mullen) and worked on wheat and cotton industry issues.

Bob has been involved in ACIAR projects in Cambodia since 2001. These have included an assessment of field crop technologies in the context of semi-subsistence farming in the upland regions of Cambodia. Recently, Bob has commenced work in Myanmar relating to fertility management for semi-subsistence cereal (rice and maize) farmers in the dry zone. At the University of Melbourne (since 2008), Bob has expanded his research interests in association with supervision of international postgraduate students.

An AARES member since 1976, Bob has been a long-standing Councillor for AARES representing the New England and Victorian Branches and has been Federal Secretary since 2011. Bob was co-chair (with Garry Griffith) of the Local Organising Committee for the 49th Annual Conference of AARES at Coffs Harbour in 2005 and served on the LOC for the 2011 Melbourne Conference. Recently, he has guided Council through the process of transforming itself to a Not-For-Profit Company Limited by Guarantee with Charity status.