

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE4503

Salvetti, Maryann

Occupation Businesswoman, Community stalwart, Farmer

Summary

Maryann Salvetti was state winner for Queensland of the ABC Rural Woman of the year award in 1997, representing the far northern region. She has roughly thirty years as a primary producer in the region; she and her family have produced maize, peanuts, potatoes, navy beans, mangoes, and over 10 different grasses (including sugar cane) and legume crops on their mixed farming properties near Tolga on the Atherton Tablelands. She is co-managing director and marketing manager for North Queensland Tropical Seeds, a wholesale, processing and exporting company supplying seed to both the domestic and international markets.

A sugar grower for twenty years, Maryann has expanded her interest and commitment to the industry beyond the farm gate. She has served as the chairperson of Tableland Sugar Services, a director of Tableland Canegrowers Limited, Queensland Sugar Limited, a board member of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations (BSES) and Tableland Contracting Services Pty Ltd, Tanita Pty Ltd and secretary/public officer of Tableland Sugar Pty Ltd. She played a crucial role in the construction of a sugar mill on the Atherton Tablelands which opened in 1998.

Maryann's commitment to industry and community has been recognised in a variety of forums besides in the ABC Rural Woman of the Year Award. She has been an Atherton Shire Australia Citizen of the Year and was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001. She won a bursary that enabled her to attend the Second International Women in 1998.

Details

When Maryann Salvetti, from Tolga in the Atherton Tablelands, was announced Queensland Rural Woman of the Year in 1997, she was in the thick of overseeing the establishment of the first new sugar mill to be opened in Queensland in over seventy years. Administering Tablelands Canegrowers from a home office, while juggling family business interests and the raising of three children, she was co-ordinating the set-up of more than 50 new cane farms which were to supply the new Bundaberg Sugar Company mill at Mareeba, due to open next June. 'Because we are a completely new industry, we've been able to plug into all the most modern technology. I can't wait for the opening. There's going to be a big party,' she said.

Fast forward fourteen years and Maryann is still a spokeswoman for North Queensland cane producers. Angry at the overseas owners of the mill she helped to establish, over extraordinary marketing charges they have passed on to local growers, Maryann is front and centre in the group of growers disputing the charges and standing up for their rights. The Deputy Chair of the industry group, Canegrowers, is one of a number of canegrowers calling upon the mill owners to 'do the right thing and play fair' for the sake of canegrowers, families and local communities who, in the last six months have endured a category five cyclone and the worst harvest on record.

Maryann has high praise for the ABC Radio Awards as a mechanism for encouraging women to 'get involved in their industries'. A farmer for over thirty years, Maryann Salvetti and her family have long been innovators and experimenters to get a competitive edge. They have produced maize, peanuts, potatoes, navy beans, mangoes, and over 10 different grasses and legume crops on their three mixed farming properties near Tolga on the Atherton Tablelands, more recently branching out into sugar and seeds. North Queensland Tropical Seeds supplies seeds to both domestic and export markets, specialising in legume seeds for the northern New South Wales and Queensland Sugar Industries. Diversity appears to have been the source of their long term success. 'Farming is not about lifestyle anymore,' Salvetti said in 1997. 'It's a business where you have got to be innovative and stay one step ahead of the competition.'

She has always been an active partner and manager in her own business and an active participant in the community it supports, as this ABC award, and others, acknowledge. Maryann is currently (2011) chairperson of Tableland Sugar Services, a director and deputy chair of Tableland Canegrowers Limited, Tableland Contracting Services Pty Ltd, Tanita Pty Ltd and secretary/public officer of Tableland Sugar Pty Ltd. Maryann was a director of BSES Ltd (formerly the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations). She is a past, Atherton Shire Australia Citizen of the Year and was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001 for services to the Rural Community.

In 1998 she was one of three Queensland women to win bursaries funding them to attend the Second Women in Agriculture conference held in Washington D.C. The conference was an important opportunity to raise the profile of women in Australian agriculture on an international level, as well as creating networks and contacts and gathering knowledge to share with interested women back home.

Maryann did precisely that when she got home. She helped establish the Tablelands Agribusiness Women's Group. From speaking with women in her own network, Maryann observed that:

Lots of women want to be involved in the executive of their organisations but they lack the skills and confidence. The Tablelands Agribusiness Women's Group is about building that confidence and accessing skills that will qualify them for those roles... This group is about training women, and giving them the confidence and skills to attend local community and industry meetings, get known, have their say and get elected.

Maryann was also involved in organising the 1999 World Rural Women's Day celebrations at Mareeba. On hearing her speak at that occasion, another ten women approached her about joining the rapidly growing group. She was delighted by the response and noted that 'the women's commitment to their industries, and the understanding they have of each other's needs and level of confidence, is a valuable resource for industry, community and government alike'.

Described as 'an outstanding ambassador for her state', Maryann Salvetti was the final Queensland winner of the ABC version of the award that established roots in her state. Fitting, given that it was the brainchild of the grand-daughter of a cane-farmer, that it should go to someone who is still representing that industry's interests.

Events

1997 - 1997

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

North Queensland Tropical Seeds Website, North Queensland Tropical Seeds, 2011,
<http://www.nqtropicalseeds.com.au/HOME.9.0.html>

Resource Section

1997 ABC Queensland Rural Woman of the Year Award Winners, ABC Radio, 1997,
<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/rwoty/qld.htm>

Media Release: Formal dispute lodged on recalcitrant mill by far northern cane growers, 2011

Newspaper Article

Tableland farmer claims rural woman award, 1997

What's On, 1997

Rural women break new ground, Monk, S, 1998

Report

Vision for Change: National Plan for Women in Agriculture and Resource Management, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management, 2000,
http://www.mincos.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/316072/vision_for_change1.pdf

Site Exhibition

Brilliant Ideas and Huge Visions: ABC Radio Australian Rural Women of the Year - 1994-1997, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2011,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/rwya/rwya-home.html>

Archival resources

National Library of Australia

[\[Biographical cuttings on Maryann Salvetti, farmer, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

Author Details

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Created 22 April 2010

Last modified 12 February 2019