

Adam Link always knew he would end up coming home to work on the family farm even though he has a science degree which he completed at university, with honours under his belt.

Taking over the reins from his parents Keith and Anne-Marie Link and expanding the families piggery venture at Leitchville to include a grower unit at Pyramid Hill and beef and cropping has been challenging but also rewarding too.

The first 10 years since buying half the business have been a roller coaster ride of drought and flood, and issues in the pig industry including cheap imports, high grain prices and labor issues, but Adam and wife, Susanne have remained positive and steadily grown the business.

“I have confidence in the sustainability of agriculture, my generation have a lot of opportunity heading into the future,” Adam said. “I do believe the family farm structure will remain an important part of our industry”

For the last 18 months the business has been milling their own pig feed. While this was a significant investment, it has given them more control over their feed rations and helped with the bottom line.

“Feed costs are 60 per cent of our expenses. We wanted to have the economic benefit from milling as well as a bit more control over grain quality when we feed our pigs,” Keith said.

“We wouldn’t have survived the tough times if we didn’t start milling our own feed, I really believe it has helped us with our long term viability and it helps us to adapt our business in different ways.”

“The mill also gives us the ability to value add any grain we can produce on our farm,” Adam adds.

Purchasing 541 ha at Pyramid Hill for the grower unit has enabled the family to grow some of their own grain requirements. This season they had a bumper barley crop which went 43 bags to the acre which was in Adam’s words ‘exceptional.’

The crop was grown using super phosphate and composted waste litter from the grower shed igloos.

“The pigs in the grower sheds are housed in igloos because they create a friendly, social environment. They have a deep litter bottom made up of rice hulls and straw which when combined with pig manure composts down into fertiliser. We simply clean the sheds and stockpile the litter for later use. “Adam said.

“The management program we have in place for nutrient recycling helps cut down on our fertiliser costs. Everything is integrated, but it has to be for business to survive.”

Looking to the future of the pork industry Adam can see skilled labour becoming more of an issue moving forward.

“We are very happy with our staff, although some of the bigger piggeries are employing Phillipino’s to combat some of their labor shortages.”

Meanwhile Adam is making the most of the ‘cheap’ labor provided by his parents when they aren’t off in their caravan until they retire and head off in their caravan.

“Mum and Dad have been great. They have stepped back a bit and allowed me to make the decisions. There are many things in farming that are out of your control, but controlling what you can is the essence of managing your business.”