

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Optimistic outlook for state's premier agricultural event

Agfest patrons spent more than \$26 million dollars at the event last year, according to new research released today by the University of Tasmania and the Agfest committee.

The findings have also shed positive light on the attendee experience, showing Agfest is increasing in popularity, with patrons, exhibitors and volunteers revealing a strong satisfaction.

On average, volunteers gave a combined total of 13,124 hours, an estimated value of \$328,100 to organise the event. 60% of volunteers were aged under 30 while 47% were under 25, bucking the national trend.

The research was conducted through surveys carried out by University of Tasmania students. The results were then analysed by University academics who compiled the *Agfest 2015 Vounteers, Patron and Exhibitors* report for the event committee. The project formed part of the successful inaugural partnership agreement between both institutions.

91.4% of patrons surveyed were from Tasmania with almost 90% having attended the event previously and 96.6% indicated they would return to Agfest again. 41.6% ranked the "social experience" as the highest reason to go, followed by the "consumer experience" at 36.5%. 86% of patrons made a purchase.

Patrons were also asked about their educational background. The results showed 41% would still consider further education and training and almost 17% of this number were considering university or VET study, equating to almost 10,000 individuals contemplating courses in the next year.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community, Partnerships and Regional Development) Professor Janelle Allison said it was exciting to be joining forces with Agfest again, and welcomed the research findings.

“We are already seeing local demand for new educational courses state-wide, particularly across industry, to help people upskill and transition to new careers. These findings reinforce that there is a strong interest by Tasmanians in accessing higher education, and we are particularly seeing that push in Agriculture, which is why we are currently formulating an Agri-business associate degree,” Professor Allison said.

Agfest Chairman Kate Coad said the research had been carried out to help guide organisers in shaping the event to better align with current perceptions, and to understand the economic and social impact of Agfest on the community.

“This report has also reaffirmed for us the value of our volunteers, they are the life blood of our organisation,” Ms Coad said.

“Their motivation comes from the pride they have for Agfest itself and the many social connections they form within the volunteer group. During their time with us they have learnt valuable skills that have benefited them in their everyday lives and this is just another example of the value of this very important event.

“Our partnership with the University of Tasmania has been invaluable and we look forward to working with them on more projects into the future.”

The research revealed that 68% of exhibitors were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their sales results. Interstate exhibitors benefited the local economy by bringing 1-4 people from outside of Tasmania with them at a total cost of \$441,200 and employing 448 Tasmanian staff at the event.

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