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Future Agro Challenge Australia 2016 –



## **Australian Future Agro Challenge** **Australian Winner Announced**

The first ever Future Agro Challenge Australia was a huge success.

Chris Cameron and his daughter, Catriona Dale of Platinum Compost Pty Ltd were the winners for the Australian Future Agro Challenge for 2016. They entered the Evergreen Practises Category and have an idea that aims towards premium quality, healthy, sustainable, crop production and sustainable regeneration of soil health and productivity.

This is a father and daughter team that has come together to pass on the accumulated knowledge of a life of learning.

Chris has spent over 50 years building up as thorough an understanding as possible (a continuing process) of "The Blueprint of Nature". This is understanding how all the elements go together to maintain a healthy and fertile soil as the very basis of farm and environmental health. The relevance of this accumulation has been widely recognised over many years for both straight farming ability and environmental maintenance. Back in 1988 the Family finished in the Top 5 in the Australia / New Zealand wide "Bicentennial Tree Care Award". In 1990 he was Runner Up in the State-wide "United Graziers Association Centenary Land Management and Conservation Award". He was also selected as Keynote Speaker for the State Landcare Conference in 2009.

Catriona grew up on the family farm where she had exposure to all elements of the running of a very diverse operation. Her latter education path led back towards agriculture in particular its efficient financial administration. Catriona graduated in the top 1% of her class from the University of Queensland, Gatton Campus, with a Bachelor of Agribusiness.

Their primary business involves the making of very carefully formulated and processed compost using an aerobic window system, a 28 day process. They have devised a clean, sustainable, non-toxic method of addressing three main issues in much of our agricultural soil: a lack of organic matter/soil carbon; severe mineral shortages, and the absence of beneficial biological population in most soil. This can result in a steady decrease in quantity of crops grown and their nutritional content, and serious structural deterioration of agricultural soil. This is at a time when food production needs to increase to meet the needs of the growing world population and farmers are struggling under ever increasing input costs. Their compost emulates as closely as possible the blue-print of nature. Their formulated system uses a ruminant manure based compost which is blended with approximately 15 minerals designed specifically to address the shortages in the target soil, and finally a live biological culture is applied to the soil in order to start healthy in-ground processes.

From the time I first stumbled across the article in the Growcom Magazine seeking entries in the Competition it was exciting! When Leanne rang to congratulate us of our winning the title it took a while for the realisation to sink in, in fact it still is!! This will certainly be a life-changer for all of us!! Like most rural people, we have been through our fair share of tough times and it has been very tough trying to get this extremely well proven business up and running by ourselves. We sat for a while on the side of the road with the odd tear of relief and joy out the back of Hughenden, then rang Catriona back in Toowoomba, who wet up her own tissues!!” Chris Cameron, winner 2016 Future Agro Challenge Australia.

The competitors were from all over Queensland in the Future Agro Challenge Australia. They took their ideas and put them into action, pitching their innovations to a steady stream of people coming into the Malanda Field Day Pavilion, under extremely hot and humid conditions for Malanda.

The judges and audience were very impressed with the extremely high level and professionalism of competitors for Australia's first Future Agro Challenge. The pitches and topics were extremely diverse which made the judging all the more difficult. Competition finalists had some of the best ideas in food, agtech and agriculture, battling it out for the title and ticket to the Global event in South Africa in 2017.

Unfortunately it was impossible to come to a winning decision upon completion of the pitching segment of the competition. A revisit of all of the written applications and Lean Model Canvasses was needed due to equal criteria scoring in the pitching battle.

"The decision from the judges according to the marking criteria of the Global Future Agro Challenge guide lines and rules resulted in absolute draw after the pitching. The judges had to revisit all the components of the competition. The criteria marking of both pitching and written applications was jointly collated and an Australian Future Agro Challenge winner has now been announced. This close competition is true testament to the high calibre of agro innovators we have amongst us in Australia. The level of competition was simply amazing." Leanne Kruss, Queensland Agricultural Workforce Manager for Far North Queensland and FAC Organiser for Start-up Tablelands. “We welcome you to visit our social media platforms and webpage for Start-up Tablelands for another showcase of the competitors and their performance at the first Australian Future Agro Challenge 2016.”

Official Future Agro Challenge Judge John Williams, Digital Economy Principal Project Officer North Queensland, Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation quoted,

**“Local agricultural issues being solved on a global scale! It’s amazing to see how diverse and insightful the Future Agro Challenge competitors applied their experiences and recognition of a need to develop products and services that could see success in overseas markets. Collaboration, community, business smarts and passion – a great combination meant for success!”**

To add to the occasion, Friday night saw the group of like-minded innovators and small business persons come together with competitors, judges and organizers over a delicious meal at the Malanda Pub. The Collaboration Quickstep was designed to encourage interactive communication and collaboration for everyone, in order to look for persons and solutions to helping business challenges they may be experiencing. It was an extremely fun night and many phone numbers were exchanged.

The weekend and event ended in a lovely cocktail party of fine natural cuisine cooked by Geraldine McGuire at her Rainforest Bounty property. Geraldine sources all her produce locally and is also president of Taste Paradise. It was a lovely evening of conversation and speeches, culminating a very successful first ever Future Agro Challenge Australia.

Future Agro Challenge (FAC) is a worldwide competition recognizing innovative, commercially viable food and agribusiness start-ups that address regional, national and global challenges. The Future Agro Challenge addresses the future of healthy food from the farmer to the consumer, and furthers the agricultural revolution that is underway globally.

FAC supports “agro visionaries, start-ups, farmers, manufacturers and distributors from countries around the world and selects the most promising ideas, and innovations to compete in the Global Championships for the title of the “Most Innovative Agribusiness of the Year.”

“Agriculture is one of our nation’s most technologically advanced sectors, yet many Australian’s are unaware of the revolution that is occurring on our farms.” Leanne states. “Agricultural innovation is one of our greatest contributions to develop solutions to global food security challenges. Australia’s primary industries have a strong tradition of being innovative and adaptive to new challenges.”

“Being the first time this competition has happened for Australia we have a lot to learn and improve as we grow this annual event so that Australia can take its rightful place on the agricultural innovation global stage. I encourage all to follow the pathway to Chris and Catriona representing us in South Africa next March, and for all to contact us and join us to making Future Agro Challenge Australia a well-recognized National event next year and for years to come.”

For further comment on the Future Agro Challenge Australia:

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