



Associate Professor Robert Faggian, of Deakin University's Centre for Regional and Rural Futures, was in Orbost recently to discuss the Agriculture Industry Transformation – Gippsland (AIT-G) Project. S57-40



Robert De Geus, of Genoa, and Lisa McKenna, of Orbost, attended Prof Faggian's AIT-G presentation. S57-41

Climate change good for ag?

The Agriculture Industry Transformation – Gippsland (AIT-G) Project has determined that a changing climate may in fact be cause for optimism for Gippsland.

Associate Professor Robert Faggian, of Deakin University's Centre for Regional and Rural Futures, visited the Far East Gippsland Landcare office in Orbost last week to bring staff up to date on the AIT-G project, established in 2009, which takes a broad look at the opportunities for agricultural development across the Gippsland Region.

In conjunction with Gippsland

farmers, the AIT-G Project developed mathematical models for 20 agricultural and forestry commodities and looked at likely yields under climate change scenarios.

Prof Faggian said results indicated that certain farming systems would face challenges to continue with a 'business as usual approach' in a warmer and drier climate.

However, there were plenty of new commodities that would either be unaffected or would actually perform better in the future, leading to the conclusion that the prospects for agricultural development across

Gippsland are in fact excellent.

Areas around Gippsland have been determined to be well suited to particular commodities with a prediction that high yields could be achieved.

Other areas might be suitable if certain limiting factors are dealt with, like soil pH or drainage, Prof Faggian said.

Apples, for example, are not currently a major crop in Gippsland, but the AIT-G suggests they could be.

The crop models for apple production show that many parts of Gippsland are highly suitable for apple

production, particularly across West Gippsland, assuming some supplemental irrigation water is available.

Under a climate change scenario, there will be some reductions in suitability out to 2050, but at the same time new areas that were previously too cold to support commercial apple production of common varieties will become suitable, around Omeo, for example.

It is predicted that ryegrass, which is an important part of Gippsland's pasture system, may be more challenging for farmers to maintain as the climate becomes warmer and

drier in some parts of Gippsland.

AIT-G suggests that it may therefore be useful for farmers to start experimenting with other pasture systems as a means to adapt to a future with more severe droughts.

Brassicas such as broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage are becoming an increasingly popular agricultural crop in Gippsland, however, as the climate becomes warmer and drier, suitability declines slightly in some areas, for instance in South Gippsland, but overall, the biophysical environment will remain highly suitable for brassicas out to 2050.