

Wising up to warming

FARMERS will have a chance to better understand and adapt to the changing climate during a high-profile forum in the Wimmera later this month.

Speakers at the Farming for the Future forum will include 2007 Australian of the Year Tim Flannery, Western District farmer Mark Wootton and Bureau of Meteorology principal research scientist Scott Power.

There will also be a range of workshops, outlining practical information about surviving and thriving into the future.

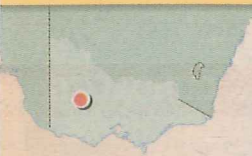
The forum will be held at Longerenong College on October 31.

Mr Wootton, from Jigsaw Farms near Hamilton, said governments, communities and individuals would have to work closely together on climate change.

Being positive and gaining knowledge was also vital, he said.

Mr Wootton said he'd initially been sceptical about the level of human

At a glance



What: climate change forum

Why: farming for the future

Where: Wimmera

Report: SIMONE DALTON

influence on climate change.

"I started reading, finding out as much as I could, and it was obvious climate change was happening and that we as a species were major contributors," he said.

The forum will focus on both opportunities and answers, Mr Wootton said.

"We have an energy, water and land trifecta to consider and getting things working together productively is going to be a challenge.



Working together: forum speaker Mark Wootton and his wife Eve Kantor produce beef, wool, crops and agroforestry near Hamilton.

"But some of the best adaptive people in the world have traditionally

been, and still are, Australian farmers."

Mr Wootton farms with his wife, Eve Kantor. They produce beef, wool, crops and agroforestry, and have planted more than one million trees in the past 12 years.

He is also chairman of the Poola Foundation, which distributes money bequeathed by Ms Kantor's brother, the late Tom Kantor, and supports many projects, including an organisation called Climate Institute.

Dr Power will clarify the science behind global warming at the forum.

"We'll look at how climate has varied over the past century in Australia and the Wimmera-Mallee in particular, and what has caused the changes," he said.

Dr Power, who has a



Scott Power

particular interest in El Nino, global warming and climate prediction, will also look at the latest projections for the future.

He said it was vital to get the facts straight on global warming and climate changes.

"There is strong agreement among scientists on what might happen next, but if you read newspapers

you wouldn't get that impression," he said.

Dr Power leads a new research partnership between the CSIRO and the BOM, called the Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research.

Apart from being a guest speaker, he will lead a workshop called Climate Forecasting and Seasonal Outlooks.

Prof Flannery will discuss climate change's global and regional impacts and look at both lessons from the past and future predictions.

The forum is being organised by Wimmera Landcare, which comprises 56 Landcare groups with about 1600 members.

It will also feature an afternoon of workshops.

Topics include technology for tomorrow, carbon trading, adapting to a drier

climate, livestock management, alternative crops, women and change, government policies, wildlife and risk management.

There will also be the option of visiting a local farm and a research site to look at wheat crop response to climate change.

The forum will be preceded by a breakfast at the Horsham Golf Club, where Prof Flannery will discuss how business and community leadership can influence environmental changes.

There will also be a Sustainable Land and Living Expo at Longerenong the following day, with internationally renowned sustainable living advocate Tanya Ha.

To register for the forum, phone Max Skeen on (03) 5382 1544, or visit www.wcma.vic.gov.au