

2009 FARM STUDY TOURS

Farming in the New World

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SECTION 1
OVERVIEW

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In early July an intrepid group of cotton and grain growers boldly headed east across the Pacific in search of farming in 'The New World'. After surviving the concrete jungle that is Los Angeles, and the bottomless money pit that is very much Las Vegas, we eventually found acre upon acre of magnificent farmlands – usually with some natural wonder or another as a backdrop. We bravely sought out the locals, and instead of bows and arrows and corn-cakes, we found nothing but unwaveringly wonderful hospitality and the best BBQ ribs in the world.

This place was different but at the same time, eerily similar to home. Was it the Grand Canyon that reminded some in our party of the long term consequences of not adopting minimum-till on our shallow soils – or was it the Canadian Rockies, which was mistaken one magnificent morning by a bleary eyed Victorian, as the Grampians.

Maybe it was the Calgary Stampede and the spectacular chuckwagon races reminding the more senior members in our touring party of their mum trying to catch up with the school bus.

Whatever it was, all of these exhilarating sights set the scene for the more serious, but no less enjoyable, side of a memorable farm study tour. We met up with many farmers and researchers along the way and all of them were more than happy to share their knowledge and insights of North American farming.

We learned that just because you happen to farm within the world's largest economy, it was just as hard to make a few dollars from agriculture as it is in Australia. And the general outlook by North American farmers was for even more commodity price volatility and frequent but short-lived opportunities to cash in on the next boom crop. You will

need to be flexible in your enterprise mix and hopefully be quicker than most to identify where that opportunity is.

In coming years, there will also be much tougher access to water – sound familiar?



Yes, they still do grow some cotton in the US.



The famous world championship chuckwagon race in Calgary.



Northern NSW grower David Gleeson inspects a serious erosion problem in Arizona.



Call that a tree?