

Reg Miller Award

Murraylands onion grower Steve Rathjen isn't one to blow his own horn when it comes to farming.

Steve is a fifth generation farmer, whose operation Delta Produce has been producing onions in the Murray Bridge and Bordertown regions of South Australia for many years.

Steve is not only a man on the land though, during the years he has worked tirelessly to ensure his industry has progressed, always with one eye on the future.

During the last two decades he has been involved with a raft of projects and positions, all with the good of the industry in mind.

As part of this, he was a founding member of the Onions Australia Executive and served as the organisation's Vice President from 2004-06, before taking the helm as President from 2006-08.

During his time as President, Steve presided over the Onion Industry Strategic Plan development, something he was very passionate about.

His desire to help guide the onion industry into the future led to him becoming a key participant in the Onion Biosecurity Plan, as well as to him being appointed as an Onions Australia representative to Plant Health Australia and an Onion Industry Advisory Committee member for SA since 2008. He also participated in the 5th International Congress on Edible Alliums, held in the Netherlands in 2007.

Prior to that, Steve was involved in setting up the onion research and development levy from 1999-2002, and remains a participant in the current review process.

He has also been a participant in the Onion Mallee Stunt research and development project, including hosting field trials, which can often involve a lot of work for growers.

In a bid to complement his business, Steve is also a founding member and director



Steve Rathjen - Singapore October 2007.

of Rivapak, a packing and distribution centre based between Murray Bridge and Mannum.

In his younger days, Steve was an enthusiastic speed skier and also a hang glider pilot.

Those who know him well say he was successful at both (because he is still alive!!!) mainly because of his careful planning and attention to detail.

It is those same qualities he has harnessed to become a successful onion grower and family business leader.

Steve has successfully introduced and involved his two sons Darren and Brendan (the sixth generation) into the business, and now finds himself the proud grandfather of another generation for which the foundations are being laid to allow them to continue the tradition.

This family business structure has allowed the Rathjen family to diversify their onion production in order to satisfy market



commitments in the face of the recent drought.

So with all of this in mind it is hard to dismiss that Steve Rathjen makes an extremely deserved recipient of the prestigious Reg Miller Award.