

Graduate totals must rise

POTATOES SA

BY ROBBIE DAVIS, CEO

THERE appeared to be renewed confidence in the air when I attended the Agribusiness Outlook Australia 2016 and the Ag Institute innovation and agriculture conferences recently.

Also, the focus was on careers in agriculture, not jobs.

It was reported that school leavers were more interested in careers in agriculture than has been the case for quite a few years, with the number of students entering university agricultural courses rising from slightly more than 900 in 2012 to more than 1500 enrolments in 2016.

In 2008 it was estimated that of 624,000 people employed in the agricultural sector, about 320,000 were on-farm.

ABS statistics indicated that about 12 per cent had higher education qualifications.

If the average working life in agriculture is 30 years, then the graduate requirement for maintenance would be about 2500 annually.

In 2012 the Australian



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Potatoes SA is the voice for seed producers, growers, fresh market, packers, processors, marketers, exporters, wholesalers and retailers.

Farm Institute published an occasional paper entitled *Professional agriculture - a case of supply and demand*.

The paper outlined the decline in the numbers of agricultural graduates each year and the mismatch between those numbers and the buoyant demand for agricultural graduates.

It was a depressing picture overall.

While actual graduate numbers have continued to fall, new enrolments are up considerably and the agricultural job market remains very positive.

The key focus for industry has been the supply of grad-

concerning the image of the sector and a clear message about employment opportunities and career paths.

If we want young people to make a career in agribusiness, it is up to all of us to make it more attractive. We don't have a problem getting people to choose medicine, dentistry or law because we all know what doctors, dentists and lawyers do.

This remains the case even though there is consistent indication that agricultural science graduates are in high demand and seemingly with better prospects of employment than these career pursuits, particularly law.

At the Ag Institute conference at the Waite campus last month, federal Member for Grey Rowan Ramsey mentioned that primary production provided the best toolbox in the world and had the best gadgets and most sophisticated technology.

What more could you want in preparation for the imminent global agricultural dining boom?

And then the rain came! ■ Need to know more? potatoesa.com.au



Agriculture offers exciting career prospects, with strong demand for university graduates and an increased focus on modern technology.