

Rachael Halder [00:00:04]:

Catchment Convos with Thriving Southland, your link to Southland Catchment Groups and their impactful projects. Each episode, we'll dive into grassroot effort by local farmers and communities that are driving change and sustainability in our regions. Listen in for inspiring stories and insight. Real people, real change, the Southland way.

Rachael Halder [00:00:26]:

Welcome back to Catchment Convos. I'm your host, Rachael Halder. And today we're diving into all things Agritech. We're fresh off the heels of the first Southern Agritech and Innovation Day and what an absolute game changer of a day it was. In this episode, we're gonna unpack everything that went down at the event from the innovative tech we saw to the inspiring keynotes and the hands on workshops that had everyone buzzing. If you missed it, don't worry. We've got you covered with all the highlights and a little follow-up information, but we're not gonna stop there. We're going to chat about what's next. The wheels are already turning for the next Southern Agri Tech and Innovation Day. And we're keen to give you guys a little bit of a sneak peek for what's in the works for the 2025 version. Joining me today is my colleague and the mastermind behind all things Agritech, Tania Clarke.

Rachael Halder [00:01:15]:

Together, we'll reflect on the success of the year's event and share our thoughts on how we're planning to make next year's event even better if that's possible. So grab a cuppa, fiddling and, let's get into the future of farming together. So Tania, welcome to the show. You nervous for your first podcast debut?

Tania Clarke [00:01:36]:

Hi, Rachael. I am nervous. I am. This is very new to me, but that's okay. What could go wrong?

Rachael Halder [00:01:42]:

What could go wrong? Exactly. As catchment coordinators, we love a yarn. So, this is just talking and recording it. Right? Yes. So, Tania, curious, you were the mastermind behind this awesome Agritech. For those people who maybe missed it or thinking back, can you just place us where where was Agritech? When was it?

Tania Clarke [00:02:01]:

So, firstly, I wouldn't say I was the only master We did I did have a lot of help, and we worked very closely with Waimumu Catchment Group. The event was in May, May this year, at the Waimumu Field Day site. Fabulous location. Excellent facilities. You couldn't ask for more. So, really great really great site.

Rachael Halder [00:02:22]:

Yeah. So I'm thinking, like, go away from the field days. Like, that's a massive site. So, you know, did you guys use all that space? What like, really, why such a big site?

Tania Clarke [00:02:31]:

Well, no. We didn't use it all this year, but next year, we might. We did. We actually put a a large curtain up about 3 quarters of the way down the large sheet and used that space just to just to make it a little bit realier, a little bit smaller. But we did use it. It was we had our 300 odd people come along to see that to the day, and it was, it was chokka. It was great.

Rachael Halder [00:02:53]:

Cool. And so 300 odd people, like, what was it? 30 plus exhibitors and, like, a range of workshops and speakers. How did this idea even come about?

Tania Clarke [00:03:05]:

All good ideas start with just a a conversation around a cup of tea or a beer. And this had been happening around south, and I I know I've had catchment groups where the discussion had led to innovation and technology on farm and and what people were doing and people were keen to hear about. And and this has been happening with other groups as well. And, I had a couple of conversations with the farmer with farmers and thought, you know what? I'm gonna give this give this a nudge. And so I thought, perfect. Gore/Waimumu Catchment Group are really keen to get amongst it.

They were great partners in this in the designing of this. They helped guide the decisions around what it is they wanted to see, who they wanted to hear from, exhibitors they were keen to hear from and see.

Tania Clarke [00:03:48]:

So it was a real it was a group effort.

Rachael Halder [00:03:51]:

And so in those early early conversations and ideas, did you envision you were gonna have it at this sort of scale with this many things and moving parts?

Tania Clarke [00:04:00]:

With a lot of things we do, Rachael, they grow. So it did it did grow. And as more people were keen to get involved and I I'm pretty sure that our colleague, Claire, was eating away interest the week leading up to it. And I even think the day before. So there was a lot of interest in the event when when it finally gained some traction through through the socials. It takes a wee while for those to get get a wee bit of traction through there, but it was fabulous in the end. We did have a lot of interest.

Rachael Halder [00:04:30]:

Yeah. And it was really cool to see that. And I guess if we're talking technology, talking innovation, it's, you know, it is a sign of the times. Right? And it's kind of everything is encompassed in it, and there's so much. So what were those next steps, and how how did you guys how did the team go about finding speakers or exhibitors?

Tania Clarke [00:04:53]:

So the group, the Gore group did actually give, they were quite they were brilliant at being ruthless and striking off things that they they didn't think were of interest or adding things that they really decided they wanted to hear about. And so I went away and and spent a lot of little hours doing a wee bit of research on who we might be able to approach to come and speak, come and exhibit, come and run workshops. And, and then the the real donkey work did start. And it was just a matter of letting these speakers know what it was we were hoping to achieve, what it was farmers were keen to hear about. And they all jumped on board. Everyone we asked said yes.

Rachael Halder [00:05:30]:

You said, you know, what were we hoping to achieve? What was that? What were we trying to achieve with Agritech?

Tania Clarke [00:05:36]:

Well, that that's a great point. So it was really a matter of focusing on grassroots technology and innovation. It was it was the technology and innovation that's accessible and achievable to southern farmers. So, you know, myself, you, everybody who who has, you know, a family farm, a corporate farm down here that, that they can they can really invest in this technology. It's not out of reach. So that's that's what we were hoping to really showcase, and it went down well. It was brilliant.

Rachael Halder [00:06:05]:

And so when you say not out of reach, you're talking about stuff that's not necessarily here right now, but stuff that's on the horizon. Right? Like that technology that's coming and is going to help and improve what we're sort of up to down here in the southern regions.

Tania Clarke [00:06:21]:

Yes. New and emerging. New and emerging technology was that was what we were wanting to showcase, and that's what we hopefully achieved. The feedback we received was brilliant. But, yeah, we can always look to new next next year. It's always next year. So, yeah. But, no, it was very much around what is what is this accessible to Southern Farmers just emerging and then into the future.

Tania Clarke [00:06:45]:

So there was a lot of discussion around that.

Rachael Halder [00:06:47]:

And, yeah, as Tania said, we've you know, we were really grateful and lucky that we had loads of businesses come on board. So the event was free for everyone that attended, and it was broken up into key speakers, into workshops, into exhibitors. And so, Tania, can you sort of maybe just give us a quick name drop some of our fabulous key speakers that we had throughout the day?

Tania Clarke [00:07:10]:

I know. We're really lucky. I still had to pinch myself. We did have some real high level keynote speakers and panels and workshops, but we started the day with Brendan O'Connell. He, he's from Agritech and Baird, and he really gave us an overview of where things were at in Agritech around the world. And we also had a fabulous GM panel with Dr William Rolston, Dr Tony Connor, and, and Dr Caroline Saunders.

Rachael Halder [00:07:36]:

And so GM, you're talking genetically modified?

Tania Clarke [00:07:40]:

I am. Yes.

Rachael Halder [00:07:41]:

Cool.

Tania Clarke [00:07:41]:

So it was such a great panel to have a different discussion, actually. And that was, like, an almost opening of the door of a topic that possibly hadn't been broached terribly much down here. So that was that was brilliant. Great to have those speakers on there. They know this stuff. They really do. We also had a lovely shared perspective panel with around trade and technology with Ruth Leary and Hamish Maher, and that was that was wonderful. That was really their vision around technology and how it and how it enables trade and and puts us in a better position going forward.

Tania Clarke [00:08:16]:

So that was also great. And so Ira from ICA, she had a a very high level discussion on the main stage around energy on farm and where farmers could really leverage, and that was great. She also ran a workshop along with loads of other fabulous attendees. They ran some workshops from energy to a great one on robotics, another fabulous one on landscape, doctor Clint Lisman, landscape science, and also a drones workshop, drones on farm, which was very well received. So, oh, there's there's actually there's so many. I actually struggle to put them all in into a single sentence, but it was a great day. Really good.

Rachael Halder [00:08:55]:

It was cool, and it was awesome to see so many questions come through. I know that our speakers have been fielding questions, you know, ever since that day, and it's awesome to see Southland connected with some of these people who are out there in the world and out there in New Zealand, you know, asking questions and looking at to looking into solutions and options that are going to help us directly on farm. So after the event, we got some good feedback, and we've kind of started looking into next next AgriTek. Have we, have we not there, Tania?

Tania Clarke [00:09:28]:

We have. We're we're just about to start. We the discussions have started. We'll we'll put it there. One of the the only feedback we received that possibly may have gone into the negative was around the temperature. And, unfortunately, we can't fix that. But it was a lovely day the day before, and it was a lovely day the day after when we were packing up. So hopefully, this coming year, this coming May, it will be a lovely day on the day.

Tania Clarke [00:09:52]:

So yes. So that's as far as we've got. We're now pushing through feedback for other ideas that people have put forward for for future speakers and workshops. So the work has

Rachael Halder [00:10:02]:

begun. Work has indeed begun, and we endeavor to make Agritech 2025 as good, if not better, than our first edition. And so what do you think some of the sort of key components we're gonna take forward or take through to 2020 5 will be, Tania?

Tania Clarke [00:10:18]:

Ah, 2025. I know it seems like such a long long way away, but it's not. Not when you're planning such a big event. Obviously, more topical panels. The format that we had was really well received. The food was brilliant. The exhibitors, we we know we've already had people lining up to to be on next year's exhibitors list. So just more.

Tania Clarke [00:10:38]:

More and more topical subjects. So it'll be great. It'll be really good.

Rachael Halder [00:10:42]:

Would you suppose with trade and tech and innovation, it's hard to almost book a lot of stuff in right now when, you know, we're still a little bit in the future. So we don't want to miss the mark on some sort of up and coming stuff that might come out of the pipeline in the new year. But as you said, exhibitors, it was so cool to see so many Southland businesses highlighted at an event like that. And I think some of the ones you've already mentioned, Southland is doing some awesome stuff at putting its best foot forward and actually problem solving a lot of things that they've got down here that are perceived as opportunities for improvement. And I guess that's what Agri Tech's trying to do. Isn't it Tania is connect people, create opportunities for learning and education, but also making it farmer to farmer learning. Any, any comments on that?

Tania Clarke [00:11:32]:

Well, I'm just gonna say you're right. You're so right, Rachael. It is a moving beast. It's so quick. The technology and innovation, when I was setting up the speakers and then and having conversation many conversations with speakers leading into into this year's event, one thing that was really came across really strongly was, oh, it's always moving. You know, what we're discussing now is old news in a couple of months. And so that is really hard to pinpoint, you know, to really lock things in for next year because who who knows what's gonna be on the horizon. So it's exciting.

Tania Clarke [00:12:03]:

It's so exciting. The conversations that it was so loud in there in that shed. It was. The conversations that were happening around between farmers, between growers, between some of the speakers. It was just fabulous. It was so good to see that connection. And we're so lucky down here to have such strong connections in our in our rural communities.

Rachael Halder [00:12:24]:

Yeah. And that was really evident on the day, wasn't it? That, you know, we saw old friends catching up. We saw new people making connections. And so just sort of parting words, Tania, anything you want to to tell our listeners? Anything any call outs you wanna sort of make for this next event in 2025?

Tania Clarke [00:12:40]:

Get in touch. I am all ears. I would love to hear some of your ideas for how you would like it to how you'd like to run, who you'd like to hear from, what you'd like to see. If you know of a small business or a or a speaker that you think would be a fabulous fit, let me know. I am here. So, that's something I would say. We are going to start looking at, lining up dates, so keep an ear out for that, and have a look at at this year's event. It's all loaded on the Thriving Southland website, and all the videos are on there from the panels and and keynote speakers from the main stage and all the details from the workshop.

Tania Clarke [00:13:19]:

So jump on there and have a look.

Rachael Halder [00:13:21]:

Yeah. Cool. And as Tania said, there is videos, there's presentations, and so if you missed it or if you wanna recap, go for it. But I guess this is a really cool opportunity as well for us to extend our gratitude to all those that made the event

possible in the first place. It was a little bit of a big ambitious goal that the Gore catchment group and thriving set out to achieve. And special thanks to the speakers and the organizations for coming down south and sharing with us all your expertise, ideas, and knowledge. You've sparked really engaging discussions and conversations, and you did indeed leave farmers wanting more. So note discussion for 2025.

Rachael Halder [00:14:02]:

And a huge thanks to all the sponsors for their support in delivering the day. We're lucky to have such a fantastic local support network down here for the catchment groups and thriving. So thank you. And of course, all the exhibitors, for setting up and engaging with all of the participants and the farmers that came along for the day. It was invaluable for everyone to be able to join the dots and get those next steps in place. So giving people that connection to turn those ideas and those little sparks of inspiration into action. And all of those who gave us some feedback, we are reading through it. We're taking it into account and building this next event for 2025 that we're super excited about.

Rachael Halder [00:14:43]:

So thank you, Tania, for for jumping on, telling to me about it. It's an incredibly hard event to to wrap up and, you know, we, we conversation or we sentence, but Hey, has she said, check out the website for all information. And of course, we'd love you to listen to our other podcast episodes. So like, and subscribe and, we'll catch you next episode. Thanks again to the Gore Group and thanks Tania. Catch you later.

Tania Clarke [00:15:08]:

Thanks, Rach.

Rachael Halder [00:15:09]:

Bye.

Tania Clarke [00:15:09]:

Bye.