



# Pejo Enterprises Barramundi Farm - Martyville via Innisfail

**1. Name:** Marty Phillips DOB: 3/6/1971

## Who is in your farming family?

My farming family consists of myself, my wife, my son and my daughter. We have a dog, Sasha, a cat, Macka and a few hundred thousand fish.

## Where is your farm and what do you farm?

Our farm is located at Martyville, just south of Mourilyan, near Innisfail. We grow barramundi. We produce about 400 tonnes of fish per year. We just bought a second farm with a few ponds on it where we hope to expand the aquaculture, but I'll also grow some sugar cane on it.

## What is your farming background?

I grew up on a cane farm, where I helped on week-ends and after school. When I went off to boarding school I could only help on holidays. Then I went off to Ag college at University of Queensland — Gatton to get an Associate Diploma of Agriculture and Plant Protection. I worked for the BSES as a research assistant and farm manager. Next, I studied externally and got my Bachelor of Applied Science. I left the BSES and returned to the family farm growing sugar cane, bananas and paw paws. After a number of cyclones I wanted to diversify into something that doesn't get blown over in a cyclone. So I ended up growing fish. I started in about the year 2000.

In 2010 I was awarded a scholarship — I had 16 weeks overseas and went around the world twice. I was the first fish farmer to ever get the scholarship. It was interesting and exciting and a huge learning experience. I'm president of the Australian Barramundi Growers Assoc. and very active on all those sorts of fronts.

## 2. Farming Memories - What has been so special for you living on a family farm?

When I was younger, we were always busy on the farm, but when you got some time off it was a real treat. We used to go fishing out to the reef. I remember working hard in the lead up to it, but fishing trips were always happy times, family times. You'd come home with a feed of coral trout and if you were lucky you might have found a crayfish to spear.



When I became farm manager with the BSES, I was given a lot more responsibility and I found it very empowering. It was a very good learning experience.

For scary experiences, well there's cyclones of course and we've had some thumpers! I wasn't scared for me, we have a solid building that we stayed in, but you don't know what's going to be there when you come out — your business, your livelihood.....all the fish could be dead. Especially for Cyclone Larry, no one had ever seen anything like it — I was quite nervous, in that one. In the end it wasn't too bad. But there's lots of lessons you learn.

We were reasonably well prepared. But there is more you can always do, we were quite well prepared when Cyclone Yasi came. I like to think that going forward I'd be pretty ready for another one of those things.

**3. Farming Life Experiences - Family farming presents many challenges which often involve considerable effort to resolve. What experiences can you recall which presented you and your family with a significant problem?**

Being prepared for cyclones – the boy scout motto ‘be prepared’ cannot be underestimated.

We are very reliant on electricity because aerators need to be kept going to give the fish enough oxygen. Without electricity over half of my fish stock would not make it overnight in summertime. We have back-up generators everywhere but they need fuel. Keeping the fuel up to them and keeping the generators going after the cyclone was a challenge.

By the morning after Cyclone Larry we had generators going and some aerators going in all the ponds. The other thing you *don't* do is feed the fish, this helps to reduce their oxygen demand. Luckily we managed to nurse the fish through that stress.

We had thought about what to do in a cyclone but we had not needed to implement these things before Larry.

**4. Looking Back - What lessons were learnt? What has your farming life taught you?**

You never stop learning, you always have to be striving to keep learning. There is so much out there to see and do. The day you think you know it all, you should give it all away because you'll only just be going backwards then.

Work hard. You have to apply yourself and do the hard yards. Farming isn't easy, you just have to keep going.

The rewards....when I stand back and see the product going to market, going to feed somebody, I get a lot of satisfaction out of that. It's great to see it all coming to fruition and the product going to be consumed. It is also a business, so it has to make money to pay the bills and raise a family.

Christmas when you've got a big ice machine

