

Funding projects is Pozible Jamie First

Farmers have jumped on board the latest trend, online crowdfunding, to help pay for things they couldn't otherwise afford.

Thanks to sites like Indiegogo, Pozible, and iPledg, people have been receiving thousands of dollars in donations without setting foot outside their homes.

In return for pledges, supporters receive a series of "rewards", depending on how much they give.

Head of international at Indiegogo – the world's first crowdfunding website – Liz Wald said the concept was born out of frustration at how difficult, inefficient and unfair the traditional fundraising process was.

"The team set out to create an open platform that would empower passionate people everywhere to get their ideas off the ground without anything or anyone standing in the way," she said.

Nineteen-year-old Madelaine Scott used Australian-owned Pozible to collect money for an egg cleaning and grading machine to reduce the time she spent packing at her 178ha farm at Clarkefield.

With five days to go, more than 400 people have donated to her campaign, which began on March 26, and she has almost reached her \$60,000 target.

"It's been an extremely positive experience," she said.

"People are very generous. It's just great to see people helping those who need to be helped."

Offering rewards such as produce, chicken butchering workshops and tours, Madelaine said Pozible provided her with more opportunities.

"It has spread my network. If I didn't have this extra leverage, I may not have made it this far."

Pozible's co-founder Rick Chen said since creating the site four years ago it has generated \$22 million and hosted 6000 projects.

"It has grown really, really rapidly," he said.

"The social media boom has allowed online technology like this to turn viral and be easily accessible."

Originally popular with mums and startup food and beverage companies to help with design and packaging, Rick said it's been fantastic to also get the rural community involved.

“It’s very unexpected, but lovely to see the sharp curve in farming projects.

“In the current economy, I know it’s harder and harder for farmers to get funds, so this is a creative way to directly pitch products or services to the general public and have a big impact.

“It allows people to learn about what you do, get involved, engage you personally and support you if they want to.”

Tammi and Stuart Jonas were the first Australians to use Pozible to raise money for their farm.

With nearly 170 pledges, the central Victorian couple pocketed \$27,570 for a boning room on their 30ha property in Eganstown, smashing their goal of \$21,450.

“It was an amazing, overwhelming exercise, connecting us to the community and reaching out and raising awareness to even more people,” Tammi said.

The mother-of-three said since the campaign, Jonai Farms has changed drastically.

“We’re profitable now. We went from a small farm having debt and paying off a lot of costs, to having money in the bank and being able to build and expand our facility.”

Due to the success of the first project, the family is in the process of creating another, aiming to raise \$30,000 for a curing room and commercial kitchen.

“For those worried about crowdfunding fatigue, where you think it’s just another thing to donate to, you shouldn’t.

“Instead of worrying about it as a trend, you should think about it as a way of investing in each other and a fabulous way of supporting something you believe in.”

Madelaine's campaign runs until May 26. To help, visit pozi.be/madelainesorganiceggs.