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MEDIA RELEASE

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A FORUM in Melbourne next month will lead the way in defining ways in which private sector engagement in extension can be further supported.

The forum, to be held on May 17, is part of the Federally-funded *Stimulating private sector extension in Australian agriculture to increase returns from R&D* project.

Project Manager Ian Linley said the aim of all activities associated with the project were to jointly examine, develop and tests models to support the capacity of the private and commercial sector in delivering R&D extension services to Australian farmers.

"This forum recognises that Australian agricultural extension system is adapting to many rapidly evolving challenges and changes," Mr Linley said.

"The private sector extension role in addressing these challenges is critical to the fabric, and the ultimate success, of our national agriculture extension response.

"We are inviting private agricultural advisers, agribusiness, farmers, R&D and government personnel to participate in the forum, which will provide a unique opportunity for cross-sectoral discussion and information-sharing about agricultural extension and private sector engagement."

Forum focus and discussion will include:

- The role of extension in the Australian agriculture R&D system and private sector involvement;
- Perspectives on extension from the agriculture private advisory, agribusiness, industry, research and government sectors;
- European and New Zealand trends in agricultural extension, and;
- Current practices addressing agricultural extension challenges – understanding the issue, the approaches, progress/early findings, implications and challenges.

To register for the forum, go to <http://ag-extension.eventbrite.com.au>

The project is supported by six rural RDCs, the Australian, Victorian and NSW governments, and the University of Melbourne, which is also heading the research component.

Detailed *Stimulating private sector extension in Australian agriculture to increase returns from R&D* project progress and information can be found on the project website at <http://rirg.fvas.unimelb.edu.au/ag-extension>

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