



Stimulating private sector extension in Australian agriculture to increase returns from R&D



This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of its Rural R&D for Profit programme.

Why is this project being undertaken?

The Australian Government's *Rural Research and Development (R&D) for Profit* programme is a \$200 million competitive grants programme with funding available over eight financial years (2014/2015 to 2021/2022).

The programme aims to improve farm-gate productivity and profitability and deliver real outcomes for Australian farmers through:

- Generating knowledge, technologies, products or processes that benefit primary producers;
- Strengthening pathways to extend the results of rural R&D, including understanding the barriers to adoption; and,
- Establishing and fostering industry and research collaborations that form the basis for ongoing innovation and growth of Australian agriculture.

The project *Stimulating private sector extension in Australian agriculture to increase returns from R&D* was funded in the first round of funding approved by the Minister for Agriculture, The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP.

Who are the main partners?

Led by Dairy Australia, the project is a collaboration involving nine partner organisations – six RDCs (Dairy Australia, Meat & Livestock Australia, Cotton Research & Development Corporation, Sugar Research Australia, Australian Pork Limited, Horticulture Innovation Australia), the Victorian and NSW governments, and the University of Melbourne.

What will the project achieve?

The project will deliver the following key outcomes:

- Improve profit on-farm through a private sector that is more engaged in driving innovation based on the latest research and industry best practice;
- Make research more accessible to farmers through a more integrated and co-operative extension system;
- Identify barriers to private sector involvement in delivering R&D to farmers;

- Stimulate further growth of a capable private sector, through the training and retention of professionals to ensure they have the extension skills and capability to meet industry needs; and,
- Build a stronger connection between end users and researchers by trialling different approaches to increase engagement.

The University of Melbourne is the principal research agency. Its role includes conducting research and identifying collaborative research partners, both within Australia and internationally. Associate Professor Ruth Nettle will be the Principal Investigator. The project methodology can best be described as "Action Research". It will develop an understanding of the private extension sector and how it engages with farmers and R&D, apply practical trials in real situations and analyse the outcomes to better define the underlying issues and the way they are best addressed.

How is the research being done?

Key elements of the methodology are to:

- Review models of private sector engagement in priority setting and in delivery;
- Determine drivers of demand for private extension services (farmers/advisers/processors);
- Develop a base-line understanding of private provider networks and market failure (private capability and capacity issues); and,
- Establish four trials to stimulate the private sector and identify models to further deliver benefits to the private sector and farmers.

The project is managed through Dairy Australia as the lead RDC. A Project Steering Committee comprising representatives from all partners oversees the project, while a smaller Project Management Committee is responsible for the proper conduct of the project. Project forums and consultations provide opportunities for advisers and producers to contribute to the planning and implementation of the project.

To sign up for the newsletter, go to: rirg.fvas.unimelb.edu.au/ag-extension

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