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



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture  
and Water Resources

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**Stimulating private sector extension in Australian agriculture to increase returns from R&D** (Enhancing Private Sector Roles in Ag Extension) is a three-year project to develop and test models to build the capacity of the commercial and private sector in delivering extension services to Australian farmers.

### Trial Symposium a success

A symposium focusing on the trials which are being conducted as part of the Stimulating private sector extension in Australian agriculture project was held in Sydney on 21 March at the iconic Luna Park conference venue.

This was followed by a strategic planning day on 22 March at the Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) offices.

The project team invited trial participants, public and private sector RD&E providers and users (including producers), alongside representatives of the project partners, investors and other stakeholders, to share experiences and lessons learned from the trials.

During the first half of the day, the trial teams presented their trial activities, key research findings and recommendations for action.

They also reflected on the collaborative approach taken in the trials and there was general agreement that the trial collaborations, while not without challenges, had been a positive and productive experience.

Small group discussions facilitated by Cath Botta offered the opportunity to identify cross-trial benefits and potential impacts of the findings for the overall RD&E system.

After lunch, the delegates came together again to

identify potential next steps and actions arising from cross-trial findings.

They further evaluated 'Eight options for action' that had emerged from a comparative review of international private sector extension practice, in order to ascertain what is needed to maintain the momentum for change in the RD&E system generated by the trials and the overall project.

The project team strategic planning session on 22 March at MLA further considered the Trial Symposium outcomes, and focused on key research, drivers and motivators of private sector engagement in RD&E for benefit of producers.







## About the Processor Trial

*In each newsletter, we have been highlighting once of the trials which form part of the Stimulating Private Sector Extension project.*

*Here, Nicole Reichelt, from the University of Melbourne, focuses on the Processor Trial, known as Trial 1.*

The purpose of Trial 1 (Processor Trial) is to create greater connections between RDCs, farm advisers, producers and the processing sector as a supply chain response to RD&E. Dairy Australia (DA) is the RDC lead in collaboration with MLA and Australian Pork Limited (APL) as participating agricultural industries.

Trial 1 is running as two sub-trials as we engaged with both a dairy processor and a red meat processor.

The dairy sub-trial involves working with Warrnambool Cheese and Butter (part of the Dairy Division of Saputo Inc.) and the meat sub-trial involves working with JBS Australia Pty Ltd.

A strength of our engagement approach is that we took the time at the start of the trial to understand the needs and interests of each processor in the RD&E space, acknowledging that they are operating in their own commercial environment within specific quality assurance systems to supply product markets.

Project officer Jacqui Knee (RMCG) led the engagement process for the dairy sub-trial and Bruce Hancock (PIRSA) led the process for the meat sub-trial.

Both sub-trials underwent a similar process to establish a collaborative working partnership with each processor:

- Participating in a series of meetings with management in an open discussion forum to establish a shared interest in RD&E;
- Undertaking a current situation analysis looking at the professional development and training needs of each front-line team using surveys, interviews and workshops;
- Reporting our key findings from our situation analysis to each processor;
- Co-developing an 'activities plan' to improve the current situation for each processor; and
- Supporting the delivery of key activities.

Management from both processors expressed that they aspire to improve their supply chain performance by supporting milk and meat producers through the trusted services and relationships developed by their front-line staff (dairy field officers – WCB; meat livestock buyers – JBS) in their daily interactions with their supplier base.

*What we're trying to put together is a team and a service that helps us build relationships and, at the end of the day, helps our farmers become more sustainable and more profitable [to] run better businesses.*

*(Management Interview, Warrnambool Cheese and Butter, 2017)*

*We are looking at trying to improve the results of our suppliers, around compliance - if they get a better result, they get more money in their pocket and so do we, so it's a win/win situation.*

*(Management Interview, JBS Australia, 2017)*

Considering our engagement discussions with each processor and the key findings from our situation analyses Trial 1 is focusing on building the capability of WCB and JBS front-line staff in service delivery to their supplier base, understanding processor access to industry R&D and supporting each processor in enhancing their communication and information flows.

Figure [1] provides a snapshot of the target areas for professional development, training and improvements in communications for each processor situation. Figure [1] also highlights that the field officers and livestock buyers consider that an important part of their role is acting as an extension officer or intermediary.

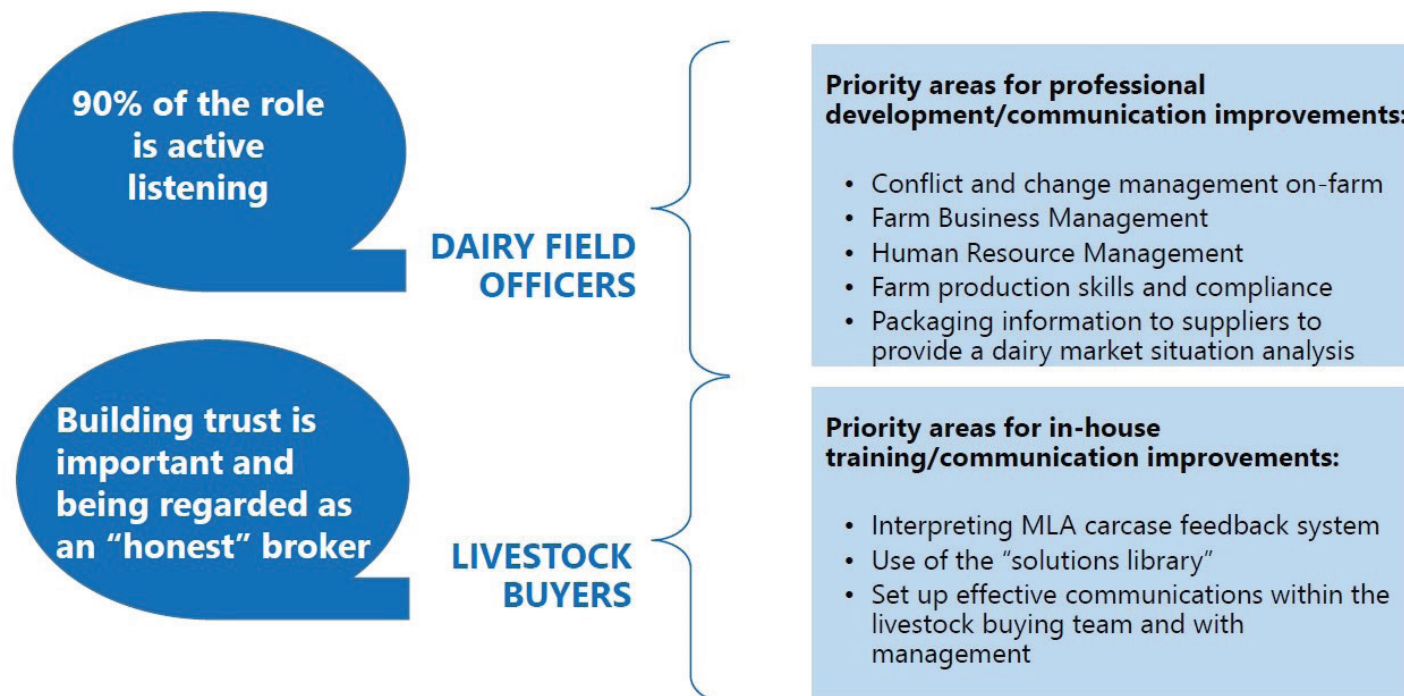


Figure [1] Priority areas for professional development and training of processor front-line teams

Currently the dairy sub-trial is focusing on understanding the professional networks of the dairy field officers through a Social Network Analysis activity, which is designed to identify any network gaps and opportunities to expand access to expert knowledge. The aim is to enhance their referral service offered to their milk suppliers, which links suppliers to expert advice and information. Some dairy field officers have recently undergone training in identified priority areas of conflict management and nutrition management. The meat sub-trial is focusing on delivering a unit of training with the livestock buyers in translating the results from MLA's Livestock Data Link application. This activity is designed to assist their suppliers in carcass compliance. Trial 1 has been set up so that some activities can be continued by the processors once the project ends in June 2018. We would like to thank everyone involved in Trial 1 for a productive experience!

**For further information, contact:**

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