

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

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Keeping Australian farmers
at the cutting edge



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.

Key activities to date:

As the principal research agency, the University of Melbourne and the project partners have hosted three project forums with invited primary producers and private sector advisers.

The first forum was held in Adelaide in South Australia in March, the second in Traralgon, Victoria, in April, the third in May in Toowoomba, Queensland and the last in the series in Wagga Wagga, in NSW. More than 150 people participated overall in the events.

The forums were facilitated by the University of Melbourne's Associate Professor Ruth Nettle, with a focus on receiving input from both producers and advisers about how the project can meet their needs and how they can provide input into the research being conducted.

The forums provided the opportunity for attendees to:

- Contribute their input on regional interests, challenges and opportunities, and other key issues or gaps they experience related to 'extension';
- Provide views and suggestions for improvements and planned on-ground-action;
- Make suggestions on how the private sector can be engaged into the future to maximize returns for RD&E investment and productivity in Australian agriculture; and
- Make comment on a draft concept for four trials designed to take practical action on agricultural extension priorities involving the private sector and that will be run as part of the project.

The feedback included the need for advisers to remain connected to research findings and the importance of the role the Research Development Corporations play in ensuring information is distributed in a way that is convenient and affordable for producers and advisers to access and use.

Gaps were observed in research translation and application in practice across the different industries, with some being viewed as more progressive than others in this area.



Advisory sector succession planning and the availability of a key portal for research and industry development information emerged among other key issues for both producers and advisers.

After each forum, a full summary of the feedback has been provided to participants.



It was explained that surveys and trials will be an important component of the project. The surveys are aimed at providing useful data about the issues faced by producers and advisers and how they can be addressed. The trials are practical action research collaborations involving participants from RDCs and the value chain, advisers and primary producers.



They are aimed at increasing understanding of issues in practice, improving engagement between all participants and contributing to action for change as part of this research step.

The project was also discussed at a national extension and adoption workshop in Wagga in April, hosted by Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Dairy Australia and the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services with Associate Professor Nettle being a speaker at that event.



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