



# 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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Department of Industry



Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources



## Trial Team

**Industry lead:** Agriculture Victoria – Carole Hollier

**Industry partners:** NSW DPI – Joe Sullivan;  
Sugar Research Australia – Andrea Evers;  
Horticulture Innovation Australia – Bianca Cairns

**Project Officer:** Jim Shovelton (Meridian Agriculture)

**Research lead:** Dr Jana-Axinja Paschen (The University of Melbourne)



## Trial Objectives

- Reach a broad representation of producers and users of current research
- Understand the current knowledge system from different perspectives
- Find a shared 'vision' of opportunities for change
- Improve engagement between those involved in the system by building, improving and maintaining knowledge / innovation networks
- Improve knowledge flow (generating, sharing and accessing knowledge, practice relevance)
- Identify actions needed for change as the basis of a model for engagement whose legacy can be maintained beyond the trial



## Trial Participants

### Bestwool/Bestlamb Facilitators

- Bestwool/Bestlamb is a network of approx. 60 farmer groups in Victoria.
- Began in mid 1990s.
- Agriculture Victoria initiative with funding from AWI and funding for specific events from MLA.
- Groups facilitated mainly by private providers.

Chosen because it is an established network which is actively engaged in knowledge transfer.



## Trial Participants

### Project Catalyst

- Partnership between 70+ innovative Qld cane growers, private consultants, NRM groups, environmental organisations and corporate sponsors.
- Key focus is the improvement of water quality from agricultural catchments that flow into the Great Barrier Reef
- Supports a network of farmers using cutting-edge management practices for a more sustainable and productive farming future.
- Chosen because identified isolation and lack of information flow in the industry.



## First Meeting

1. What is the current situation in the RD&E system?
2. What are the issues and opportunities arising from this situation?
3. Identify shared interests – recognise conflicting interests
4. Describe visions for the future – objectives this trial can achieve
5. What are the benefits, opportunities and potential risks for consultants to invest in collaboratively addressing these issues and opportunities?
6. What objectives and indicators of success can we derive from this.
7. What are the actions needed to be taken towards these goals?



# Outcomes

## Bestwool/Bestlamb

- Issues Raised
  - Extension Methods
    - How to deliver on-ground results
  - Informing Research Priorities
    - Disconnect with R&D process
  - Knowledge Acquisition and Assessment
    - The need to access reputable, relevant information



## Outcomes

### Project Catalyst

- Issues Raised
  - Silos of information and influence
  - Non-permanence of industry knowledge – lack of continuity of operatives
  - Industry IP issues – Loss of competitive advantage
  - Disconnect between players in the industry.
    - Lack of recognition farmer skill set
    - Research detached from reality
    - Poor translation of research on farm





## Next Steps

- Identification of actions that will be undertaken to address identified issues.
  - Individual actions
  - Organisational actions
- Negotiation with participants to address barriers identified at initial meeting.
- Follow up to assess success of interactions
- Second meeting to review impact and identify learnings