



Australian Government



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Climate Change, Evaluation top the agenda

Communiqué from Rural Research and Development Corporation Chairs Meeting, Canberra, September 4



RDCs to support major climate change strategy

Climate change has been confirmed as a major priority for Australia's fifteen Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs).

At their bi-annual meeting in Canberra this week, the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporation Chairs (CRRDCC) committed to support the development of a national climate change research strategy for primary industries.

The original proposal for the national research strategy was raised at a Research and Development sub-committee meeting of the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) in June, which was attended by state and federal governments and rural R&D agencies.

Incoming Chair of the CRRDCC, Enzo Allara, described it as a critical and challenging project that will seek to link research efforts on issues that apply across industries and jurisdictions, whilst still meeting industry needs for regional and industry specific information.

"While there will need to be coordinated implementation of climate change responses at a national level, the RDCs are able to interpret these for different industries and support the delivery of adaptation solutions at a regional level," Mr Allara said.

"This is undoubtedly one of the most pressing research issues our agricultural, fishing and forestry rural industries face. The RDCs are keen to show some leadership in this area and have committed to support and fund a third of the development of the strategy, in partnership with Federal and State Governments and other research agencies such as universities and CSIRO."

The work on the strategy so far has included an analysis of existing work plans and policy documents to identify gaps, and the next step will be the development of a project plan to deliver a national climate change research strategy for primary industries by March 2008.

Comprehensive evaluation framework of rural research to commence

Rural research and development in Australia is about to undergo its most comprehensive impact evaluation ever following agreement on an approach and methodology by the fifteen RDCs at this week's meeting.

This process is the first time that projects from all RDCs will be evaluated in a consistent manner to measure the return on the half a billion dollars spent every year on rural R&D in terms of economic, social and environmental impacts.

The evaluation is being coordinated by the CRRDCC as part of the ongoing commitment to demonstrating the return on investment to its levy payers and the broader Australian community, and to continue to lead innovation Australian agriculture.

Speaking at the meeting in Canberra this week, Mr Allara said the evaluation methodology will allow measurement of the overall returns to industry and the broader community from the collective RDCs on a regular basis.

"It will focus on the return on the total investment as well as that on public funds and whether these funds induce appropriate spillover benefits. Both of these were key components of the Productivity Commission's research report *Public Support for Science and Innovation*.

"The evaluation will also look at whether changing the level of funding will increase or decrease the net spillover benefits", Mr Allara said.

"The Council is confident the results will confirm and quantify the enormous benefits that flow to the whole of the Australian community from this investment."

The evaluation will be coordinated through economic consultants ACIL and will be independently reviewed.

The evaluation framework will comprise three parts:

- A randomly selected set of cost benefit analyses (CBA) to measure the mean and marginal returns from the overall investment,
- CBAs for a selection of successful, large scale projects, and
- An analysis of two collaborative R&D projects each year.

It is the most comprehensive review ever attempted in the history of Australia's rural research and development and the first set of results will be due out in March 2008.

The Council of Rural Research and Development Corporation Chairs

Mr Enzo Allara has been elected as the new Chair of the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations, replacing outgoing Chair Terry Enright. Mr Allara is currently chair of Australian Pork Limited.

The objectives of the fifteen-member Council are:

- the development of a common, consolidated and more rigorous reporting framework for the RDCs with a focus on quantifying outcomes and benefits;
- to enable collaboration between RDCs; and
- the demonstration of how the RDCs are meeting the Australian Government's research priorities.

Mr Allara will be supported in his role as Chairman by an executive committee comprising Deputy Chair Dennis Mutton (GWRDC), Bobby Brazil (LWA) Peter O'Brien (RIRDC), Nigel Steele Scott (HAL) and Brian van Rooyen (AWI).

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