



Australian Government



Cotton Research and Development Corporation

Grains Research and Development Corporation

Fisheries Research and Development Corporation

Land & Water Australia

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

Sugar Research and Development Corporation

Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation

Level 1
33 Ainslie Avenue
Canberra City ACT 2600
Australia
GPO Box 1322
Canberra ACT 2601
Phone: 02 6103 8200
Fax: 02 6103 8233
Email: Secretariat@ruralrdc.com.au

Tuesday July 1, 2008

Rural R&D investment important source of drought support



The Council of Rural Research and Development Corporation Chairs (CRRDCC) has applauded the Australian Government's intention to review drought policy and is encouraging all levy payers to participate in the extensive public consultation and submission process.

The Productivity Commission has been asked to review both business support and income support measures provided to help farmers and small businesses manage drought. The Commission is also reviewing the range of social support services available to farm families and rural communities.

Chair of the CRRDCC, Enzo Allara believes it's essential that drought policy be reviewed to encourage more producers to adopt better risk management strategies.

"While some emergency support may still be required, producers in all industries will need to be able to manage the reality of more frequent and severe drought events in the future as a result of climate change."

To do this, producers will need access to the latest information and research and development in areas such as drought resistant plant and animal species, managing water and climate variability in order to adapt to the climatic changes that will inevitably occur.

"This will mean that maintaining investment in research, development and extension in these areas is more important than ever before. Farmers should be given every encouragement and opportunity to adopt the latest research in order to maximise their drought preparedness.

The RDCs have been consistent contributors to research into drought preparedness and climate variability, both individually and collaboratively.

In 2005-06 the Rural RDCs made significant investments in cross-sectoral issues pertaining to drought and climate change management, including \$7.79 million in natural resource management, \$1.74 million in pasture variety improvement and management and \$1.17 million in managing climate variability.

"For more than 10 years, the Australian Government and several Rural RDCs invested in climate change adaptation and management programs, including the Managing Climate Variability Program," Mr Allara said.

“This program invested in research to improve and create technologies for better decision making in a variable and changing climate. It was responsible for the development of climate risk management tools such as AussieGRASS in the Northern Territory and seasonal climate risk management tools such as Yield Prophet.”

More recently, the CRRDCC facilitated the co-contribution of around \$1 million in the National Climate Change Research Strategy for Primary Industries.

Mr Allara also believes the ongoing adoption of research is essential to maintaining productivity growth, one of the most important defences against the challenges of climate change.

“Since 1954 the primary industries sector has experienced annual average productivity growth of 2.5%ⁱ per annum, far exceeding any other Australian industry,” Mr Allara said.

“Much of this growth has been driven by the more than half a billion dollars a year of research, development and extension managed by the RDCs on behalf of industry and government.

This unique co-investment model provides an effective mechanism to ensure that future research needs of rural industry relating to drought management and adaption to climate change can be effectively met.

<ends>

Contact: Fiona Dewar, Cox Inall Communications, 0413 556 069

^{i i} Mullen, J. D. & Crean, J. (2007) Productivity Growth in Australian Agriculture: Trends, Sources, Performance. Australian Farm Institute: Sydney