



Newsletter four, March, 2017:

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



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.

*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.

The main aims of the project are to:

- Increase private sector engagement with the latest research and industry best practice;
- Make research more accessible to producers through a more integrated and co-operative extension system;
- Identify barriers to private sector involvement in agricultural extension;
- Stimulate growth in capability of the private sector in agricultural extension, and;
- Build stronger connections between end users and researchers.

Welcome to our fourth newsletter, which we hope will provide you with a great overview of the work which has been undertaken by this project so far.

## Expert panel

A project expert panel has been convened to foster critical reflection throughout the project. The expert panel diagnoses and provides comment on approaches to cross-sector extension, and on the development of models to build private sector capacity.

The panel is a “thought leadership group”, consisting of Australian and international leaders in the field of private sector roles in agricultural innovation.

This month, we introduce you to Dr Laurens Klerkx, right, who is an associate professor at the Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group of Wageningen University, The Netherlands.

Dr Klerkx will also be a speaker at the annual forum in Melbourne in May (*details in this newsletter*).

### About Dr Klerkx

Dr Klerkx has been working for the past 15 years in the field of agricultural innovation, researching various topics, including:



- Privatisation dynamics of research and extension;
- The role of organisations that broker multi-stakeholder networks for innovation;
- Implementation of co-innovation approaches in research organisations;
- The dynamics of research and innovation agenda setting;
- Knowledge exchange between agricultural advisors to enhance service innovation and professional development;
- The division of public and private roles in research and extension, and;
- Innovation and scaling processes from a systemic perspective.

His research takes place in countries around the globe, such as The Netherlands, England, Norway, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Ghana, Kenya, Vietnam, Indonesia, New Zealand and Australia, and is informed by diverse theoretical perspectives, such as Innovation Systems, Social Capital, Institutional Theory, and Sustainability Transitions.

Throughout his career, Dr Klerkx has published more than 70 articles in peer reviewed journals, both in agricultural social science journals and innovation studies journals.

In recent years these have been done increasingly in collaboration with international colleagues and the PhD students and postdoctoral researchers he supervises.

For more information, go to <https://www.wur.nl/nl/Personen/Laurens-Klerkx.htm>

### Why did you get involved in the project expert panel?

My interest is that the current Australian experience with extension system change provides rich experiences from different types of change trajectories and stakeholder responses, given the different pathways taken in the different states. Furthermore, the action orientation of the project (not just studying change, but also supporting it) appeals to me.

## What do you hope to achieve?

I want to contribute to meaningful reflection in the project, drawing on my practical experiences with, and theoretical knowledge of, change dynamics in extension systems around the globe.

## What's your approach to being involved in projects?

To ensure my science has impact, and to learn from people's experiences, I like to engage in different ways with different groups. Obviously, I teach to students on topics of systemic thinking in innovation, but I have also engaged with policy and practitioner organisations such as FAO, World Bank, OECD, Ministries of Agriculture in Chile and Australia, applied agricultural research organisations in Uruguay and New Zealand, the Royal Tropical Institute and the Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services, through consultancies, training, and other forms of interaction.

For example, I am currently Science Advisor to the Primary Innovation project in New Zealand (<http://www.beyondresults.co.nz/PrimaryInnovation/Pages/default.aspx>) and the Competent Farmer project in Norway.

## Update on trials:

As mentioned in the last newsletter, four engagement trials for private sector stimulation have been established.

The four trials are:

Trial 1: The Processor Trial - connecting industries, farm advisers and producers with the processing sector as a supply chain response to RD&E. Industry lead: Dairy Australia;

Trial 2: The Precision Ag Trial - increasing the capacity of farm advisers to engage with digital applications based on industry research, development and extension to benefit producers. Industry lead: Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC);

Trial 3: The Advisory Pathways Trial (business focus) - creating career development pathways for new entrants and professionals in the agricultural advisory and extension sector. Industry lead: Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), and;

Trial 4: The Knowledge Trial - exploring ways to improve access to, and engagement with, the latest research, while identifying needs and opportunities to help translate theory into meaningful practice. Lead: Agriculture Victoria.

The trial committees have developed research design and planning documents for each of the four engagement trials.

The Trial 1 and Trial 4 teams are currently engaging with private

sector collaborators to refine shared collaborative opportunities and identify activities.

For Trial 2, attendance for the first workshop on 8 March has been confirmed and participants are being invited for the first Trial 3 workshop later in March.

For more information on the trials go to <http://rirg.fvas.unimelb.edu.au/ag-extension#project-activities>

## Annual forum

A date has now been set for the annual forum, which will take place on Wednesday, 17 May 2017, at The Metropolis on Southbank, Melbourne.

A project group is working on the forum agenda and format, and invitations will be issued shortly.

The agenda will focus on private sector extension capacity, and provide an opportunity for cross-sectoral discussion about agricultural extension and private sector engagement. Project findings from research, forums and surveys of producer and adviser preferences and challenges for receiving and providing information will also be provided and discussed.

Please place the date in your diaries to ensure you can participate in the forum.

## Website

A revamp of the project website has been completed and we would encourage stakeholders to view it at <http://rirg.fvas.unimelb.edu.au/ag-extension>

Please update your bookmarks accordingly, but note the former website redirects to the new site.

The website is greatly improved and contains information about project activities, collaborators in the project and an overview of the project's aims and objectives.

## Tell us what you think

We would love some feedback on the newsletter and what you find of interest, or what could be improved.

We are conducting a brief survey for your feedback at <http://surveys.couttsjr.com.au/s3/Stimulating-Private-Sector-Extension-E-newsletter-Survey>

Please take five minutes to provide feedback as we are keen to provide you with project information in a format most valuable to you.

### For further information, contact:

Research Group Leader Ass Prof Ruth Nettle, Rural Innovation Research Group Lead, [ranettle@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ranettle@unimelb.edu.au), (03) 8344 4581 or Ian Linley, Extension Coordinator, Dairy Australia, [iliny@airyaustralia.com.au](mailto:iliny@airyaustralia.com.au), 0422 814 579.  
<http://rirg.fvas.unimelb.edu.au/ag-extension>

