

Position Paper – Research and Development

The Issues and Our Position

Innovative, industry focused and effective research and development (R&D) activities, systems and infrastructure are vitally important for the future competitiveness and sustainability of our agricultural production industries.

Competitive pressures, changing consumer expectations and preferences, changing regulatory and compliance requirements, and new enabling and disruptive technologies, all provide both opportunities and threats to individual businesses and to the farming sector overall. This is even more true for the Northern Territory's farming sector which faces the additional challenges of remoteness and distance to markets.

The Northern Territory's farming sector has already demonstrated that it is extremely dynamic and innovative. It has developed from very small origins to its current status as a significant contributor to the Northern Territory economy in only a few decades. It could not have achieved this without considerable innovation, learning and adaptation to new environments, crops and practices.

The future of the Northern Territory's farming sector, in terms of its ability to remain competitive and to continue to successfully navigate the myriad of challenges and opportunities that it faces, will most certainly be tied to its ability to continue to innovate, learn, adapt and develop. One vital ingredient to our industry's innovative and adaptive capacity will be the effectiveness and strength of support from an R&D sector that understands industry needs.

Another vital element will be the industries capacity to take full advantage of R&D efforts. It is NT Farmers view that extension and education services are essential elements of effective R&D.

Our Position

In order to effectively capture opportunities to innovate and develop, NT Farmers seeks to support the maintenance and expansion of a strong R&D sector that is well connected and responsive to the needs and priorities of farmers in the NT.

R&D must be relevant to both the short and long term needs of industry, including commercial outcomes and industry sustainability. R&D must be industry driven and funding for R&D effort must be prioritised.

NT Farmers also believes that there must be strong grower and commercial supply chain partnering and involvement within R&D projects so that they appropriately recognise the realities of actual business practices and supply chain impacts.

NT Farmers also believe that effective extension and education services are essential to the take up of R&D findings and that priority must be given to the funding of this aspect of R&D programs.

NT Farmers supports the principal of levy funded R&D on the basis that these levy funds are invested in a manner that is:

- Transparent, accountable, fair and equitable;
- Scientifically and professionally robust;
- Efficiently and effectively targeted;

- Focused on industry driven priorities, addressing both short and long term industry needs;
- Supported by excellent communications and engagement with industry; and
- Based on comprehensive and timely feedback and sharing of learnings.

Our Commitment

NT Farmers will:

- Work with national and Territory R&D providers and funding agencies to ensure that the priorities of the NT farming sector are reflected in R&D programs.
- Directly engage with key stakeholders to ensure that the NT receives regionally appropriate R&D levy investment into NT research priorities.
- Work with commodity groups to ensure that their R&D challenges and priorities are well understood (undertake regular forums, member surveys, etc.) and well communicated to relevant stakeholders.
- Undertake a desktop review of relevant R&D and develop an online library of resources for members.

Our Expectations

NT Farmers seeks and expects:

- Funding support to enable NT Farmers to take a leadership role in coordinating industry wide R&D priority setting through strong communication and engagement with growers.
- Funding support for R&D programs that provide extension and education services to enhance industry capacity and capture the benefits of research outcomes.
- Government agencies and industry bodies to engage with NT Farmers in respect of all industry and commodity group R&D needs.
- Industry focused R&D programs with high levels of grower and supply chain partner involvement.
- Outcomes focused R&D programs that are accountable, transparent, efficient, effective and truly consultative, especially where public or levy funding is involved.
- Effective use of Department of Primary Industry research farm infrastructure to deliver R&D that is industry focused and accountable.

Our Agenda Items

- Commercially focused, results oriented R&D that supports the growth and sustainability of our industry.
- Quantifiable regional industry outcomes from R&D funding.
- Effective partnerships with R&D providers, R&D funders and R&D priority setters, especially a strategic partnership between Department of Primary Industry and NT Farmers.
- Excellent communications with growers about R&D programs and opportunities for participation and contribution to priority setting.
- Increased delivery of extension and education services and support for members through project based funding programs.
- A dedicated NT Farmers staff member to support greatly improved R&D outcomes for NT growers.
- Capturing R&D funding opportunities for the benefit of NT growers.