



ABARES 2026-27 workplan

How we plan and deliver research that matters

ABARES plays a key role in supporting decisions that shape Australia's agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and water sectors. We do this by providing trusted, independent research, data, analysis and advice that helps government and industry respond to current challenges and prepare for future opportunities.

Each year, we draw on the perspectives of stakeholders across government, industry and research to understand the emerging issues that may affect the sectors in the next three to five years. This helps us set focused research priorities, build the capability needed to respond, and identify opportunities to work with others on shared goals.

Our annual workplan sets out the major activities we will deliver across five key focus areas. This includes the publication of a broad range of outputs (such as insights papers, research reports, spatial datasets and interactive dashboards) to support informed decision-making and strengthen public understanding.

The annual ABARES National Outlook conference in March acts as both a showcase and a delivery mechanism for the workplan, connecting planned research and analysis with practical discussion, stakeholder engagement and opportunities to inform future priorities.

Modern technology and data systems are essential to the way ABARES operates. Ongoing investment in these systems will improve security, reliability and usability of our work, helping us deliver trusted, world-class insights that support long-term outcomes for Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

Priorities for the year ahead

1. Producing critical underpinning agricultural, fisheries and forestry statistics to inform policy development and industry decision making

Farm survey provides underpinning data

ABARES surveys broadacre and dairy farms to collect detailed physical, financial, and socioeconomic data. This trusted information – that ABARES has been collecting for more than 70 years – helps DAFF monitor industry performance, assess the impact of major events, and evaluate policy responses to ensure decisions are grounded in real-world evidence. ABARES farm surveys, which include the Australian Agricultural and Grazing Industries Survey and Australian Dairy Industry Survey, are

designed by a team of statisticians to make sure samples are representative of the broader population and produce reliable, robust estimates.

Driving smarter decisions with farm performance insights

ABARES publishes detailed data and research on farm productivity, financial performance, debt, investment, R&D expenditure, farmland prices and the impacts of climate and market shifts to capture the evolving structure of Australian agriculture. These insights directly support DAFF's policy development and evaluation, and empower industry stakeholders like Grains Research and Development Corporation and Meat and Livestock Australia to make informed decisions.

Towards a better understanding of farm business resilience, climate change adaptation and risk management

This project will analyse changes in farm financial performance, risk management and farm resilience over recent decades, and evaluate the relationship between farm financial performance and regional socio-economic outcomes. It will strengthen the information and evidence base that supports the ongoing work of DAFF's Farm Resilience Division by contributing to policy development, policy tools and program design.

Trusted forecasts to guide agriculture, fisheries and forestry

ABARES' flagship publications the *Agricultural Commodities Report* and the *Australian Crop Report* – providing timely forecasts on production, prices and exports across key agricultural, fisheries and forestry sectors – will continue to be published every quarter. These insights help government, industry, researchers and the media understand market trends, assess risks and opportunities, and make informed decisions.

Providing key statistics on Australia's farm sector

The *Agriculture Commodity Statistics* publication delivers consolidated macroeconomic, farm sector, and commodity data that informs analysis, research and decision-making across government, industry and media.

Modernising regional agricultural statistics for better decisions

ABARES is working with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other partners to modernise the collection, production and dissemination of regional agricultural data. This includes developing agricultural land and water use statistics, strengthening stewardship of the agricultural statistics system, and supporting greater access to and use of agricultural microdata. By improving the quality and availability of regional data, this work enables more informed decisions across government, industry and research, supporting a more responsive and data-driven agricultural sector.

Providing key statistics on Australia's forests

ABARES will continue to update the National Forest Inventory including data on production, gross value, trade and the size of the plantation estate. It also includes ecological, spatial, and tabular data from Commonwealth, state, and territory forest agencies. As an Essential Statistical Asset since 1988, the inventory underpins Australia's commitments under the National Forest Policy Statement,

the *Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002*, and global targets like United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 15. These efforts ensure Australia's forest data remains credible, connected, and accessible to inform forest policy and sustainable forest management.

Modernising insights into Australia's wood processing sector

In partnership with Forests & Wood Products Australia (FWPA), ABARES is developing a new method (instead of traditional ABARES surveys) to capture up-to-date information on the number of sawmills, production levels, revenue, and sector challenges. This report will track industry trends, identify market inefficiencies, and provide deeper insights into engineered wood products supporting government program design to help the sector navigate increasing market complexity both in Australia and globally.

Providing key statistics on Australian fisheries

ABARES *Australian Fisheries and Aquaculture Statistics* (AFAS) provides data on gross value of production (GVP) of Australian fisheries, trade, employment and recreational fishing for the fishing and aquaculture industry, fisheries managers, policy makers and researchers.

Commonwealth fisheries profitability

This project uses administrative and public datasets to estimate the economic performance of Commonwealth fisheries (instead of traditional ABARES surveys). During 2026-27 ABARES will publish two reports under this series, focused on the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery and the Commonwealth Trawl Sector of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery. Another more general report, describing the economic conditions facing Commonwealth fisheries, will also be published.

Better understanding of climate dynamics for agriculture

The *Weekly Australian Climate, Water and Agriculture Update* delivers timely insights into how seasonal conditions affect agricultural production, water availability, and commodity prices in Australia and globally. In 2026-27 it will increasingly incorporate insights from the Australian Agricultural Drought Indicators program. The work underpinning this product also informs the forecasts in the *Agricultural Commodities* and *Australian Crop* reports.

Modernising community vulnerability insights for smarter policy

ABARES continues to review and update its community vulnerability indicators to strengthen the evidence base for policy and program design. The project will assess contemporary approaches, draw on internal and external data sources, and identify improvements to the current methodology to better inform analysis of regional resilience and vulnerability.

Building a clearer picture of Australia's agricultural workforce

ABARES is continuing to deliver insights into the agricultural workforce by collecting and analysing data from the Horticulture Labour Survey and supplementary surveys in the broadacre and dairy sectors. This work provides a clearer understanding of workforce dynamics and supports informed decision-making across government and industry.

Land use intelligence for sustainable planning

In partnership with the Australian Collaborative Land Use and Management Program (ACLUMP), ABARES will continue providing an evidence base for Australia's changing land use and land tenure. Specifically, ABARES will release a compilation of most recent state and territory (catchment scale) land use mapping and 2025-26 land tenure data. In addition, ABARES is developing a new approach to map agricultural land uses for its national scale time series. As a foundational spatial asset, land use data is used in assessing agricultural productivity and sustainability, biodiversity conservation, biosecurity, land use planning, natural disaster management, natural resource management and investment. These datasets are also key inputs to modelling land use trade-offs and greenhouse gas emissions, as inputs to environmental-economic accounting and as part of modernising Australia's agricultural statistics.

2. Analysis, advice, and research to support the efficient operation of agricultural, fisheries, forestry and water markets and to promote sector productivity and resilience

Understanding productivity drivers in Australian agriculture

ABARES publishes insights into the key factors shaping productivity in the agriculture sector, including barriers to growth and the impacts of climate change. These data products and analyses support DAFF's corporate performance measures and inform policy and industry decisions – helping drive sustainable growth and resilience across the sector.

Understanding fisheries productivity for key Commonwealth fisheries

This will estimate trends in productivity for key Commonwealth fisheries. Additional work (see productivity roadmap item below) will assess if this can be extended to develop a national estimate for fisheries and aquaculture productivity.

Building a stronger productivity evidence base for Australia's forestry sector

In partnership with FWPA, ABARES will develop a productivity index that provides a consistent framework for measuring forest products productivity. In parallel, we will update regional mean annual increment and yield tables to track changes in plantation performance over the past 10-20 years and highlight regional differences in silviculture. These insights are essential for identifying productivity challenges and opportunities, guiding research and development investment, and informing forest policy and planning, especially as land competition limits expansion and industry dynamics reshape the market for logs.

Productivity Roadmap

In partnership with the rural research and development corporations, ABARES is building the evidence base to help lift productivity growth across Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector. The Productivity Roadmap aims to identify, and where possible, fill gaps in productivity estimates across all industries. It will also consider drivers and barriers to productivity growth, potential productivity goals, and outline practical options to strengthen future data collection. This

work is important because productivity growth underpins the long-term competitiveness, profitability and resilience of Australian agriculture, particularly in the face of climate variability, rising input costs, labour constraints, biosecurity risks and changing global markets.

Expanding *farmpredict* modelling capability to strengthen forecasting

ABARES is building out *farmpredict*, an innovative microsimulation machine-learning model that draws on extensive data from Australian farm businesses collected through the ABARES farm surveys. This work will expand the sectors modelled (including dairy), improve livestock modelling, and build more efficient data and modelling pipelines to support timely, consistent monthly forecasts. As a result, ABARES will be better placed to provide reliable insights into emerging risks, market pressures and policy impacts. *farmpredict* already underpins a range of ABARES outputs, including AADI (see below), agricultural commodity forecasts, monthly updates and policy briefings.

Forecasting drought impacts to support agricultural resilience

The Australian Agricultural Drought Indicators (AADI) provides a set of national indicators for measuring and forecasting the extent and severity of drought impacts in the Australian agricultural sector. Work is underway to add a range of features to AADI integration, with the Climate Services for Agriculture platform also being explored. AADI will help DAFF shape drought policy and enable industry to monitor and prepare for potential impacts to build resilience in the face of growing climate challenges.

Designing water trading strategies for better environmental outcomes

ABARES continues working with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to develop a practical, evidence-based water trading strategy that aligns with environmental watering goals and navigates the complexities of water markets. In collaboration with the Murray Darling Basin Authority and CSIRO, we are also quantifying the environmental benefits of this approach.

Helping enhance Australia's position on global agricultural trade

ABARES provides an evidence base for Australian representatives to make the case for open markets in global agricultural trade and lower distortionary agricultural support. Research supporting this objective includes:

- Quantifying how structural changes to global trade balances, amid changes in trade patterns, could impact the export of Australian agricultural commodities.
- Examining the impacts of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) on Australian agricultural trade to better inform trade discussions.
- Exploring the economics, challenges and evidence base in pursuing the objectives of food self-sufficiency and food sovereignty policies.
- Considering how lower tariffs and lower agricultural support have benefitted Australia's agriculture sector and global food security. The project would use a modelling approach to examine behind the border and at the border trade liberalisation.

In 2026-27, research understanding changes in Australia's major agricultural markets will be a key focus along with a paper examining the impacts of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) on Australian agricultural trade.

3. Support policy development and industry decision making about agriculture, fisheries and forestry's place in a net zero economy

Informing agri-environmental policy through embedded emissions modelling

Reducing emissions from agrifood systems requires understanding not only the direct emissions released during production, but also the emissions embedded in the inputs used by agriculture and food across global supply chains. This report develops a transparent method for estimating embedded emissions in agriculture and food production using the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) database.

Driving smarter, sustainable farming through national insights

The National Agricultural Land Use Management Survey (NALMs) engages about 8,000 agricultural land managers across Australia to build a comprehensive picture of how climate-smart practices and sustainable farming are being adopted on the ground. By collecting large-scale data from all agricultural sectors, this survey directly informs policy and program design, guiding future government investments in resilient, resource-efficient agriculture.

Understanding forestry's role in carbon and nature repair markets

In partnership with FWPA, this consultation-driven report explores why and how forestry industry players and carbon market investors choose to engage with carbon and nature repair markets. It uncovers the behavioural drivers behind project registration under the Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme Plantation Forestry Method. The findings will guide industry and government stakeholders on shaping future engagement strategies, highlighting how tools like FullCAM and additionality rules influence participation at both national and regional levels.

Impacts of environmental trade measures

This research will assess global environmental trade measures to guide Australia's agricultural trade policy position. By identifying and quantifying the impacts of trade liberalisation, it will strengthen Australia's efforts to reduce distortions in global agricultural trade and reinforce Australia's position in international negotiations.

Understanding trade policy in a changing climate

This Insights report builds on forthcoming research and considers whether open markets deliver stronger outcomes in the face of increasing climate volatility. As climate change intensifies, unpredictable weather events may tempt countries to adopt protectionist policies. Using a framework that accounts for uncertainty, it will provide an evidence base to understand the impact of trade and domestic support policy as climates shift across the world.

4. Reporting, analysis and advice on the sustainable management and use of Australia's fisheries and forestry resources

Contributing scientific advice to domestic fisheries management

We participate in the Australian Fisheries Management Authority Resource Assessment Group meetings and similar forums as scientific members, invited participants, or observers. In these roles, we represent ABARES and the DAFF, providing evidence-based scientific advice to support informed and effective fisheries management decisions.

Scientific leadership in regional fisheries management

We lead Australia's scientific input to five Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, providing expert analysis and advice on stock status, harvest strategies, and sustainable fishing practices. This work supports Australia's international obligations, strengthens its positions in key negotiations, and directly influences regional decisions that protect fish stocks, reduce bycatch, and promote long-term sustainability. It also contributes to Australia's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific through science-based diplomacy.

Delivering trusted assessments of Australia's fisheries

ABARES produces independent, public reports that assess the health of fish stocks and the economic performance of Commonwealth-managed fisheries, supporting transparency and informed decision-making. Through the annual Fishery Status Reports and contributions to national fish stock reports, ABARES provides robust data and analysis used by the minister, government agencies, industry, environmental groups, and the public.

Authoritative reporting in support of sustainable forest management

We deliver authoritative national reports describing the status and trends of all of Australia's forests for government, industry and the community. Publications for 2026-27 will include 10 indicators under Australia's State of the Forests Report (SOFR) program of work specifically for forest extent, tenure and management, wood production, carbon and forest-dwelling species, and nine forest profiles, while also advancing next generation approaches to reporting on forest status and change. This work supports decision-making by providing credible, contemporary evidence aligned with Australia's Montreal Process framework of seven criteria and 44 indicators. The underlying spatial and tabular data inform policy, programs and strategic forest initiatives.

Driving forest science leadership

ABARES will continue to lead national and international forest science efforts by engaging in global technical forums and publishing insights via the Forests Australia website. This reinforces Australia's commitment to sustainable forest management and enhances the department's credibility and influence in forest-related matters.

5. Analysis, advice, and research to enhance the efficient and effective operation of Australia's biosecurity system

Models and methods for smarter biosecurity inspections and surveillance

This work develops tools and methodologies to improve how Australia detects and responds to biosecurity threats, such as using group testing for more efficient inspections and building decision-making frameworks for pest and disease control. Through partnerships with the Australian National University, the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA), CSIRO, and the Arthur Rylah Institute, these approaches are helping deliver better decisions, more efficient resource use, and stronger protection for agriculture and the environment.

Economic models to guide biosecurity investment

This work focuses on developing and applying economic models and methods to help make smarter decisions about where to invest resources in biosecurity. By using detailed cost-benefit analyses, especially during emergency responses, it provides evidence of the financial risks posed by pests and diseases and the value of actions taken to prevent or control them. These insights support informed decisions about whether to start, continue, or adjust biosecurity programs and policies, helping ensure resources are used effectively to protect Australia's agriculture and environment.

Supporting national policy on environmental biosecurity

This work helps shape national policy on exotic pests, weeds, and diseases by providing research, tools, and expert advice to support decision-making and assist informed, coordinated responses to emerging threats. It strengthens preparedness for invasive species through risk assessments and practical methodologies and offers technical input and committee representation to the Australian Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer.

National insights on established pests and weeds

This work supports national policy on established vertebrate pests and weeds by collecting and analysing data on their presence, impact, and management across Australia. Key projects include mapping the distribution of priority species, surveying landholders to track changes in pest and weed issues over time, and contributing to the National Established Weed Priorities Framework. These efforts provide the evidence base for coordinated management decisions and help identify species that may need national attention.

National Grains Diagnostic Surveillance Initiative (WinGrains)

Managing biosecurity threats in the Australian grains industry depends not only on technical and environmental factors, but also on effective communication and coordination between growers, government and industry. This project explores how private grain agronomists – as a trusted group of on-ground professionals who are well-placed to act as critical intermediaries between grain growers and broader biosecurity system expertise and relationships – can be better leveraged to support biosecurity efforts in ways that are practical, sustainable, and beneficial to agronomists, growers, the

grains industry and the broader biosecurity system. This project is part of the GRDC / DAFF National Grains Diagnostic Surveillance Initiative.

Improving marine pest biosecurity

This work supports national marine biosecurity by providing scientific advice, data, and tools to help prevent and respond to marine pest incursions. It includes modelling ballast water risks, mapping pest and disease distribution, tracking shipping traffic, and offering technical input and committee representation. These efforts help guide policy, improve preparedness, and support coordinated responses to protect Australia's marine environments.

Improving general surveillance through monitoring and evaluation

This work supports the effectiveness of general surveillance programs by developing tools to monitor and evaluate their performance. It helps teams improve through adaptive management and provides data on cost-effectiveness. When combined across programs, these insights reveal which approaches work best in different situations to support smarter decisions about where to invest in biosecurity surveillance.