National Agricultural Traceability Grants Program – Regulatory Technology Research and Insights Grant Round: Agribusiness Connect Limited grantee summary

Scott Carter
Project Manager – Agribusiness Connect Limited

Project outcomes

The Agribusiness Connect 'Trace2Place' project sought to identify and deploy technologies that enable traceability from paddock to processor. Our collaborative ecosystem included industry, producers, retailers, technology providers, government, food and safety regulators and academia.

The project was designed for the red meat sector, with 2 key objectives:

1) Identify technologies either available or in development that could provide solutions for Regulatory Technology (RegTech).

2) Deploy selected technologies in a real-world scenario to determine the fit-for-purpose, cost-effective and interoperable nature of those solutions in reducing administrative and compliance burdens.

Project teams and scope were developed with steering committee oversight, challenges identified and target solutions investigated with recommendations made. The project scope was one of the first in Australia to cover data integration, validation and presentation from a food safety standards perspective at an industry level and generated an output data map that provided true user functionality and interoperability.

Key elements considered in creating the data collection, aggregation and customer display outputs of the project included current business systems, data integration, technology systems, including data exchanges, integration technologies, industry standards, data standards, a comprehensive landscape analysis (which extended across commodities and into international regions) and determination of gaps and adoption limitations.

The key challenges identified in undertaking the project related to current business systems, cost and efficiency, and confidentiality and data sharing.

Current business systems

Legacy IT systems (ERP) are ill-suited when it comes to external platform integration. A lack of industry and data standards makes full data integration difficult, design of new technology solutions non-coordinated with data aggregation the likely result. Solutions such as electronic National Vendor Declaration (eNVD) have potential if redesigned to be a traceability solution that covers more than the last step and to extend across commodity sectors and geographical boundaries.

Cost and efficiency

Despite a growing demand for traceability, the customer is simply not prepared to pay for it. The project took 6 months to establish traceability records and chain for 78 head of cattle with a vertically integrated supply partner. Key barriers were establishing common frameworks that identified traceability events, ensuring the availability of data in the right useable format and creating access protocols within policy frameworks to enable integration.

Confidentiality and data sharing

Time to align expectations around confidentiality and use of data, even with a cohort with demonstrated in principle alignment and support of the project was difficult. The common findings were the fear of data loss, non-authorised use of data and the legal ramifications to various stakeholders engaged in the project. The right to access and use data was in some cases prohibited by government agencies all together.

Recommendations generated from the project were:

1) Align projects with international export trade partners such as Japan, South Korea, Vietnam. This alignment accelerates industry and data standards adoption.
2) Develop co-investment program that delivers cross-commodity application development and develop commercialisation programs to increase government Return on Investment (ROI) and industry adoption.
3) Develop curriculum and skills specifically for targeting data-sharing protocols, trust-building measures and deliver through practical application.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.