



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

# Rural Research and Development Update

March 2012

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## Background

This report provides an update of policy and program developments in rural R&D and innovation. Updates are grouped by the investment themes in the National Strategic Rural Research and Development (R&D) Investment Plan, developed by the Rural R&D Council.

The Rural R&D Council was established in January 2009 and focused on playing a leadership role for the rural R&D system. As the Council completed its three year term in December 2011, the *Rural Research and Development Update* is now circulated by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

More information on the Rural R&D Council and the Investment Plan can be found on the DAFF website: [www.daff.gov.au/council](http://www.daff.gov.au/council).

## Industry development and sustainable production

### ***National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Framework***

Eighteen sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies under the National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension Framework have been endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) to date. The remaining three strategies from the first tranche—food and nutrition, animal biosecurity and plant biosecurity—are due to be finalised in 2012. The focus of the parties to the Framework is now on implementation of the strategies.

Following the Council of Australian Governments' decision to reform Ministerial Councils, a new Standing Council on Primary Industries has been launched. The new Standing Council will encourage greater collaboration and promote continuous improvement in the investment of rural research and development resources nationally. The Standing Council will meet for the first time in April 2012.

In December 2011 the Climate Change Research Strategy for Primary Industries (CCRSPI) Secretariat convened a two-day forum to consult with key stakeholders on the revision of the CCRSPI Strategy. Participants included representatives from research agencies, state and federal departments, CSIRO, universities, agribusiness and farm service providers, as well as producers, extension and policy officers, and farm consultants. The revision is expected to be completed by mid 2012.

### ***Productivity Commission report on the rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs)***

The Australian Government tabled the Productivity Commission's final report on the rural RDCs in Parliament on 15 June 2011. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry hosted a series of targeted consultation meetings during November 2011 to inform the government's response. The government is now in the process of developing its final response to the Productivity Commission's report and the Rural R&D Council's National Strategic Rural R&D Investment Plan.



### ***Co-operative Research Centres (CRCs)***

The priorities for the 15th CRC selection round have been announced as social innovation, sustainable regional communities and clean manufacturing. CRC program information sessions were held during February 2012 in state or territory capital cities. Applications for the 15th selection round must be lodged by 14 June 2012.

### ***The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) Conference***

Registration is open for the NCCARF annual national conference, to be held in Melbourne on 26-28 June. Its focus will be on the information needed to ensure Australia is adapting well to climate change. The Conference will bring together Australia's leading researchers, practitioners and decision makers from a range of sectors to share the latest research, information and practical experiences on climate change adaptation in Australia. Registration is now open. Further information is available at: <http://www.nccarf.edu.au/conference2012/>.

### ***R&D Tax Incentive***

The Australian Government's legislation for the new R&D tax credit was passed by the Parliament on 24 August 2011. The program is now known as the R&D Tax Incentive. AusIndustry and the Australian Taxation Office are now developing guidance material to assist companies to transition from the old R&D Tax Concession to the new R&D Tax Incentive, and to support participants to meet compliance obligations under the program. To further improve the access to the R&D Tax Incentive for small and medium enterprises, the Government will introduce quarterly credits from 1 January 2014. Quarterly Credits will provide small companies with the option to receive the benefit of the R&D Tax Incentive as instalments during the income year in which they undertake their R&D activities. There will be consultation in 2012 on the details of the changes. Further information on the R&D Tax Incentive is available at: [www.ausindustry.gov.au/InnovationandRandD/RandDTaxIncentive](http://www.ausindustry.gov.au/InnovationandRandD/RandDTaxIncentive).

### ***ABARES Australian Crop Report***

On 14 February, ABARES released the Australian Crop Report. The report forecasts generally favourable growing conditions for summer crops, and higher yields and production for Australian summer crops in 2011-12. The report is available at: <http://www.daff.gov.au/abares/publications>.

### ***ABARES Outlook Conference***

The ABARES 2012 Outlook Conference was held on 6-7 March in Canberra. The conference theme was future landscapes, with a focus on the outlook for Australia's key agricultural, forestry and fisheries commodities and the issues influencing future landscapes. Starting with the economic overview, sessions covered topical issues that cut across sectors, such as farm performance, water issues, carbon mitigation and agriculture, linkages between innovation and productivity, biosecurity reform, coal seam gas development and agriculture, regional development and the outlook



for key commodities and other issues. Outlook 2012 concluded with a plenary closing session exploring “What future for Australian farmers?” More information on the conference is available at: <http://daff.gov.au/abares/outlook>.

## **Transformational research**

### ***The Enabling Technologies Roadmap***

The Enabling Technologies Roadmap (ETRM) is a report commissioned by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education on the advice of the National Enabling Technologies Strategy (NETS) Expert Forum. The Expert Forum is focused particularly on new forms of nanotechnology and biotechnology (including synthetic biology), as well as areas of intersection, and those enabled by ICT and cognitive science. The final report is expected to be released in April 2012. More information is available at:

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Industry/Nanotechnology/NationalEnablingTechnologiesStrategy/Pages/ExpertForum.aspx>.

### ***Refreshing the National Research Priorities***

A process to refresh the National Research Priorities (NRPs) is being undertaken by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education. The current NRPs are ‘An Environmentally Sustainable Australia’; ‘Promoting and Maintaining Good Health’; ‘Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries’; and ‘Safeguarding Australia’. Submissions are invited from stakeholder groups in the national innovation system. For details, see:

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Research/Pages/RefreshingtheNationalResearchPriorities.aspx>.

## **Capacity in people**

### ***Prime Minister’s Prizes for Science***

Nominations are open until 27 April for the 2012 Prime Minister’s Prizes for Science. The Prizes honour Australians who have made significant contributions to building a more prosperous and progressive society through scientific achievements and science education. The prizes are awarded in five categories: the Prime Minister’s Prize for Science; the Malcolm McIntosh Prize for Physical Scientist of the Year; the Science Minister’s Prize for Life Scientist of the Year; the Prime Minister’s Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools; and the Prime Minister’s Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Primary Schools. More detail is available at: [www.innovation.gov.au/scienceprizes](http://www.innovation.gov.au/scienceprizes).

### ***Senate inquiry into agricultural education and skills training***

In September 2011, the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations launched an inquiry into meeting the education and skills requirements for the agriculture sector in Australia. The submission period for the inquiry is now closed, and the expected reporting date is 8 June 2012. Further



information, including the terms of reference, is available at:

[www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet\\_ctte/agribusiness/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/agribusiness/index.htm).

### ***Careers in Agriculture Expo***

The 2012 Careers in Agriculture Expo will be held on 5 April, at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. The Expo works with the agricultural sector to promote career opportunities to young people by bringing industry and trade employers, industry groups, educational institutions and government together. It is an initiative of the RAS Youth Group, and more information can be found at the Royal Easter Show [website](#).

## **International links**

### ***Strategic Framework for International Agricultural Research within Australia's Aid Program***

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) commissioned an independent panel in 2011 to provide guidance for expansion of agricultural research by Australian and international institutions. The Panel released its report, A Strategic Framework for International Agricultural Research within Australia's Aid Program, on 8 February 2012. The Framework found that Australia is a leader in international agricultural research, but greater effort should be made to bring together the public and private sectors in the financing, management and conduct of agricultural research. It also found a more coordinated and collaborative approach of Australian institutions involved in international agricultural research would improve effectiveness. The report is available at: <http://aciar.gov.au/strategicframework>.

## **Other rural R&D and innovation activities**

### ***Australian Research Committee (ARCom)***

Following the publication of the Focusing Australia's Publically Funded Research Review, a new committee, the Australian Research Committee (ARCom) has been established. ARCom is chaired by Australia's Chief Scientist, and will provide the Australian Government with integrated and strategic advice on future research investments. Initially, the committee will develop a national research investment plan. More information on the Focusing Australia's Publically Funded Research Review is available at:

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Research/Pages/FocusingAustraliasPubliclyFundedResearch.aspx>.