

# Terms of Reference

## Developing and implementing participatory R&D Sites

### Background/Introduction

In 2010, MLA acting as agent for the Red Meat Co-investment Committee (RMCiC) developed a Feedbase Investment Plan (the FIP) that followed on from the PISC process of developing national beef and sheep industry RD&E strategies. To build the next level of detail, MLA commissioned the Feedbase R&D Plan which defined 5 key R&D Pillars - Pasture breeding & evaluation; Productive & sustainable pastures; Grazing management & production systems; Weeds & biodiversity; and Decision tools. The goal of the feedbase program has been set as “adding \$25m on-farm value per year by 2020, with kg meat per ha rising at 2.5% pa and with no decline in sustainability indicators”.

MLA (in conjunction with RMCiC partners) has launched a major effort to implement the Feedbase R&D Plan, primarily by developing and contracting specific R&D projects within the Pasture breeding & evaluation Pillar, the Productive & sustainable pastures Pillar and the Grazing management & production systems Pillar.

Equally important for this project brief is the set of principles/philosophies outlined in the FR&DP that underpin the FR&DP and guide the development of individual projects. Some of the principles/philosophies from the FR&DP and that affect this project brief include:

- The FR&DP is based on a new model of collaborative engagement with the RMCiC agencies with a focus on cross agency engagement of the best capabilities and collective development of the actual projects.
- The R&D will be focussed on the needs of the leading 20% of producers, and these producers will be actively engaged at all levels, from project selection and implementation to program oversight and reviews of progress.
- There will be a focus on participatory R&D wherever possible in all themes as a key way to engage leading producers.

The primary strategy for engaging leading producers into the R&D projects in the feedbase program is based on the concept that groups of leading producers will be encouraged/organised/funded to participate in the R&D, including the establishment of on-farm sites that trial, test or extend what is happening at the core research sites. It is anticipated that there may be up to 3-5 ‘participatory sites associated with each project. These producer sites are expected to make significant contributions to the R&D effort by providing information back to the core research team – ie, while they will have a demonstration value, that is not the primary purpose. ***The purpose of the project outlined in this Terms of Reference is firstly to develop this concept into a practical process with wide support across the industry, and secondly to implement the process within a range of the R&D projects that have already been contracted or are in the process of being contracted.***

### Objectives of the brief

1. To take the generalised concept [ie. producer groups linking into the feedbase R&D projects in ways that engage leading producers into participatory R&D; that provide on-farm testing of

innovations; that provide feedback into the R&D process; and that provide a level of demonstration of the R&D outputs] outlined above and develop the practical details needed to implement the process across all the major R&D projects within the southern feedbase program.

2. To build broad support (from leading producer groups and from the researcher involved in the southern feedbase program) for the process.
3. To outline a process that stimulates interaction between producer groups associated with participatory sites across the feedbase R&D program encouraging the exchange of ideas and knowledge and refinement of research outputs.
4. To begin implementing the process in those R&D projects that have already been contracted and to assist the planning for this process in the R&D projects that are still under development.

## Tasks

1. Build a full understanding of the expectations and requirements associated with this project by reviewing the relevant background documents [these include the Feedbase Investment Plan (FIP) and the Feedbase R&D Plan (FR&DP)] and by meeting with MLA (and potentially with RMCiC partners). Included in this task is the need to gain an overview of the projects that are being developed and implemented as part of the Feedbase R&D Plan so that the scope of the R&D activities is broadly understood.
2. Review previous processes/models/projects that have had as a core function, producer engagement via on-farm demonstration and or research sites. These have included EverGraze, Sustainable Grazing on Saline, PIRDs (Producer Initiated Research & Development), Producer Demonstration Sites, and consult with researchers, advisors, producer groups and other interested parties to engage them in the process of designing how such sites might best be organised within the southern feedbase program.
3. Prepare an implementation plan, based on tasks one and two above that captures the lessons from previous participatory R&D activities and that is fit for purpose for the southern feedbase program. This plan should be to a level of detail that includes:
  - a. specify the process(es) for engaging scientists and producers to develop a site,
  - b. the scale of the network of sites - number and draft budget for sites across each project
  - c. the expectations of producer groups and researchers,
  - d. the sort of data that is required from the producer sites
  - e. process to network the producers around the sites, and what is desired by producers and researchers from such networking
  - f. recommendation on who to contract and lead implementation (researchers / producer groups)
  - g. some indication (to be refined over time) of how/when the effectiveness of this process might be evaluated.

This task includes seeking broad scale agreement around the implementation plan, probably including a workshop with key feedbase program researchers, advisors and producers. MLA cannot 'approve' the implementation without the support of these groups as they are essential to its effective rollout.

4. On the basis of an MLA approved process from task 3, implement a workplan to June 30, 2012 that includes:
  - Working with the research teams (for those R&D projects that have already been contracted – ie phosphorus efficiency and grazing crops - to implement the producer engagement

process within their existing projects. [Note, those projects that have already been contracted are aware of the need for linked producer sites, have the concept in their contracts and are anticipating that this project will lay out the details and assist them with implementation].

- For those projects that are in development, working with the research teams to design the producer sites into their projects (these being legume stability, sub tropical pastures, soil biology).
  - Engaging appropriate producer groups for involvement with both the contracted and the developing R&D projects.
5. Prepare a report for MLA that outlines:
- Progress to date
  - Lessons learnt
  - Plans for 2012/13

## Outputs

There are three deliverables associated with this project:

1. An implementation plan (as described in Task 3 above) that has broad support from researchers and leading producers.
2. A workplan for carrying out the implementation plan with groups to be engaged with researchers identified in the grazing crops, a phosphorus efficiency projects, and process agreed with the developing projects
3. A final report that sets out progress including successful establishment (or agreed plans between researchers and producers) of participatory research sites on the phosphorus efficiency, sub-tropical pastures and grazing crops projects, plus lessons learnt during the process, application of the model across other research topics, outline required actions for 2012/13.

## Proposed method and time allocations

The time allocations suggested in the table below are a general guide to applicants rather than a clear instruction and will be subject to on-going negotiation within the overall allocation of 35 days.

Task	Action	Days
1	Review background and liaise with MLA/RMCiC	2
2	Review and consult re previous on-farm activities	2
3	Prepare the implementation plan to build industry support	9
4	Implement a workplan	20
5	Prepare an end of financial year report	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>35</b>

The final number of days may be adjusted in the negotiations associated with finalising a contract.

## Reporting and Liaison

Dr Warren Mason (MLA's feedbase R&D coordinator) will be the primary point of contact for the contractor during 2011/12.

The successful applicant will:

- Attend an initial briefing meeting with MLA

- Provide brief email reports monthly to the MLA coordinator on progress and impending issues that may require direction or further exploration.
- Provide an end of financial year report by 25 June 2012.

All reports are to be provided to MLA electronically.

### **Milestones and payment**

There are three milestones associated with this contract:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Achievement criteria</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Payment</b>
1.	Contract signing	20 Mar 2012	25%
2.	Acceptance of the implementation plan	16 April 2012	25%
3.	Progress report – Progress with implementation	30 May 2012	25%
4.	Final report completed and accepted by MLA	25 June 2012	25%

MLA will make progress payments against successful completion of the milestones the milestones on the basis of accepting the consultant's monthly reports and proposed action plan for the following month. Final payment will be subject to MLA acceptance of the final report and receipt of tax invoices & supporting documentation from the consultant.

### **Selection Criteria and Process:**

Expressions of Interest to undertake the role outlined in this TOR will be assessed against the following criteria. The applicant needs to have and demonstrate in an EOI:

- an understanding of key aspects of the southern feedbase and of the management decisions associated with southern meat producing systems;
- an understanding of the requirements of this project;
- a proven track record of engaging with meat producer groups (experience with on-farm R&D/demonstrations would be an advantage);
- experience of engaging with researchers/advisors;
- experience/expertise across more than one agroecological pasture zones of southern Australian would be an advantage and the producer group processes and activities are quite different in the east compared to the west;
- a proposed methodology to undertake the tasks outlined in this TOR
- a willingness to undertake travel across southern Australia to work with research and producer groups during the implementation of producer sites
- a competitive daily fee, not including GST
- at least 2 referees who can be contacted by MLA to discuss this project.

### **All queries should be directed to:**

Dr Warren Mason  
 Feedbase R&D plan coordinator  
 Mobile: 0419975036  
 Email: [warren@rpcsolutions.com.au](mailto:warren@rpcsolutions.com.au)

**EOI should be lodged with Kelly Hawley [khawley@mla.com.au](mailto:khawley@mla.com.au) by CoB 23 February, 2012**