



Final report

L.SFP.1017 Environmental Credentials for Grassfed Beef – pilot project phase

Project code: L.SFP.1017

Prepared by: Joanna Jones, Georgia McCarthy, Dee Heinjus and Annie Allwright
Pinion Advisory

Date published: 30 April 2024

PUBLISHED BY
Meat & Livestock Australia Limited
PO Box 1961
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

This publication is published by Meat & Livestock Australia Limited ABN 39 081 678 364 (MLA). Care is taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication. However MLA cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the information or opinions contained in the publication. You should make your own enquiries before making decisions concerning your interests. Reproduction in whole or in part of this publication is prohibited without prior written consent of MLA.

Abstract

The national online platform, *Environmental credentials for Australian grassfed beef* (ECGB) has been built to enable grassfed beef producers to measure and report on their environmental credentials. The project is being led by MLA, in partnership with the University of Queensland and WWF-Australia, funded through the National Landcare Program's Smart Farming Partnership grant.

The purpose of this sub-project was to facilitate the piloting of the platform and gather feedback to inform its finalisation before the release in February 2024.

A series of facilitated webinars were held to engage beef producers with the ECGB platform that demonstrated how to navigate through the various parts and addressed the key frequently asked questions. Producers were then able to trial the platform for their own properties in their own time and provide feedback through an online survey. Survey data was analysed and has been used to form recommendations for refining the platform.

Recommendations should inform the changes which can be made to the platform prior to its release in 2024 and future iterations of the platform.

Executive summary

Background

The *Environmental credentials for Australian grassfed beef* (ECGB) project was established to build a national online platform to enable grassfed beef producers to measure and report on their environmental credentials. The project is being led by MLA, in partnership with the University of Queensland and WWF-Australia, funded through the National Landcare Program's Smart Farming Partnership grant.

The purpose of this sub-project was to facilitate the piloting of the platform and gather feedback to inform the finalisation of the platform before subsequent release in February 2024.

Objectives

The objectives of the project were to deliver pilot workshop webinars to red meat producers, capture their feedback and report on feedback to enable finalisation of the platform.

Methodology

The project involved the scheduling, development, and facilitation of online webinar sessions to engage beef producers with the ECGB platform. Participating producers feedback was collected through an online survey and reported to be of use to the platform developers.

Results/key findings

Detailed feedback was received from producers piloting the platform. Valuable insights into the useability, design, content and value of the platform were obtained. In general, producers found the platform engaging, easy to navigate, and it enabled them to build their skill and confidence to make decisions about carbon balance, biodiversity and tree cover and drought resilience on their properties.

Benefits to industry

This pilot process will enable finalisation of the platform to occur using the experiences and recommendations of beef producers across diverse production regions of Australia. Having first-hand producer experience underpinning the design of this platform was the next logical step in this project which has been underpinned by co-design and should lead to the development of a more targeted and user-friendly platform.

Future research and recommendations

The recommendations, which arise from the producer feedback, should underpin the refinement of the platform prior to its release in 2024. Further user-testing after the platform is released would be beneficial to ensure all bugs and gaps have been identified. Future user-testing phases would benefit from being over a longer timeframe to enable producers to have time to engage with the platform in depth and work through all elements of the platform thoroughly.

Table of contents

Abstract	2
Executive summary	3
1. Background	6
1.1 Project context	6
2. Objectives	6
2.1 Overall objective	6
2.1.1 Objective related to demonstrating the platform.....	6
2.1.2 Objective related to collecting feedback from producers.....	6
2.1.3 Objective related to reporting feedback from producers.....	7
3. Methodology	7
3.1 Method for demonstrating the platform to enable piloting by producers	7
3.2 Method for collecting feedback from producers	8
3.3 Method for analysing and reporting feedback to platform developers	9
4. Results	9
4.1 Achievement of project objectives	9
4.2 Producer engagement with the platform	9
4.2.1 Engagement with platform demonstration webinars.....	9
4.2.2 Engagement with the pilot platform	11
4.3 Producer feedback about the platform	12
4.3.1 Navigation and ease of use.....	13
4.3.2 Learning modules content evaluation.....	16
4.3.3 My Credential section evaluation.....	20
4.3.5 Synthesis of feedback and recommendations for platform refinement	21
5. Conclusion	22

5.1 Key findings	22
5.2 Benefits to industry	22
6. Future research and recommendations.....	22
7. References	22
8. Appendices	23
Appendix 1 - Pilot testing webinar presentation slides	23
Appendix 2 - Post webinar information pack.....	23
Appendix 3 – Screenshot of feedback survey.....	23
Appendix 4 - Summary of webinar registration and attendance figures	23
Appendix 5 – Summary of questions and comments raised during webinars.....	23
Appendix 6 - raw data feedback received from producers relating to navigation and ease of use	23
Appendix 7 – raw data feedback received from producers relating to learning library content of carbon balance theme	23
Appendix 8 – raw data feedback received from producers relating to learning library content of biodiversity and tree cover theme	23
Appendix 9 – raw data feedback received from producers relating to learning library content of drought resilience theme	23
Appendix 10 – raw data general feedback received from producers relating to the platform	23
Appendix 11 – analysis of themes from feedback and recommendations for changes.....	23

1. Background

1.1 Project context

The *Environmental credentials for Australian grassfed beef* (ECGB) project was established to build a national online platform to enable grassfed beef producers to measure and report on their environmental credentials. The project is being led by MLA, in partnership with the University of Queensland (UQ) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia, funded through the National Landcare Program's Smart Farming Partnership grant.

Producers have worked together with industry organisations to design and develop a practical tool that can be used to demonstrate on-farm environmental sustainability credentials, enabling market access of sustainably produced beef.

A platform development team, consisting of Servian, Cibo Labs and RMCG have built the online platform using the recommendations developed by the project team and producers through the co-design process, advice from the project advisory group, and work completed by CSIRO. A draft platform was released in September 2023. This sub-project is to facilitate the piloting of the platform and gather feedback to inform the finalisation of the platform and subsequent release in February 2024.

2. Objectives

2.1 Overall objective

The overall objective of this project was to deliver pilot workshop webinars to a minimum of 500 red meat producers and analyse feedback provided by participating producers in a report to inform refinement of the platform. This overall objective was made up of three key sub objectives.

2.1.1 Objective related to demonstrating the platform

This objective related to demonstrating the platform. It involved working with the MLA events team to schedule a series of online Zoom webinars and promote webinars through industry networks and platforms, with the support of the MLA communications team and MLA communication channels.

2.1.2 Objective related to collecting feedback from producers

This objective related to collecting feedback provided by producers who had piloted the platform.

2.1.3 Objective related to reporting feedback from producers

This objective related to reporting producer feedback. It involved submitting a report to MLA on the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) feedback gathered during the piloting process, including feedback on the platform's usability, with recommendations to MLA on platform improvements.

3. Methodology

3.1 Method for demonstrating the platform to enable piloting by producers

The pilot phase time frame was set by MLA and was initially 29th September to 9th October and later extended to close on 23rd October 2023 which allowed four weeks for producers to trial the tool and submit feedback.

A vehicle for providing producers the opportunity to experience the platform and set them up for a positive experience for piloting the platform was required. This was achieved by scheduling a series of online webinars. Sixteen webinar slots were scheduled, with a diversity of time of day and days of the week to attempt to create flexibility for the producer.

Webinars were promoted through industry networks and platforms, with the support of the MLA communications team and MLA communication channels. Webinars were hosted on the zoom platform and producers were required to pre-register for a webinar. This enabled demographic data to be captured, reminders to be sent to registrants the day before their webinar, as well as receiving preparatory tips for maximising the value of the webinar experience. The scheduled webinars are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Webinar dates and times

Webinar	Day	Date	Time (AEST)
1	Friday	22/09/2023	8:00am
2	Friday	22/09/2023	12:00pm
3	Monday	25/09/2023	9:00am
4	Monday	25/09/2023	1:00pm
5	Monday	25/09/2023	7:00pm
6	Tuesday	26/09/2023	8:00am
7	Tuesday	26/09/2023	12:00pm
8	Tuesday	26/09/2023	4:00pm
9	Wednesday	27/09/2023	9:00am
10	Wednesday	27/09/2023	1:00pm
11	Wednesday	27/09/2023	7:00pm
12	Thursday	28/09/2023	9:00am
13	Thursday	28/09/2023	1:00pm
14	Thursday	28/09/2023	7:00pm
15	Friday	29/09/2023	8:00am
16	Friday	29/09/2023	12:00pm

Extensive promotion of the opportunity to be involved occurred. MLA and Pinion advisory social media channels were utilised as well as direct email to existing MLA databases of interested producers wanting to be involved in the pilot.

Each webinar was facilitated by a Pinion Advisory consultant, familiar with the platform. The webinars focussed on demonstrating to producers how to access and navigate the platform, showing the capabilities and the value proposition of using the platform along with trouble-shooting tips. The presentation can be found in appendix 1.

A second consultant from Pinion Advisory was present on each webinar to monitor the chat function to answer questions, where possible. At every webinar, producers would ask questions via the chat function or at the conclusion of the presentation during live Q&A. Webinar duration was between 40 minutes and 1 hour, depending on the number and complexity of questions. At the conclusion of each webinar, a short poll was launched through zoom to capture the participants initial feelings about the platform. The questions posed were:

- How valuable did you find today's webinar? (please rate from 1-5)
- How confident do you feel in piloting the Environmental credentials platform after today's introductory webinar? (please rate from 1-5)
- How motivated do you feel to pilot the Environmental credentials platform after today's introductory webinar? (please rate 1-5)

After each webinar, a follow up email was sent to all registrants of the webinar, regardless of if they attended or not. The email contained instructions for accessing the platform, how to share their feedback and the dates for completing the process. A recording of the presentation was also provided for anyone who did not attend, including the extended list of EOI participants who did not sign up for an introductory webinar. The information pack sent to producers can be found in appendix 2.

During the pilot period the team, including the MLA project team, MLA support desk and Pinion Advisory consultants were available to support users to trouble shoot when piloting the platform.

3.2 Method for collecting feedback from producers

Collecting feedback from producers piloting the platform required the team to set up a system for users to submit feedback. The preferred platform for collecting feedback was Microsoft Forms as it satisfied requirements of the MLA Privacy policy.

A survey was designed to gather feedback from users about ease of access, useability, functionality, and the value and satisfaction of the learning modules, carbon balance calculator and biodiversity self-assessment questionnaire.

It was deemed important that the survey was logical in flow, used plain language, and was not too onerous to complete. Survey logic was used to aid the flow of questions and to prevent irrelevant questions being posed unnecessarily. The survey was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, through a mix of multiple choice, Likert scale, rating scale and short answer questions.

When completing the survey, respondents entered their name, postcode and number of cattle managed on their property. Depending on the level of detail respondents shared in their feedback,

the survey took between 5 and 30 minutes to complete. A screenshot of the survey information is shown in appendix 3.

Email reminders were sent to webinar registrants about the closing date of the survey, encouraging them to share their feedback.

3.3 Method for analysing and reporting feedback to platform developers

At the conclusion of the pilot period raw data was downloaded from Microsoft Forms and analytics data was retrieved from the platform.

Survey data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to draw out themes from feedback as well as ratings and values.

Feedback received via email was de-identified and incorporated into the dataset. Feedback received in the webinars via the chat function or Q&A was also included in the analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Achievement of project objectives

The overall objective of this project, to deliver pilot workshop webinars and analyse feedback to inform refinement of the platform was achieved. The target of a minimum of 500 red meat producers piloting the platform as set by the milestones of the Smart Farming Partnership grant was not achieved. With 218 people piloting the platform, this objective was 44 % achieved.

Although this target number was not achieved the level of detail received through the feedback survey plus several informative emails received still resulted in highly valuable information being captured to enable revision of the platform.

4.2 Producer engagement with the platform

4.2.1 Engagement with platform demonstration webinars

Registrations for webinars varied, with some achieving strong registrations and others only a few. A summary of registrations and attendance figures can be found in appendix 4. Webinars with very low registrations were cancelled. Registrants for these were emailed to encourage them to register for an alternative session and assistance was offered to re-register for an alternative webinar. Thirteen webinars were delivered in total, with a total of 262 registrants.

The data in Table 2 was collected from 262 pilot participants who registered to attend an introductory webinar on the platform.

Table 2: Demographic and impact data collected from registrants for the zoom introductory webinars

Total cattle managed by registered webinar participants	Average herd size managed by registered webinar participants
476,361	3,708

Total hectares managed by registered webinar participants	Average size of area managed by registered webinar participants
1,537,270 hectares	11,645 hectares

Attendance rates were lower than registration rates. The highest attendance was 37 and the lowest 1, although it should be noted that there were some instances of more than one attendee sharing a device. The total attendance at demonstration webinars was 141. All states of Australia were represented at the webinars, with the highest representation from New South Wales. There was a high level of engagement in the Q&A session at some webinars, and at others there were no questions posed. A summary of questions and comments posed during the online webinars can be found in appendix 5.

The results from the poll at the conclusion of each webinar showed that 73 percent of respondents found the webinar valuable or very valuable as shown in figure 1.



Figure 1: perceived value of attending the webinar demonstrating the platform

Fifty two percent of respondents felt confident or very confident to pilot the platform after attending the webinar as shown in figure 2.

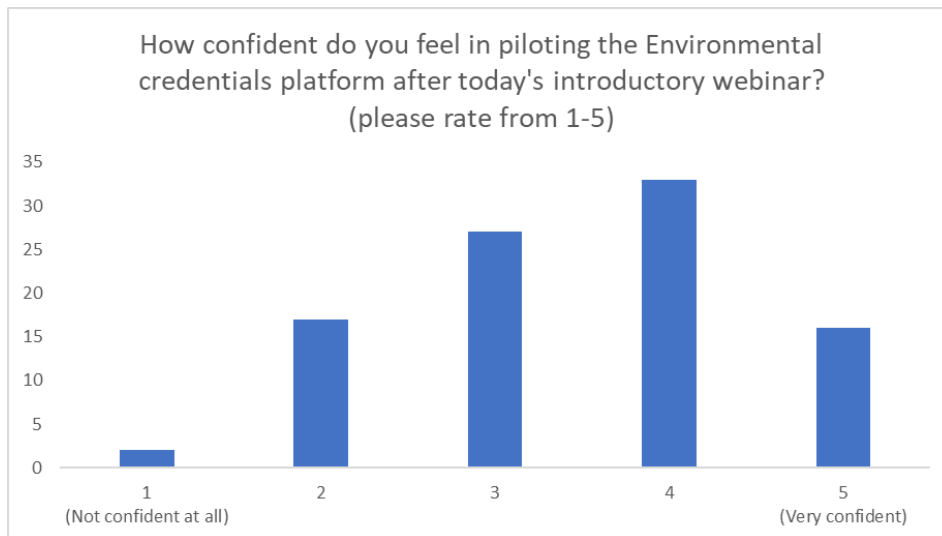


Figure 2: level of confidence to pilot the platform following the webinar demonstrating the platform

Seventy percent of respondents felt motivated or very motivated to pilot the platform after attending the webinar as shown in figure 3.

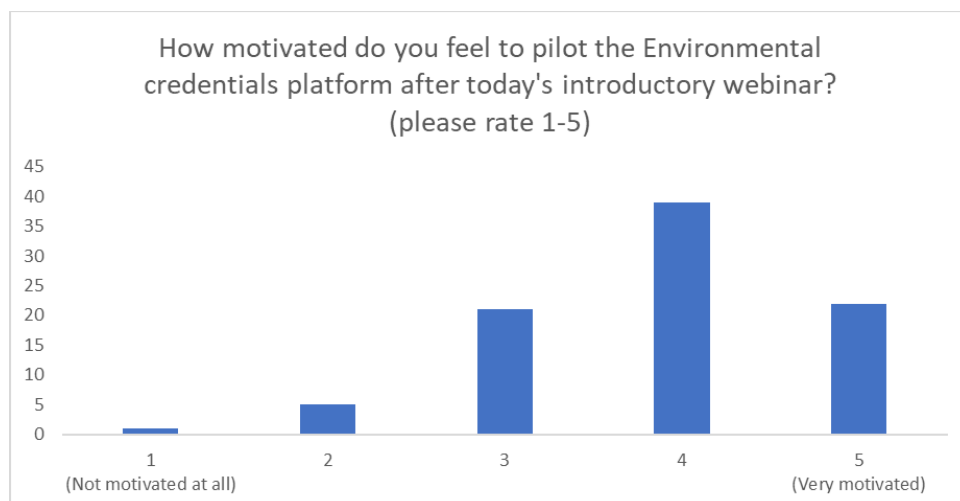


Figure 3: level of motivation to pilot the platform following the webinar demonstrating the platform

4.2.2 Engagement with the pilot platform

A total of 218 different users accessed the platform during the pilot phase. Analytics showed that these users accessed the platform using desktop computers (91%), tablets (1%) and mobile devices (8%). During the webinar, attendees were told that the platform is designed to be used on desktop computers and not mobiles, and that the user experience on mobile devices would be inferior.

The average engagement time was 11 minutes 55 seconds, with the average time spent on the learning library being 8 minutes 51 seconds and the average time spent on the MyProperty section 4 minutes 22 seconds. The average number of sessions per user was 2.5.

4.3 Producer feedback about the platform

A total of 38 users submitted feedback via the survey after trialling the platform.

The following data has been collated from 38 official feedback survey responses and qualitative feedback received via email by the project team.

Nearly all people trialling the platform were owner managers or owners of the business as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: role of the person participating in the piloting of the platform.

People piloting the platform managed a variety of herd sizes, with the most common being herds between 501 and 1000 head of cattle, as shown in figure 5.

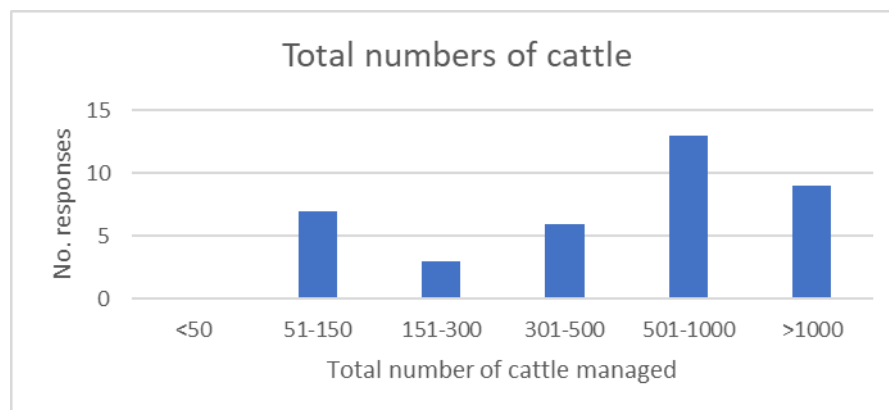


Figure 5: total number of cattle managed by those completing the survey

The key themes of the feedback were:

- navigation and ease of use
- learning library content evaluation
- credentialing

Some points within themes were reinforced by many users, whereas others emerged as unique experiences for individual users.

4.3.1 Navigation and ease of use

As shown in figure 6, 84 percent of users found the platform easy or very easy to log in to.

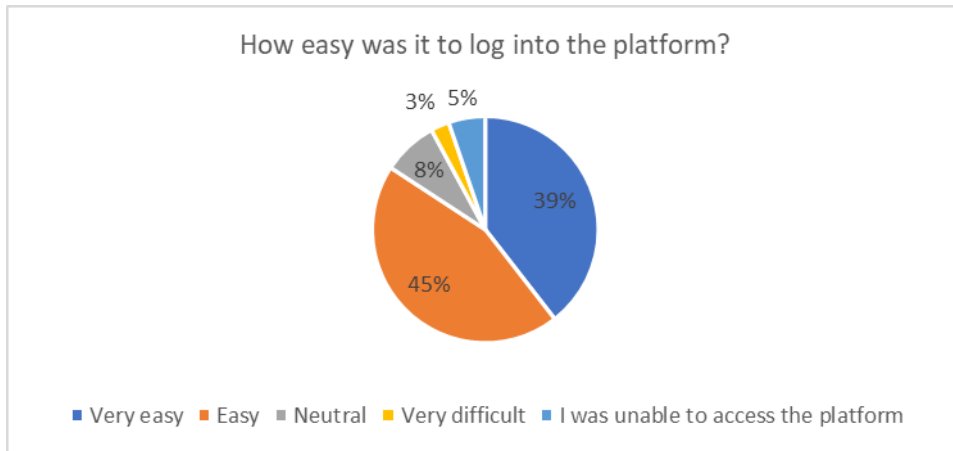


Figure 6: ease to log in to the platform

Of those people who tried to set up their property boundaries, the majority of them found it easy or very easy. Five individuals were not able to set their property boundaries.

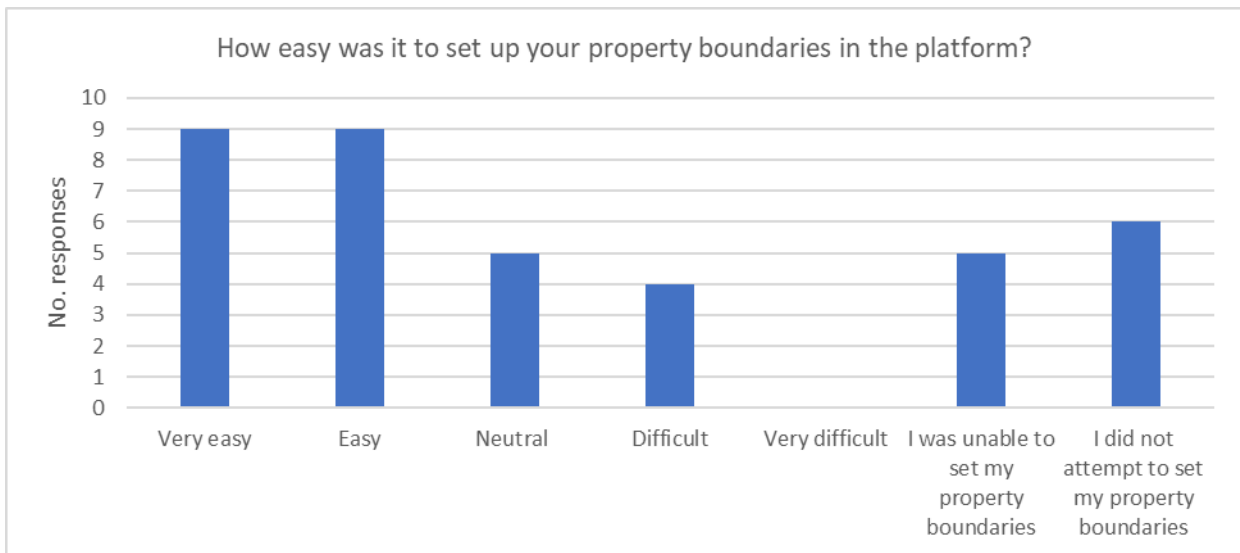


Figure 7: level of ease to set up property boundaries

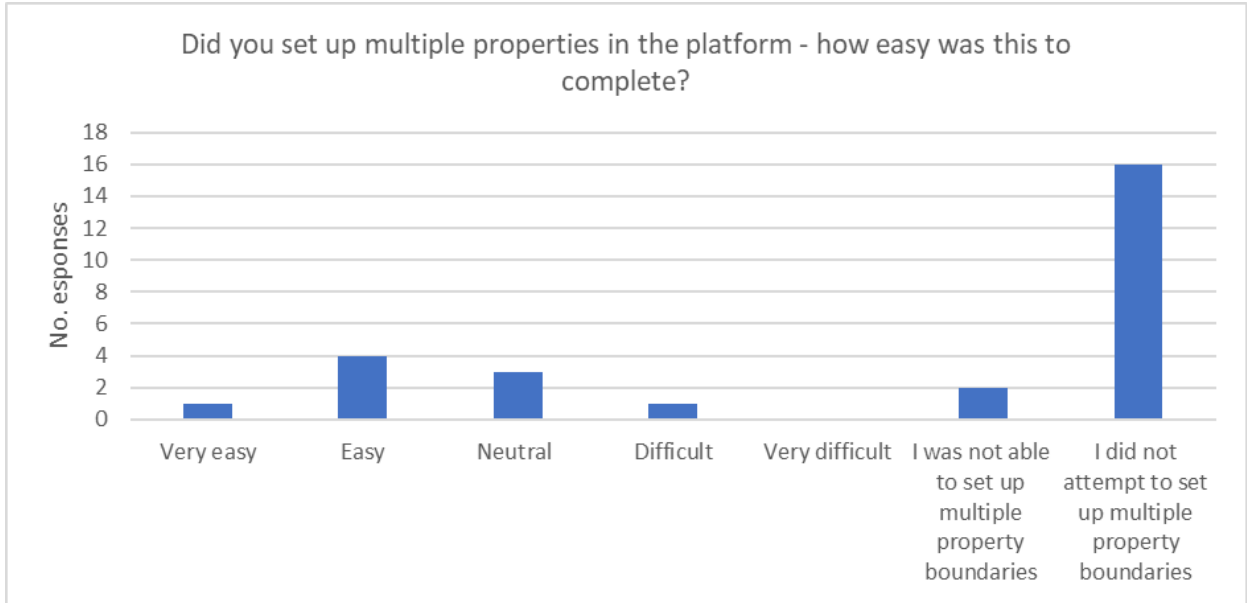


Figure 8: level of ease to set up multiple property boundaries

Nearly all participants found it easy or very easy to navigate through the learning library as shown in figure 9.

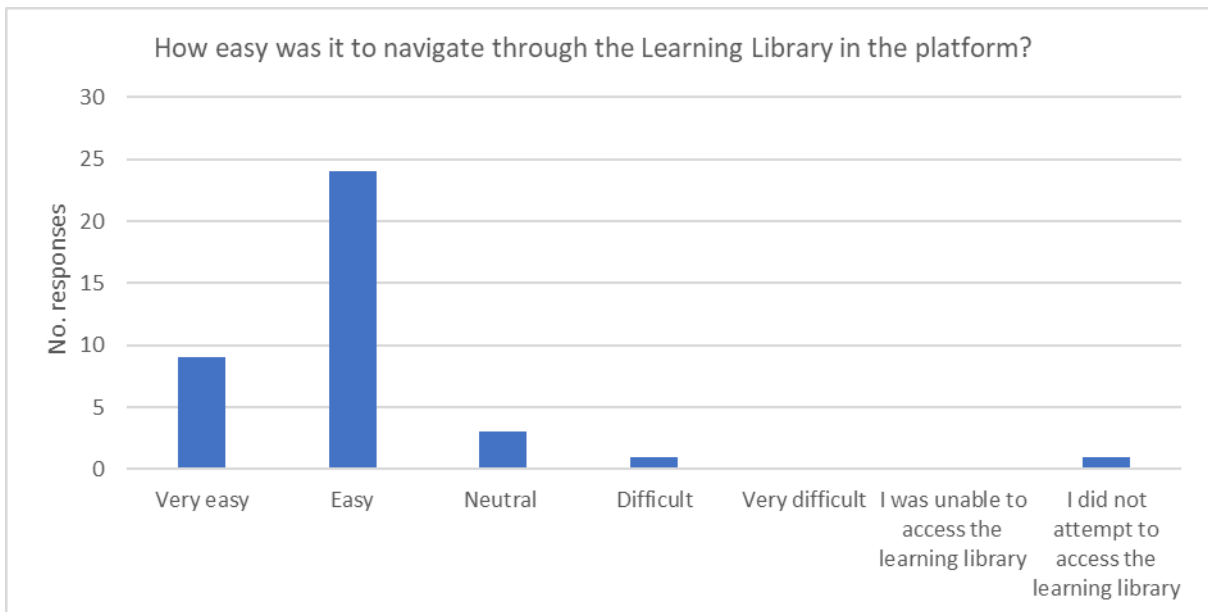


Figure 9: level of ease to navigate through the learning library

The majority of participants found it easy, very easy or neutral to navigate through the My Credentials section of the platform as shown in figure 10.

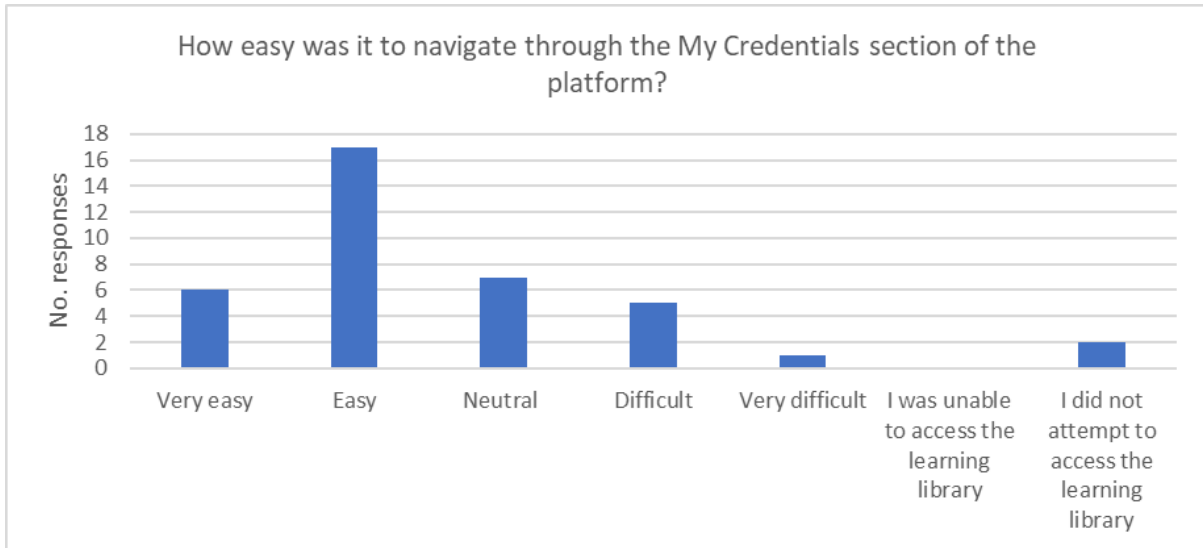


Figure 10: level of ease to navigate through the MyCredentials section of the platform

Fifty three percent of participants found the overall experience of the platform easy to use, 37 percent were neutral and 18 percent found it difficult or very difficult to use, as shown in figure 11.

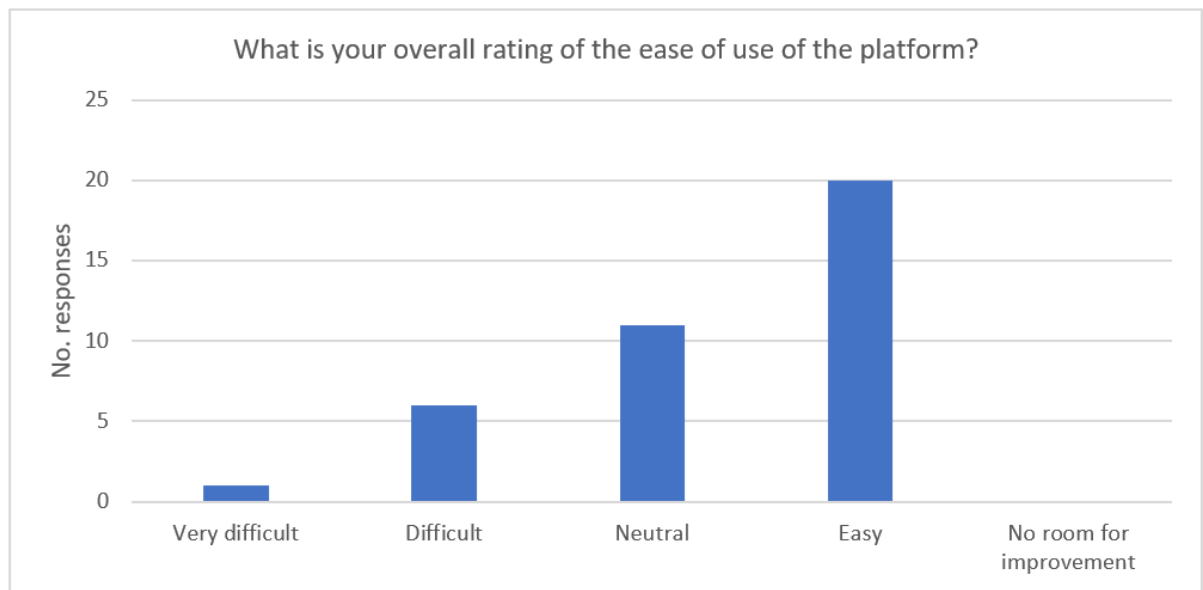


Figure 11: overall ease of use rating for the platform

Specific comments shared relating to navigation ability and ease of use are presented in appendix 6.

4.3.2 Learning modules content evaluation

Participants provided feedback about the carbon balance theme learning modules, with 58 percent of respondents providing positive feedback about the modules being useful. The majority of respondents found the content engaging, of appropriate complexity and taking an appropriate length of time to complete as shown in figures 12 a, b, c and d.

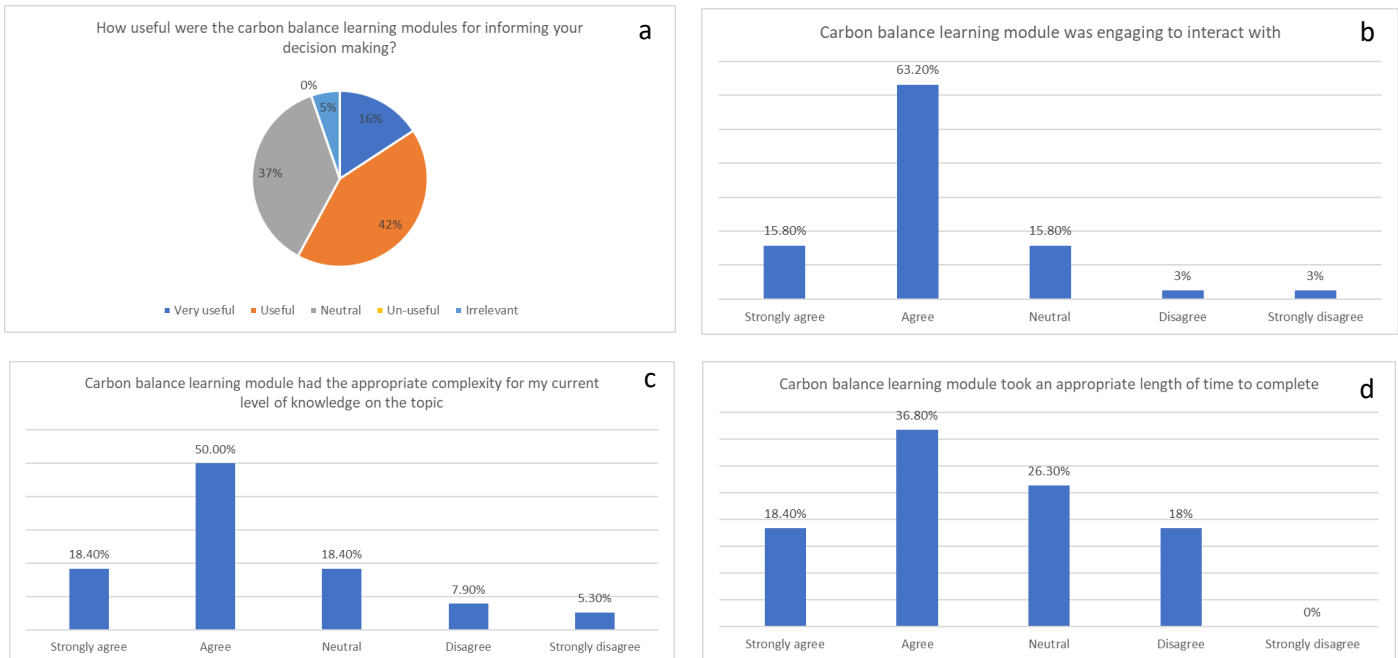


Figure 12: feedback received about the carbon balance theme learning module content a) usefulness b) how engaging c) appropriateness of complexity d) appropriate length of time to complete.

Feedback showed that the carbon balance learning modules increased participants confidence and knowledge to engage with the My Credentials section of the platform (see figure 13), and that 66% of respondents felt there were not any gaps in the carbon balance theme learning module content (see figure 14). Specific feedback about the gaps in the content are reported in appendix 7.

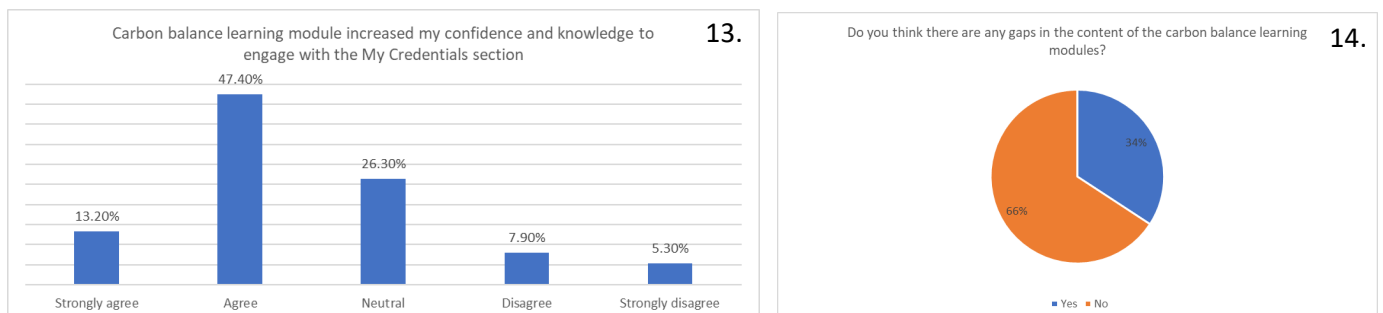


Figure 13: feedback about confidence and knowledge to engage with the My Credentials section Figure 14: feedback about gaps in the carbon balance learning module content.

Feedback showed that the majority of people found the voice over content in the carbon balance theme learning modules helped them engage with the material as shown in figure 15.

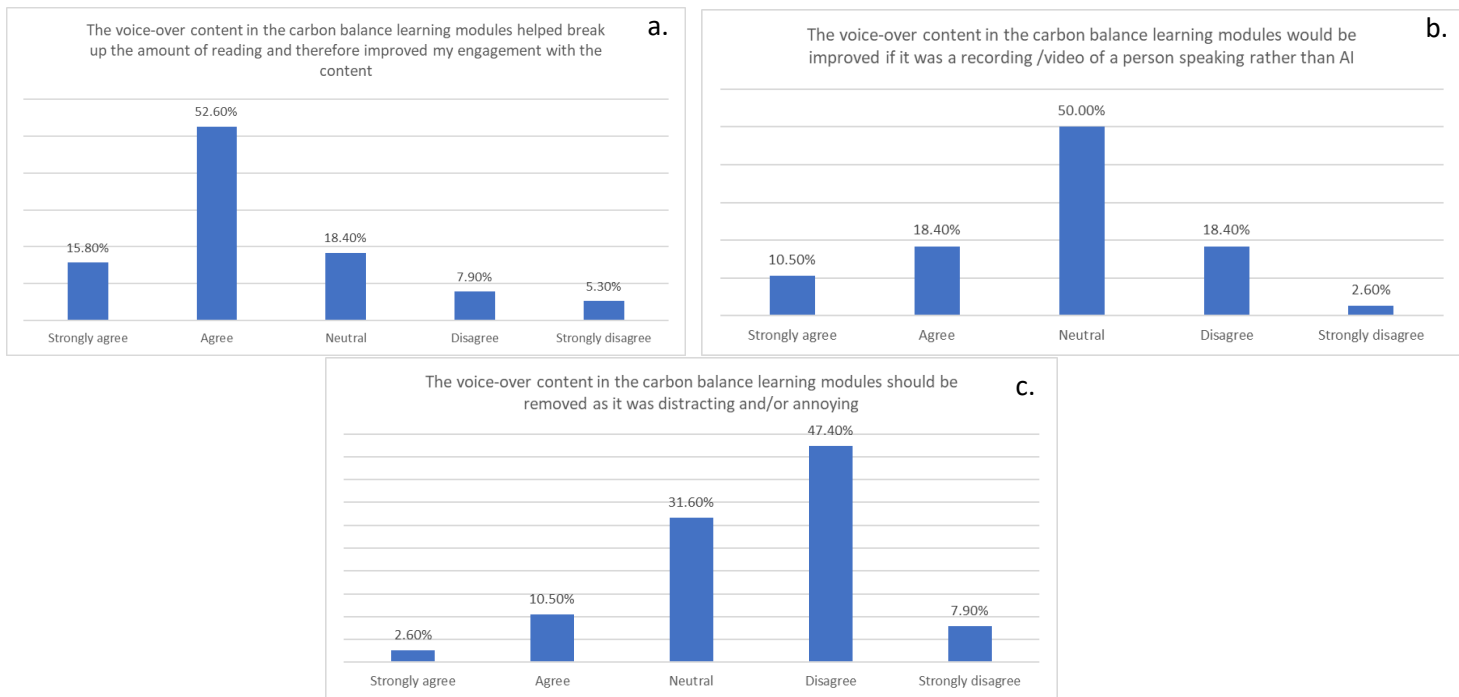


Figure 15: feedback relating to the voice over component of the carbon balance theme learning modules a) agreement with improving engagement with the content b) agreement with if having a human voice rather than AI would be an improvement c) agreement with if the AI voice over should be removed.

Participants provided feedback about the biodiversity stewardship and tree cover theme learning modules, with 69% of respondents providing positive feedback about the modules being useful. The majority of respondents found the content engaging, relevant to their business, of appropriate complexity and taking an appropriate length of time to complete as shown in figures 16 a, b, c, d, e and f.



Figure 16: feedback received about the biodiversity and tree cover theme learning module content a) usefulness b) how engaging c) relevance to business d) appropriateness of complexity e) appropriate length of time to complete f) increase in confidence and knowledge to engage with My Credentials section of the platform.

Feedback showed that the biodiversity and tree cover learning modules increased participants confidence and knowledge to engage with the My Credentials section of the platform (see figure 16 f), and that 75% of respondents felt there were not any gaps in the biodiversity and tree cover theme learning module content (see figure 17). Specific feedback about the gaps in the content are reported in appendix 8.

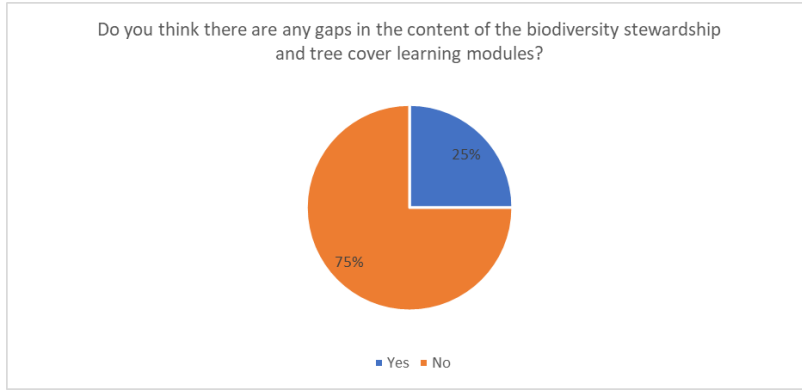


Figure 17: feedback about gaps in the biodiversity stewardship and tree cover learning module content

Participants provided feedback about the drought resilience theme learning modules, with 50% of respondents providing positive feedback about the modules being useful. The majority of respondents found the content engaging, relevant to their business, of appropriate complexity and taking an appropriate length of time to complete as shown in figures 18 a, b, c, d, e and f.

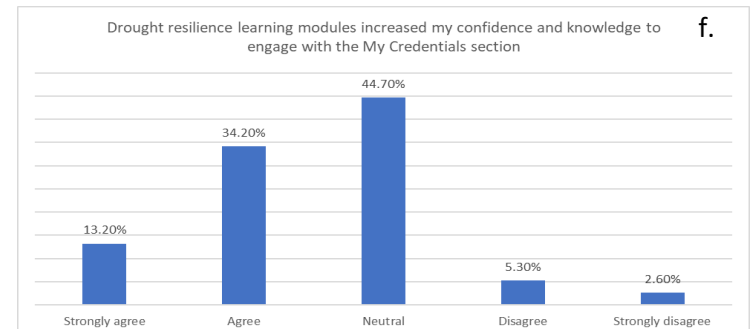
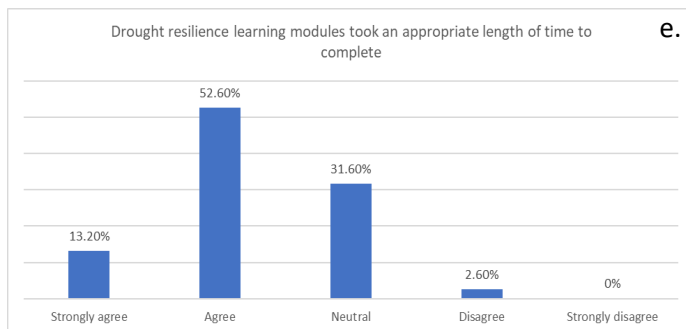
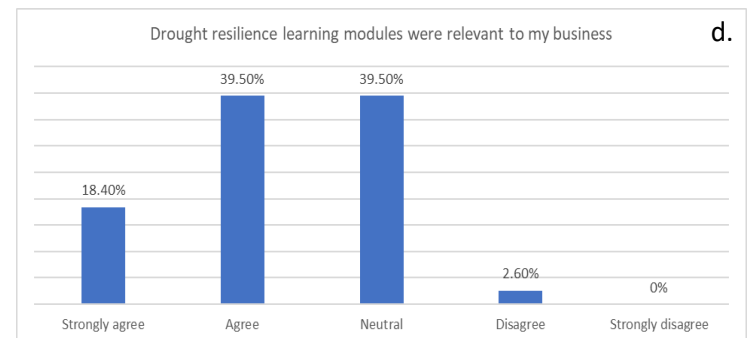
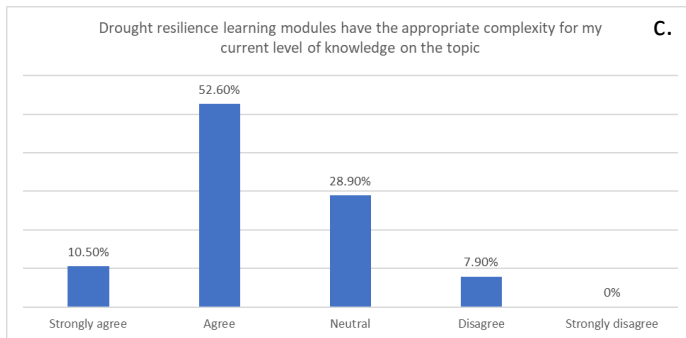
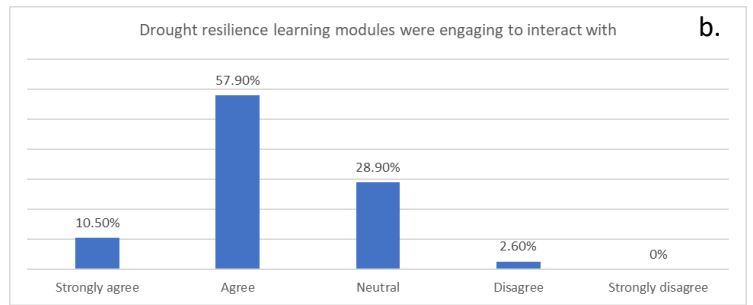
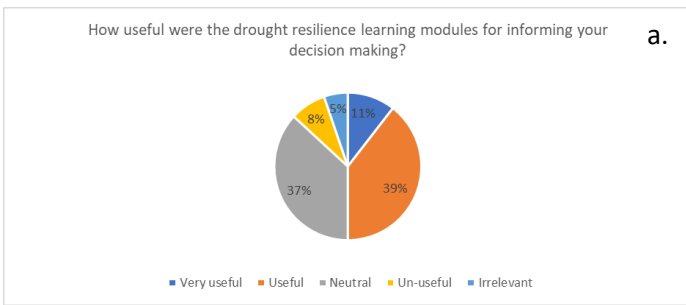


Figure 18: feedback received about the drought resilience theme learning module content a) usefulness b) how engaging c) appropriateness of complexity d) relevance to business e) appropriate length of time to complete f) increase in confidence and knowledge to engage with My Credentials section of the platform.

When interpreting the feedback regarding the drought resilience learning module content, it is important to note that the material was not ready at the time introductory webinars for the platform pilot were delivered and that the content remains incomplete at the time of writing this report due to content being under development. Feedback presented here reflects experiences of producers piloting the platform prior to learning modules for drought resilience being completed.

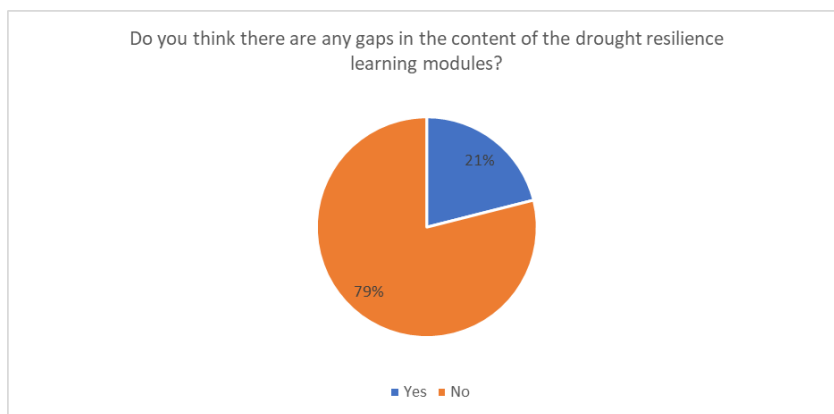


Figure 19: feedback about gaps in the drought resilience learning module content

Feedback showed that 79 percent of respondents felt there were not any gaps in the drought resilience learning module content (see figure 19). Specific feedback about the gaps in the content are reported in appendix 9.

4.3.3 My Credential section evaluation

Respondents shared feedback about the My Credential section of the platform. Data showed that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the three-tier approach as seen in figure 20, and 95 percent of respondents attempted tier 1, 79 percent of respondents attempted tier 2, 13 percent of respondents attempted tier 3. Feedback indicated that the majority of respondents would like the ability to commence their credential journey at tier two or three.

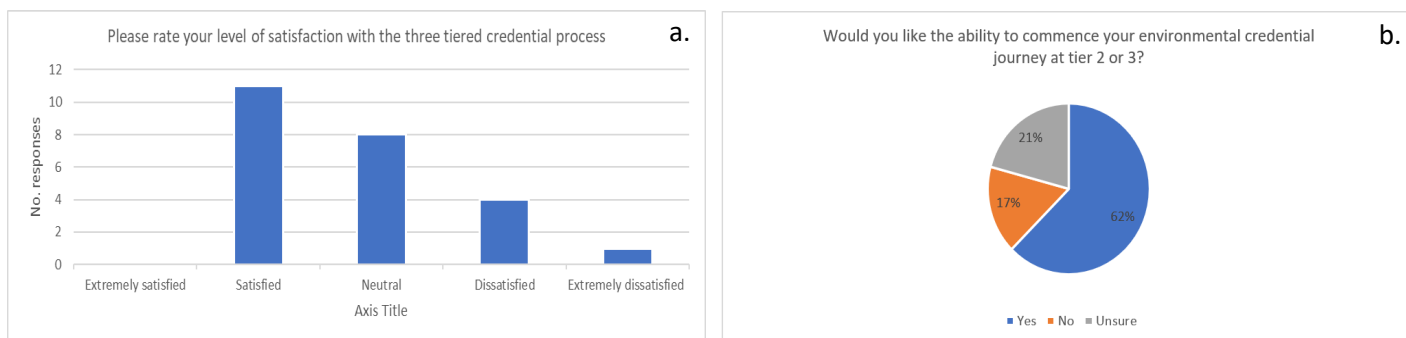


Figure 20: a) feedback about level of satisfaction with the three-tiered credential approach b) agreement with the ability to commence the credential journey at tier 2 and 3.

Sixty percent of respondents said they would like the ability to share their learning module progress with a third party and 87% of respondents said they would like to see the sharing capability extended to allow credential reports to be downloaded as PDFs.

Fifty percent of respondents said it was clear how to access help with using the platform.

When asked how important the ability to demonstrate environmental credentials was to their business, the majority of respondents reported it was important or very important. Sixty-one percent of respondents felt motivated to engage with the platform for three years to complete tier three after having completed the platform pilot, as shown in figure 21b.



Figure 21: a) importance to business to be able to demonstrate environmental credentials b) motivation to engage with the platform to complete tier 3.

General additional feedback received is shared as raw data in appendix 10.

4.3.5 Synthesis of feedback and recommendations for platform refinement

The detailed feedback provided by producers piloting the platform is a great source of evidence from which to base recommendations for refinement of the environmental credentials for Australian grassfed beef platform. Some of the feedback can be used to action simple changes to content, design or processes prior to the platform's release in 2024. Other feedback can be used to inform future iterations of the platform.

Feedback from the survey and also through emails received directly by the project team have been used to identify key themes of recommendations. These themes include:

- Improving platform access
- Improvements to ease of use / navigation
- Refinement of the learning library
- Modifications to the MLA Carbon Calculator
- Improvements to the biodiversity self-assessment quiz
- Changes to the My Credentials section

Due to the depth and breadth of feedback received, it was felt important to present the recommendations designed to inform platform changes as a stand-alone document. Details about the recommendations can be found in appendix 11.

5. Conclusion

Valuable feedback was obtained from producers piloting the environmental credentials for Australian grassfed beef platform. A good cross-section of producers participated in the pilot, with producers from all states participating, and varying property sizes. In general, positive responses about access, usability, learning module content and value of information generated were received. Valuable insights into glitches, gaps, and frustrations were obtained which will enable the platform to be refined prior to its release in 2024.

5.1 Key findings

Feedback from the pilot process identified key themes to base the focus of recommendations on. These themes include:

- Improving platform access
- Improvements to ease of use / navigation
- Refinement of the learning library
- Modifications to the carbon calculator
- Improvements to the biodiversity self-assessment quiz
- Changes to the MyCredential section

Many of the simple issues and value-adds suggested could be actioned in the short term, and other issues and suggestions may need to be held over for the next iteration of the platform.

5.2 Benefits to industry

The pilot testing phase enabled user testing of the platform which will in turn allow for valuable feedback to inform improvement and finalisation of the platform prior to public release. This work should lead to the development of a better product and increased satisfaction with the platform and greater value to be gained by industry using the tool.

6. Future research and recommendations

The feedback from this pilot testing should inform the refinement and finalisation of the platform. Valid and valuable suggestions which are not able to be incorporated into the platform refinement at the current time should be recorded and used to inform the development of future iterations of the platform.

7. References

NA

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Pilot testing webinar presentation slides

Appendix 2 - Post webinar information pack

Appendix 3 – Screenshot of feedback survey

Appendix 4 - Summary of webinar registration and attendance figures

Appendix 5 – Summary of questions and comments raised during webinars

Appendix 6 - raw data feedback received from producers relating to navigation and ease of use

Appendix 7 – raw data feedback received from producers relating to learning library content of carbon balance theme

Appendix 8 – raw data feedback received from producers relating to learning library content of biodiversity and tree cover theme

Appendix 9 – raw data feedback received from producers relating to learning library content of drought resilience theme

Appendix 10 – raw data general feedback received from producers relating to the platform

Appendix 11 – analysis of themes from feedback and recommendations for changes