Supporting industry integrity and sustainability

MLA invests in programs that support industry’s environmental, animal welfare, community communications and workforce sustainability practices.

Objectives under this strategic imperative include:

4.1 Support on-farm environmental sustainability
4.2 Support off-farm environmental sustainability
4.3 Provide industry with solutions to meet high standards of animal welfare without reducing productivity levels
4.4 Support industry’s effective engagement with the community
4.5 Develop sustainable innovation capability within the industry and its service providers

Australian Government National Research Priorities:
- An environmentally sustainable Australia
- Frontier technologies for building and transforming Australian industries

Australian Government Rural Research and Development Priorities:
- National resource management
- Climate variability and climate change
- Innovation skills
- Technology

Delivering MLA business units:
- On-farm Innovation and Adoption
- Communications and Stakeholder Engagement
- Value Chain Innovation

INVESTMENT

An Australian first
The commissioning of a new waste-to-energy plant at Oakey Abattoir is the first time the COHRAL™ technology from Europe has been used in Australian meat processing (see page 59).

Less methane
The federally funded and MLA-managed $32.8 million National Livestock Methane Program found leucaena plantations in northern cattle systems can lift productivity by up to 22 per cent and lower methane emissions by up to 20 per cent (page 57).

Rabbit control
The isolation of K5, a strain of rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), will target rabbits in cooler, wetter regions where RHDV is currently less effective, helping to minimise the impact of Australia’s most destructive pest (page 57).

Pain relief
Buccalgesic pain relief gel available for calves launched and NumNuts, a fast-acting pain-relieving local anaesthetic for lambs, was ready for commercialisation (pages 60-61).

Weed breakthrough
Two parkinsonia biological control projects offer potential solutions to a rampant weed problem in northern Australia (pages 56-57).

Utility reduction
Electricity usage in participating processing plants has been reduced by at least 3 per cent (pages 58-59).
The 2015 release of K5, the establishment of new dung beetle species in temperate Australia will improve pasture growth and soil health.

MLA-funded rabbit control research has found a way of ‘recycling’ viruses, addressing issues of rising immunity among rabbit populations and significantly reducing the cost of introducing new viruses.

The 2015 release of K5, a Korean strain of rabbit haemorrhagic disease, should reduce the rabbit population in Australia’s temperate regions. Further research into refining and progressing the rabbit virus ‘recycling’ discovery will continue.

Discoveries from the National Livestock Methane Program have the potential to feed into the Emissions Reduction Fund methodologies.

**CHALLENGES**

> Replacing, refining and relieving painful animal husbandry practices.
> The red meat industry uses significant quantities of fuel and electricity in processing activities such as rendering.
> The success of dieback-inducing fungi control of parkinsonia has been proven but a commercial partner is needed to further develop this work into a market-ready product.
> For successful distribution of new dung beetle species, researchers need to better understand failures of the past and why many previously imported species have failed to persist.
> Discoveries from the National Livestock Methane Program need to be translated into extension activities, such as Farm300, to utilise productivity opportunities.

**OUTLOOK 2015-16**

> Develop a cost-effective method to increase adherence of dehorning patches.
> Pain relief product for sheep, developed through the MDC-Troy partnership, is due for release later in 2015.
> Research to optimise how to deliver pain relief to cattle during castration and dehorning.
> MLA and industry partners will continue to work on identifying energy efficiency opportunities and implement new energy-smart technologies.
> Target 100 will market learning guides with MLA-developed content to schools around Australia (via video-conferenced lessons).
> A second YouTube series showing on-farm practices and addressing community questions, following from #GoodMeat, will be developed in 2015-16.
> Refining mass rearing techniques will enable the new imported dung beetle species to be distributed over more locations.
> During 2015-16 MLA will continue its research and extension work on livestock methane emissions.
> MLA will continue its partnership with the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre.
> An additional 145 growers have agreed to conduct demonstration trials for the coming silverleaf nightshade season.

**FAST FACTS 2014-15**

#GoodMeat YouTube videos have received 200,000 views

The lack of dung beetles in temperate Australia in late winter/early spring represents an annual loss of 17-25% of potential benefit.

National Livestock Methane Program research shows that with the right tools and strategies, up to 40% or more of feed energy that is lost in methane, can be captured and put to productive purpose.

**People are eating less red meat for perceived environmental or animal welfare reasons**

**Environment** ↑ 3.9% in 2015 from 2.6% in 2010

**Welfare** ↑ 3.3% in 2015 from 0.7% in 2010

Source: Pollinate research, 2015

**Major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia (CO2-e Mt)**

- Waste 13 Mt (2%)
- Industrial processes 33 Mt (6%)
- Fugitive emissions 41 Mt (8%)
- Transport 88 Mt (16%)
- Agriculture: enteric methane 55 Mt (10%)
- Agriculture: other 20 Mt (5%)
- Stationary energy 293 Mt (53%)

Source: Australian National Greenhouse Accounts: National Inventory Report 2011 (Vol 1)

 Mt = million tonnes
Stationary energy includes fossil fuel combustion in electricity and heat production
Supporting industry integrity and sustainability

OBJECTIVE 4.1
Support on-farm environmental sustainability

MLA supports the livestock industry to further its environmental sustainability through R&D focused on improving natural resource management, responding to climate change and increasing productivity while demonstrating environmental stewardship.

**STRATEGIES**

- **4.1.1 Manage** natural resources
- **4.1.2 Respond** to climate change

**KEY MILESTONES**

**Documented evidence indicating 10,000ha of perennial summer weed infected areas in southern Australia are under best management during the 2014-15 control season**

*Achieved*

RESULT: Up to 51,000ha of infected land is under best management from the 2014-15 season

**Implementation of parkinsonia control in northern Australia with the registration and commercialisation process underway for a bioherbicide and looper caterpillars released at six locations**

*Achieved*

RESULT: Two species of looper caterpillars have been released at 72 sites across northern Australia. One species ‘uu’ has been confirmed as established and is spreading. A registration application of a bioherbicide for parkinsonia has been completed and is being assessed by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

**Release of starter colonies of the dung beetle O. vacca at three sites across southern Australia, and commencement of mass rearing of O. vacca and B. bubalus with collaborators for public releases in spring 2015**

*Not achieved*

RESULT: Release of starter colonies has occurred at three locations. No (lab) mass rearing program was commenced due to budget reduction

**Development of a strategy for investment in climate adaptation with contracting of two significant projects**

*Not achieved*

RESULT: A climate adaptation strategy has been developed and presented to peak councils for review. No projects have been contracted due to budget reduction

**Incidence of heat stress events in Australian feedlots for a range of future climate variability scenarios established and reported to industry**

*Achieved*

RESULT: Project was completed and the final report is available on the MLA website

**Benefit of lignite as an ameliorant for feedlot manure nitrogen-based greenhouse gas emissions established and reported to industry**

*Not achieved*

RESULT: Experimental work has been completed and the final report is currently being reviewed. Information will be made available to industry later in 2015

**INVESTMENT**

$6.4 million

- Producer levies $2.6m
- Government funding $2.6m
- Other sources $1.2m

‘Other sources’ includes funding from the Department of Agriculture for the National Livestock Methane Program.

An additional $56,000 was attracted in voluntary contributions ($28,000) and matched Government funding ($28,000) for investment via the MLA Donor Company.

In 2014-15 this investment included:

- controlling major weed species
- new invasive animal controls
- self-assessment tools for natural resource management
- research into reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate variability
**OBJECTIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

**Parkinsonia – bioherbicide and loopers**

Parkinsonia, one of the 20 Weeds of National Significance that occupies more than 3.5 million hectares across northern Australia, was the target of an MLA-funded bioherbicide project. Involving large-scale field trials across Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland, the project proved the feasibility of using a dieback fungi, in capsule form, as a control agent. Successful dieback was achieved in all trees and a co-treatment with a low dose of herbicide (glysophate) stimulated infection, particularly in very healthy populations. In densely populated locations, tree-to-tree spread was also successful. Storage and viability testing of the bioherbicide capsule found it remained active after 12 months at 4 degrees celsius and was still viable after nine months at 25 degrees, demonstrating it would be compatible with standard transport and storage conditions. Two successive MLA projects (2007–2010 and 2010–2013) funded the discovery and testing of biocontrol agents for parkinsonia.

MLA is also supporting the mass rearing and release of two parkinsonia loopers, non-descript moths whose juveniles are caterpillars that defoliate parkinsonia. More than 600,000 agents have been released across Queensland and Western Australia with six nursery sites across four regions. Releases will progress in the Northern Territory from 2016. Plant inspections up to 5km from release sites have shown the agent is established and spreading.

**Release of dung beetle starter colonies**

An MLA-funded dung beetle project aims to improve soil health and pasture growth in temperate Australia through the importation of two new climate-matched dung beetle species. It is hoped Onthophagus vacca and Bubas bubalas, from France and Spain, will address a dearth of early spring-active beetles, particularly in the cattle grazing areas of temperate Australia. More than 50 species have been imported and released across Australia since the 1970s and 23 species have established. Tunnelling and dung burial by the beetles improves water penetration, soil aeration and movement of nutrients to the root zone, improving pasture growth and soil health. MLA has funded CSIRO to import the beetles, acclimatise them and refine mass rearing methods to speed up generation time and reduce premature deaths. Beetles were released at five sites across southern Australia during 2014 and field rearing was established at three sites in South Australia. It is hoped beetles will be recovered within three to five years, enabling further distribution.

**National Livestock Methane Program**

Managing livestock methane emissions has become an increasingly important issue for Australian producers which is why MLA became a key partner in the Commonwealth Government’s $32.8 million National Livestock Methane Program. From 2012 to 2015, researchers confirmed close links between lower methane emissions and productivity gains and formulated management practices and techniques producers can use now to improve sustainability and increase productivity. One example includes using leucaena plantations in northern cattle systems to lift productivity by up to 22 per cent and lower methane emissions by up to 20 per cent. Research findings are also being applied and extended in other areas such as influencing Emissions Reduction Fund methods, allowing producers to claim carbon credits as well as reap the production benefits.

**Pest animal control**

MLA is committed to reducing the impact of pest animals on the red meat industry through its investment in the Invasive Animals CRC, a $72 million, 27-partner collaboration. Through this mechanism MLA continues to support both tactical and strategic research for new control methods. Rabbits continue to be Australia’s most destructive pest, costing agriculture more than $200 million annually. During 2014-15, MLA-funded research resulted in the discovery of new biological controls which will form part of our future integrated management approach. Bioprospecting revealed a new South Korean strain of rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV), formerly known as calicivirus. The new K5 strain will target rabbits in cooler, wetter regions where a benign strain of calicivirus has provided temporary protection from RHDV infection. Other MLA research, in conjunction with CSIRO, is investigating the use of natural selection processes to produce new RHDV strains that are able to overcome immunity and potential resistance to existing RHDV strains. If successful this would enable a continuous supply of suitable RHDV strains for subsequent release that could sustainably address Australia’s rabbit problem.

Feeding red macro-algae has the potential to lift productivity and reduce emissions in cattle and sheep by up to 60%
Supporting industry integrity and sustainability

OBJECTIVE 4.2
Support off-farm environmental sustainability

MLA conducts R&D in collaboration with AMPC to identify strategies to mitigate and manage the impact of meat manufacturing on the natural environment and capture beneficial effects and practices.

STRATEGIES

4.2.1 **Research** to improve resource use efficiency

4.2.2 **Develop** technologies, tools and procedures that contribute to improved waste management systems and value add to waste products

4.2.3 **Develop** mitigation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

4.2.4 **Engage** industry stakeholders to demonstrate environmental stewardship and to respond to emerging regulatory and market requirements

4.2.5 **Improve** industry capability, knowledge and adoption of new technologies and processes to achieve sustainable resource management and adaptation to climate change

KEY MILESTONES

- New technologies or processes capable of reducing the total electricity usage for meat plants by 2 per cent are defined and/or validated
  - **Achieved**
  - **RESULT:** Projects identified that reduce electricity use by at least 3 per cent

- New technologies or processes capable of reducing abattoir town water consumption by 2 per cent are demonstrated and/or validated
  - **Achieved**
  - **RESULT:** Research found that average potable water usage in the industry was down 8 per cent. An economic assessment tool for a plant to evaluate any proposed recycled water scheme was developed

- At least two off-farm pre-commercialisation innovations have achieved at least 80 per cent of their annual adoption strategy targets
  - **Achieved**
  - **RESULT:** Covered anaerobic lagoons and energy saving technologies have achieved 80 per cent of their annual adoption strategy targets

INVESTMENT

$1.0 million

- Government funding $0.5m
- Processor contributions $0.5m

An additional $1 million was attracted in voluntary contributions ($0.3 million), processor contributions ($0.2 million) and matched Government funding ($0.5 million) for investment via the MLA Donor Company.

In 2014-15 this investment included:

- reducing resource use (water and energy)
- generation of clean energy
- more effective waste treatments
- greenhouse gas mitigation
OBJECTIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Reduced electricity usage in meat plants

MLA Donor Company (MDC) (which doesn’t use producer levies) projects surpassed their target of reducing electricity usage by 2 per cent in red meat processing plants across Australia. These included a project to reduce gas consumption at the Thomas Foods International plant at Murray Bridge, SA, where increasing the efficiency of boilers and utilising biogas could contribute to a 3 per cent energy saving per annum. A feasibility study at a plant in Victoria identified that switching from commercial-type Freon refrigeration equipment to a centralised industrial system could reduce the site’s power consumption by 28.8 per cent. A third project identified opportunities such as refrigerator and boiler upgrades which could save 8 per cent of another site’s total annual energy usage.

Anaerobic pond at Oakey

The development of an innovative, covered, high-rate anaerobic lagoon (COHRAL™) to treat wastewater at the Oakey Abattoir in Oakley, Qld via the MDC is progressing, with the wet and biological commissioning phase taking place in April 2015. This involved using ‘seed sludge’ from a nearby sewage treatment plant to commence the biological activity in the system. The treatment plant is expected to reach full operation by late 2015. The COHRAL™ technology will harness methane-rich biogas from the facility’s wastewater in the existing anaerobic lagoon system. It has potential to cut the plant’s gas usage by 20 per cent and reduce CO₂ emissions by 15,000 tonnes per year.

First time

COHRAL™ technology from Europe has been used in Australian meat processing

Filling the knowledge gap on lagoons

The MLA Donor Company (MDO) (which doesn’t use producer levies) funded research, along with the Australian Government and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation, to consolidate industry knowledge and research on Covered Anaerobic Lagoon (CAL) technology, the production and utilisation of biogas from lagoons and how to manage wastewater to treatment to maximise biogas production and end of pipe wastewater quality.

The research was carried out in two stages using CAL technology at the Murray Bridge, SA abattoir operated by Thomas Foods International (TFI). TFI processes four megalitres of wastewater a day, which is then used to irrigate 120 hectares of pasture.

The first stage of research focused on the most effective design of a CAL, along with effective automated sludge removal and biogas collection and handling. The research found that the preferred design was a Dissolved Air Flotation unit without a polymer addition, because the polymers significantly inhibited biogas production.

Stage two investigated the ideal organic load for CALs to enable maximum biogas production, while avoiding overloading and crust accumulation that leads to treatment failure. The research identified many important learnings, including that the pH balance (which should be greater than 6.5) and ensuring a consistent flow of wastewater into the CAL were important for the system to run effectively.

Together with allowing TFI to treat their wastewater to a high standard, the optimised CAL technology has enabled the equivalent of 13,000 (9kg) barbecue gas bottles of biogas to be captured each week and used by the plant as energy, saving 30 per cent of plant requirements. TFI has saved the equivalent of 27,200 tonnes CO₂-e of greenhouse gas emissions per year.
OBJECTIVE 4.3
Provide industry with solutions to meet high standards of animal welfare without reducing productivity levels

MLA invests in R&D to create cost-effective opportunities for industry to support continuous improvements in the welfare of livestock being raised, handled, transported and processed in Australia.

In 2014-15 this investment included:

> pain relief for aversive procedures
> promoting and measuring animal welfare standards on farm and at processing establishments

An additional $0.5 million was attracted in voluntary contributions ($243,000), processor contributions ($24,000) and matched Government funding ($267,000) for investment via the MLA Donor Company.
**OBJECTIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

**Dehorning patch**

MLA-funded research has delivered a simple, practical strategy for producers to enhance animal welfare after dehorning. Although there is a major shift in the north Australian beef industry towards breeding polled cattle, dehorning is still practised, which can cause frontal sinus exposure.

Dehorning can contribute to the loss of 1 per cent of dehorned calves a year in northern cattle operations. In the trial at Mittiebah Station on the Barkly Tableland Qld, biodegradable gauze patches (swabs) placed on dehorning wounds reduced haemorrhaging, cut infection by 11 per cent and sped up healing.

Effective application of swabs could replace the traditional application of chemicals used for insect and infection control.

**11% reduction**
in infection due to gauze dehorning patches

**54 cents per head**
cost of purchasing and the labour of applying patches when dehorning

**Needle-free pain relief**

A new easy-to-administer pain relief product for calves hit the market in April 2015, funded by a million dollar partnership between the MLA Donor Company (which doesn’t use producer levies) and Troy Laboratories Australia. Buccalgesic (which producers can source through their veterinarians) is the first practical product for extensive enterprises.

The gel formula allows rapid absorption via the mouth, becoming effective six minutes after application, with pain relief lasting up to 48 hours. Buccalgesic replaces previous injected products which presented operator-safety, carcase-quality and welfare issues. It has a withholding period of 14 days and an export slaughter interval of 21 days.

**90 cents per head**
cost to administer Buccalgesic to a 60kg calf prior to dehorning, mostly for labour

**More pain relief products on the way**

MLA’s animal welfare commitment is to replace, refine and relieve painful animal husbandry practices.

**Buccalgesic**

A commercial partnership between the MLA Donor Company (MDC) (which doesn’t use producer levies) and Troy Laboratories Australia saw the release of the pain relief product, Buccalgesic, in April 2015 (see left). The MDC-Troy partnership has also produced a similar pain relief product for sheep (see image above), which is due to be released later in 2015.

**NumNuts**

A new device – known as NumNuts – which injects a fast-acting pain-relieving local anaesthetic into lambs while applying rubber rings for castration and tail docking is ready for commercialisation.

The device has been developed by Scotland’s Moredun Research Institute with funding from MLA and Australian Wool Innovation.

Dr Matthew McDonagh, MLA’s General Manager of On-farm Innovation and Adoption, said he expected the device would generate significant animal welfare and production benefits.

“The availability of a single, rapid pain-relief tool for tail docking and castration would also help livestock producers get on the front foot in demonstrating to consumers and the community that our industry is focused on continuous improvement in animal welfare,” Dr McDonagh said.
Supporting industry integrity and sustainability

OBJECTIVE 4.4

Support industry’s effective engagement with the community

MLA supports industry bodies and individual producers to authentically communicate the integrity of livestock production practices to the broader community and demonstrate industry’s commitment to improvements underpinned by science.

STRATEGIES

4.4.1 **Support** the industry to maintain the community’s trust and confidence in the integrity and ethics of the Australian red meat industry by building knowledge and providing experience

4.4.2 **Equip and empower** producers and their representatives to build our industry’s reputation through facts and engagement

INVESTMENT

$1.9 million

- Government funding $0.1m
- Producer levies $1.7m
- Processor contributions $0.09m

In 2014-15 this investment included:

> continued building of the Target 100 program to showcase industry sustainability
> incorporating education materials and resources to schools
> industry social media capability
> participation in urban events to reach key influencers

KEY MILESTONES

- **Increase engagement in Target 100** by 10 per cent through the key platforms of the website, social media channels and events
  - **Achieved**
  - RESULT: Engagement with Target 100’s social platforms saw YouTube video views increase 720 per cent; Facebook likes increase 304 per cent; Twitter followers increase 31 per cent; and visits to the Target 100 website increase 32 per cent

- **300 producers actively engaged in industry advocacy activities utilising MLA-developed resources**
  - **Achieved**
  - RESULT: 350 producers involved in Target 100, including 100 who attended advocacy events at Beef Australia

- **Percentage of consumers stating they are reducing red meat consumption due to perceived animal welfare reasons is below 5 per cent**
  - **Achieved**
  - RESULT: Reduction in red meat consumption for animal welfare reasons was 3.3 per cent, higher than the 2.8 per cent in 2014

- **Percentage of consumers stating they are reducing red meat consumption due to perceived environmental reasons is below 5 per cent**
  - **Achieved**
  - RESULT: Reduction in red meat consumption for environmental reasons was 3.9 per cent, higher than the 2.2 per cent in 2014
OBJECTIVE HIGHLIGHTS

#GoodMeat

Target 100 developed a three-part, 12-episode YouTube series to explore community perceptions about how beef is produced. The program took animal enthusiast Andrew Ucles, chef Guy Turland from Bondi Harvest and Channel Ten’s Bondi Rescue lifeguard Andrew Reid on a journey to discover why Australian beef is good meat. Each of the hosts explored a topic – animal welfare in Australian feedlots, climate change from methane emissions, and protecting the Great Barrier Reef from sediment run-off – through farm visits, discussions with experts and research projects. The videos were released weekly from 11 March and received 200,000 views, an average of 15,000 views per episode. The series was supported by an online and social media campaign which included the three personalities promoting the series through their own extensive social media networks. During the 12-week campaign, Target 100 more than doubled its Facebook ‘likes’, from 6,000 to 15,000. A second YouTube series will be developed in 2015-16.

School curriculum update

In 2014-15, Target 100 developed and released three primary school learning guides to accompany the previous five high school resources. The materials align with the Australian Curriculum and were developed for students to study sustainability in food production, in order to respond to food security issues in Australia and around the globe. Three interactive digital learning tools supporting the three new guides were also launched on the Target 100 website, designed to be used on electronic whiteboards in schools. Through its membership of the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia, MLA also contributed to the development of 17 study guides across all year levels, and learning areas, as part of the Federal Government’s Agriculture in Education initiative. The guides were launched in May 2015 by the then Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP.

Consumption metrics

Concerns in the community about animal welfare, environment and different production systems have the ability to impact the trust of consumers domestically and in export markets. Currently, concern for these issues is limited to a small segment of the population, with more than 60 per cent of Australian consumers having no concerns about the industry. However, MLA consumer research shows an increase in the percentage of people eating less red meat for perceived environment or animal welfare reasons over the past five years. In 2015, 5.9 per cent of people reported eating less red meat due to concern with environment/animal welfare.
OBJECTIVE 4.5
Develop sustainable innovation capability within the industry and its service providers

MLA supports industry innovation and research strategies by working to ensure industry has appropriately skilled people both at the enterprise level and among research providers.

4.5.1 Work with stakeholders to promote opportunities for innovative people and processes across the industry

4.5.2 Collaborate with industry to implement professional and skills development programs

4.5.3 Support the development of essential science, research, technical and extension capabilities

INVESTMENT
$4.2 million

Producer levies $0.5m
Government funding $2.1m
Processor contributions $1.6m

An additional $2.8 million was attracted in voluntary contributions ($0.8 million), processor contributions ($0.6 million) and matched Government funding ($1.4 million) for investment via the MLA Donor Company.

In 2014-15 this investment included:
> supporting enhancing science and technical skills and increasing general innovation skills within enterprises and supply chains
> ensuring long-term R&D capability is available in required disciplines
OBJECTIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Collaborative Innovation Strategies Partnership program update

MLA’s Collaborative Innovation Strategies Partnership (CISP) program continues to co-develop innovation capability within red meat value chains. In 2014-15, the MLA Donor Company (MDC) (which doesn’t use producer levies) worked with 13 value chains, representing 66 per cent of the industry’s total processed livestock. Overall, there has been more than 80 per cent achievement of innovation performance indicators set by all but one of these clients. These include increasing the number of value-added products to market, reducing utility consumption and waste generation and increasing investment in innovations. Through the program, MLA also helped deliver workshops to more than 400 producers, allowing producer programs to be run by companies to provide farm-gate premiums for livestock which meet market requirements. The program has secured partner investment for long-term transformational objective measurement projects. CISP’s focus has broadened from individual enterprises to complete value chains. This involved establishing ‘flagship value chain programs’ so the industry can develop whole-of-value chain innovation programs to respond to market diversification opportunities.

WA value chain program update

The MDC invested in two new projects in Western Australia during the year. The four-year programs, funded by Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) Royalties for Regions, build on the success of the Beef Industry Change Program (an initiative between MLA, the WA Beef Council and DAFWA to develop beef supply chains). The $15 million Northern Beef Futures project aims to transform WA’s northern beef industry by developing capability and infrastructure to expand markets, such as breeding heifer exports to Indonesia, boxed beef to China and offshore processing of slaughter-ready cattle. The $10 million Sheep Industry Business Innovation project aims to position the WA sheep industry as internationally competitive. The program aims to build capacity to supply new markets for sheepmeat and live exports, particularly in nearby Asia and the Middle East. Key activities include Lifetime Ewe Management and the Lamb Survival Initiative, adoption of genetic technologies (using the MLA co-funded Resource Flock at Katanning), and industry placements and study tours (see story at right).

JBS Farm Assurance

Through the MLA CISP, a core activity has been supporting processor JBS in developing a farm assurance program. This program is one of the largest of its kind and the only grassfed, multi-species branded program in Australia. JBS Farm Assurance involves more than 2,000 lamb and beef suppliers, who produce high quality grassfed meat to suit specific market requirements and consistently meet food safety and animal welfare standards in their farming practices. Last year the program delivered $19 million in farm-gate premiums for program suppliers. A specific CISP investment was funding a Masters student, Jose Webb, to manage the rollout of Livestock Data Link across JBS’s Farm Assurance program and develop the useability of the feedback system and user capability (see page 49).

Grand result from China tour

A tour to China in July 2015 not only gave West Australian producer Neville McDonald (pictured above left, next to Kelvin Flugge, Department of Agriculture and Food WA), seven other sheep producers and industry representatives an insight into the supply chain and market requirements, but saw a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by MLA, V&V Walsh, Grand Farm Group and Department of Agriculture and Food, WA (DAFWA) to supply an additional 500,000 lambs per year into Grand Farms’ Chinese distribution channels. The tour was part of MLA’s involvement through the MLA Donor Company (which doesn’t use producer levies) to co-invest in a number of targeted, strategically-aligned programs within the $300 million DAFWA Royalties for Regions program to secure the profitability and sustainability of WA’s food and agriculture sector (see ‘WA value chain program update’ at left).

MLA will use the V&V Walsh and Grand Farm supply chain model to develop other projects which aim to sustainably increase lamb production and improve supply chain efficiencies and returns to producers.