



# Final report

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## Bindaree Food Group: High Value Foods Co-Innovation Programme

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## **Abstract**

This project was undertaken to support Bindaree Food Group's strategic shift toward high-value food products through a Co-Innovation Programme in partnership with Meat & Livestock Australia. The initiative aimed to align innovation efforts with MLA priorities and Bindaree's business strategy, focusing on customers and markets, product development, sustainability, and skills enhancement.

The programme employed MLA's Market Classification and Category Growth Driver analysis, combined with internal data, to guide brand, supply chain and innovation strategies. Key outcomes included a 57% increase in retail volume, successful product launches into Hong Kong and Japan, and adoption of new technologies such as crust and nitrogen tunnels, flow wrap packaging, and objective carcass measurement. Social and environmental benefits included enhanced staff capability, targeted market expansion, and sustainability initiatives like plastic reduction, solar energy adoption, and carbon emissions mapping. The project delivered measurable financial, social, and environmental impacts, offering valuable insights and practical innovations for the red meat industry beyond just Bindaree Food Group.

## Executive summary

### Background

This research was initiated to support Bindaree Food Group's strategic transition toward high-value food products through a 3 year Co-Innovation Programme in partnership with Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA). The main question addressed was: *How can targeted innovation across product development, market expansion, sustainability, and capability building enhance competitiveness and value creation in the red meat industry?*

The results of this research will be used to guide future innovation strategies, inform tech adoption, and support sustainability initiatives across the Bindaree Food Group and the red meat supply chain.

### Objectives

- Finalise and implement Bindaree's high-value food strategy aligned with MLA priorities.
- Deliver innovation projects across four pillars: Customers & Markets, Products, Sustainability, and People & Skills.
- Build internal capability and foster cross-functional collaboration.
- Achieve measurable impact across financial, social, and environmental dimensions.

All objectives were successfully achieved, with clear outcomes across each strategic pillar.

### Methodology

- Action Research – apply iterative process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting to improve practice and generate knowledge
- Applied MLA's Market Classification and Category Growth Driver analysis to guide strategy.
- Developed and implemented innovation projects under each pillar.
- Established baseline performance measures and tracked progress.
- Engaged in capability development and cultural change initiatives.
- Collaborated with MLA and external partners to extend learnings and impact.

### Results / Key Findings

- Retail volume increased by 57% from the 2022 baseline.
- Successful product launches into Hong Kong and Japan.
- Adoption of technologies including crust and nitrogen tunnels, flow wrap packaging, and objective carcass measurement.
- Staff completed formal training, participated in MLA Co-Innovation manager cohort workshops, designed and deliver research projects, enhancing innovation capacity.
- Sustainability initiatives included packaging innovation, solar energy investment, and carbon emissions mapping.

### Benefits to Industry

The project demonstrated how targeted innovation can improve efficiency, open new markets, and support environmental goals. The insights and technologies trialled offer practical solutions for broader industry adoption.

### Future Research and Recommendations

- Further R&D into scalable objective measurement and sustainable packaging technologies.
- Continued collaboration between processors and MLA to drive strategic alignment and shared learning.

## Table of contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Background .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Objectives.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Methodology .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.1 Financial – Value Add Programme .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1.1 Volume Increase .....	5
3.1.2 Value Add Products .....	6
3.1.3 Efficiency Improvements .....	6
<b>3.2 Social .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.2.1 Capability Development.....	6
3.2.2 New Channels or Markets.....	7
<b>3.3 Environmental.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.3.1 Sustainability Initiatives .....	7
<b>4. Results .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.1 Financial.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.2 Social .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4.3 Environmental.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.1 Key findings.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.2 Benefits to industry .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6. Future research and recommendations.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. Appendix .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>7.1 Bindaree Co-Innovation Programme KPI’s .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## 1. Background

Bindaree Food Group agreed to commence a Co-Innovation program with MLA over a three-year period commencing 1st August 2022. The agreement aimed to support a Co-Innovation Program Manager to implement the Bindaree high value products strategy aligning with MLA's priority projects and the BFG business strategy. The program had four broad goals; 1. Finalise the BFG high value food strategy, 2. Implement key projects against the strategy, 3. Build capability in the NPD team, and 4. Achieve greater alignment across the business.

## 2. Objectives

Implement the innovation strategy as agreed with MLA under the following key project pillars:

- Customers and markets
- Products (Value add and Technology)
- Sustainability (Business and ESG Innovation)
- People and Skills

The Co-innovation programme impact was measured against triple bottom line financial, social and environmental measures as outlined in the Bindaree Co-Innovation Programme KPI's (appendix 1). The success of each measure is detailed below.

## 3. Methodology

Action research cycles were used to capture key lessons learned. This iterative process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting helped to improve innovation practice and generate knowledge. Using MLA's Market Classification and Category Growth Driver analysis combined with company data and insights to review and/or develop brand, marketing and supply chain differentiation strategies as well as development of sustainability initiatives to support business growth, the company utilized the following methodologies and structure;

- Develop unique innovation projects in each of the project pillars.
- Setting quantifiable performance measures for projects in each of the pillars, including the development of baseline measures to monitor progress;
- Implement agreed projects under each of the strategic pillars;
- Develop innovation capability and skills to effectively implement the program;
- Implement initiatives that support cultural changes required to deliver the program;

The specific project and work have been separated according to the programme KPI's and are detailed further below.

### 3.1 Financial – Value Add Programme

#### 3.1.1 Volume Increase

The value-add programme was focused at the Bindaree further processing site in Burleigh Heads. The site produces own-brand and private label meat products for domestic and export retailers.

During the Co-innovation programme the site New Product Development (NPD) team, led by the Co-Innovation Manager, developed a pipeline of value-added products to increase volume into retail

customers. The NPD programme focused on a new strategy to support a retail customer re-modelling their product tiers. Data and marketing information from MLA's MSA programme were used to support the strategy. The NPD team also supported the growth of volume into a new retail customer, producing own brand product for their retail stores. The company developed and launched a grain fed branded product into a Hong Kong retail chain (via Feather & Bone and Farmers Market HK) to support an existing Bindaree branded grass fed retail product range and dry-aged cuts.

### 3.1.2 Value Add Products

Bindaree Food Group investigated opportunities to supply value add products to new customers including export food service customers. During the programme significant trials were undertaken to match a product into a major Japanese customer. Production trials included significant works to match a product to a very specific specification and development of new value add capability for the site.

### 3.1.3 Efficiency Improvements

The company committed to various new technology projects to improve efficiencies and capability providing access to new customers. The R&D team were involved in the development and implementation of the following technologies.

**Crust tunnel** – Implementation of a primal crust tunnel to improve yield and capability to service fixed weight products to a domestic retailer.

**Nitrogen tunnel** – Rapid chilling of hot boned slashed beef for sale into the domestic bulk chilled trim market.

**Flow wrap** – Development of a packaging solution for MAP retail beef mince that consisted of 70% less plastic than the incumbent. The processing efficiencies also offered benefits.

**Commodity thermoform packing for International Retail** – Although not a new technology, the company added thermoforming capability to one of their primary processing sites allowing access into International retail.

**Objective Carcass measurement** – Following attendance at a co-innovation network meeting and a presentation from the MLA Objective Carcass Measurement Team, trials were carried out validating objective measurement technology at a primary processing site.

## 3.2 Social

### 3.2.1 Capability Development

The MLA Co-innovation programme was utilised to help develop the understanding of innovation techniques and provide networking opportunities for various members of the Bindaree team. The intention was to form a company innovation committee and although this did not occur, through regular innovation reports back to the business, there was better engagement and alignment between R&D, NPD, Project and Operations teams. There was a focus on the capability of the Technical team and opportunities for professional development were provided to team members. Bindaree have also identified several strategic partnerships to further support industry capability

such as partnering with ICMJ to supporting future industry leaders and meat graders plus a partnership with Meat Business Women Australia.

### **3.2.2 New Channels or Markets**

In 2022 Bindaree engaged with the MLA Markets team and participated in the MLA Category Growth Driver programme. Bindaree shared market and sales data as well as internal sales strategies with the MLA team who provided an extensive report on potential markets and key growth drivers in these markets. This information was used to develop a more targeted sales strategy including new channels in China.

## **3.3 Environmental**

### **3.3.1 Sustainability Initiatives**

During the Co-innovation programme, Bindaree created an ESG committee consisting of subject matter experts across various departments. The committee developed an ESG strategy including annual reporting on key objectives. The strategy included initiatives across carbon emissions baseline measurement and reporting, packaging sustainability to meet customer and legislative requirements, energy efficiency and social accountability.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Financial**

The Bindaree Burleigh Heads site saw a volume increase of 57% from the 2022 baseline. In 2025 Bindaree's key Japanese customer approved the value-add product match and has indicated they will commit to up to a 10% increase in site volume following an initial store trial.

Results of the implementation of innovation technologies on efficiencies and capability enhancements include;

**Crust tunnel** – 10% increase in volume due to capability improvement.

**Nitrogen tunnel** – 20% of beef trim product directed to higher value market.

**Flow wrap** – Transition of 3 SKU's into flow wrap packaging. Reduction in packaging cost. Finalist in the innovation packaging category at the Australian Packaging awards in 2023.

**Commodity thermoform packing to international retail** – Small volumes being assessed by a major international online retailer with potential of significant tonnage.

**Objective Carcass measurement** – The company has committed to the installation of objective carcass measurement technology which will assist with more consistent and efficient grading.

## 4.2 Social

During the programme, the Bindaree Research and Development Officer was supported to complete a Bachelor of Science Honours year researching the quality of hot boned beef in retail MAP mince receiving first class honours for the project.

Another employee attended a session on objective carcass measurement resulting in the business trialling carcass measurement technology with investment to come.

The Co-innovation Manager attended IFFA in Germany in May, who along with two other team members reported various new technologies back to the business, with plans to investigate some of the technologies for implementation at Bindaree sites.

An NPD team member completed an AUS- Meat Retail Specification course providing the employee a better understanding of meat cuts, yields and suitability various cooking methods.

The entire Technical team also completed a Certificate IV in Project Management which has improved their capability in managing innovation projects.

## 4.3 Environmental

Bindaree Food Group through its ESG committee and strategy executed the following sustainability initiatives as enablers to future new product/brand development opportunities;

**Flow wrap** – In 2022, Bindaree launched an Australian first flow wrap MAP packaged retail beef mince into the domestic market. This packaging reduces the use of plastic by 70% and meets soft plastic recycling requirements.

**Solar Farm** – In 2023 the company committed to installing a solar farm on one of its primary processing sites which will cover over 35% of the site's energy needs. The solar farm will be operational in late 2025.

**APCO** – Bindaree Food Group joined as a signatory to the APCO. The company has used the APCO sustainable packaging guidelines to validate and implement new packaging types ensuring customers are receiving product packaged in packaging containing recycled content and that is recyclable whilst maintaining the integrity of the meat.

**Carbon emissions** – In late 2024 the company employed a consultant to map scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions for each site. This information is being used to develop a carbon emissions strategy and reduction objectives.

**UQ mentorship** – In 2022 the Co-Innovation Manager supported the University of Queensland Environment Management honours programme, mentoring teams delivering sustainability projects of interest to the Red Meat Industry. The following projects were completed by the cohort.

- **Sustainability in Red Meat:** Navigating Industry Frameworks and Nature Positive branding
- **Transport solutions:** Advancements in sustainable freight technologies

## 5. Conclusion

The Bindaree Food Group High Value Foods Co-Innovation Programme has delivered a range of strategic, operational, and sustainability outcomes that offer insights for the red meat industry. The programme demonstrated how targeted innovation, supported by structured methodologies and industry collaboration, can drive measurable improvements across financial, social, and environmental dimensions.

Key insights include the effectiveness of MLA's Category Growth Driver analysis in identifying market opportunities, the importance of tailored product development for export success, and the operational benefits of adopting technologies such as crust and nitrogen tunnels, flow wrap packaging, and objective carcass measurement. These innovations not only improved processing efficiency and product quality but also enabled access to new domestic and international markets.

The programme also highlighted the importance of capability development, with technical staff completing formal training and engaging in professional development that strengthened the organisation's innovation culture. Environmental initiatives—including packaging sustainability, solar energy investment, and carbon emissions mapping—reinforced the industry's commitment to responsible production and long-term resilience.

However, the project revealed knowledge gaps in embedding innovation culture across all business units and scaling certain technologies for broader industry adoption. Additional resources may be required to support further research into sustainable packaging, emissions reduction strategies, and advanced processing technologies.

Overall, the programme provides a replicable model for how collaborative innovation can enhance competitiveness, sustainability, and value creation across the red meat supply chain.

### 5.1 Key findings

- **Retail Volume Growth:**  
Bindaree Food Group achieved a 57% increase in retail volume from the 2022 baseline, driven by new product development and strategic market expansion.
- **Export Market Success:**  
Successful product launches into Hong Kong and Japan, including a grain-fed branded product and a customised value-added product for a major Japanese customer.
- **Technology Implementation:**  
Several new technologies were trialled and adopted, including:
  - **Crust tunnel:** Improved yield and capability, resulting in a 10% volume increase.
  - **Nitrogen tunnel:** Enabled 20% of beef trim to be directed to higher-value markets.
  - **Flow wrap packaging:** Reduced plastic use by 70%, lowered packaging costs, and earned industry recognition.
  - **Objective carcass measurement:** Validated and committed to installation for improved grading consistency.

- **Capability Development:**  
Staff undertook formal training including Project Management certification, AUS-Meat specifications, and Honours-level research, enhancing technical and innovation capacity.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:**
  - Launch of flow wrap packaging meeting recycling standards.
  - Commitment to a solar farm covering 35% of site energy needs.
  - Carbon emissions mapping across sites to inform reduction strategies.
  - Engagement with APCO and mentorship of UQ sustainability projects.

## 5.2 Benefits to industry

- **Data-Driven Market Expansion**  
The use of MLA's Category Growth Driver analysis enabled targeted market strategies. Other businesses can apply similar data-driven approaches to identify high-potential markets and tailor product offerings accordingly.
- **Sustainable Packaging Solutions**  
The flow wrap packaging innovation reduced plastic use by 70% and met recycling standards. This model can be replicated across the industry to meet environmental targets and consumer expectations.
- **Capability Building and Training**  
The project's investment in staff training (e.g., Project Management, AUS-Meat specs, Honours research) highlights the importance of upskilling teams to drive innovation. Bindaree CoInnovation Manager was a high valuable contributor to MLA's cohort of Co-Innovation Manager workshops.

Broader industry benefits include;

- The programme fostered collaboration between Bindaree and MLA, showing the value of industry partnerships. Sharing methodologies and outcomes can accelerate innovation across the sector.
- The ESG strategy and initiatives position the red meat industry as proactive in sustainability, helping to future-proof operations and meet regulatory and consumer demands.
- By demonstrating how innovation can unlock new markets and improve operational efficiency, the project also provides a roadmap for other red meat businesses to enhance their competitiveness..

## 6. Future research and recommendations

### Key Challenges and Successes

The programme saw financial, social and environmental success for Bindaree with key KPI's met including a retail volume increase of 57%. Successful technology implementations, new export market realisations, capability development and sustainable initiatives completed.

Challenges throughout the programme included not achieving the formation of a formal innovation committee, although there was better cross functional alignment. The company also managed

through various market fluctuations during the period which reduced funding for the implementation of various other technologies.

**Recommendations**

**Future R&D**

- Explore advanced packaging technologies that balance sustainability, cost, and product integrity.
- Conduct longitudinal studies on carbon emissions reduction strategies tailored to red meat processing environments.

**7. Appendix**

**7.1 Bindaree Co-Innovation Programme KPI's**

Bindaree Co-Innovation Program KPI's		
KPI's	Measures (to be agreed)	
<b>1. Financial - Return on Investment (ROI) comprised of;</b>		
Increase in volume from new commodity and/or value adding products developed as part of the innovation program	Baseline set at start of the program. Sales as at Nov 22.	
Increased net margin from value added products compared to current commodity sales	Adoption of at least 2 new VA products or processes. Current capability includes mince and steak portioning. Developed blue sky plan with projects commenced.	
Increased net margins from existing products e.g. from efficiencies or cost savings	A percentage increase is attributed to efficiency improvements achieved as a result of the innovation program initiatives including adoption of new technologies. At least 3 projects initiated that provide significant cost savings to the business (yield, efficiencies, consumables etc.).	
<b>2. Social - Demonstrated evidence that the program investments have accelerated innovation adoption within the participants enterprises and value chains, including;</b>		
Improved innovation capability within Bindaree Team	Innovation training for key stakeholders and adoption of innovation committee/programme within the business.	
Any increase in the number of new markets or channels supplied by the business.	Number of new markets or channels attributed to Co-Innovation initiatives.	
<b>3. Environmental - Improvements in environmental sustainability attributed to the program.</b>		
The number of new sustainability initiatives undertaken or the inclusion of sustainability considerations in projects undertaken as part of the agreement.	Baseline set at start of the program. Measure is the number of sustainability initiatives attributed to the co-innovation program, and related metrics such as GHG emission reduction, waste reduction, saving in energy costs etc. Reduction in plastic, emissions, energy costs and waste based on 2021 Bindaree baseline data.	
<b>A measure of the Co-Innovation Manager's contribution to the following:</b>		
Partners achieve 80% of their documented innovation objectives with at least 80% activities first for industry and unique	Annual Program Survey (June)	
Demonstrate evidence of accelerated innovation adoption aligned with MLA strategic Plan 2025 focus areas	Baseline set at start of the program. Measured as a % of the number of innovation initiatives adopted by the business.	
Attendance at MLA's network events.	Attendance at network meetings	
Co-Innovation manager completes MLA's capability development program.	Completes MLA's Capability development modules.	
Periodic (6 monthly) program steering group review meetings conducted with all program partners	Biannual steering group meeting conducted	
Project management against milestones.	Project management against milestones.	
Quality of reports	Final & milestone reports submitted and approved.	