Expressions of Interest

Australian red meat's role in the future of health and wellness

MLA Donor Company co-funded initiatives

Summary

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is seeking expressions of interest (EOI) via preliminary applications from organizations (or partnerships) with the expertise and interest to deliver research projects aimed at:

1. Delivering suitable red meat solutions capable of addressing some of the emerging and growing nutrition trends across multiple consumer cohorts that incrementally grow demand for Australian red meat.
2. Investigating novel technical interventions that could assist with the development of a range of new products derived from red meat ingredients, that could assist in addressing some of these emerging trends.
3. Identify new usages and occasions for the some of the most nutritionally dense parts of the red meat value chain (offal, blood, organs, glands & glandules) which, have historically been considered as inedible parts of the carcass.

These initiatives would be co-investment with the MLA Donor Company for up to 40% matched funds.

Background

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and Food & Nutrition Australia released an industry white paper understanding red meats role in the future of health and wellness.

The nutritional status of red meat is recognised both locally and globally in government dietary guidelines and policy documents and the Food & Agricultural Organisation (FAO) recognises the important role red meat plays in meeting future global nutritional needs. Consumption trends vary by country with key influences being income, culture and religion, and perceptions about the role red meat plays in health and wellness. In some markets red meat consumption is increasing and in others, it is in slight decline. Maintaining or increasing red meat intake through future marketing and innovation strategies that target health and wellness can assist in addressing local and global health and nutrition issues, including under-nutrition, malnutrition and overweight and obesity. It is also essential for the long-term sustainability and prosperity of the Australian red meat industry.

Consumer demands around food, and the expectations they have of the role food plays in health and nutrition, continue to change and evolve. Increasingly, consumers are looking for food to do more than simply meet daily nutrient and energy needs. They are seeking out 'functional foods' that help them solve daily challenges, such as managing weight, supporting immunity and helping ward off the signs of ageing or the development of lifestyle related diseases. While interest in functional foods is strong, it exists alongside consumer desire to preference 'fresh' and 'natural' foods to improve health and wellbeing. Emerging research identifying the health risks associated with high consumption of ultra-processed foods is propelling this desire further. With its high-quality protein, natural and fresh status, and strong nutritional profile, Australian red meat is well positioned to provide foods that meet these needs.

The recently completed report, Understanding Australian red meat's role in the future of health and wellness, identified three top priority areas for innovation by industry, along with three second tier opportunities.

These are linked to the areas of **immune health**, **weight management**, **healthy longevity**, **sports performance**, **skin and joint health**.

Objectives

As part of MLA's ongoing investments into the Product and Packaging program, there remains a need to enhance the current carcass value proposition where typically, 80% of carcass value is derived from just 20% of the cuts, and where once processed, only 40% of the starting cattle/sheep liveweight is considered edible.

Given the nutritional profile of red meat, its spectrum of bioactive components, versatility and accessibility, it can play a crucial role in helping to address future health and wellness and nutritional challenges faced by individuals, populations and governments.

MLA is seeking proposals for research and development projects for innovation in these areas, including the possibilities for new product development concepts and marketing mix formats and new business model developments. Proposals must include a clearly articulated research question(s) and design that tests i) desirability (product-market fit), ii) feasibility (technical and resource capability) and iii) viability (cost-revenue structure suitable to scale up and create value for both the innovator and wider Australian red meat sector).

Proposed activities/ areas of interest, could consider:

(A) The role of red meat in health and nutrition
1. Undertake research to identify countries where governments are investing in food and nutrition based initiatives to address malnutrition, such as school lunch programs, and which provide opportunities to supply nutrient rich meat blends and/or nutrient rich meat based snacks e.g. Indonesia, China, India.

2. Develop a proposed product range and preliminary bill of materials that has inclusion of Australian red meat/by-products for the above mentioned. List key assumptions/validated value propositions for ''where to play/how to win''.

(B) Nutritional attributes of red meat and offal
1. Undertake a comprehensive nutritional analysis of offal, across type of animal and type of offal, with a view to understanding what roles suitable Australian red meat offal inclusions could play in driving New Product Development within new or existing meal formats.

2. Consider utilising one representative set of nutritional figures per meat type (for consistency in communication) and develop and test new product range/marketing mix.

3. Combine small amounts of offal, particularly liver, in product innovation and test value proposition and target market.

(C) Key nutrients in red meat – deeper dive
1. Develop products for specific consumer segments and test the key proposition for matching health claims to specific health and wellness areas of interest. For example, zinc and immunity, vitamin B12 and energy, protein and muscle gain.

2. Continue to pursue innovation with mince and offal blends to create nutrient-rich differentiated offerings linked to health benefits.

3. Further assess consumer acceptance of a "health claims" linked to lamb and its omega-3 content (TBC with further exploration).

4. Consider communication of nutrient bundles that emphasise the value of red meat during pregnancy e.g. the presence of choline, folate, vitamin D, protein, B vitamins, iron and zinc.

(D) Current intake of red meat

1. Develop and test range of value-added functional foods with inclusion of Australian red meat/byproducts that represent additional future growth opportunities for red meat in high income countries. Describe clear strategy for "where to play / how to win" that can demonstrate incremental value capture.

(E) The role of red meat across the life stages

1. Commission research into the effects of iron-fortified cereals compared to red meat on infant gut health. Pending results, develop red meat based product concept range and marketing mix and test value proposition for red meat to support infant growth and development linked to the importance of good nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life.

2. Develop and promote 100% pure red meat baby food product range for infants.

3. Seek opportunities in global markets to address the impact of iron deficiency on health and wellbeing for mothers and infants by encouraging more frequent consumption of red meat in this population sub-group. This may best be done via development of nutrient-rich meat based snacks.

4. Commission research to assess the potential role of increased Australian red meat on measures of cognition and muscle strength in healthy older adults, absent of chronic disease.

5. Develop and test a red meat/offal blend 'Super Mince' for retail and food service markets that boosts the nutritional intake of the elderly. Consider positioning it as part of the solution to malnutrition in this age group.

(F) Macro trends and changing consumer behavior

1. Build and test range of red-meat based meals for healthy older people who are living at home, still cooking, but looking for convenience and high nutrition. Test value propositions that support healthy longevity and highlight red meats high quality protein, zinc, choline, iron and natural collagen content.

2. Specifically developed red meat products that combine beef/lamb/goat with small amounts of liver to develop and test a 'Super Mince' for older people is viable. This could be sold through retail and via food service to meet the needs of frailer older people living at home and those in aged care settings.

3. Build and test Semi-prepared meals and products derived from Australian red meat/byproducts help consumers make simple everyday meals at home and which are available via home delivery services is viable.

(G) Behavioural trends

1. Build and test new product range derived from Australian red meat/byproducts that provide convenience, while also supporting 'scratch' cooking and cooking at home. Solutions that help consumers cut time and effort while still delivering the sensation of freshly prepared food are of interest. Describe 'where to play/how to win' innovation path and key assumptions.

2. Consider innovations that blends meat-based snacks with functional benefits.

(H) Health and wellness trends

1a. Monitor research in this area to enable the matching of certain nutrient bundles within Australian red meat to be appropriately recommended to those with certain genetic profiles. Research opportunities – keep abreast of and engage with research to better understand the interactions between genes and food; Start building a database of red meat components that benefit certain genotypes and microbiome types to prepare for the future.

1b. Design concept product range / meals with inclusion of Australian red meat/by-products that can test the value proposition for shifting focus to the individual rather than a "one size fits all" approach to nutrition and dietary advice. Ideate new marketing mix concepts that seek to communicate to consumers that these products are "designed for me". For example, "Iron, zinc and vitamin D: "For people carrying XYZ gene.". Consider addressable market, willingness and ability of target consumer to 'convert' and potential overall impact to the category.

(I) Functional

1. Explore the potential for fermented red meat or other minimal processing interventions as a matrix for the delivery of beneficial probiotics that can play a role in gut health via positively influencing the gut microbiome. Monitor the research on ultra processed foods and utilise the connection between these foods and poorer health outcomes as part of developing and testing minimally processed / natural red meat prototype(s) with target market(s) and describe key process design criteria

2. Consider involvement in research to better understand the direct impact of Australian red meat and its components (including iron, protein, amino acids and choline) on the gut microbiome. Develop and test prototype(s) with target market(s) and describe key process design criteria

3. Invest in the development of systematic reviews to substantiate general level health claims for industry use that are linked to bioactives and nutrients in meat. For example, collagen and skin health, creatine and muscle strength, protein and satiety, L-carnitine and weight management.

4. Combine bundles of natural nutrients and bioactives derived from Australian red meat/byproducts to develop products with benefits for growth markets e.g. Healthy Longevity – supported by protein for muscle strength, collagen for

skin and chondroitin for joints. Develop and test prototype(s) with target market(s) and describe key process design criteria.

5. Build the science to support nootropic substances in meat and their role in mood, cognition and mental health, include choline, L-carnitine and creatine. Develop and test prototype(s) with target market(s) and describe how and what 'meat' would be harvested to deliver consistent quality.

    Target older adults with products with inclusion of Australian red meat/byproducts focused on enhancing quality of life through better brain health and maintaining strength that supports independence and dignity as an opportunity that combines several key trends for 'active ageing'. Develop and test prototype(s) with target market(s) and describe how and what 'meat' would be harvested to deliver consistent quality.

6. Match consumer trends with macro trends and the nutrient and bioactive profile of red meat to identify key opportunities for future focus. Develop and test prototype(s) with target market(s) and describe key process design criteria.

Each proposal should call out which activities/ areas of interest is being responded to (listing letter and number(s), noting there may be some cross-over and/or multiple areas.

Timing

MLA is looking to engage successful party/ies to undertake works starting by September 2025. This should be considered in your proposed timeline of activities.

Funding

This expression of interest is to identify opportunities for co-funding through the MLA Donor Company. Information and guidelines on the MLA Donor Company can be found on the MLA website
Per MLA Donor Company guidelines, applicants (individually or as a collective) will be expected to contribute 60% of the total project costs.

Project would be contracted under MLA Standard Terms available at:
https://www.mla.com.au/about-mla/mla-agreements/

Selection criteria

Selection will be based on the assessment against the following criteria:
*   Experience of individual/team in the research capabilities
*   Relevant knowledge of the individual/team in food product innovation

- Knowledge of the challenges and opportunities for ideation through to adoption of new product development.
  Adaption of innovation strategies to research proposals such as '[where to play / how to win' framework](); and a clear demonstration for testing the desirability, viability and feasibility criteria of your prototype such as using the [business model canvas tool]()
- Project scope and budget should be commensurate with the quantifiable return on investment for the Australian red meat industry. Milestone description with itemised fees and expenses, describe objectives, timing and deliverables per milestone is required.
- Ability to deliver, individually or as a team, on all components of the project scope
- Ability to demonstrate value capture for Australia's red meat industry, including recommended next steps demonstrating a path to adoption

Confidentiality

By submitting an EOI, the applicant will disclose information in the preliminary application form to MLA's employees, agents, contractors and advisors, for the purposes of this tender process and any legal or MLA policy requirement. Applicants must identify any information that they consider should be protected as confidential information and provide reasons for this.

Expressions of Interest

Please submit an EOI using the preliminary application form attached here:
[MLA Project Funding Application Form – Preliminary]()

Funding application guidelines can be found here:
[https://www.mla.com.au/globalassets/mla-corporate/research-and-development/documents/funding-oportunities/mla-project-funding-application-guidelines_2024.pdf]()

Or contact MLA to discuss your project concept prior to submitting an EOI.

All EOIs are to be submitted by **30 May 2025** to:
Angelica Pickup – [apickup@mla.com.au]()

Further information

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