

FutureBeef

# Update eBulletin and Social Media Evaluation

April 2016

Coutts J&R



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This report has been made possible by the willingness of FutureBeef producers, industry representatives and extension providers to give the time to share their experiences and insights about the program. FutureBeef staff and partner organisations have provided strong support with access to documents and contact details of interviewees.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Purpose

This report focuses on providing an evaluation of the **FutureBeef Update eBulletin** and **social media channels** (Facebook and Twitter), to determine the level of subscriber satisfaction; the impact/s the eBulletin and social media has had, if any, on subscribers' businesses; and specifically to determine whether use of these communication mediums has contributed to improved profitability and sustainability. It is one of a series of reports looking at the different communication platforms of the FutureBeef program.

## Methods

The approach taken in this review was a combination of secondary data and communication platform analysis combined with engagement via discussion and a randomised survey with existing FutureBeef producer members, industry representatives and government extension providers.

Given the random selection process and the total frame of the producer population (those on the eBulletin subscriber list), there is a 95% certainty that the true mean responses to questions in the survey lie between plus or minus 8%. The results relate directly to those on the eBulletin list and must be viewed within this context.

## eBulletin and social media key messages

### **A. The majority of stakeholders prefer email as the main method of receiving information and updates although newspaper features were also useful information sources for many.**

Email updates allowing for quick scanning of relevant information were noted as the preferred form of communication. The eBulletin was felt to be useful, relevant and timely. Equally noted were newspaper features and articles (particularly those available through the Queensland Country Life and Beeftalk) as stakeholders commented about the option to file articles away for future reference. The printed articles were valued even more by those who had limited access to online resources.

### **B. Social media use is growing with extension providers currently appearing to actively use these channels more than producers and industry.**

Social media statistics were noted to be *significant* with *positive growth* during the 2014-2015 annual reporting. The March 2016 survey indicated that use of social media was more prevalent amongst extension providers with more than half (54%) accessing YouTube and just under half Facebook (46%) compared to 19% of producers who mentioned using these two channels. Those accessing FutureBeef Facebook and Twitter said it was a valuable forum to *share experiences* while YouTube mostly seemed to be used by extension providers and industry representatives during their own workshops or to refer clients to. Social media was described as a good platform to extend messages to clients *we don't get to see*.

**C. The eBulletin and newspaper features were cited as sources informing and prompting change.**

Newspaper features (and other written sources including Beeftalk) were noted by respondents as providing information that supported changes across business, sustainability, technical, and particularly improving the advice being given. The eBulletin was specifically cited in relation to business, technical and advice improvement.

## Overall key messages

The following key messages are common across all the linked FutureBeef communication evaluation reports and focus on the overall program.

**D. Stakeholders had a reasonably strong awareness of the FutureBeef program.**

Most stakeholders had a reasonable level of awareness of the program and its varied communication channels, although a more varied awareness of the program structure and partner organisations. While some did have a good understanding of the program and all its partners, others related more to the departments or organisation they connected with regularly, including MLA and DAF. Very few were aware of NTDPPIF and DAFWA's involvement in the program.

**E. There is relatively high level of satisfaction with the usefulness, delivery and extension of FutureBeef information.**

More than half of 2016 survey respondents agreed that FutureBeef's current delivery and extension of information offers users the opportunity to *pick* their preferred communication channels. The mix of FutureBeef information resources was described as *providing variety; fantastic overall; accessible;* and offering *something for everyone*. The content and information being provided across different communication channels (both print and online) was noted to be valuable, containing *practical advice* with most *relevant topics* covered. There was some suggestion that more regionally relevant content would be well received including case studies.

**F. Internet issues have a significant impact on communication channels accessed by stakeholders.**

While many stakeholders appreciated and preferred email updates and other online resources, internet and mobile coverage along with download limits impacted on access. Stakeholders were *frustrated* by these limitations, preventing many from consistent access of online resources.

**G. There are indications that FutureBeef information is positively impacting knowledge and understanding as well as productivity and improving advice being given.**

The majority (68%) of survey respondents (March 2016) indicated that FutureBeef information had (37%) or might have (31%) stimulated or supported decisions and changes made to their enterprises (producers) or their advisory and extension services. As a result of better informed business decisions, producers said that they have achieved *clearer* and more *efficient farming* practices leading to improved production (breeding healthier stock), environmental (e.g. improved land management) and technical improvements and increased profitability (e.g. achieving increased prices for healthier cows). Those who had made no specific changes (12%) suggested that they were able to remain informed and up to date with what is happening in the industry.

Extension providers and industry representatives/advisors/suppliers said that their business was *more sustainable* and with their own improved knowledge and skills were able to provide better technical advice.

## Recommendations

1. Social media use amongst next users (industry representatives and extension officers) should be encouraged and promoted as they tend to act as conduits for FutureBeef information shared through these channels (e.g. YouTube via workshops). This could help mitigate some of the limitations faced by producers with internet access issues and encourage further use of these resources as legitimate and timely when internet access is available.
2. While online resources are valued and accessed by a large percentage of stakeholders, it is important to continue to produce printed material, particularly as poor internet accessibility was noted by a number of producers<sup>1</sup>. There were several comments about a preference for printed communications with the option to file away for future reference. FutureBeef should continue to produce newspaper features in addition to reviewing current and planned printed resources, their distribution and availability to producers.
3. While social media use has grown over the last three to four years and is particularly utilised by extension providers it is important to develop a dashboard of meaningful qualitative metrics and objectives tied in with the overall aims of the FutureBeef program. Growth in Twitter followers and Facebook likes does not necessarily translate to reaching relevant stakeholders and influencing change.

Moving beyond number of likes/ followers could include analysis of Facebook/Twitter interactions including topics discussed, conversation drivers, images shared/ posted and sentiment. It could also be useful to identify involved social media influencers (those with relevant audiences interested in FutureBeef information) and track their interactions with FutureBeef content online. One of the social media goals might be to further engage with online influencers and tracking the results.

Dependent on objectives, the level of traffic to the website driven by social media could be good to track including downloads of reports/ fact sheets and time spent on particular pages (noted to be tracked already). Future program level evaluation should also include social media related questions covering how it is used, referenced and its level of influence on changes made.

4. The *FutureBeef Update* eBulletin graphic content should be kept to a minimum (or not at all) to allow for easy download for producers with limited internet access.
5. There is a call for more regionally specific information available online (website and social media) including YouTube clips and case studies.

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<sup>1</sup> It has been noted that the new Sky Muster satellite is due to come on-line in mid-2016 which should improve connectivity.

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# PURPOSE

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The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the **FutureBeef Update eBulletin** and **social media efforts** (Facebook and Twitter). The aims of this review are:

1. To determine the level of subscriber satisfaction with each of these communication mediums and what impact/s these communication mediums have had, if any, on users' businesses; and whether use of these communications mediums has contributed to improved profitability and sustainability; and
2. To recommend improvements to the FutureBeef Update eBulletin and social media efforts (if needed) to maximise their effectiveness based on user perceptions.

It is one of a series of reports looking at the different communication platforms of the FutureBeef program.

# INTRODUCTION

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## Background

### The FutureBeef Program

The **FutureBeef program for northern Australia** is a collaborative extension program involving the following partners:

- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)
- Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (DPIF)
- Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA)
- Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA)

The aim of the FutureBeef Program is to provide the northern Australia beef industry with a 24/7 one-stop-shop for beef information. The program aims to reduce any associated difficulties and inefficiencies that would present if each organisation were to create and maintain beef related information on their own websites, as well as the management of online engagement with industry members. In addition, the program will save the four partner organisations from having to re-invent the wheel themselves and inadvertently providing a confusing array of overlapping information.

The agreed priorities of the FutureBeef program for northern Australia are:

1. Weaner management
2. Improving breeder performance
3. Business management
4. Grazing land management
5. Breeder management

This project aims to ensure each of these priorities are delivered effectively to a wider audience, using online technologies<sup>2</sup>.

## FutureBeef market segments

The FutureBeef program target population is northern Australia beef producers and beef extension staff in Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Kimberley-Pilbara regions of Western Australia. The other key stakeholder is the FutureBeef program committee and the organisations it represents (i.e. MLA, DAFWA, DPIF and DAF). The following tables provide indicative estimates of key FutureBeef program target market segments<sup>3</sup>.

### FutureBeef update eBulletin subscribers

Description of eBulletin subscribers (2014-2015 MailChimp system):

- 23% industry members
- 6% private sector service providers
- 8% public sector service providers
- 6% 'other'
- 58% did not nominate a category.

### Non-corporate specialist beef producers

Non-corporate specialist beef producers are those producers with more than 200 head of cattle who derive the majority of their income from beef production (Northern beef report 2013).

Region	Population	Average herd size (AE)	Average ha managed
1. Qld Southern coastal	1,422	1,132	4,445
2. Qld Northern coastal	295	1,741	10,702
3. Qld Eastern downs	416	716	3,717
4. Qld Southern inland and central	1,954	1,535	8,531
5. Qld Cape and Carpentaria	67	6,183	121,159
6. Qld West and south-west	175	4,460	105,911
7. Qld Central north	514	3,863	38,591
8. Qld Central west	462	2,188	21,852
9. NT Alice Springs	49	6,062	376,307
10. NT Barkly Tablelands	13	12,682	417,691
11. NT VRD and Katherine	44	10,331	161,829
12. NT Darwin and Top-End	25	4,482	67,866
13. WA Kimberley	30	9,108	236,167
14. WA Pilbara	25	8,214	239,842
Total	5,493		

### Corporate beef businesses (Northern beef report 2013)

Corporate beef businesses are those not owned, operated or managed by related individuals (Northern beef report 2013).

Region	Population	Average herd size (AE)	Average ha managed
Northern Australia	183	17,542	349,600

<sup>2</sup> Request for Quotation PID1620 (c). Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

<sup>3</sup> Request for Quotation PID1620 (c). Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.



### The total number of MLA members with grass-fed cattle (pers comm. Fox 2014)

Region	Population
1. Queensland	10,441
2. Northern Territory	143
3. Western Australia: Kimberley/Pilbara and Broome	57
Total	10,641

### Beef extension staff (FutureBeef strategic plan 2014-16)

Region	Population
1. Queensland: Far North and North West	4
2. Queensland: North	8
3. Queensland: Central	10
4. Queensland: West	2
5. Queensland: Southern and South East	6
6. Northern Territory: Alice Springs, Barkly, Katherine and Darwin	3
7. Western Australia: Kimberley/Pilbara and Broome	2
Total	35

## FutureBeef and FutureBeef eExtension

The eExtension team, within FutureBeef, is responsible for developing and managing the FutureBeef website, FutureBeef staff intranet, webinars, eBulletins and newsletters, social media (working closely with NTDPIF colleagues) and multimedia. The primary aim of all these activities is to support and enhance FutureBeef and other industry on-ground activities delivered by staff and industry partners<sup>4</sup>.

## FutureBeef update eBulletin

The **FutureBeef update eBulletin** is a monthly publication, which contains information about project updates, upcoming events, the availability of new publications and tools. Subscriptions are free and available online at [www.futurebeef.com.au/resources/newsletters](http://www.futurebeef.com.au/resources/newsletters). Forty-four FutureBeef Update eBulletins have been produced since inception in April 2012. At the time of reporting 2,947 subscribers receive the FutureBeef update eBulletins. Data is collected for each issue, collated and reported on quarterly and annually, including the number of subscribers, articles, clicks and unique clicks for each FutureBeef update<sup>5</sup>.

FutureBeef also offers three additional eBulletins as part of its service (outside the scope of this evaluation): Northern muster (north Queensland); CQ BEEF (central Queensland); and Beeftalk (south east and southern Queensland).

## FutureBeef Facebook and Twitter

**FutureBeef Facebook and Twitter** accounts are managed through a program partners' working committee, via regular planning webinars. During 2014-2015 there were 1,640 referrals from Facebook and 490 referrals from Twitter to the FutureBeef website<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.

<sup>5</sup> Request for Quotation PID1620 (c). Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

<sup>6</sup> Request for Quotation PID1620 (c). Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

# Methodology

## Secondary data sources

FutureBeef provided the following existing monitoring and evaluation material to inform the evaluation:

1. Subscriber evaluation of the FutureBeef website March 2013
2. Staff evaluation of the FutureBeef website March 2013
3. 2014-2015 annual report

## Telephone interviews

### Sampling and confidence

A randomised telephone survey was undertaken as part of this evaluation. The survey frame used for sampling was the list of subscribers to the FutureBeef eBulletin (2,900). In the first instance, a subsample was randomly generated. This list consisted of 400 producers and 45 advisors/ industry/ staff.

This list was then further refined based on the availability of phone numbers, comprising of the following categories:

- Producers - 133
- Industry members - 22
- No category - 8
- Other - 4
- DAF, NTDPI and DAFWA FutureBeef staff - 45

Those selected were contacted and advised of the survey and its purpose. This provided the opportunity for people to remove themselves from the contact list. Three producers and three service providers/ staff were subsequently removed in addition to five further contacts due to email bounces.

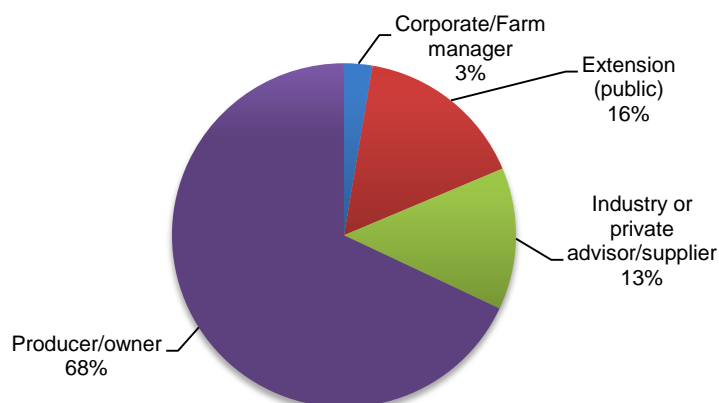
A further randomly selected 132 subscribers (with contact details) were added bringing the potential contact list to 265. Attempts were made to contact all those listed with 150 successfully contacted and completing the survey.

*Given the random selection process and the total frame of the producer population (those on the eBulletin subscriber list), there is a 95% certainty that the true mean responses to questions in the survey lie between plus or minus 8%. The results relate directly to those on the eBulletin list and must be viewed within this context.*

### Survey respondents

During February and March 2016, responses were collected from 102 producers, 24 extension providers, 20 industry representatives/advisors/suppliers and 4 corporate/farm managers. Of the 98 producers who responded, 89% noted they were MLA members (87), the remaining 11% were non-members. Of the 102 producers, 88 provided details about **herd size** with responses ranging from 3 to 5000 (average herd size: 895).

Figure 1: Respondent roles (n=150)



## Understanding of FutureBeef Program

Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of FutureBeef as the name of the program. With an average rating of 6.7/10, most had quite a good awareness. Respondents also commented on their awareness of the involvement of FutureBeef partners in the program. This awareness was varied, however there was overall a very limited awareness of NTDPIF and DAFWA involvement across all respondent groups (average rating 2.6 and 1.8 respectively).

The following table shows a breakdown of these findings.

	Not at all aware								Very aware				TOTAL	Average
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
MLA	13	0	2	5	3	8	6	24	39	13	37	150	7.2	
DAF	19	2	8	4	1	3	6	18	25	13	49	148	6.9	
NTDPIF	100	0	3	1	3	4	1	2	3	2	27	146	2.6	
DAFWA	108	1	4	1	1	5	2	2	4	2	15	145	1.8	

Some **extension providers** were part of the FutureBeef program or part of the network and had a better understanding of all partner organisations. Others were based in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, part of NTDPIF or DAFWA. Comments were that they *thought it was a Queensland program; don't see much from DAFWA* and were *not sure of DAFWA involvements*. There were some who noted they were aware MLA was funding FutureBeef but *unaware of [its] input into the development and hadn't seen any evidence that MLA was involved*.

This perspective was similar amongst **industry representatives/advisors/suppliers** with some commenting that *DAFWA was a bit more off the radar*. Some had worked in partnership with DAF and MLA and were well aware of their involvement. One was based in NT and aware of NTDPIF involvement. Another commented that they were aware of the partners but not of *the structure*.

Some **producers** had a very good understanding of the partners involved in FutureBeef. One explained that they *export cattle overseas and have dealings with Thailand so we are aware of all aspects*, while another worked for DAF in NT and WA and someone else said that *it is part of my job to know this*. Many noted their connections to either MLA (via Feedback, magazines, booklets and emails) and DAF (working on farm projects, participation in courses and workshops, facilities available, extension support, field days and other resources) as contributing to their knowledge of these organisations' involvement. Many producers indicated that they were not aware of NTDPIF and DAFWA involvement.

## SPECIFIC FINDINGS

### Communication channels

FutureBeef newspaper features (85%) and the *FutureBeef update* eBulletin (83%) were the most commonly mentioned communication channels by respondents (March 2016). Social media channels (YouTube 23%; Facebook 23%; Twitter 9%) were less prevalent overall. However, more than half of extension providers (54%) mentioned accessing YouTube and just under half (46%) Facebook. Just 19% of producers mentioned using these two channels. Industry/private advisor/suppliers were more likely to have used Twitter (30%) than extension officers (21%) and producers (2%).

More than half also mentioned accessing the FutureBeef website (59%) and the FutureBeef webinars (52%). Seventeen extension providers commented on their use of the FutureBeef intranet. The below table provides an overall breakdown of respondent use of FutureBeef communication channels:

	Extension (public) (n=24)	Industry/ private advisor/supplier (n=20)	Producer/ owner (n=102)	Corporate/Farm manager (n=4)	TOTAL
<b>FutureBeef newspaper features</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>FutureBeef Update eBulletin</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>124</b>
FutureBeef Website	24	18	47		<b>89</b>
FutureBeef Webinars	22	13	42	1	<b>78</b>
<b>FutureBeef on YouTube</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>35</b>
<b>FutureBeef on Facebook</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>34</b>
FutureBeef Intranet	17				<b>17</b>
<b>FutureBeef on Twitter</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>13</b>

### FutureBeef Update eBulletin

#### eBulletin statistics

The FutureBeef update eBulletin is published monthly (previously every six weeks) and contains information about project updates, upcoming events, the availability of new publications and tools. Forty-four FutureBeef update eBulletins have been produced since inception (April 2012) with it currently having 2,947 subscribers (relatively stable since 2013–14). Data is collected on each issue

and collated and reported on quarterly and annually. This includes the number of subscribers, articles, clicks and unique clicks for each FutureBeef update<sup>7</sup>.

As of 30 June 2015, there were an average of 40 new subscriptions each month and nine unsubscribes. The average open rate for each campaign was 31% compared to the industry average of 20%. The average click rate for each campaign was 6%. To date there were noted to have been a total of 267 unsubscribes and 486 emails 'cleaned' (i.e. MailChimp automatically removes unsubscribes when a recipient clicks the 'Unsubscribe' link in the email). Reasons people gave for unsubscribing included *retirement, no longer in the industry, duplicate emails and did not subscribe/spam*<sup>8</sup>.

The MailChimp system showed that eBulletin subscribers in 2014-15 included:

- 23% industry members
- 6% private sector service providers
- 8% public sector service providers
- 6% 'other'
- 58% did not nominate a category.

This compared with the 2013-14 eBulletin subscriber descriptions, which were:

- 20% industry members
- 4% private sector service providers
- 6% public sector service providers
- 4% 'other'
- 66% did not nominate a category.

The number of subscribers, articles, clicks and unique clicks for each *FutureBeef update* are indicators of the effectiveness of the eBulletin to distribute news and information regarding FutureBeef activities.

#### FutureBeef Update metrics 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015

Issue no.	Date published	Subscribers	No. articles	Total opens*	Clicks	Unique clicks
23	01 Jul 14	2877	5	1012	613	455
24	05 Aug 14	2887	5	1026	402	339
25	02 Sep 14	2892	5	916	331	303
26	09 Oct 14	2884	11	935	384	338
27	04 Nov 14	2892	11	976	434	364
28	02 Dec 14	2885	7	952	379	324
29	06 Jan 15	2885	Events only	1005	423	344
30	05 Feb 15	2895	8	1001	432	383
31	03 Mar 15	2901	5	1028	423	345
32	07 Apr 15	2890	5	1056	617	476
33	05 May 15	2882	11	956	328	282
34	02 Jun 15	2875	10	956	459	399

Source: MailChimp \*Total opens for the campaign, i.e. the individual eBulletin.

<sup>7</sup> Request for Quotation PID1620 (c). Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

<sup>8</sup> Request for Quotation PID1620 (c). Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

## 2013 online survey

During March 2013, an online survey of 433 FutureBeef website subscribers was conducted using SurveyMonkey. Respondents to the survey included producers (25%), consultants (19%) and agribusiness (22%). Government, natural resource management and hobby farmers each accounted for 9%. Education and livestock agents each accounted for 3%<sup>9</sup>.

The evaluation also included responses from 27 FutureBeef staff: DAFQ (69.2%), DAFWA (15.3%), DPIF (11.5%) and MLA (3.8%). Extension was the primary work role for 73.1% of respondents, 19.2% research and 7.7% other<sup>10</sup>. The following is a summary of findings and feedback collected during these evaluations:

Subscribers rated the eBulletin highly (7 to 8 out of 10). They liked: how informative it was; easy to access; great way to keep up to date; range of topics covered; short, visual and easy to read; networking, industry contacts and discussion topics. There was not much that subscribers did not like about the eBulletin. Suggestions for improvement included: *More often; A bit more, about who the faces of FutureBeef are; I would prefer to see more of the text from each story without having to go to the website each time.*

FutureBeef staff rated the eBulletin highly. The majority of respondents rated the eBulletin subscription process, content, layout and frequency at 8 out of 10 or higher. eBulletin effectiveness rated slightly lower at 7 out of 10 or higher. Staff particularly like that it was short, sharp and to the point making it easy and quick to see what's in it. They appreciated that it was *not going to be relevant to them 100% of the time*. Staff also liked the look and feel. One respondent mentioned how it highlighted things that may have been missed on the website. There were only two suggestions for improving the eBulletin: *Reducing, or removing, 'double clicking through the FutureBeef site to external websites; and increasing the frequency so that it doesn't miss important things/events.*

## 2016 evaluation

Most respondents to the survey (83%) indicated they have received the *FutureBeef update* eBulletin. This included 92% of extension providers, 90% of industry representatives, 79% of producers and 75% of corporate/farm managers contacted.

Overall, the *FutureBeef update* eBulletin was rated as being *quite* useful (average rating 6.6/10). It was valued as a beneficial resource (72 mentions) with many commenting that email is their preferred and main method of receiving information and updates on events and activities. This is because it allowed readers to *skim through information* and *click through and share links* that are relevant and useful. Some comments included:

*Can look at them when you can and access the links if you need to - **Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers***

*[!] like eBulletin, it is a comprehensive way of keeping in touch - **Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers***

*Quick and easy way to have a look at some highlights it comes in email and you can scan it pretty quickly - **Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers***

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<sup>9</sup> Subscriber evaluation of FutureBeef website (Attachment 2). March 2013. FutureBeef.

<sup>10</sup> Staff Evaluation of the FutureBeef website (Attachment 3). March 2013. FutureBeef.

*Read emails more often because they come to you, searching is so time consuming - **Producer***

*Email is probably is the best source I can save it and read it at my leisure and don't have to carry around the paper and it is topical and immediate – **Producer***

*Really like how they send emails out but would be nice to get notifications because being on a busy schedule I forget sometimes – **Producer***

Others noted that although they receive the *FutureBeef update* eBulletin they do not regularly read through the emails (36 mentions). For extension providers and producers alike, time was noted as an impacting factor. Several commented that unless there is reference to a topic area of interest in the first line, they would delete/disregard the email. Others noted that emails tend to get lost in amongst other correspondence. Many producers also commented on the fact that they may not check their emails often and that internet speeds are too slow to download emails.

Several respondents suggested that the eBulletin *seemed to be Queensland oriented* or just *not relevant*. One commented that the information does not *link in to some of the broader issues for industry*.

## FutureBeef social media

According to the eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015, there continues to be significant, positive growth in FutureBeef social media (Facebook and Twitter). During 2014-15 there were 1,640 referrals from Facebook and 490 referrals from Twitter to the FutureBeef website<sup>11</sup>.

### Social media statistics

The eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 notes that after joining Facebook (19 January 2012), FutureBeef had 2,315 likes as of 30 June 2015 (a 153% increase from 2013-14) and 2,364 Twitter followers (joined 2 May 2012) (a 59% increase from 2013-14). The 10 most popular tweets for 2014-2015 attracted 425 URL clicks through to the program website and northern beef stakeholder online content<sup>12</sup>.

Activity (including posts, comments and sharing) and the tone of tweets and general message exchange, were described in the eExtension Annual Report (2014-2015) as being *positive*<sup>13</sup>. The length of time and average number of pages viewed by Facebook users on the FutureBeef website (2.47 minutes) after clicking through suggests a quality visitor interested in the available content. There would be value in nurturing this audience and providing frequent and timely interactions.

### Social network referrals to FutureBeef website 2014-2015

	Social network	Visits	Pageviews	Avg. visit duration	Pages/visit
1	Facebook	1640	4261	2.47 minutes	2.60
2	Twitter	490	840	1.23 minutes	1.71
3	LinkedIn	47	63	0.47 minutes	1.34

Source: Google Analytics

<sup>11</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.

<sup>12</sup> Request for Quotation PID1620 (c). Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

<sup>13</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.



## Facebook

The following metrics demonstrate FutureBeef's Facebook responses during 2014-2015. As at 30 June 2015, 2,315 people had 'liked' FutureBeef on Facebook (153% increase from 2013-14)<sup>14</sup>.

### FutureBeef Facebook monthly analytics 2014-2015

Month	Total likes	New likes	Weekly total reach
July 2014	816	27	NA
August 2014	836	24	NA
September 2014	877	45	NA
October 2014	898	21	NA
November 2014	935	37	NA
December 2014	1103	168	120
January 2015	1213	110	0
February 2015	1306	93	196
March 2015	2090	784	0
April 2015	2143	53	347
May 2015	2209	66	1089
June 2015	2315	106	3989

### Facebook referrals to FutureBeef 2014-2015<sup>15</sup>

	2014–2015	Apr–Jun 2015	Jan–Mar 2015	Oct–Dec 2014	Jul–Sep 2014
<b>Visits</b>	1640	644	464	247	285
% change from previous period	—	+39%	+88%	-13%	+1%
<b>Pageviews</b>	4261	1356	1532	524	849
% change from previous period	—	-11%	+192%	-38%	-24%
<b>Av. visit duration (min)</b>	2.47	2.24	3.09	2.29	3.18
% change from previous period	—	-28%	+35%	-28%	-48%
<b>Pages per visit</b>	2.60	2.11	3.30	2.12	2.98
% change from previous period	—	-36%	+56%	-29%	-25%

### Top 10 FutureBeef website pages referred to by Facebook 2014-2015

	Shared URL	Visits	Pageviews	Avg. visit duration	Pages/visit
1	futurebeef.com.au/	232	1178	6.34 min	5.08
2	futurebeef.com.au/resources/projects/wambiana-grazing-trial/	113	133	0.42 min	1.18
3	futurebeef.com.au/events/northern-beef-producer-expo/	71	112	1.23 min	1.58
4	futurebeef.com.au/topics/breeding-and-genetics/bull-buying-checklist/	52	58	0.07 min	1.12
5	futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/nutrition/nutrient-requirements/	39	53	0.23 min	1.36
6	futurebeef.com.au/topics/business-management/stocking-rate-economics/	35	42	1.01 min	1.20
7	futurebeef.com.au/topics/breeding-and-genetics/crossbreeding-systems-for-beef-cattle/	34	42	1.08 min	1.24
8	futurebeef.com.au/topics/markets-and-marketing/	28	53	7.18 min	1.89
9	futurebeef.com.au/topics/nutrition/water-requirements-for-cattle/	28	46	2.49 min	1.64
10	futurebeef.com.au/topics/health-and-disease/post-weaning-diarrhoea-pwd/	27	35	3.19 min	1.30

<sup>14</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.

<sup>15</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.



## 2016 evaluation

Thirty-four respondents (23%) indicated that they have accessed and/or viewed FutureBeef on Facebook. This included 46% of extension providers, 20% of industry representatives and 19% of producers. Respondents rated FutureBeef on Facebook as being *quite* useful (average rating 6.7/10). Those who accessed FutureBeef communications via Facebook agree that it is a useful tool for providing updates on events, sharing information and *communicating with the younger generations*. Some producers noted they use Facebook to gain access to topics of interest, to keep up to date, to see *other farmers' experiences* and to *share photos and experiences*.

One extension provider commented that Facebook offers a *great* opportunity to interact with people using photo visuals instead of email. *It has a huge potential more opportunity for others to tap into. It could be better if we could find out on Facebook about local areas instead of everything in general and update the Facebook more frequently. We have so many different avenues to get events out there. We aren't using it to its full potential.*

*Social media component is a good platform to extend messages to clients that we don't get to see and they still know they have a contact – Extension Provider*

## Twitter

The following statistics demonstrate FutureBeef's Twitter performance during 2014-2015. As of 30 June 2015, FutureBeef had 2,364 Twitter followers (a 153% increase from 2013-14). FutureBeef sent a total of 399 tweets and 490 people clicked on a FutureBeef tweet URL. The top 10 most popular links are listed in the table below<sup>16</sup>.

### Top 10 most popular links for @FutureBeef 2014-2015

Rank	Date	Post	Clicks
1	02 Jun 15	<a href="http://www.bigredbash.com.au/bigredbash/drought...">http://www.bigredbash.com.au/bigredbash/drought...</a> 'Big Red Bash' free & discounted tickets for producers & residents in Western Qld! See website for details & to apply <a href="http://ow.ly/2btgNK">http://ow.ly/2btgNK</a>	104
2	24 Jun 15	<a href="https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledgecentre/mark...">https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledgecentre/mark...</a> Live Export. You've heard about it, but here's the facts. A comprehensive, one page summary: <a href="http://ow.ly/OcPWk">http://ow.ly/OcPWk</a>	49
3	26 Jun 15	<a href="https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/nutr...">https://futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/nutr...</a> Could you answer this question: When considering feeding cattle it is important to:... <a href="http://ow.ly/OcQxP">http://ow.ly/OcQxP</a>	43
4	27 Jun 15	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/topics/nutrition/prote...">http://futurebeef.com.au/topics/nutrition/prote...</a> Why supplementing protein and urea in the dry season can help productivity: <a href="http://ow.ly/ynixJ">http://ow.ly/ynixJ</a>	41
5	22 Mar 15	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gl-W_txoh0E&amp;fea...">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gl-W_txoh0E&amp;fea...</a> It's nearly the end of the pasture growing season. Time to match how much grass you have to how much you'll need: <a href="http://ow.ly/KDyYV">http://ow.ly/KDyYV</a>	40
6	18 Jul 14	<a href="http://www.mla.com.au/News-and-resources/Tools-...">http://www.mla.com.au/News-and-resources/Tools...</a> Cost of production? @meatlivestock have an online calculator to help you do just that: <a href="http://ow.ly/ykiho">http://ow.ly/ykiho</a>	37
7	08 May 15	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/how-to-be-profitable-i...">http://futurebeef.com.au/how-to-be-profitable-i...</a> Increasing scale of the business alone won't make it more profitable. Have you read this @meatlivestock report? <a href="http://ow.ly/McFZ7">http://ow.ly/McFZ7</a>	35
8	14 Apr 15	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/topics/husbandry/yard-...">http://futurebeef.com.au/topics/husbandry/yard...</a> The time and cost put into training weaners is recouped many times over as they get older. <a href="http://ow.ly/Lt7Qv">http://ow.ly/Lt7Qv</a> <a href="http://ow.ly/i/ajSdl">http://ow.ly/i/ajSdl</a>	26

<sup>16</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.

9	28 Aug 14	<a href="http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overvi...">http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overvi...</a> Latest BOM climate outlooks- also new clickable maps so you can see detailed chances and averages for your region! <a href="http://ow.ly/AO1my">http://ow.ly/AO1my</a>	25
10	30 Mar 15	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDdxCV1pnaU&amp;fea...">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDdxCV1pnaU&amp;fea...</a> If you were challenged, would you be able to prove you've been taking care of your land? <a href="http://ow.ly/KDAnT">http://ow.ly/KDAnT</a>	25

Source: HootSuite

### Top 10 FutureBeef website pages referred to by Twitter 2014-2015<sup>17</sup>

	Shared URL	Visits	Pageviews	Avg. visit duration	Pages/visit
1	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/how-to-be-profitable-in-the-north/">futurebeef.com.au/how-to-be-profitable-in-the-north/</a>	36	41	0.14 min	1.14
2	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/markets-and-marketing/live-export/">futurebeef.com.au/knowledge-centre/markets-and-marketing/live-export/</a>	30	45	0.20 min	1.50
3	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/">futurebeef.com.au/</a>	21	71	2.10 min	3.38
4	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/events/?event_month=3&amp;event_year=2013">futurebeef.com.au/events/?event_month=3&amp;event_year=2013</a>	16	151	16.36 min	9.44
5	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/topics/nutrition/protein-and-urea-supplementation/">futurebeef.com.au/topics/nutrition/protein-and-urea-supplementation/</a>	10	20	3.20 min	2.00
6	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/topics/breeding-and-genetics/bull-buying-checklist/">futurebeef.com.au/topics/breeding-and-genetics/bull-buying-checklist/</a>	9	10	0.51 min	1.11
7	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/topics/business-management/stocking-rate-economics/">futurebeef.com.au/topics/business-management/stocking-rate-economics/</a>	9	9	0 min	1.00
8	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/events/strategies-to-increase-the-profitability-of-extensive-beef-businesses/">futurebeef.com.au/events/strategies-to-increase-the-profitability-of-extensive-beef-businesses/</a>	8	8	0 min	1.00
9	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/contact/">futurebeef.com.au/contact/</a>	6	12	4.13 min	2.00
10	<a href="http://futurebeef.com.au/events/beefconnect-webinar-learning-from-cash-cow/">futurebeef.com.au/events/beefconnect-webinar-learning-from-cash-cow/</a>	6	9	1.43 min	1.50

## 2013 online survey

This evaluation found that the majority of respondents used neither Facebook (56%) or Twitter (70%). Facebook was used by the most number of respondents on a daily basis (27%), compared to Twitter (12%). Similar numbers of subscribers reported using Facebook and Twitter on a weekly to monthly basis (18%).

## 2016 evaluation

Thirteen respondents (9%) indicated they have used Twitter. This included 21% of extension providers, 30% of industry representatives and 2% of producers contacted. Respondents rated #FutureBeef on Twitter as being *quite* useful (average rating 6.3/10). One extension provider noted that they rely on Twitter feeds as a primary source of information regarding FutureBeef. Others found #FutureBeef on Twitter a useful source of information related to *suggestions* and *market farm prices and news*. One respondent noted sharing AgForce information from #FutureBeef. Others expressed the views that *from a Twitter point of view there is only so much you can get across in a short message* and that *obviously it is very topic dependent and personally I get a lot out of it*.

*Social media components are where I am getting my main source of information from if I am searching for something – Extension Provider*

*We don't know what is going to happen to the social media in the next 5 years and I like what is happening at the moment – Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers*

<sup>17</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.

## Multimedia

There are currently 134 subscribers to the FutureBeef YouTube channel. During 2014-2015 there were 9,207 views (a 9% increase from 2013-14), and an estimated 947 hours watched, across the 121 videos (12% increase) available. FutureBeef multimedia views have increased annually since the FutureBeef YouTube channel was created on 23 November 2011. These videos showcase *key management practices and FutureBeef initiatives*. The majority of people access FutureBeefAu directly through YouTube, followed by embedded players on other websites and mobile devices<sup>18</sup>.

### Top 10 FutureBeef videos by number of views 2014-2015

	Top 10 videos by views	Views	Estimated hours watched
1	Feedlot industry investment	3144	366
2	Grazing systems - fact and fiction	522	60
3	PCAS webinar #2	356	64
4	Beef supply chain development	268	13
5	Burn your bush before it bites back – lessons from Kidman Springs fire trial 1993-2013	265	27
6	Microscope bull sperm live stream test	202	3
7	Learning from CashCow – the Northern Australian beef fertility project	196	28
8	Demystifying pestivirus (BVD) – a guide to enterprise level management	174	16
9	Maximising beef production and profits with high quality forages	174	32
10	The diversity and potential within legume Desmanthus	169	13

Source: YouTube Analytics

### 2013 online survey

Approximately 77% of subscribers watched FutureBeef multimedia/videos on a weekly or monthly basis and 23% did not watch them at all. Findings from the evaluation listed factors which subscribers liked most about FutureBeef videos:

- *Far better than just pictures*
- *Information to improve my knowledge*
- *Videos and accompanying notes are good form of accessing information on specific and relevant topics*
- *Interaction*
- *Having someone present information and do demonstrations where you can see what they are talking about is better than just reading about it*
- *Quality information every time*
- *Well prepared and presented*
- *Practical*
- *Have watched a few and they seem relevant and I can hear them. I have difficulty hearing if there is music playing in the background.*
- *I like that it is a different way of getting a message across*
- *Able to view practical examples.*

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<sup>18</sup> eExtension Annual Report 2014-2015 (Attachment 4). FutureBeef.

Approximately 65.4% (17) of staff members responding to the survey watched FutureBeef multimedia/videos monthly, 26.9% never watched them and 7.7% watched them daily.

## 2016 evaluation

Thirty-five respondents (23%) indicated that they have accessed and/or viewed FutureBeef on YouTube. This included 54% extension providers, 15% industry representatives and 19% producers contacted. Overall respondents rated FutureBeef on YouTube as being *quite* useful (average rating 6.4/10). Specific mention by extension providers included viewing webinars and accessing training clips via YouTube, which are sometimes used to present information during workshops or in discussions with clients. One extension provider commented they had referred their own clients to the FutureBeef YouTube as *it has bite-sized bits of information that they can refer back to*. Respondents commented on the *worthwhile* information available via YouTube including videos on *land condition monitoring* and *holistic management*. YouTube allowed respondents to access *direct link[s]* and topics which they are directly interested in, *at any hour of the day*. Other comments relating to YouTube included:

*I really like webinars on YouTube, we can use for our BMP program. I wrote a script for one of the videos as well I think they are very good resource to show people – Extension Provider*

*I think the short quick YouTube videos are quite useful and continuation facts sheet available on the net are important. There are quite a few app based things on gestation for cattle – Extension Provider*

## FutureBeef beef and sheep newspaper features

### 2016 evaluation

A total of 128 respondents (85%) indicated that they have accessed and/or viewed FutureBeef beef and sheep newspaper features appearing in Queensland Country Life and the North Queensland Register. This included 83% extension providers, 60% industry representatives, 90% producers and 100% of the corporate/farm managers contacted. Overall the FutureBeef beef and sheep newspaper features were rated as being *quite* useful (average rating 6.8/10).

Respondent comments were generally favorable regarding FutureBeef sheep and beef newspaper features. Many extension providers noted making contributions to these articles and some have received positive feedback from readers. Others described FutureBeef features as being *relevant to producers; excellent; and useful*. Comments included:

*FutureBeef is engaging with clients, they are reaching more clients and [features are] more suitable to the clients. Using a centerfold is putting FutureBeef branding out there and creating a lot more recognition of the brand – Extension Provider*

*Print media is vitally important we can't over rely on electronic means so this needs to be supported - Extension Provider*

Several extension providers expressed the view that newspaper articles are too labor intensive, with one commenting that *the level of input to develop the articles and the negotiation is enormous* and another that *the content is good, but I question the usefulness of doing it. It takes so much of our time*.

General producer feedback was positive regarding articles in both the Queensland Country Life and Beeftalk, with several describing the publications as their *bible*. Some producers noted reading the features occasionally (6 mentions), others noted reading them weekly and whenever they had spare

time. Some producers note receiving both the Queensland Country Life and BeefTalk publication online and/or via social media. Comments included:

*I like the opportunity to go more into detail in the paper print not on the digital it is good to get a large article where you can absorb the knowledge that has been written in the paper. I like an in-depth explanation and I like to read and you can put it down and pick up and read it at your leisure – **Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers***

*I relate to BeefTalk the most, it's my favourite magazine and I am not too confident on computers - **Producer***

*The stuff in the Queensland Country Life, as you don't get a lot in print. If it has something good it is good to file it away for future reference. Or put it on the board to remind me of things when I get overwhelmed - **Producer***

Specific mention made regarding the Queensland Country Life suggests that almost half of the survey respondents receive the publication, with many (33 mentions) describing it as providing *informative* articles, market reports, classifieds and sometimes good *to file away for future reference*. Some producers suggested that the publication is *losing its value; definitely not as good as it used to be* and several commented negatively on the new format. Some commented on the timelines of print articles suggesting that by the time print date occurs, articles may be redundant, one commented that *newspapers are yesterday's news*. Other comments relating to the Queensland Country Life included:

*Queensland Country Life is really slipping and losing interest but BeefTalk and Beef Central are way better with content – **Producer***

*Queensland Country Life lacks independent journalism content, there is too much advertorial content, very poor – **Producer***

Mention of other publications which producers found useful included: the Weekly Times; Stock and Land; North Queensland Register; The Land; Beef Central; The Australian; MLA Feedback; Farm Weekly; ABC Rural; and a “quarterly book produced by DAF” (respondents words – no further detail available)... *brilliant for farmers that can't access the Internet*.

Several commented on their reliance of newspaper features as a source of information, based on limited access to online resources:

*We have to rely on magazines, things would be different if I had an Internet service that worked - **Producer***

*I would love to watch video clips on YouTube as you can see exactly how some things are done but don't have that privilege. MLA Feedback is a wonderful source and Farm Weekly is good too - **Producer***

# Overall program: satisfaction with FutureBeef communication

## Information channels

Respondents were generally *quite* satisfied with the mix of information sources that FutureBeef is using to provide information to the industry (average rating 7.4/10). More than half of the respondents agreed that FutureBeef's current delivery and extension of information offers users the opportunity to *pick* their preferred communication channels (80 mentions). Its mix of information resources were described as providing *variety; fantastic overall; accessible; and offering something for everyone*. FutureBeef was commended for delivering information across a range of geographic areas, covering a range of information and for being *adaptable and not stuck on one thing*. Respondents commented that *you will be sure to get the information you are looking for; and if people want the information, there is plenty if they go looking*. One noted that *given today's technology...they are going the right way*. One producer expressed the view that current information available is *better than it ever has been in my life!*

Producers discussed their use of FutureBeef's **online resources** including the availability of webinars, emails and newsletter updates. Several extension providers commented on the need for more links to *scientific information*, other websites and the possibility of a virtual library. Another respondent commented on the availability of old fact sheets relating to management options, which are no longer available online, suggesting an issue with website storage capabilities.

FutureBeef's **social media strategies** were discussed by an extension provider as providing a *good platform to extend messages to clients that we don't get to see* and another suggested the potential to use resources to link to other news topics and information rather than housing it all in the eBulletin. From a producer perspective, Facebook was noted as *leading the way*, particularly when producers cannot make it to workshops and forums. Facebook allows access to local events and other farmer experiences.

Some respondents commented on the need for more **workshops, field days and general face-to-face** interactions (10 mentions). It was explained they missed the opportunity to talk with extension providers (particular mention of DAF) and the fact that *most farmers actually like speaking to someone*. The need for regular interaction, field days, demonstration sites and a scope for more extension was highlighted, with one respondent commenting that *information sinks in better than emails* when producers attend seminars and workshops.

Several commented on the availability of FutureBeef **printed materials**. Extension providers suggested the potential for more mail outs and flyers. Several producers commented on their preference for printed communications, the option to *file it away and read it again* at a later date, with several making specific mention of MLA publications, which were noted as being more relevant to larger properties.

Overall respondents were satisfied that FutureBeef is providing access to range of information, while several extension providers noted that there is always the potential to do more to get information out to producers, but *it comes down to money and people to do it*. One extension provider commented that they are *still running into beef producers who have never heard of FutureBeef*.



## FutureBeef content

Respondents were satisfied with the content of information and resources being provided by FutureBeef (average rating 7.5/10). Overall it was thought that FutureBeef was providing useful content in a range of formats (print and online) and covering a variety of topics (48 mentions). FutureBeef was noted to be providing *practical advice* on general farm management and that *over a period of time, most relevant topics are being covered*.

In terms of preferred communications, many commented on FutureBeef's online content and resources (27 mentions). In particular, respondents mentioned the FutureBeef webinars, emails and newsletters, as well as the value of the FutureBeef website in providing information on upcoming events, workshops, contact details and other notifications.

Respondents appreciated any content specific to **cattle and sheep management** including best practice herd management, stock control, breeding, fertility, mother and calf welfare, health and genetics (17 mentions). Respondents also discussed the value of information regarding **animal nutrition**: grazing, dry season feeding and supplementary feeding (10 mentions); as well as information **about land management** practices: land types, pasture management and legumes (9 mentions).

**Market** updates, reports and projections as well as **general business management** topics and research including productivity, profitability, environment, government and economics were mentioned as being useful FutureBeef content (14 and 12 mentions).

Some respondents commented on their preference to receive **published information** and reports including: reports of an academic nature; documented examples with facts and figures; new innovations and research; fact sheets; and MLA publications (11 mentions).

Others discussed their preference for FutureBeef's training and extension activities including workshops, field days, presentations and seminars (8 mentions).

Some producers expressed the view that FutureBeef information is not useful and that there is sometimes too much information (7 mentions).

## Suggestions for additional content

Many respondents could not suggest any areas where FutureBeef could improve their communications or topics areas they felt were lacking (66 mentions). Others suggested specific areas where they felt additional information could be provided. These included:

- **Regionally specific information** including the unique requirements of central Australia, Central Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, climate and weather impacts, drought management and biosecurity issues.
- **Pasture management** information including soils, legumes, forage crops, cropping conditions, feed lotting, organic farming.
- **Land management** information including fencing and forestry.
- **Herd management** topics including more information relating to genetics, supplements and nutrition.
- **General farm and business management** issues including market information, business improvement and innovation, management and leadership, economics, marketing and branding, different entitlements and schemes available to farmers, exporting information, succession planning.

Respondents suggested some improvement to FutureBeef online resources including the need for more YouTube clips with regional relevance, lists of publications and additional website links and an events and workshop calendar (already in use). One extension provider suggested the possibility of using text messages to update members and several producers took the opportunity to suggest the need for improved internet coverage to allow producers to access more of FutureBeef's online resources. Some respondents commented on the ease of use of the website with particular mention of the search function and the option to refine results.

Case studies were suggested by some extension providers and producers as being a worthwhile means of sharing information with producers (8 mentions), which are regionally relevant and presented by other producers *because producers relate better to other producers*.

Several respondents commented on the need to ensure enough information is targeted towards smaller producers, with some expressing the view that a large portion of existing information is *aimed at the bigger producer*.

Other comments made regarding the extension of FutureBeef information included:

*It is important that they get all of the research that is going on in the industry. It is a lacking there –*  
**Extension Provider**

*More educational topics on business improvement and innovation and we will share it amongst our clients –*  
**Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers**

*We need more information on how to access and use webinars and hopefully spread them out to more areas. Also I don't have a clue what all the abbreviations e.g. BMP stands for, I am sure I am not the only farmer and it's frustrating -*  
**Producer**

*I deal with rural people all over the country but FutureBeef comes through with things that are handy to know and would like to see a lot more farmers utilise –*  
**Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers**

## Impact of FutureBeef communications

### Use of FutureBeef information and resources

Fifty-one respondents indicated that they had used information and resources provided via FutureBeef communication channels to stimulate or support decisions and changes made to their enterprises (in the case of producers) or their advisory and extension services. A further 17 suggested that although they had not made any specific changes as a result of information gained, they were able to remain informed and up to date with what is happening in the industry. Others noted they had *maybe* used information to stimulate and/or support change, but were not in a position to provide specific details (43 respondents).



	Extension (public)	Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers	Corporate/Farm manager	Producer/owner	TOTAL
Yes	9	3	0	39	51
No specific changes	0	3	1	13	17
Maybe	3	7	1	32	43
No	8	5	1	13	27
No answer	4	2	1	5	12
				TOTAL	150

The table below shows the types of changes that were motivated or informed by FutureBeef. Seventy eight (78) of the 94 respondents who indicated *Yes they had made a change* as a result of FutureBeef information and resources or *Maybe (but cannot think of a specific example)*, provided details regarding the type of changes they had made.

	Yes	No specific changes but keeps me informed of what is available/happening in the industry	Maybe (but can't think of specific example)	No	TOTAL
Business improvement	8	1	3	0	12
Environmental improvement	9	1	1	0	11
Improvement to advice being given	20	3	12	0	35
Technical improvement	9	0	2	0	11
Other	4	3	10	4	21

## Details of changes made

### Business improvements and changes

Industry representatives/advisors/suppliers discussed the use of FutureBeef information in terms of assisting their clients, making their businesses *more sustainable* and *imparting knowledge* to be used in their business case studies.

Business improvements made by producers included making more informed decisions based on the market and beef prices. Some producers decided to hold onto more females based on demand, to buy hay rather than sell and to keep more calves on the ground. The release of research by FutureBeef and related information was noted as having some influence over decisions.

Specific resources mentioned by respondents as assisting in supporting and informing these changes included:

- A **workshop** at Gin Gin - *changed our enterprise to not selling weaners as we used too as we were not getting enough money for them. Now we sell the yearlings at 3 to 4 to the meat works yet we still have the same amount of cattle on the property but not so many breeders.*
- **Newspaper features:** MLA magazine, MLA EDGE newsletter, DPI BeefTalk, publications on livestock handling, weeds and managing southern speargrass, managing native pasture.
- **FutureBeef website:** updates about events in area

## Environmental improvements and changes

One extension provider commented on the use of land type information sheets and forage reports to assist in *determining land conditions*. Producers used information to support decisions regarding land and soil management mentioning improvements and changes made to *phosphorous efficiency*; identifying and controlling weeds and pastures; and improvements to pastures and different mixes of legumes and grass seeds. In terms of herd management, producers noted improvements made to *general herd management; conditioning scoring; and cattle worming and spraying*. Producers have also used FutureBeef information and resources in planning for and assisting with drought; climate range forecasting and climate change.

Specific resources mentioned by respondents as assisting in supporting and informing these changes:

- **Newspaper features:** magazine articles
- **FutureBeef website:** including MLA and FarmSafe

## Technical improvements and changes

Technical improvements were mostly mentioned by extension providers, who noted using technical information including nutrition advice, feeding schedules and pasture management, to help provide informed advice to graziers. One respondent commented that they have been able to use webinars for extension purposes, *sending clips [and links] out to clients* and using the technical notes for their own purposes.

Specific resources mentioned by respondents as assisting in supporting and informing these changes included:

- **eNews:** and supporting website information
- **FutureBeef website:** *able to pass on information to a client to make a decision to sell or feed cattle*
- **Newspaper features:** information sheets and newspapers
- **Radio:** such as Country hour
- **Webinars:** most detailed information is on the webinar

## Improvements to advice given and received

Several extension providers noted their use of the FutureBeef website, to *hone* their own skills, to access information (*land type sheets; HOF webinars; and grazing management*) as well as referring producers to the website.

Producers discussed the improved access to knowledge within the industry. Specific areas where producers benefited from access to improved advice and information include breeding management, fertility and animal husbandry. Other areas included nutrition and supplementary feeding (particularly drought feeding); herd management (specific mention of how to manage pestivirus, buffalo fly control, tick and worm control as well as cattle weighing and ear tagging); grazing management (rotation strategies, improving pastures and grazing systems); as well as improvements to general knowledge, *reinforcing* current strategies as well as general business management. Specific resources mentioned by respondents as assisting in supporting and informing these changes:

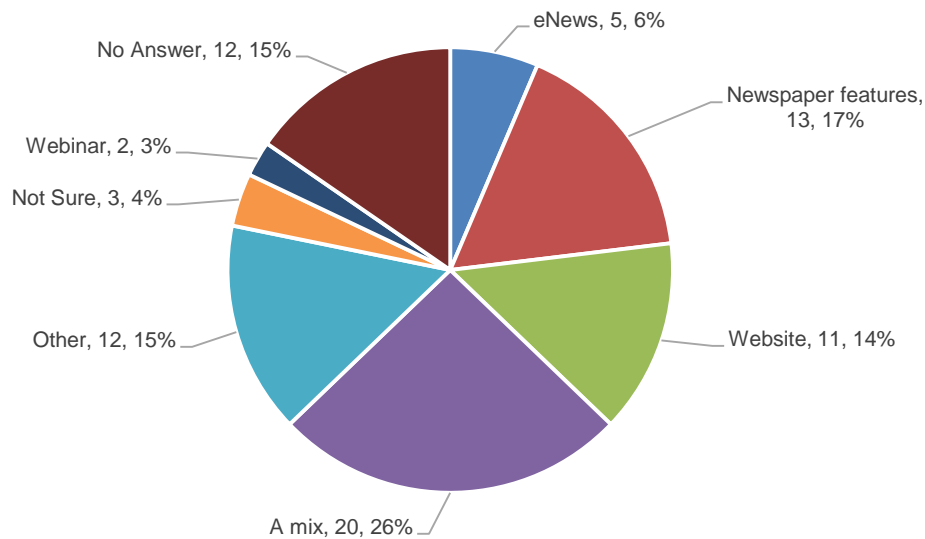
- **FutureBeef website:** Grazing nutrition management, *looked up how to feed in the drought*, MLA Feedback information, YouTube and webinars

- **Newspaper features:** Beef Central, BeefTalk, a course with DAF, MLA book (respondent's own words)/MLA FutureBeef. improvement in pastures
- **Field days and workshops:** MLA beef forums, field days, speaker from a workshop, DAF seminar
- **Face-to-face:** DAF, other cattle producers

## Sources of information informing changes

Seventy eight (78) of the 94 respondents who indicated Yes they had made a change as a result of FutureBeef information and resources or *Maybe* (but cannot think of a specific example), identified the source of information that had assisting in supporting and informing changes. These are shown in the chart below and include a mix of resources (20), newspaper features (13) other sources (12) and the FutureBeef website (11).

**Figure 2: Sources of information informing change (n= 78)**



	Business improvement	Environmental improvement	Improvement to advice being given	Technical improvement	Other	TOTAL
eNews	2		1	2		5
Newspaper features	3	2	6	2		13
Website	1	2	4	3	1	11
A mix	2	3	10	3	2	20
Other	2	2	7		1	12
Not sure	1		1		1	3
Webinar			1	1		2
No answer		1	2		9	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>78</b>

## Benefits of changes made

One of the main benefits resulting from change/hoped to achieve as a result of changes and improvements was noted by producers to be productivity improvements (20 mentions), particularly in terms of producing more and better breeding stock, healthier cattle and an overall improved understanding of stock control. Closely aligned, producers hoped to improve their farm profitability, achieving increased prices for healthier cows (18 mentions). Producers hoped that by having *clearer plans* they can improve income, make cost savings and improve their bottom line. One respondent commented, because of improved understanding, *we control when we sell and how much we get for them at the meat works*.

Producers discussed the overall benefits to general farm and business management strategies (16 mentions) noting they: have *clearer plans*; *an outlook on what can be done*; *are hoping to achieving more efficient farming*; *are improving staff procedures*; and *making savings of time and thinking outside of the square*. One respondent summed up that they now have *less stress running [the] business and a bit of direction*. Producers also commented on the improvements made and hoped to be achieved in terms of land management, including improved pastures, ground cover, weed control and fencing.

Extension providers and industry representatives/advisors/suppliers discussed benefits associated with gaining access to information via FutureBeef. Several commented on having improved their own knowledge and skills, impacting on the services and technical knowledge being passed on to clients. In addition, extension providers commented that they are able to refer producers to FutureBeef resources. One respondent commented that this is *part of the process of giving information to people and enabling them to make decisions on what they are going to change or not*.

**FutureBeef update eBulletin:** Several respondents noted improvements to production (*getting better at what you are doing*) and an improved understanding of *land systems* and the environment, as a result of information gained from the FutureBeef eBulletin. Another commented on attending a workshop in Gin Gin (Grazing BMP workshop) which resulted in *financial benefits* and sale prices (workshop perhaps advertised in eBulletin?).

**FutureBeef newspaper features:** As a result of information gained via newspaper articles, magazines and an MLA book (respondent's own words – possibly Feedback magazine), respondents noted improvements made to profitability; their production – ability to produce more cattle, to improve breeding stock; and farm productivity, farm management and working the land better.

## Summary comments

Overall, respondents commended FutureBeef for *working extremely well* and *doing a great job!* Most were satisfied with the variety of resources available with several commenting on its role as a *space* for users to find *good information in the grazing industry* and for those looking for *information as a starting point*. One industry representatives/advisors/suppliers commented that FutureBeef information is useful to their members and they have *a lot of opportunity to share the events*.

### Extension of FutureBeef resources

In terms of sharing and extension of FutureBeef resources, one extension provider expressed the view that there is potential for more promotion of FutureBeef services: *it has reached a level as a good supporting tool but the industry has to bring itself up to speed to where the tools are*. Another

mentioned FutureBeef should be *careful to target all producers*, suggesting the importance of finding a way to reach those producers *who don't engage with the internet or have bad internet connections*. One extension provider advised FutureBeef noting, they *would be hesitant [to] step too far away from printed media in general*, suggesting the importance of ensuring all communications interact and support producer needs effectively... *internet connection aside some people like technology and some don't if you can take a printed copy it is more effective*. It was also suggested that some producers are unsure on how to access online resources and there is the opportunity to help and show producers how to access the internet and webinar courses.

### **Internet in rural Australia**

Although not the realm of FutureBeef's responsibility, many respondents commented on the impact of internet connections and poor mobile coverage in rural regions. Many praised the efforts of FutureBeef in providing a range of communication resources, however were frustrated and disappointed in not being able to access the full range of articles, information and knowledge offered to them via FutureBeef. This sentiment summed up by one producer: *lots of farmers can't get Internet in their area so through no fault of their own they miss out considerably*.

Where mobile coverage and internet service is available, producers acknowledged FutureBeef emails and updates as being very valuable, with comments including *emails are good as they seem to prompt me in looking sites up*. However, many noted that if there are too many downloads or images, their data would be quickly depleted resulting in them not accessing the information at all. One producer suggested: *maybe some form of simplification of web based information so it is more downloadable, if I get an email that I can't download pictures I don't bother*.

Several producers took the opportunity to comment on the overall impact of internet issues in rural regions, suggesting that unless internet issues were *dramatically improved* younger generation farmers may be lost to other industries. Comments included:

*I know lots of farmers that can't get service for the Internet and it's hard enough for them but our children need those sort of things to get an education, as they have fresh ideas and the energy to make them work. We have to look after the next generation and if the facilities aren't there, it might be put into the too hard basket and they might pursue other careers, so where will that leave the farming industry years from now - **Producer***

*If communication doesn't improve our next generation will lean more towards different trades and where will Australia will be without farmers? - **Producer***

Some producers expressed a view that government should be more accountable for helping farmers, commenting that *without proper communication and knowledge we lose out, having the Internet would make it so much easier on cattle prices* and another that *government doesn't subsidise us what so ever, more is done overseas and that's very disappointing*.