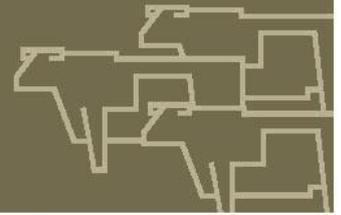


# FutureBeef Program for Northern Australia Strategic Plan 2014-2016



## A profitable, competitive and sustainable northern beef industry

There are many aspects of the beef business such as climate variability and global financial markets that are beyond operational control. Despite this, successful beef business managers seem to be able to activate the right information and tools, at the right time, to plan for and make better decisions.

For several years, four key industry and state departmental organisations have been working together to maximise this alignment across the northern Australia beef industry – helping business-minded producers take up research-based information and services to improve profitability.

The National Beef Production Research, Development and Extension Strategy states a vision for Australia's beef industry as being: *A competitive and sustainable beef industry, responsive and adaptable to a changing operating environment.*

Collectively, the partner organisations have corporate goals for the beef industry around improved economic development, profitability, productivity, sustainability, competitiveness and responsiveness within a dynamic operating environment. They also lead and fund research, development and extension (RD&E) projects and services for the northern Australia beef industry.

There are further opportunities to work more closely with the Vocational, Education and Training (VET) sector to better align extension outputs around training and workshops to accredited outcomes for workforce development.

The **FutureBeef Program for Northern Australia** is a collaboration between the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (NTDPIF), the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

Each FutureBeef partner contributed to the National Beef Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Production Strategy 2009 which was developed in consultation with beef and agriculture industry agencies and bodies, state agencies, academic institutions and other leaders of RD&E.

The strategy aims to promote continuous improvement in the investment of beef cattle RD&E resources nationally through collaboration around the four key priority areas that are linked to national RD&E strategic imperatives (see Appendix 1).

The FutureBeef program is managed through a committee of partner organisation representatives whose mission is to provide the platform for collaborative extension and communication delivery to northern beef producers to achieve the imperatives stated in the National Beef Production RD&E Strategy.

There are currently around 35 staff across the three public sector agencies who work closely with producers across northern Australia and who have access to or can implement the tools and information from this program into other extension projects. (Refer Appendix 2).

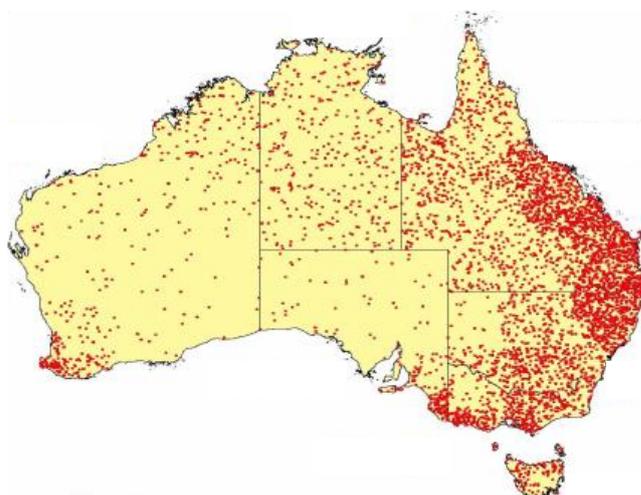
## Program objectives

1. To identify, prioritise and fund new projects and activities to support the implementation of NABRC Implementation response (by December 2014)
2. To promote extension activities and key messages around best management practice under the FutureBeef brand, as part of a coordinated communications strategy (including social media) (ongoing)
3. To identify, prioritise and integrate new technologies, tools and engagement approaches as part of innovative extension delivery (ongoing)
4. To build the extension and technical capacity of government, non-government and private extension providers through professional development opportunities (ongoing)
5. To conduct program monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) to determine achievements and impact (by July 2015)

## The northern Australia beef industry

The northern Australia beef industry represents 59 per cent of the national beef cattle herd (approximately 14 million head), extending over a geographic area encompassing all of Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Kimberley/Pilbara regions of Western Australia (as below).

Region	Percentage of national beef herd	Total herd	Gross value of production ('farm gate')	No. of beef businesses
Queensland	47%	11.2M	\$3.17B	12,000
Northern Territory	8.6%	2.1M	\$363M	220
Northern Western Australia (Kimberley/Pilbara)	3.7%	0.9M	\$123.3M	120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>14.2M</b>		



The number of beef businesses across these regions is extremely variable, ranging from approximately 200 producers in the Northern Territory on large, extensive holdings to some 18,000 beef businesses in Queensland. The latter also includes large, multi-faceted commercial operations to small non-commercial enterprises.

There are two scales of beef production across the northern region of Australia. Intensive systems are located mainly in south east Queensland which may be up to 1000 hectares and with herd sizes ranging from 200 – 1000 head. Extensive systems range from 3000 to 800 000 ha and carry 1000 – 60,000 head. Most are family-owned, however, there are some larger corporate operations.

## Service delivery

Across northern Australia, beef research, development and extension projects are largely funded by federal and state governments, MLA, natural resource management (NRM) groups (and similar), and the university sector. Often, these organisations co-invest and collaborate on projects around key themes from the National Beef Production RD&E Strategy combining expertise, capacity and resources to optimise industry benefits.

Industry research and development outcomes are typically delivered to beef businesses through a network of state agency extension officers and a relatively small private consultant base. Many private consultants are sole operator businesses and provide services across the north, often working in extensive and remote areas. The majority of dedicated beef consultancies are likely to be short to medium-term business lifespan, with little capacity to expand or plan for succession.

State agencies providing beef RD&E services often have critical industry linkages and networks which allow outcomes of multiple project collaborations and investment to be drawn together. This can also facilitate an integrated, whole-of-beef business approach, while meeting resource, production and business needs.

## Industry priorities

Extension priorities are shaped by key strategic imperatives from the National Beef Production RD&E Strategy, the Northern Australia Beef Research Council (NABRC) RD&E Priorities Prospectus and Implementation Response, regional priorities as identified by local beef producers, extension officers and other project collaborators, and state department priorities (see Appendix 2).

NABRC is the key industry-agency forum responsible for determining and advising on strategic requirements for RD&E activities (including education and training) in the northern Australian beef industry. It is an independent organisation that acts as the central consultative council comprising all major northern RD&E agencies and educational institutions (departments of primary industries, CSIRO, CRCs and universities) and producer representatives from relevant states and territories.

NABRC is represented at a regional level across northern Australia by 11 Regional Beef Research Committees – six in Queensland, three in the Northern Territory and two in Western Australia.

The four RD&E themes as outlined in NABRC's Implementation Response (July 2013) based on National RD&E Strategy for the North Australian Beef Industry (March 2012), are:

1. Improving animal production
2. Improving the feedbase
3. Technology
4. Bringing it all together

## FutureBeef Program goal

To support sustainable and profitable productivity gains for northern beef producers and build delivery capacity and support services for northern beef producers.

## Program Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The success of the FutureBeef program will be evaluated by the number of producers that engage in different levels of extension activities that address the four NABRC priorities. Specifically, the hierarchy of KPIs provides the key outcomes to be achieved by 2016, namely: awareness, building knowledge, skills and confidence and activities that support adoption and practice change.

The following table outlines the number of producers that will be engaged in each level of extension activity by each state by 2016 as a result of projects funded under this program\*.

		BY HERD SIZE >100 HEAD & \$40k EVAO			
		QUEENSLAND	NORTHERN TERRITORY	WESTERN AUSTRALIA	TOTAL (100%)
A	Maintaining broad industry awareness (50% producers engaged in A)	6088	97	60	<b>6307</b>
B	Building knowledge, skills and confidence (30% producers engaged in B)	1826*	29	20	<b>1892</b>
C	Supporting adoption and practice change (20% of producers engaged in C)	913*	15	10	<b>946</b>

The hierarchy aims to provide an integrated and ongoing learning environment for producers with FutureBeef to identify further opportunities for improving business performance. The types of 'A' activities that will be delivered to create awareness include webinars, Beef Up forums, field days and newsletters. To build 'B' level knowledge skills and confidence, training workshops including: BusinessEDGE, Grazing Land Management, BreedingEDGE and NutritionEDGE will be used. 'C' level practice change activities will include producer demonstration sites.

## Collaboration and delivery

The FutureBeef program builds on the strong partner relationships and goodwill established over many years and will expand to include other project collaborators where possible.

To execute the FutureBeef strategic plan, the FutureBeef Program partners will meet quarterly to collaboratively plan, resource and implement an extension program to meet critical industry drivers for improved productivity, profitability, sustainability and business growth.

Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) have been developed for each key extension priority which outlines the problem, differences between regions and the activities that each party will undertake in order to achieve the goal and KPIs of the FutureBeef program. They are inclusive of the following key values and principles.

The FutureBeef program will:

1. be the preferred communication and research adoption framework for extending beef cattle RD&E outputs around business performance and evaluating the impact of RD&E (funded under the program) to the northern beef industry.
2. target the critical success drivers for production improvements and business success.
3. develop new state and regional RD&E projects and activities to maximise practice change and technology uptake.
4. use annual operating plans to integrate informal learning and accredited learning pathways for industry workforce and professional development.
5. maximise extension services by providing 'packages' with latest RD&E outcomes that can be tailored for local needs by state agency beef extension officers, agribusiness, consultants, non-government agencies (eg NRM groups) and registered training organisations.
6. implement innovative extension delivery modes including the internet, online self-paced modules, social media, webinars to complement face-to-face delivery and meet the expectations of 'next generation' managers
7. foster extension capability through professional development activities to enable a responsive state extension service with partners and stakeholders that focuses on 'best practice' and professional excellence.
8. maintain strong linkages with Northern Australian Beef Research Council and the Red Meat Co-investment Committee through rigorous reporting to support the delivery of the RD&E strategies.

## 2014-15 program tasks and outcomes planned for delivery

### Internal and external

Task	Outcome	By When
<b>FutureBeef Program of activities for 2014-15 for Northern Australia (Program partners: DAFF, DAFWA, NTDoR and MLA)</b>	Existing projects identified and key project proposals developed for co-investment by partner agencies and other investors.	November 2014, by program committee
<b>FutureBeef Strategic Plan 2014-16 and Annual Operating Plans</b>	Increased awareness, understanding and integration of industry priorities within an extension program for Northern Australia (reflecting National Beef RD&E Production Strategy, Northern Australia Beef Research Council priorities and regional priorities)	Documents drafted annually for internal use, by program partners

<b>Communication plan updated for coordinated delivery of key messages</b>	Ongoing integration of innovative tools and services to promote beef extension projects, activities, information, and tools for industry. Includes monthly eBulletins to promote seasonal management practices and tips, events calendar and online booking capability to complement existing systems, youtube video demonstrations etc.	Ongoing with six-monthly reports on progress
<b>Program of professional development opportunities for public, private and NGO extension deliverers.</b>	Facilitation of knowledge exchange by key industry RD&E professionals	February 2015
<b>Review of key messages (around profit drivers and priority areas) and delivery modes, including existing market research on decision-making and adaptation processes. (major across state project proposal)</b>	Improve the design of RD&E projects and activities to accelerate innovation and adoption.	Key messages reviewed and available on FutureBeef staff intranet

### How FutureBeef Priorities align with National RD&E Strategic Priority Areas

Rural Research and Development Priorities	FutureBeef Priorities
<p><b><i>Productivity and Adding Value</i></b></p> <p>Improve the productivity and profitability of existing industries and support the development of viable new industries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeding Phosphorus</li> <li>• Weaner management</li> <li>• Whole of business management</li> <li>• Heifer management</li> <li>• Improving breeder performance</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Supply Chain and Markets</i></b></p> <p>Better understand and respond to domestic and international market and consumer requirements &amp; improve the flow of such information through the whole supply chain, including to consumers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole of business management</li> <li>• Genetics and breeding</li> <li>• Market compliance</li> </ul>

<p><b>Natural Resource Management</b></p> <p>Support effective management of Australia’s natural resources to ensure primary industries are both economically and environmentally sustainable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stocking rates/wet season spelling</li> <li>• Improving breeder performance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Climate Variability and Climate Change</b></p> <p>Build resilience to climate variability and adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stocking rates/wet season spelling</li> <li>• Improving breeder performance</li> <li>• Heifer management</li> <li>• Weaner management</li> <li>• Feeding Phosphorus</li> <li>• Whole of business management</li> </ul>
<p><b>Biosecurity</b></p> <p>Protect Australia’s community, primary industries and environment from biosecurity threats.</p>	

## Evaluation

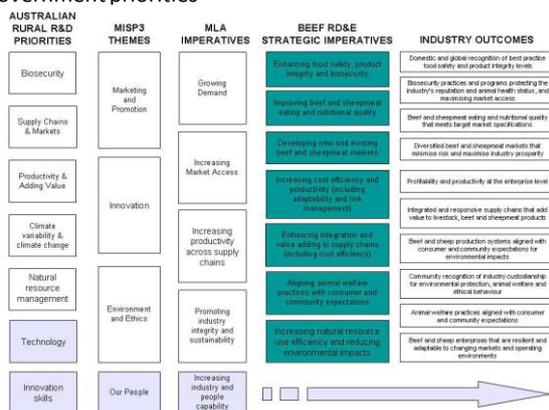
An annual report will be prepared outlining achievements against program objectives and funded projects, based on MER tools and systems. The findings will be used to identify opportunities, gaps and issues that could be addressed through new project proposals or through the program partnership.

# Appendix 1. Strategic imperatives

The strategic imperatives identified in *National Beef Production Research, Development and Extension Strategy*, and their relationship to the Meat Industry Strategic Plan (MISP), Australian Government and northern Australia RD&E priorities are illustrated below (source: NABRC 2012)

## Beef Production national strategic imperatives

Meat Industry Strategic Plan (MISP) and Australian Government priorities



- From National Beef Production Research, Development and Extension Strategy, January 2010



**RD&E strategic imperatives for North Australia:**

- Enterprise viability:** Increasing cost efficiency and productivity and profitability
- Enterprise sustainability:** Increasing natural resource use efficiency and managed environmental impacts
- Human capacity:** Enhancing human capital - producers, researchers, extension
- Preserving social licence to operate:** Practices and perception – animal welfare and resource management
- Enhancing product quality and acceptability**
- Biosecurity**

[NABRC LOGO]

## Appendix 2. Extension capacity across state agencies (2014)

### Queensland – Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)

Location	Extension officers
Far North Queensland and North West Qld	4
North Queensland	8
Central Queensland	10
West Queensland	2
Southern Queensland / SEQ	6
<i>Note: Some positions are temporary and fully committed to other contracted projects however all contribute to National Beef Production RD&amp;E priorities</i>	<b>Total 30</b>

### Western Australia – Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (DAFWA)

Location	Extension officers
Kimberley/Pilbara - Broome	2
	<b>Total</b>

### Northern Territory – Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries

Location	Extension officers
Alice Springs, Barkly, Katherine and Darwin	3
	<b>Total</b>