

Tasmanian Government Submission to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee Inquiry into all aspects of higher education and skills training to support future demand in agriculture and agribusiness in Australia

The Tasmanian Government recognises the importance of skills and education to agriculture and agribusiness through the following policies, strategies and plans:

- The Skills Strategy and its themes and actions and
- The Tasmanian Economic Development Plan.

The Economic Development Plan identifies food and agriculture as a key trade and investment sector with many of the sector wide priorities relating strongly to skills and training needs. Within food and agriculture the following sub sectors have been identified as important, based on contribution to Gross State Product, strategic importance and/or growth potential: dairy, salmon, fruit, vegetables, wine and red meat.

As the food and agriculture sector expands and diversifies, access to sufficient skilled labour will be critical to ensure that economic and social opportunities are maximised. It is important that skills training for agriculture is affordable, accessible, and flexible and fits with industry needs.

While the primary responsibility for skills training lies with Skills Tasmania as the agency responsible for skills, workforce development and vocational education and training; the Departments of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) and Economic Development Tourism and the Arts (DEDTA) also make significant contribution to the wider government strategies and programs to support skills and workforce development in agriculture and agribusiness. Observations and comments have been provided by the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA).

This submission is informed by consultation and strategic planning undertaken by the above agencies with input from the Tasmanian Skills Institute (TSI). The focus of the submission is on the skills and training needs that can be met through the delivery of vocational education and training (VET).

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON ISSUES AND TRENDS

Career pathways, opportunities and awareness

One of the consistent themes to emerge in all consultations in context of sector and workforce development is the awareness and understanding of career opportunities. The negative perception of work in the agriculture sector is commonly reported as a major limitation on the capacity of agriculture and agribusiness to attract and retain skilled staff.

Conversely, ornamental horticulture has a waiting list for placements because the industry is seen as attractive. This indicates that better outcomes can be achieved even in the current environment but an image overhaul is urgently needed for the rest of the industry to make it a more attractive proposition (TFGA).

Engagement by farmers, agribusiness enterprises in education and training

The low perceived value of training by farmers, farm managers and agribusinesses generally is contributing to low level of use of the formal training system.

Historically farmers and farm managers have relied on extension services and field days for their ongoing skill development rather than formal education and training. While the skills acquired and applied through this learning can be mapped to accredited qualifications (generally to units of competency rather than full qualifications), formal recognition is generally not valued at this level.

The changing nature of farming and agribusiness

Tasmania has about 12 per cent of Australia's fresh water resources on about one per cent of the Australian landmass. The Tasmanian and Australian Governments have committed \$220 million (\$80 and \$140 million respectively) to develop reliable irrigation in partnership with local communities, with private sector investment of up to \$120 million expected. Tasmanian Irrigation Pty Ltd is managing some 13 irrigation projects across the state. The introduction of irrigation to areas of the state that have not previously had access to it will require producers to learn and apply new skills in areas such as irrigation systems, technology and automation.

Tasmania is experiencing an increase in corporate farms, both in numbers and increasing scale of investment and operations. This highlights the increasing importance of skills to manage the business of agriculture on the larger scale of corporate farming.

With the increase in corporatized farms in Tasmania, and larger employers implementing detailed business plans, workforce planning and development will identify skills and knowledge gaps and therefore training opportunities.

However, many farm businesses in Tasmania are considered to be small business because of the small number of employees and most would not have undertaken any workforce planning or succession planning. The prevalence of mixed farming demands broad and diverse skills, as well as the knowledge and skill to shift farming activity according to product and commodity trends.

Within the wider scope of agriculture and agribusiness, sectoral differences are apparent. The priority for some areas of agriculture, such as fruit and vegetables, relates to the seasonal harvesting requirements and the skills and training needs of a transient workforce particularly basic employability such as safe use of chemicals, chainsaws, ATVs and 4 wheel drive vehicles.

Some sectors, such as wine, have skills needs related to allied business activity, for example product knowledge and customer service in cellar door sales.

There are often similar or overlapping skill sets between declining and growth industries. In Tasmania the structural transformation and job losses in forestry are occurring as dairy production and processing of milk products is increasing. For some occupations minimal re-training may bridge the gap adequately.

However, it should be noted that it is quite often the un-competitive wages structure that has been a contributing factor in a declining industry. Wage expectations from displaced workers are often unrealistic and particularly so when compared to the agricultural industry where “basic” labour represents a large proportion of the employment need.

The Tasmanian Forests Intergovernmental Agreement includes support for forest and timber workers re-skill to take advantage of job opportunities in other industries. In the north west of Tasmania, agriculture and processing of milk products have the potential to offset job losses in native forest based industries.

While there is a critical need for workers in agricultural sectors and the relevance of absorbing, where possible, displaced workers from declining industries is acknowledged, some sectors put a higher priority for the future on attracting entry level, young people into the industry.*

Emerging Needs

In the context of the changing character of the industry, skills in demand are likely to shift to new and higher technical skills to manage and maintain technical systems for the efficient use of water and energy. This will become more widespread with greater awareness of energy efficiency as a driver of fixed costs. The roll out of the national broadband network will facilitate greater adoption of computerised farm management systems.

To take advantage of such technologies and systems, farm managers need to have higher levels of skill and knowledge in order to get and understand specialist and technical advice. The skills needs of those providing the advice are clearly critical as is the attraction of specialists into regions.

In the wider agribusiness sectors, skills in product development, understanding national and international markets and export facilitation will be increasingly important as Tasmania seeks to expand the economic potential of agriculture and agribusiness.

It is also important to note that the costs of production in Tasmania are relatively high and recent developments such as new water projects require further investment on associated infrastructure. This means that improving productivity and efficiency is critical for business viability. There will be a related need for increased skills and capabilities in the sector.

The capability of registered training organisations (RTOs) to deliver training to meet these emerging skills needs is a critical component of solutions to the skills challenges. The general recommendations of reports by Skills Australia (*Skills for Prosperity*, May 2011 and *Australian Workforce Futures*, March 2010) and the

* A Joint Response from Poppy Growers Tasmania Inc. & the Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group Ltd to the Economic Development Plan discussion paper, Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts, unpublished, December 2010

Productivity Commission (Vocational Education and Training Workforce) are relevant to the provision of VET to meet the emerging needs identified above.

It is important for producers to recognise that workers are often looking for stability and continuity of employment. Due to seasonality this can be difficult to provide in the agricultural sector. Producers may need to consider their enterprise mix so that year-round employment can be offered – thereby assisting with attraction and retention of workers and reducing the need for retraining.

If people, especially young people, are not able to find stable and continuous work in their local area they are likely to leave – this is especially important in rural and regional areas (where the majority of food production takes place) as businesses lose access to a local labour pool. Labour sharing and business partnerships may help in this regard. Once again the focus is on workforce planning and development issues.

Growth in the Tasmanian agribusiness sector will lead to increased demand for skilled labour throughout the value chain. There is likely to be increased demand not only for entry level workers, but also for highly skilled staff in areas such as research and development, agronomy, laboratory technicians, food safety, food processing, marketing and business and personnel management. Indeed, industry has identified business skills for primary producers and small business operators as an area requiring particular attention and the development and promotion of more suitable (flexible) training opportunities.

Focus on workforce development

The adoption of a workforce planning and development approach to the industry concerns about the supply of skilled labour is making a difference to how industry, employers and training providers respond to the challenge. The Tasmanian Dairy Industry Skills Plan is an example of this approach. The dairy industry and the major training provider (TSI) are implementing the actions identified in the Plan, supporting

- industry and training providers coming together to identify issues, solutions and ongoing commitments;
- a shift away from a supply to a demand driven system;
- industry taking charge of workforce development and planning needs; and
- changes in RTO delivery methodology to meet industry needs.

The recently finalised Agriculture Industry Skills Plan extends this approach to the whole of agriculture and agribusiness.

CRITICAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY INDUSTRY

The following critical issues were identified through consultation with agribusiness industry stakeholders conducted for DEDTA and DPIPW in 2011. †

Agribusiness Image

Agriculture has a serious image problem among students, teachers and pathway planners. A career in agriculture is not generally seen as relevant to students in Tasmania. Generally there are negative connotations associated with a career in agriculture (e.g. low paying, hard work, isolating and no career pathway).

Partnerships between industry and schools must be established to improve the awareness of agriculture as a positive and vibrant career opportunity. Ongoing relationships between schools and industry must be maintained and encouraged by both partners.

Promotion and Communication

Improved communication between education and agriculture industry sectors was identified as a necessity. Each sector needs to understand the other's needs and then identify opportunities to work together for mutual gain.

Secondly, promoting agriculture as an attractive career to potential employees was identified as essential. State of the art promotional materials (and processes) are needed to promote agriculture as an attractive career pathway. Agriculture is more than just 'farm work' and can be very high tech, challenging and financially rewarding.

Agriculture should be promoted as a progressive industry. There is an opportunity to attract young people to agribusiness who want to 'innovate' and 'change the world' - agriculture should be promoted as a career opportunity for students who want to have a positive and progressive influence on how our natural resources are managed.

2012 will be the Year of the Farmer – this will be an excellent opportunity for Tasmania to raise the profile of agriculture as a career pathway (<http://www.yearofthefarmer.com.au/>).

Government and Industry Coordination

Few people understand the training systems associated with agriculture - whether in education, government, industry or the general public. Stakeholders reported high levels of confusion and difficulty in navigating through Tasmania's education and training systems.

A 'one-stop-shop' approach to the training and skills development industry was recommended so that teachers, pathway planners, students and the general public can access to get up-to-date and consistent information about skills training and careers in agriculture. The one-stop-shop could consist of one well-resourced person who is dedicated to this role.

Skills Training and Career Pathways

Flexible learning delivery was identified as needed in order to attract students and those already in the workforce to skills training in agriculture; such things as flexible

† The critical issues are industry and stakeholder views and do not necessarily represent the position of Skills Tasmania or the Tasmanian Government.

'skills packages' and 'skills passports' are needed to improve the efficiency of the training system.

A de-emphasis on formal accreditation/qualifications is needed to attract some students to further training in agriculture.

Teacher and Pathway Planner Awareness

There is not a clear and easily identifiable career pathway for primary industries in Tasmania. Many teachers and pathway planners do not understand what the training and career options are for agriculture in Tasmania.

Training of teachers and pathway planners and linking careers in agriculture across curriculum areas were identified as key actions needed to improve teacher and advisor awareness of the positive aspects and diversity of primary industry in Tasmania; students cannot learn about and be motivated about agriculture in Tasmania unless teachers and advisors have up-to-date awareness levels of what agribusiness entails today.

A greater awareness is needed by teachers and pathway planners of existing national primary industry oriented materials including web pages, DVDs, brochures and national organisations (e.g. <http://www.primaryindustrieseducation.com.au/>).

RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

The adequacy of funding and priority given by governments at the federal, state and territory level to agriculture and agribusiness higher education and vocational education and training

With the implementation of the joint Commonwealth – State Productivity Places Program (PPP) in 2009, funding for existing workers and job seekers in Tasmania was significantly increased. PPP arrangements have been fully contestable with key criteria relating to the matching of skills needs and training justified against industry and enterprise workforce planning and development.

Although the PPP national agreement expires in June 2012, the Commonwealth Government has committed \$558.5 million over four years under the National Workforce Development Fund.

Agriculture, agribusiness and related industries were identified as priority sectors; however they secured less than 5% of total places allocated. Skills Tasmania analysis suggests a high level of successful applications.

The lack of applications is attributed to the perceived value of formal qualifications, the low level of engagement of agricultural businesses in VET and a low level of workforce planning and development across the sectors.

Other contestable funding programs managed by Skills Tasmania have also had low uptake in agriculture and agribusiness with the exception of the aquaculture industry. Funding for apprenticeships and traineeships is demand driven under the "user choice purchasing arrangements." The apparent low level of uptake reflects the pattern of demand rather than the adequacy of funding.

On the other hand, the TSI has reported improved engagement with the agriculture sector in the past 12 months with employers requesting more campus based delivery in conjunction with workplace evidence collection and there has been a three- fold increase in contracts of training in the agriculture sector in Tasmania, specifically in the dairy industry. This suggests that through the strong partnerships with industry, in this instance DairyTas, RTOs can meet increased demand.

The reasons and impacts of the decline in agricultural and related educational facilities

It has not been possible within this submission to canvass comprehensively the issues related to facilities. While the model of the agricultural colleges and school farms is supported by Primary Employers Tasmania (PET)[‡], there is no readily accessible evidence that physical training and education infrastructure would contribute to skills solutions without consideration of wider workforce challenges, such as the attractiveness of agricultural careers.

[‡] Confidential submission to Skills Tasmania.

In respect of VET facilities, the decline may relate to the level of demand, the lack of perceived value of VET and considerable growth in demand from other industries such as Construction and Allied Trades.

Generally across industry sectors, campus based facilities have declined as employers chose to have training and assessment occur in the workplace in line with the trend to on-the-job delivery and assessment across the VET sector.

While some learning can take place on properties, employers make it clear that production must not be compromised and at times it is not safe for training and or assessment to occur on-the-job.

In agribusiness, for example food processing, on-the-job training is common practice. The TSI has strong relations with food processors in Tasmania, including Murray Goulburn, Fonterra, Simplot, Tas Alkaloids, Houston's farms.

Further, in the past 5 years, the Cradle Coast Campus of the University of Tasmania has substantially renewed its commitment to agriculture and related industries through its Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR).

According to TFGA the factors below have contributed to the decline.

- Lack of demand for specialised agricultural studies has led to corresponding challenge to the viability of these specialised facilities.
- There is a need to separate the farm from the training, particularly where farms are not being kept modern due to the financial challenges. This means that teaching is being delivered in an environment that has in most cases not kept pace with current technology and best practice.
- There is a need to focus on developing strong partnerships with industry to deliver the practical side of the program.
- There is a need to shift the focus of training from the limited traditional image of farming to a more relevant and contemporary model.
- There is a need to broaden training delivery to include the need for other skills in the industry with agricultural knowledge being a specialized area within that field; for example accountants, lawyers and ICT experts. This can be achieved by importing agricultural units into the training structures of those other specialised programs.

Solutions to address the widening gap between skilled agricultural labour supply and demand

According to the TFGA, the factors below need to be taken into account in responses to the supply and demand gap.

- The demand for labour is mostly in the intensive farming area with identified middle management shortages.

- As skilled labour supply is market driven; farming is competing with industries that are willing and able to attract labour by offering generous salaries. Until the farming industry recognises the need to become more competitive in this area and realise that an investment in skilled labour is an investment in their business, this is unlikely to change, especially in light of the shrinking labour supply as "baby boomers" retire.
- The continuing automation and rapid development in ICT in farming will alleviate some of the on-ground labour shortage (for example, robotic dairies).

As part of the workforce planning approach outlined above, the Tasmanian Government is supporting targeted initiatives.

For the past three years Skills Tasmania has funded a wool harvesting program with PET. In 2008 the TFGA Wool Council, PET and the Australian Workers Union, Wool Classers Association Tasmanian Branch identified a range of concerns about the level and standard of training for shearers and shed hands. Subsequently, Skills Tasmania provided funding to PET to manage a three year project to engage a specialist trainer to deliver entry level training, improve the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships and increase the involvement of shearers and shearing contractors in formal training.

While the project is currently being evaluated, it has achieved demonstrable success in increasing the uptake of VET.

DairyTas, TSI and Skills Tasmania are currently piloting the delivery of the Diploma of Agriculture to dairy farmers. The project is developing a tailored delivery model based on recognition of prior learning and gap training. The underlying aim of the project is to demonstrate the benefits and accessibility of training and to create industry champions who will promote greater participation in training at diploma level.

The incorporation of animal welfare principles in agriculture education

Management of animal welfare is widely accepted as an important skill area for livestock farming. The Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package has incorporated many aspects of animal welfare principles in every qualification level. Considerable work is being done by the industry skills council (AgriFood Skills Australia) to ensure delivery and assessment of training reflects these requirements, particularly for all aspects dairy and beef farming.

Consumers are increasingly interested in the processes that occur in the chain between production and sale. Animal welfare, as well as food safety, and the origin of products are becoming factors considered by the consumer. Producers require the skills to not only recognise and react to these changes in the market, but also, to meet the increasingly stringent standards being imposed by retailers in regard to these factors.

References and Links

Tasmanian Economic Development Plan
<http://www.development.tas.gov.au/home>

Tasmanian Skills Strategy
<http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/skillstas/tasskillsstrategy>

Tasmania's Innovation Strategy
<http://www.dier.tas.gov.au/infrastructure2/home>

Dairy Industry Skills Plan and Agriculture Industry Skills Plan (not yet published)
http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/providers/industryadvice/training_demand_profiles

Skills Australia Publications
<http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/publications.shtml>

Appendix I

The Agriculture Industry Skills Plan 2010-2014 (extracts)

[To be published late November 2011]

I. Priority workforce planning issues

Tasmanian agriculture, like many sectors across Australia, faces dwindling numbers of people at all skill levels. This trend has already started to impact on enterprises, with business owners and managers reporting that they are holding off expansion plans because of concerns about “getting the right people”.

In other industry sectors, there has been a shift to investing in training and mentoring entry level and career change workforce entrants, as a new reality in this emerging commercial environment. The agriculture industry has also indicated it is making this shift.

Skills and workforce planning will be critical to support agricultural enterprises to realise their market potential. The industry consultation showed a strong focus on skills and pathways development. This includes the development of a culture of learning and development within the industry as an objective.

However, analysis of the consultation also revealed that strategies to address retention in the industry, such as industry conditions, an attractive HR culture and competitive wages, appeared to be a low priority for the industry at this time. Raising awareness of the importance of addressing retention strategies will be a critical future issue in the face of continued ageing and shrinking of the Tasmanian labour force and as the trend in workforce shortages continues to challenge the efficiency and productivity of agricultural enterprises and industries.

The following four priorities for workforce development and planning emerged from the consultation phase and are the foundation for the detailed action plan.

Improve the perception of agriculture as a career option:

There is widespread and unanimous concern across the industry that agriculture has an image problem. There is agreement that addressing the myths and lack of knowledge about the diversity and rewards of careers in agriculture will require a range of actions across a range of workforce groups; and that these actions will need to continue over time and consistently. There is also scope to work more directly with the many school level promotions and programs (both in Tasmania and nationally) that influence student perceptions of agriculture as a future career.

Improve relevance and accessibility of training and career pathways into agriculture

It is clear from the consultations that, from the industry’s perspective, there is a need for: a) a better alignment of training pathways with industry; and b) improved collaboration between training providers and industry to improve the relevance and accessibility of training options.

Develop and promote career pathways for the increasing diversity of the workforce

Industry members understand the need to attract new sections of the Australian workforce to agriculture, and develop career pathways and conditions that reflect the increasing diversity of the future workforce, in particular:

- People making the transition from other industries in Tasmania's changing economic and industrial makeup;
- People who have been out of work or are returning to work and are retraining for new careers;
- Humanitarian entrants settling into Tasmania, bringing skill sets or retraining for new careers; and,
- Mid-career professionals electing career changes.

The federal government has invested in skills training and job placement for the first three of these groups. A key opportunity exists for members of the agriculture industry to work closely with the programs in place that support these target groups to attract new people to careers in agriculture.

There are three steps that the agricultural industry will need to undertake throughout the next three years to start to turn the curve on workforce trends for agriculture:

- Promote agriculture to this range of workforce entrants;
- Identify ways to improve the effectiveness and reach of current support programs for these groups; and
- Improve the take-up and accessibility of government resources targeted at encouraging diversity of workforce.

Continued investment in skills development

In addition to industry-wide actions, stakeholders identified that key commodity sectors have specific skills needs and workforce development priorities. Commodity associations identified the need for investment in actions that reflect these differences and build on industry-wide actions that address common issues.

The consultation also revealed interest in regional approaches to workforce development and planning for key agricultural regions as a strategic approach to workforce development and planning (e.g. King Island and Circular Head). Such an approach could also be of benefit in other regions where agriculture is a key industry (e.g. north-east Tasmania).

A regional approach to skills development would incorporate national and state skills development and productivity initiatives as well as meeting the needs of Tasmania's agricultural industry.

2. Priority workforce skill development issues

Across the agriculture industry enterprises are facing shortages of the right skills required to sustain profitable operations in a changing environment.

However, it is also clear that finding out about opportunities, the relevance of training to emerging and current environments, and flexibility of training options are key barriers to enterprises investing in training and skills development.

In addition, few of the existing programs are sufficiently integrated to enable best use for the industry.

The industry can engage with the training sector to improve the linkages within and across existing programs to get better value from what is already in place, including:

- Improving access to information on opportunities including training options and subsidies available to support engagement in training;
- Better utilisation of existing communication networks and mechanisms to include key information regarding skills development opportunities;
- Improving relevance and quality of training courses;
- Improving linkages between industry and education and training providers;
- Increasing flexibility of training options; and
- Recognition of short courses within VET course attainment.

In addition, the industry is seeking a focus from the training industry on the skills priorities as identified in this Skills Plan (see Section 4).

3. Our skills priorities

The industry consultation identified clear priorities for skills that will need to be developed in order to realise industry potential over the medium term. Acquiring these priority skills at the enterprise level is the foundation for a viable and prosperous business.

The identified skills priorities span all levels of the agricultural workforce, and include:

- market intelligence
- business management
- technical (professional)
- technical (operational)

Each of these four priorities includes aspects that encompass both on and off-farm agricultural careers.

Importantly, the industry is seeking from the training sector a focus on provision of accessible, quality, and flexible training options to address these priorities.

Market intelligence

Markets are continuously changing and the position held by Tasmanian agriculture in the value chain is undergoing key transitions (e.g. from commodity-centred to include fresh market, high value, value-added and high nutritional content product). Consumer preferences are also changing in line with demographic changes in both Australian and global populations.

Tasmanian producers and processors have clearly identified the need to increase and develop their skills in getting closer to, and better understanding new buyers and consumers, and to convert market intelligence into new product and processes.

Strong skills in market intelligence and analysis are required for viable enterprises in the future.

Business management skills

Increasing farm size, continuing corporatisation and the vision for increased value-adding in Tasmanian agriculture will all require improved business management and marketing skills. Business proprietors and managers need to equip themselves with the skills required for making increasingly complex business decisions, including the skills to analyse financial outcomes of decisions such as investment decisions and the timing of these decisions.

It was clear from consultations that farmers understand that these changes require agribusiness owners and managers and food processors to improve their skills in business management practices. The consultations indicated that people with both technical and business skills are needed and that these skills are complementary.

Key business skills needed include:

- market intelligence and consumer trends (as noted above)
- innovation (engaging with research, development and extension)
- business planning (future strategy, budgets and investment priorities)
- Market development and product design
- financial management
- human resources management
- succession planning
- marketing and supply chain processes
- technology

Technical (professional)

Technical consultants and researchers play an essential role in the agriculture industry, particularly as the industry in Tasmania faces rapid change and new opportunities. The number of people taking up professional careers in research and extension is decreasing, with concerns that this will have a negative impact on the industry's capacity to innovate and develop. People skills, specialist extension skills and business management skills are increasingly important for these positions.

Key technical (professional) skills requirements include:

- rural sociology
- people skills
- farm business management including supply and value chains
- information technology, precision equipment
- agronomy
- irrigation technology and engineering
- quality assurance
- marketing and product development
- natural resource and other environmental management skills
- project management and development
- logistics
- research, development and extension
- financial, economic and investment skills
- policy and analysis skills

The need for “employability skills” was also raised as important, and for professional technical positions the following components were identified:

- team work (including ability to work in multi-disciplinary teams)
- policy and governance in the agriculture industry
- communication skills
- people skills
- innovation
- uptake of new technology

Technical (operational)

The consultations identified that a shortage of core agricultural skills continues at both entry and operational levels across a range of industry sectors. Further, concerns were expressed about the relevance and quality of training now available in

“core skills”, which was identified as a key factor contributing to the lack of uptake. Core skills identified were:

- occupational health and safety (OH&S)
- first aid
- all terrain vehicle (ATV)
- chainsaw
- computer and technology skills
- basic tractor
- basic chemical handling
- forklift
- compliance (OH&S, QA, Environmental, and understanding of other relevant legislation)

Again, the issue of “employability skills” was raised in relation to operational level employees. In particular the following skill needs were prioritised:

- literacy and numeracy
- work ethic
- understanding of the basics of farm business models and value and/or supply chains
- awareness of the structure of the agricultural industry
- team skills
- social intelligence and self-management
- lifelong learning

Raising awareness and action on skills development at the enterprise level

Responsibility for skills development lies primarily at the enterprise level; however industry associations can significantly influence the capacity of individual enterprises to act on skills development. Commitment to prioritise and exercise leadership with respect to workforce development and planning is a critical strategic issue for all industry sectors.

By prioritising workforce development as a critical strategic issue, industry associations can raise awareness amongst members, increase access to subsidies and the training industry and work with members to take up enterprise level actions on workforce development and planning.

Appendix 2

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, PARKS, WATER AND ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVES

Through DPIPWE, the Tasmanian Government is supporting Agriculture and Agribusiness through the following initiatives and actions.

1. The MBA (Professional) Agricultural Innovation is a new degree established as a joint State Government and UTAS initiative involving the Faculty of Business and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Research (TIAR) School of Agricultural Science. As part of the State Government's Economic Development Plan, \$200,000 has been provided for a four year scholarship program for fee assistance towards agricultural innovation units in the new program.
2. DPIPWE provides advice and direction to TIAR to assist the development of innovative technologies for Tasmania's agricultural sector. DPIPWE also works closely with TIAR to ensure the delivery of its extension services meet the needs of the agricultural sector.
3. DPIPWE also has established a number of initiatives aimed to help build the skills and knowledge base of current and future participants in the Tasmanian agricultural sector. These include:
 - **Property management systems framework**
The Department has continued to work in collaboration with the TFGA and the three Natural Resource Management organisations to develop and implement a consistent and statewide property management systems framework. In 2010–11 the key focus was on the operational elements of the framework, in particular the ongoing development of supporting tools and modules for use by farmers and land holders.
 - **Agribusiness Skills Pipeline Program**
The aim of the Agribusiness Skills Pipeline Program has been to raise the profile of Tasmania's food and agriculture sectors and to make young people aware of career opportunities in these sectors. Consultation was undertaken with industry in February 2011 to identify gaps and prioritise actions. A number of small initiatives are being developed that seek to promote agribusiness as a career. A new database has been established on the DPIPWE website as part of the Program. It provides a central point for information on career options, courses and scholarships together with resources for career advisors and people looking for employment opportunities in agribusiness in Tasmania.
4. As part of the Women in Rural Industries Program DPIPWE promoted leadership opportunities and provided networking events and training and development sessions for women in agriculture throughout the State.

ATTACHMENT

Tasmanian Government Media Release 13/10/11

The **Minister for Economic Development, David O'Byrne**, today said Tasmanian students will benefit from \$200,000 in agribusiness scholarships, through a joint initiative at the University of Tasmania.

The new Master of Business Administration (Agricultural Innovation) program builds on the Tasmanian Government's vision of the State as a premium food producer.

"By investing strategically and playing to our natural advantages, Tasmania has an excellent chance to lead Australia in sustainable food production," Mr O'Byrne said.

"If you want to generate new ideas, and get an agribusiness advantage, this is the postgraduate course for you.

"The program is a great example of the new Economic Development Plan in action.

"It's about encouraging the skills and ideas we need to diversify our economy, grow our key sustainable industries, and create the jobs of tomorrow," he said.

As part of the Economic Development Plan, the Government has committed \$200,000 over four years for Tasmanian students enrolling in the MBA program.

The first year offers \$10,000 scholarships for 10 students. Preference will go to candidates already working in food manufacturing.

Tasmania's agriculture and food production is currently worth about \$2.5 billion a year – a significant feature of the State's economy.

The Dean of the University of Tasmania's Business Faculty, Gary O'Donovan, said the course is designed for three years of part-time study, but can be taken full-time.

"The course is primarily designed to provide an opportunity for people in the food, agriculture and aquaculture sectors to further develop these skills and also to gain an understanding of business and commercialisation principles," Professor O'Donovan said.

The Director of the Tasmanian Institute for Agricultural Research, Professor Holger Meinke, said the MBA Agricultural Innovation will help Tasmanian agribusiness engage in international markets, and bring new products to the marketplace.

"As it is also open to those working in the industry that don't have a university degree, this course provides an excellent opportunity for producers to move their businesses to the next level and expand their horizons," Professor Meinke said.

Students can apply for the scholarships until 14 November 2011. They can phone the University Info Line on 1300 363864, for an information pack.

The program is a joint Government and University of Tasmania (UTAS) initiative, involving the Faculty of Business and the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) - School of Agricultural Science.