



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry report:

Smart farming - inquiry into agricultural innovation

MAY 2024

Introduction

On 13 August 2015, the then Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, asked the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry (the Committee) to inquire into, and report on, agricultural innovation. In May 2016 the Committee released its report, *Smart farming – inquiry into agricultural innovation*.

Innovation and the adoption of existing and emerging technologies are critical drivers of productivity, growth, sustainability and resilience across Australia's agriculture industry. Contemporary food and supply chain issues, including from recent geopolitical and pandemic impacts, have reinforced a need for a world-class agricultural innovation system – one that can respond to emerging risks, and capitalise on the new opportunities and technology to grow Australia's agriculture sector.

The Australian Government continues to provide active and agile support to Australia's agriculture industries as they work towards their ambitious goal to grow their value to \$100 billion by 2030.

Responses to individual recommendations are set out in the following pages.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, in cooperation with industry, undertake a technical study to identify cost-effective approaches to using satellite services as backhaul for local wireless networks for agricultural applications.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commit to the continuation of the Mobile Black Spot Program beyond the second round, and that the Department of Communications and the Arts consider changes or additions to the selection criteria to capture the telecommunications requirements of agricultural activity.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with industry stakeholders, investigate incentives for mobile network operators to provide roaming services in rural and remote areas.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in conjunction with public and private infrastructure providers, publish consolidated information about the availability of telecommunications services in rural and remote agricultural areas.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations, in conjunction with research and training providers and producer groups, coordinate the development and delivery of educational resources to raise awareness of innovative applications of telecommunications services across the agricultural industry.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure that rural women's groups are included in future government-led policy-building activities and inquiries.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government target funding for the development of innovative education strategies for agriculture, within the current science, technology, engineering and mathematics funding program.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government provide assistance and support to farmers' groups to pursue farming benchmarking and support the development of national data sets.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in conjunction with the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, investigate establishing appropriate incentives for the greater allocation of resources from rural Research and Development Corporations to relevant Cooperative Research Centres.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Australian Research Council review its programs for funding research, with a view to increasing the duration of grants to be at least five years.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develop a national working group on agricultural innovation, focused on improved functionality of the agrifood/fibre innovation system. This working group should be developed as part of a wider strategy of cross-sectoral agricultural innovation, within the National Primary Industries RD&E Framework.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources pursue legislative and regulatory changes to enable the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority to use the decisions of trusted and comparable international regulators as a basis for product registration.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the Council of Australian Governments, pursue reform options to ensure national consistency in the regulation of gene technology.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government commission an independent review of the implementation and effectiveness of the Gene Technology Agreement with particular reference to the impact of moratoria invoked by state and territory governments under the Recognition of Designated Areas Principle.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in cooperation with Standards Australia, update the National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce to introduce a threshold for approved genetically modified material consistent with comparable international standards.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority develop appropriate extension materials promoting the appropriate use of unmanned aerial vehicles in the Australian agricultural sector.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the Civil Aviation Safety Authority investigate regulations requiring unmanned aerial vehicles to be flown within visual line of sight, with a view to amending the regulations to enable agricultural producers to use such vehicles for monitoring purposes beyond line of sight on or over their own properties.

Response

The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.