

Innovation in Agricultural Education

New technologies are revolutionising the farming industry but the education sector is failing to keep pace. There is a key need for innovation in agricultural education across three key areas:

1. Innovation is required in the development of education resources that attract the very brightest students into a career in agriculture innovation. The UNE led SMARTfarm Learning hub is an example of a strategy which links universities and leading agriculture industry technology developers to reach students at both secondary and tertiary levels. More innovative education strategies need to be pursued to attract students and educate them in the use of the latest technologies being applied to agriculture

Key Recommendations>>>

- a. Funding for the SMARTfarm Learning Hub be extended beyond its current 2 year life time (Current provided by the Office for Learning and Teaching) and integrated with Primary Industries Education Foundation (PIEFA) strategies for inclusion into the secondary school curriculum.
 - b. Additional funding be targeted for development of innovative education strategies for agriculture within the current national STEM program funding currently allocated.
2. Innovation is needed in the development of strategies to improve extension of research outcomes to the farming sector. This needs strong links to the primary, secondary and tertiary innovation strategies developed in point 1. above. The development of a university based extension strategy similar to the US State Based University Extension model should be implemented, this involves embedding extension staff within universities to directly reach producers and students.

Key recommendation>>>

- c. Funding provided for the development of a trial of this extension model across key Australian universities modelled on the US State University Extension framework. This would involve a pilot project to embed extension staff within three agricultural universities in Australia. This would be integrated with 1.a above.
3. Innovation in the education of the general public is required. This innovation should focus on the education of the general public in both current agricultural practices and for innovations currently under development. This process will avoid issues experienced by technologies such as GM where social expectations have not been met and social license not achieved.

Key recommendation>>>

- d. Research required into the development of innovative strategies that enable engagement and education of the general public. Innovation is

required in this field to develop new methodologies that go beyond current thinking around social media engagement.

Regards

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