

Background

- 2.1 This chapter will cover a number of issues:
- the National and Rural Research Priorities of the Australian Government; and
 - the role of the RIRDC and its current program of work;
 - ⇒ The RIRDC's new 2012 - 2017 Corporate Plan
 - ⇒ the role of the RIRDC in supporting the National and Rural Research priorities
- 2.2 The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) was established by the Australian Government in 1989¹ to work with industry to invest in research and development (R&D) for a more profitable, sustainable and dynamic rural sector.² Presently, the RIRDC is one of 15 rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) that work collaboratively with industry and others on a wide variety of rural R&D projects. RIRDC is a statutory authority established under the *Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act 1989* (Cth) (PIERD Act).

National and Rural Research Priorities

- 2.3 The National and Rural Research Priorities of the Australian Government provide an over-arching framework for public investment in rural

1 *Primary Industries and Energy and Research and Development Act 1989* (Cth) s 9.

2 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *About RIRDC* (13 May 2013) <<http://www.rirdc.gov.au/about-rirdc>>

research and development (R&D).³ RIRDC's investments are closely aligned with these priorities.⁴

National Research Priorities

2.4 In 2002, the Australian Government announced four National Research Priorities (NRPs) that focus 'investment on research in key areas that can deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits to Australia'.⁵ The NRPs are designed to focus Whole-of-Government research while each NRP is supported by a number of priority goals that establish more specific outcomes.⁶

2.5 The NRPs are:

- Promoting and maintaining good health;
- An environmentally sustainable Australia;
- Safeguarding Australia; and
- Frontier technologies for building and transforming Australian industries.⁷

Rural Research and Development Priorities

2.6 In 1994, the Australian Government established a set of Rural Research and Development Priorities to balance R&D needs in the primary production sector. In 2007, these were revised to 'refresh the national understanding of current critical R&D investment needs and to better target agricultural, fisheries, forestry and food industry R&D efforts'.⁸

3 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Rural Research and Development Priorities (13 May 2013) <<http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/innovation/priorities>>

4 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *About RIRDC* (13 May 2013) <<http://www.rirdc.gov.au/about-rirdc>>

5 Prime Minister of Australia, 5 December 2002, *Press Release*, 'Research Priorities for Australia's Future Prosperity'.

6 Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, *Australia's National Research Priorities and their Associated Priority Goals* (13 May 2013) <<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Research/Pages/AustraliasNationalResearchPrioritiesandGoals.aspx>>

7 Prime Minister of Australia, 5 December 2002, *Press Release*, 'Research Priorities for Australia's Future Prosperity'

8 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Rural and Research Development Priorities* (13 May 2013) <<http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/innovation/priorities>>

These priorities complement the National Research Priorities and are as follows:

- Productivity and adding value;
- Supply chain and markets;
- Natural resource management;
- Climate variability and climate change and;
- Biosecurity.⁹

2.7 In supporting the Rural R&D Priorities, the Government has also highlighted the need for innovation skills and technology.¹⁰

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

2.8 The Rural Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) invests in research and development assisting the productivity, profitability and sustainability of rural industries.

2.9 The RIRDC supports a range of sectors through its collaborative investment program in the animal, plant and rural industries. Support is provided through its key research programs for each supported industry. Each research program is based on five year research and development plan¹¹ that is supported by agreed performance indicators.¹² Each research program will also be supported by the RIRDC's new evaluation framework.¹³

2.10 From 2012, the RIRDC's R&D investment is guided by its new Corporate Plan 2012 – 17, approved by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The Plan guides investment a number of overarching goals, underpinned by ten key strategies:

- Goal 1: Promote leadership and innovation in the rural sector

9 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Rural and Research Development Priorities* (13 May 2013) <<http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/innovation/priorities>>

10 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Rural and Research Development Priorities* (13 May 2013) <<http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/innovation/priorities>>

11 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 44.

12 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Research Programs* (13 May 2013) <<http://www.rirdc.gov.au/research-programs>>

13 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 22.

- ⇒ Deliver analysis on issues of national importance to the rural sector and broader community;
- ⇒ Assess the feasibility, value and potential competitiveness of new plant and animal industry opportunities; and
- ⇒ Encourage research that fosters science and industry creativity. ¹⁴
- Goal 2: Increase profit and productivity in rural industries
 - ⇒ Manage demand driven RD&E that meets industry needs;
 - ⇒ Facilitate investments that deliver economic social and environmental benefits for rural industries; and
 - ⇒ Adopt a life-cycle approach to investment in new, developing and established industries. ¹⁵
- Goal 3: Enhance sustainability across the rural sector
 - ⇒ Work collaboratively on cross sector issues that impact across industries;
 - ⇒ Increase knowledge about rural industry options that offer regional economic development opportunities;
 - ⇒ Encourage the sustainable use and management of natural resources; and
 - ⇒ Promote leadership, capacity, skills and pathways that create opportunities. ¹⁶

2.11 The Plan identifies nine priority areas that will guide RIRDC investment:

- Productivity growth to support rural industry profit and sustainability
- Building evidence about emerging issues impacting on the rural sector
- Ensuring new industry (and innovation) potential is explored in a rigorous way and the knowledge gained is shared
- Applying a life-cycle approach to supporting rural industries
- Collaborating to respond to cross sector RD&E needs
- Supporting new industries
- Maintaining and building rural research capacity
- Investing in rural sector people
- Enhancing the adoption of RD&E¹⁷

¹⁴ Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 14.

¹⁵ Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 14.

¹⁶ Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 14.

2.12 The RIRDC's program of work supports both the National Research Priorities and the Rural Research and Development Priorities.¹⁸ The RIRDC's Annual Report highlights that its Annual Operating Plan closely aligns with these priorities and that advice on maintaining this support is provided to researchers engaging with the Corporation. The Annual Report also presents information on the projects allocated to supporting each priority and lists relevant outcomes.¹⁹

18 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 44.

19 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, *Annual Report 2011 – 12*, p. 44 - 49.

