



**growcom**  
together we grow



Submission to the  
**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and  
Regional Affairs and Transport**

on the

**Inquiry into natural resource  
management**

**September 2008**

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## **Growcom submission on Inquiry into natural resource management**

### **Executive Summary**

Growcom is pleased to provide this written submission on the Inquiry into Natural Resource Management (NRM).

Growcom represents the interests of the fruit and vegetable sector in Queensland, which grows one third of the fresh produce for the nation.

Growcom has been proactively engaged with the regional natural resource management planning process and broader NRM initiatives over many years. Growcom believes that it is critical for agricultural industry organisations to play an active role in NRM efforts, particularly because it is growers, and industries collectively, that are identified in the media and public arena as responsible for environmental degradation. Industry must therefore be in a position to demonstrate its commitment and contribution to resolving NRM issues.

Two particular highlights of Growcom's contribution to NRM include:

- Funding, with the support of Horticulture Australia, of a dedicated project officer to support and maintain grower and industry relationships with Queensland's regional NRM bodies and agencies.
- Our partnership with the Queensland Government to deliver the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative to the horticulture industry through our highly successful program, Water for Profit.

Growcom recommends the following strategic opportunities to improve NRM in Australia.

1. Government NRM policies, arrangements and investment programs more fully recognise the core role that industry organisations and industry NRM programs can and do play in helping to achieve NRM outcomes in Australia. This recognition needs to be formalised into a layer within NRM funding arrangements that provides for long-term core funding at national and state levels to support the development, management, roll out, evaluation and ongoing improvement of industry NRM programs. This will enable industry to participate more fully in such programs as true partners rather than just as service providers.
2. Governments at national and state levels need to better define a comprehensive, holistic NRM agenda for sustainable agriculture that clearly sets out core issues that need to be addressed and defines national targets, strategies, delivery/implementation and investment arrangements and key partnerships/roles.
3. Governments need to deliver policy alignment across a range of related issues. A national food security policy could provide an overarching framework to guide

integrated policy agendas around NRM, regional economic development, climate change adaptation, drought assistance, water reforms and export development for agricultural products.

4. There is much scope to achieve significant streamlining of the administrative process for NRM funding arrangements. A key issue that needs to be addressed is reducing the transaction costs for industry organisations – the current arrangements require industry groups to engage with multiple regional NRM groups in seeking to achieve funding of industry initiatives. For example, currently Growcom must establish projects and contractual arrangements with multiple regional groups in order to patch together a state wide “quilt” for industry delivered programs that provide NRM services to growers in all major production areas. Addressing this issue was a key impetus for the development of the reef rescue package.
5. Growcom acknowledges the need to improve the capacity of NRM programs to rigorously and transparently demonstrate value for money and strong outcomes from investment. A solution to this need at a national and state level may be a mechanism that also addresses local and property scale data and information management needs. Efforts have been made in some Queensland regions to establish effective catchment or regional scale information sharing systems and in some cases, these provide better baseline data to support environmental risk assessment at property scales and planning of management responses. Growcom believes that these kinds of information sharing systems could be further developed under future NRM programs. For example, monitoring of the effectiveness of farm scale management actions or practices could be supported by and feed into the catchment scale information system, improving decision making at a business/property level, while offering a more effective basis for collecting evidence for national funding programs of the on-ground outcomes of NRM investments.

## 1. ABOUT GROWCOM

Growcom is the peak representative body for the fruit and vegetable growing industry in Queensland, providing a range of advocacy, extension and industry development services to the sector. We are the only organisation in Australia to deliver services across the entire horticulture industry to businesses and organisations of all commodities, sizes and regions, as well as to associated industries in the supply chain. We are constantly in contact with growers and other horticultural business operators. As a result, we are well aware of the outlook, expectations and practical needs of our industry.

The organisation was established in 1923 as a statutory body to represent and provide services to the fruit and vegetable growing industry. As a voluntary organisation since 2003, Growcom now has grower members throughout the state and works alongside other industry organisations, regional producer associations and corporate members. To provide services and networks to growers, Growcom has approximately thirty staff located in offices in Brisbane, Bundaberg, Ayr, Toowoomba and Tully. Growcom is a member of a number of state and national industry organisations and uses these networks to promote our members' interests and to work with other industry bodies on issues of common interest.

## 2. ABOUT THE QUEENSLAND HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY

Queensland is Australia's premier state for fruit and vegetable production, growing one-third of the nation's produce. Horticulture is Queensland's second largest primary industry, worth more than \$1.8 billion per annum and employing around 25,000 people. Queensland's 2,800 commercial farms produce more than 120 types of fruit and vegetables and are located from Stanthorpe in the south to the Atherton Tablelands in the far north. The state is responsible for the majority of Australia's banana, pineapple, mandarin, avocado, beetroot and fresh tomato production. There are 16 defined horticultural regions with a total area under fruit and vegetable production of approximately 100,000 hectares.

The Queensland horticulture industry is:

- A major contributor to regional economies and the mainstay of many regional communities;
- The largest high quality supplier of fresh fruit and vegetables to Australian consumers;
- A diverse industry utilising a range of production methods in different locations and climates;
- A resource base for significant value adding throughout the food, transport, wholesale and retail industries;
- The most labour intensive of all agricultural industries, with labour representing as much as 50% of the overall operating costs;

- An industry with significant links to the tourism industry, providing income for thousands of backpackers and “grey nomads” each year;
- A high value and efficient user of water resources in terms of agricultural production;
- A primary and secondary source of income for many families in regional Queensland e.g. through seasonal work in packing sheds; and
- The site for a number of emerging agricultural industries including olives, Asian exotic tropical fruits, culinary herbs, bush foods, functional foods and nutraceuticals.

### **3. GROWCOM’S POLICY ON NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **The issues**

Access to the natural resources of soil, water and air are critical for a viable fruit and vegetable industry. Natural resource management is an important issue for growers with much of Queensland’s fruit and vegetable industry located close to sensitive environments such as the Great Barrier Reef, Ramsar wetlands and the Murray-Darling basin.

The community, industry and government recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy environment. Across Australia there is a high level of concern about major environmental issues such as salinity, water quality and the loss of natural ecosystems. Issues such as resource security in water and vegetation are the subjects of hot debate.

Fruit and vegetable growers in Queensland aim to be responsible custodians of natural resources, however, highly complex regulatory, policy and planning systems make natural resource management a major challenge for growers.

#### **Our position**

Growcom supports the sustainable development of the horticulture industry in Queensland. This requires horticultural enterprises to be profitable, socially viable and environmentally responsible. Growcom and its members aim to work in partnership with government, research organisations, regional natural resource and catchment management bodies, the community and other stakeholders to address natural resource management issues.

Growcom believes an overarching framework is needed to encourage and coordinate sustainable natural resource management at local, regional, state and national levels.

We also believe that Government’s continued commitment to natural resource management is essential for maintaining the role of protecting and enhancing Australia’s unique biodiversity, the future productive capacity of agricultural industries and viability

of rural and regional communities. Growcom is fully supportive of enhancing direct industry engagement in natural resource management programmes through industry organisations to improve outcomes. Through a cooperative and holistic approach, we aim to deliver workable and balanced outcomes for the industry that also benefit the broader community. We are committed to working in partnership with regional NRM groups and other key stakeholders however the role of industry needs to be more fully recognised and supported.

### **Our commitment**

Growcom is committed to maintaining and establishing partnerships with Government and other stakeholders to support the sustainable development of the horticulture industry. The industry has a long history in natural resource management and has made a commitment to the *Farmcare Code of Practice for Sustainable Fruit and Vegetable Production in Queensland*<sup>1</sup>, which outlines good environmental management practices such as:

- Efficient and careful use of natural resources, particularly water, soils and vegetation.
- Minimising environmental impacts caused by horticultural land use, particularly run-off of sediments, fertilisers and pesticides into waterways.
- Minimising waste and pollution from horticultural land use.
- Careful use of pesticides.
- Minimising impacts on biodiversity.
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Growcom maintains an environment program designed to assist its members to continually improve their environmental performance and achieve ecological sustainability. We believe a 'triple bottom line' approach would be an appropriate measure of the industry's performance.

Growcom is also committed to further developing and implementing our Farm Management System (FMS) program within horticulture enterprises throughout the state. The FMS is in modular format with each module focusing on the potential risk areas and opportunities for improvement. Each module generates an action plan with target dates for the grower to work towards in order to minimise their risks. This approach underpins the current reef rescue industry delivery plan.

### **Our expectations**

Growcom seeks recognition and commitment from government and the community that the industry requires support to achieve its goals in natural resource management. In particular, the industry requires:

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<sup>1</sup> The Farmcare Code has been endorsed by the Queensland Government as an approved Code of Practice under Section 219 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. It constitutes an industry standard giving guidance to growers in meeting their 'General Environmental Duty' under the Act. This Code was originally developed in 1998 and was reviewed and updated in 2007 by Growcom.

- The opportunity to apply voluntary, workable, industry-led initiatives wherever possible to address natural resource management issues.
- Planning and management of natural resources to be based on sound science.
- If necessary, negotiated transition phases of an appropriate, planned, and agreed timeframe that allow industry members time to adapt or restructure to legislative or policy changes, implement changes to practices or develop solutions to issues.
- Financial and other support for industry based programs such as stewardship and ecosystem services, when the public benefits of natural resource management outweigh private benefits, and when the community's expectations of natural resource management or biodiversity conservation restrict growers' farm management beyond current recommended practices.
- A range of financial and market-based incentives be explored and used as much as possible to encourage the adoption of improved natural resource management practices.
- Institutional, economic and other barriers to the adoption of sustainable management practices be identified and addressed.

### **Our agenda items**

Issues to be considered within this policy area include:

- A long term plan for natural resource management and on-farm delivery programs.
- Water quality.
- Farm management systems.
- Developing an overarching framework for regional and catchment planning and management.
- Natural resource access, allocation and trading (e.g. water, ecosystem services).
- Vegetation management and tree clearing.
- Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.
- Biodiversity and wildlife management.
- Pest and weed management and chemical use.
- Competing land use e.g. urban development in rural areas and peri-urban agriculture.
- Local government and regional planning activities and initiatives.
- Market based instruments for natural resources management issues.
- Commitment to work with regional natural resource management arrangements to align farm scale activities to surrounding sub-catchments.
- One Plan.
- Funding stream for NRM initiatives that work in partnership with regional arrangements.



#### 4. Lessons Learnt

Growcom has worked closely with nine regional NRM groups, namely:

- Northern Gulf Resource Management Group
- Terrain Natural Resource Management
- Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM (BDT)
- Reef Catchments - Mackay Whitsunday Inc
- Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA)
- Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG)
- SEQ Catchments
- Condamine Alliance
- Queensland Murray Darling Committee (QMDC).

The major NRM extension delivery program targeting horticulture producers is the Queensland Government funded Rural Water Use Efficiency initiative. This program, delivered by Growcom under the banner Water for Profit (WfP) has been running successfully since 1999 and has delivered water savings of 51,000 million litres in this time. Whilst the major focus of the team has been water use efficiency, there has been increasing emphasis on natural resource management outcomes and in particular water quality. Officers within this program work with growers to achieve improved on-farm practice by identifying their individual risk through the Growcom Farm Management System program. There are six WfP officers working within industry across Queensland. One in Tully, one in Ayr and one in Bundaberg and three working out of Toowoomba.

From this experience, Growcom offers the following reflections and learnings.

1. Grower engagement in NRM considerations and management responses is more successful when facilitated through industry programs
  2. NRM programs need to align with the business systems operating in the industry
  3. The strength of regional NRM process lies in the landscape wide approach
  4. A major issue is the number of contracts that need to be managed
1. The focus of any NRM program must be on the growers – they are the **land managers**. In managing natural resources they have many competing influences on their decision making. NRM programs that understand and align with mainstream industry networks and processes are the most successful. Industry organisations and industry NRM programs are best placed to deliver this.

Generic incentive programs that don't specifically target horticulture producers have traditionally been characterised by low participation and poor quality applications. This contrasts with the success of horticulture specific programs which have been very successful and provided excellent return on investment. BMRG and BDT funded Growcom to deliver incentives to improve water quality as an adjunct to Growcom's Rural Water Use Efficiency Water for Profit program. These projects resulted in documented returns on investment of up to 7:1.

2. The fruit and vegetable industry has responded proactively to the demands of the marketplace. The vast majority of growers have implemented certified quality and food systems that are independently audited at least yearly. New initiatives and programs need to understand these systems and build programs from this base, not try to introduce requirements for new systems into their businesses. For this reason Growcom has not pursued purely environmental management systems (EMS) approaches and instead developed the Farm Management Systems program that facilitates integration of NRM issues into other facets of business planning and management. Growcom also supports and integrates with such industry programs as the Freshcare Environmental Code of Practice.

3. Governments and statutory authorities have a major role in ensuring the management of natural resource assets. However governments and statutory organisations to date have not taken a landscape approach to managing these resources. By their charters and their institutional arrangement they currently manage only parts of the landscape. In Growcom's experience, regulatory approaches to farm scale NRM have had poor outcomes. However working under the regional NRM arrangements allows industry and the NRM bodies to look at issues on a landscape scale and find cooperative, multi-beneficial approaches to management.

4. A weakness of the federal government's NRM program arrangements in recent years is that industry groups need to negotiate with many regional bodies in order to access funds to work with their sector across the state to address critical NRM issues at a farm scale, using industry resources and programs. In the case of the Queensland fruit and vegetable sector this is nine (previously ten before the merger of NRM SEQ and SEQ Western Catchments) NRM bodies with which to negotiate. All regional bodies operate differently and have different priorities so different strategies and programs need to be negotiated separately. This compounds the cost and resource drain on industry organisation through increased transaction costs, project management and operational delivery. It also provided inconsistent and confusing outcomes for growers, many of whom operate in more than one region. Growcom recognises the need for regional prioritisation but for multi-regional issues there is benefit in a more consistent approach.

Some additional points are:

- Sound risk assessment and identification of improved management actions or practices to address priority NRM issues needs to be underpinned by natural resource data and mapping that is often unavailable, inaccessible or too expensive.
- Existing environmental monitoring systems do not provide information that assists growers to assess the effectiveness of any changes they have made to farm management to address NRM issues. Practical monitoring that improves the link between farm management and landscape health is needed along with better mechanisms to share key data across scales and management responsibilities (e.g.

land holders, regional NRM groups, state government NR agencies, federal funding programs)

- Growers want to demonstrate to the community that they are managing their land and water resources sustainably
- There is a need for the development of simple monitoring tools for growers to use on farm, and that deliver timely and useful information
- Data sharing arrangements from monitoring programs that are funded by a range of partners needs to be clearly spelt out and agreed to before commencement of any projects
- Some perceptions by the wider community about industry practices or the severity of an issue need to be backed up by relevant science to test their credibility and not just be blindly accepted

## **5. Build on Knowledge and Experience**

1. Growcom has a long history in environmental programs
2. Industry engagement happens at a range of levels within the regional NRM process
3. Learn from previous recommendations

1. Since the early 1990s Growcom has maintained an environmental program on behalf of the industry. In 2003 the industry commissioned a report by an industry consultant which was called the “Regional Natural Resource Management Issues for Queensland’s Fruit and Vegetable Industry – Scoping Paper”.

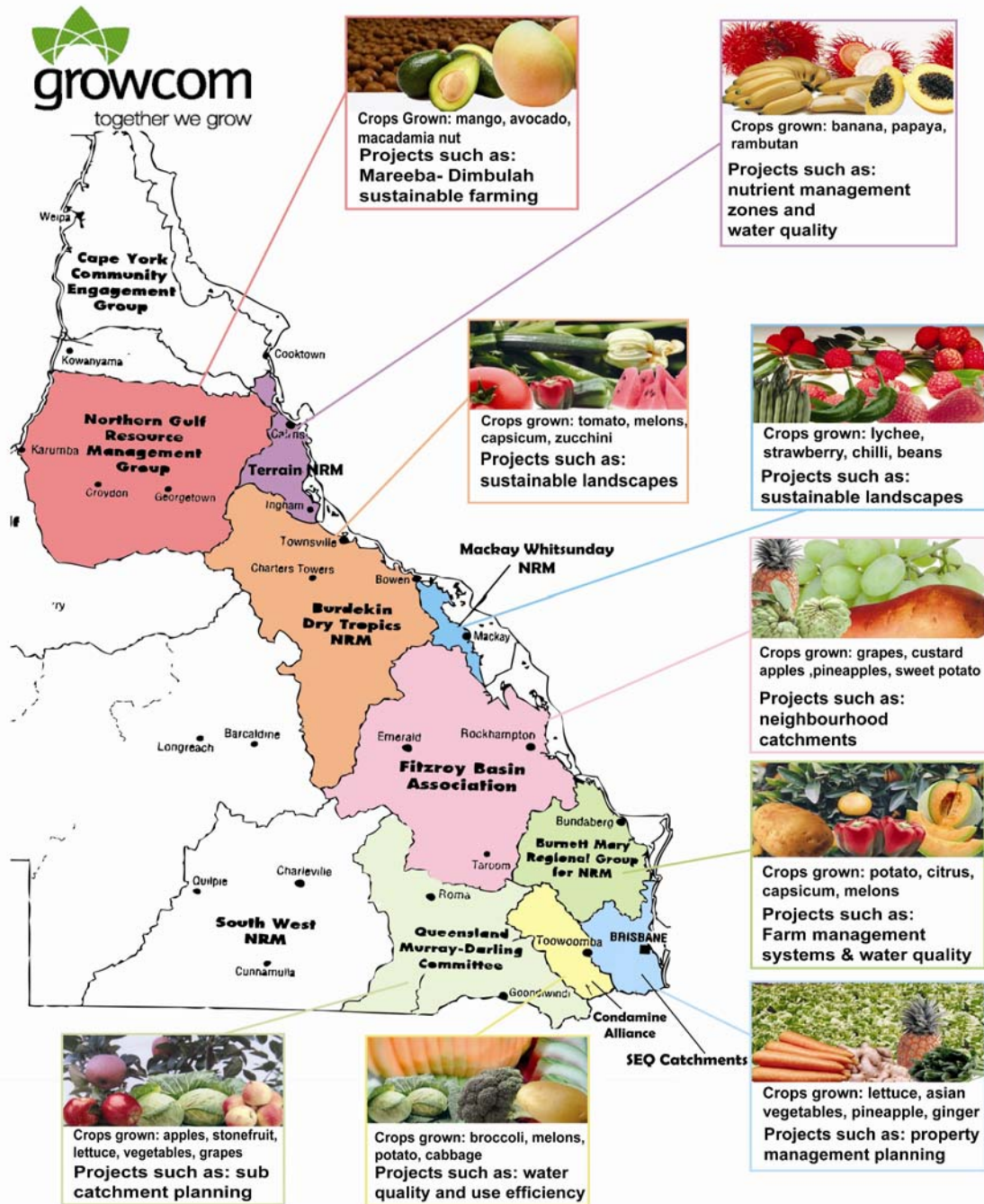
From this developed the project known as “natural resource networks for fruit and vegetable growers in Queensland” which has been funded by Growcom with support from Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) since June 2004. The project is coordinated by Margie Milgate and is internally known as the NRN project.

The objectives of the project are to:

1. Optimise the involvement of the fruit and vegetable industry in regional NRM processes in Queensland.
2. Facilitate networking amongst fruit and vegetable growers involved in regional NRM processes in Queensland
3. Facilitate effective communication between fruit and vegetable growers, regional NRM processes and Growcom regarding NRM issues, information needs, project opportunities and R & D strategic planning.
4. Enhance NRM investment in the sustainable development of the fruit & vegetable industry by programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust.
5. Enhance the fruit and vegetable industries understanding of its impacts on natural environments and natural resources at regional scales and identify opportunities to improve.

This program has successfully delivered enhanced engagement of horticultural growers and groups with the regional NRM process and resulted in the establishment of targeted projects or programs in each of the nine regional NRM group areas. This has including redesigning incentive programs that now include a risk assessment module from the FMS program and facilitated support to growers to achieve on ground action. Refer map below for an example of projects over the nine regional NRM groups in Queensland where fruit and vegetables are grown.

### Growcom working with growers and regional NRM groups



2. Engagement with regional NRM arrangements has been at Chair, Board or stakeholder level where grower representatives hold positions on Boards or subcommittees of some of the regional bodies. This means sacrificing time and resources away from their own businesses and families to participate at this level. They then go to grower meetings and other forums to pass on information regarding Board or committee decisions and NRM activities.

Growcom regional staff that are based in our offices at Tully, Ayr, Bundaberg, and Toowoomba have also been engaged on a regional level. This includes incorporating information through industry newsletters, providing funding information, attending workshops and seminars, trialling extension programs, providing technical expertise to support incentive programs and feedback on regional body initiatives.

Brisbane head office has been involved by providing backup coordination and financial and administrative support to the incentive programs being delivered in a number of regions. The communication and marketing department also assists with media releases and other communication requirements.

The Growcom Advocacy and Policy Unit plays an important role, helping to shape policies and partnerships on a range of NRM issues, in collaborative forums with federal and state government agencies, other industry organisations, conservation organisations and the Qld Regional NRM Groups' Collective.

3. Under the work conducted by the NRN project several major reports were developed and key recommendations made. Some recommendations from these reports were

- Grower opinions on NRM research priorities that affect particular industries or regions need to be canvassed before research programs are initiated
- Reviews and evaluation of previous NRM related research programs need to be undertaken before new related NRM research programs are funded
- That there needs to be recognition by all groups that a significant body of knowledge and information about a catchment resides with the people who live in it and manage it
- NRM research funders need to design effective communication and engagement strategies so that related research programs that are being conducted by a range of research agencies are better coordinated
- That R&D research into production benefits should also investigate the off-farm benefits in a quantifiable manner so that they can be used by growers to evaluate their management actions on farm and provide information for assessing eligibility for inclusion into NRM incentive programs for growers

In an earlier submission on the Future Natural Resource Management Arrangements to the Ministerial Reference Group on NRM Programme Delivery in December 2005 recommendations included:

- Industry involvement in regional NRM arrangements needs to be acknowledged and supported in future NRM programs – this support needs to translate into core investment in industry programs to support program development, management and delivery.
- Growers want seamless and consistent delivery of well co-ordinated and focused NRM programs that are based on sound extension principles and delivery by industry programs such as Water for Profit
- Growers want programs that deliver benefits for their businesses and that fit into their current management programs. They have nominated soil health as their biggest NRM issue
- Industry members and their respective organisations need to be included in future planning of NRM programs and be adequately resourced to take part.
- Industry organisations cannot afford to waste time and resources responding to and coordinating with unexpected NRM funding/action initiatives that interrupt or duplicate established programs and implementation/delivery activities.

Growcom sees the role of our organisation is in interacting with growers at a farm level and then working with regional NRM groups on the relevant landscape or catchment issues that farm businesses need to consider.

It was good to note that the Ministerial Reference Group supported the concept of greater industry involvement in their report “Review of Arrangements for Regional Delivery of Natural Resource Management Programmes” March 2006. They advocated that there should be an “evolution rather than a revolution” approach and that:

- Strategies be developed in partnership with primary industry to achieve higher levels of engagement and that
- A funding stream be introduced direct from the Australian Government, leveraging cash contributions from industry and in-kind support from the primary industry sector to improve the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices to deliver desirable regional, cross-regional and cross jurisdictional outcomes.

We believe this recommendation needs to go further in that an on-going core funding program for industry groups needs to be included to gain greater engagement and adoption in the field.

## **6. Costs and Benefits**

As stated previously a major cost to Growcom is in transaction costs of dealing with a wide number of regional NRM groups in achieving NRM support for horticultural growers. Contract negotiations covering the management, delivery and reporting of incentive programs for example can take many months before contracts are exchanged and the industry body receives any funding.

A major finding of the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES) for the Australian Government was that “working cooperatively with producers to foster changes in land management that make financial and lifestyle sense for producers, and benefit the environment, is currently the most cost-effective approach from both government and producer perspectives”.

Growcom’s facilitated approach to grower involvement in incentive programs that meet their requirements as well as the environment has been that programs are oversubscribed and have a high uptake. Other programs run by regional NRM groups that are promoted by putting an advertisement in a newspaper have very little success of engagement in the fruit and vegetable sector.

The ARIES report found that “good support makes improving water quality outcomes easy”. Producers want “user friendly” processes and our work with growers even with more complicated incentive schemes designed around a metric and an auction process were very successful due to being well designed and facilitated by knowledgeable Growcom field officers.

Our proposition then to this inquiry is that government would receive greater cost-effective outcomes and greater environmental benefits by working with key grower organisations such as Growcom who have a state wide reach to the industry through an effective extension network. Growcom is well positioned and experienced to deliver services to growers through proven industry NRM programs in close partnership with the regional NRM groups.

## **7. Long term strategic approach**

Along with the Ministerial Reference Group report – known as the Keogh Report mentioned above the fruit and vegetable industry has also supported the idea that the Australian Government should make a long term commitment to the community to continue to invest in natural resource management.

Many fruit and vegetable farming operations go back four or five generations. These commercial businesses focus on longer term time horizons than shorter political program cycles.

The knowledge that the Federal government is considering their NRM program agenda to be for the long term is warmly welcomed by industry.

## 8. Engaging land managers

In raising and addressing natural resource management and environmental issues with growers Growcom has been careful to be sensitive to the history and mood of growers. This was particularly important in regions where there had been poor engagement methods in the past. Some were feeling threatened and disengaged due to the “blame game” some agencies and organisations have promoted. This project has focused on supporting growers to become involved and focus on proactive solutions.

Growers also want to feel valued, and a key focus of much project communication is in highlighting the “good news” stories and the positive case studies of growers and industries that have good environmental practices.

The early findings from growers regarding their reactions to being involved in future NRM projects is that they wanted to set some parameters before they would be willing to engage. This was in response to some poorly handled projects in the past where researchers have misused grower data without their permission and where project deadlines and management have been less than satisfactory. Growers stated that in future the projects they would agree to be involved with needed to:

- Set out clear objectives and outcomes
- Have clearly stated key milestones
- Include strategic reviews of progress to outcomes
- Growers wanted an overseeing role in projects, though not day-to-day management
- Have clear and timely reporting
- Acknowledgement of grower’s time and resources to the project, and resourcing of growers contribution if possible
- Had to have benefit to their businesses and industry.

A number of other research projects have supported these views and the key role that industry support programs can play in gaining greater land manager engagement in NRM programs.

The first was conducted by CSIRO in the western catchments of South East Queensland (SEQ) as part of the state-wide AgSIP investments under NHT and NLP. This study found that primary producer groups were motivated to get involved with their primary producer group “because of their sustainable livelihoods worldview”.

Specific motivating factors for engaging through their groups include:

- Maintaining current productivity
- Providing a sustainable livelihood for future generations.

The preferred engagement approaches expressed by members of primary producer groups in the western catchments of SEQ include:



- Being able to access specific information when they need it (e.g. a targeted phone call). Ideally to speak to:
  - Someone with local knowledge
  - Someone with detailed industry knowledge
- Hands on engagement activities (e.g. shed meetings)
- Within-industry forums.

In the report from the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability titled “Reef Water Quality Protection Plan: Scoping of issues associated with industry practices” some recommendations of the researchers were that programs and funding models need to:

- Decrease the emphasis on paperwork and increase the emphasis on conversation
- Shift emphasis to outputs and outcomes
- Enhance and complement existing tools used to help producers take up new practices
- Strengthen industry support networks
- Support skills development of extension officers
- Take an adaptive management approach.

## **9. Comprehensive approach**

The new Caring for our Country program is still a fairly new development and its impacts are still being considered by the industry. The taking of a more centralised process to engagement in NRM outcomes will be a radical change to the more “bottom up” processes that have been seen with the previous regional NRM arrangements.

Industry has demonstrated that it is proactive in developing sophisticated partnerships with regional groups as evidenced by the reef rescue partnership. This requires a true recognition of the role industry organisations can play and funding arrangements need to reflect a partnership model rather than just a service delivery model.

One process that was good in developing the projects for the Caring for our Country Open Grants was the forum facilitated by the Regional Groups Collective. This forum looked at proposed projects under a number of themes and sought to have linkages formed. This worked well with the Growcom team being able to identify some new key partners for collaboration on some of our key project ideas.

We have been advised by Federal Government sources that the Reef Rescue partnership that was developed by the strong collaboration of the Queensland state industry groups and the reef NRM regions is a model they would like to see continue. However funding for such a collaborative process is only for the “transition year” and ongoing funding in future years is not guaranteed. This puts strain on all organisations involved as with only one year funding (or perhaps only six months) truly strategic and comprehensive approaches are not obtainable.

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