

Australian Government - Agricultural Competitiveness Issues Paper

Submission from UWA Institute of Agriculture, The University of Western Australia

[This is not submitted in confidence.](#)

The UWA Institute of Agriculture commends the Issues Paper on the competitiveness of Australian Agriculture which highlights important issues related to food security, market returns, farm finances, competitiveness, the contribution of regional centres and communities, efficiency and competitiveness across the agriculture value chain (including skills, training, education and human capital, research and development and critical infrastructure), enhancing exports (including new markets) and the effectiveness and economic benefits of existing incentives for investment and jobs creation in the agriculture sector.

The following points highlight issues of significance to **innovation, productivity, investment, farm profitability** and **revitalization of rural communities** for Australian agriculture to reach its full potential.

Innovation

- to improve on-farm practices and efficient use of resources
- to embrace technology, science and engineering to support agrifood sector
- to get the best minds to actively participate at all levels of the agricultural food chain
- for high level communication among innovators at all levels across the food chain
- for engagement with cognate disciplines (not just the traditional 'agriculture' areas)
- for further enhancement of the quality and attractiveness of agricultural education at all levels to ensure the future need of the industry are met
- for cross disciplinary investment to achieve novel outcomes
- for investment (by Departments of Agriculture/Primary Industry, agricultural industries, entrepreneurs and philanthropists) in cadetships for students entering undergraduate programs (cf expansion of Horizon Scholarships; postgraduate scholarships)
- for raising awareness of agriculture / food in schools
- for incentives that encourage long term planning (rather than short term reactions)
- to support of blue sky research (from individuals and teams)
- for marketing an image of innovation in the sector (case studies, good news stories)
- for novel practices such as masterclasses for high flying university students
- for high quality mentoring at all levels (schools, universities, industry)

- for models applied to educating urban community the role of farmers and food industries

Productivity

- requires adoption of best practice in every industry
- requires introduction of innovative practices that increase production from currently unproductive land
- requires financial incentives for conversion of less productive land use into best practice (including non-traditional agricultural production in peri-urban, rangelands and areas challenged by environmental conditions (e.g. reduced rainfall in SW Australia))
- requires landscape-scale as well as farm-scale financial and resource modeling
- requires direction of research funds to identification of best practice as well as its implementation
- requires change to new cropping / pasture options that ensure sustainable production where long term support of potentially fragile landscapes is essential
- requires improvements in biosecurity
- requires consideration of environmental impact

Investment

- attract foreign investments to aid financing and productivity growth
- support new industries
- improve value chains through high tech food processing industries

Farm profitability

- fully consider land capability
- fully consider alternative land use
- fully consider farm models for early warning

Revitalisation of rural communities

- attract the best minds and actively support cross-disciplinary approach
- implement strategies that address declining infrastructure in rural communities
- implement incentives for business in rural communities
- provide re-training opportunities
- support city to country initiatives to increase awareness
- support niche markets in rural communities