



QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION



Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI) 2026 Review **January 2026**

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Prepared for:

The University of Queensland,
Review Committee

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This submission is provided to:

Review Coordinator

Academic Board

The University of Queensland

Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia

Submitted via email at uqreviews@uq.edu.au

Our members

- Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers
- Cotton Australia
- Canegrowers
- Greenlife Industry QLD
- eastAUSmilk
- Australian Cane Farmers Association
- Queensland United Egg Producers
- Turf Queensland
- Pork Queensland
- Australian Chicken Meat Federation
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area
- Central Downs Irrigators Ltd
- Fairburn Irrigation Network
- Mallowa Irrigation
- Pioneer Valley Water Co-operative Ltd
- Theodore Water Pty Ltd
- Eton Irrigation
- Lockyer Valley Water Users

About the Queensland Farmers' Federation

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of agriculture in Queensland.

Our members are agricultural peak bodies who collectively represent more than 13,000 farmers who produce food, fibre and foliage across the state.

QFF's peak body members come together to develop policy and lead projects on the key issues that are important to their farmer members and the Queensland agriculture sector.

Together, we form a strong, unified voice leveraging our effectiveness by working together to drive policy and initiatives that support a strong future for Queensland agriculture.

Submission

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the 2026 review of the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI).

We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

Introduction

Guided by our key policy priorities, namely water security, energy use, workforce development, environmental sustainability, biosecurity, risk management, land use, waste recovery, productivity growth, and animal welfare, QFF recognises QAAFI's important role in advancing tropical and subtropical agri-food science.

While QAAFI has delivered many positive outcomes to date, there remains significant untapped potential for the Institute to lift its relevance and impact by taking a more proactive role in facilitating genuinely industry-led research, strategy setting, and partnership development, particularly in response to evolving on-farm and regional challenges.

QFF encourages QAAFI to move beyond a largely institution-driven model of engagement and instead embed structured, transparent mechanisms that enable industry to meaningfully co-design priorities, guide future work programs, and influence investment decisions. This will be critical to ensuring QAAFI's work translates into tangible, on-farm outcomes that drive productivity, sustainability, and resilience across Queensland agriculture.

Response to Terms of Reference

Term of Reference 1 – Vision and Strategy

QAAFI's published mission and strategy demonstrate a strong and relevant vision. QFF supports its focus on sustainability and innovation and encourages the review to identify opportunities to further align QAAFI's strategic objectives with the needs of Queensland agriculture. QFF recommends:

- QAAFI must explicitly incorporate key issues such as water management, renewable energy use, biosecurity, and market access into its strategic goals. These priorities should be informed by industry-identified needs and articulated through clear pathways to on-farm application and adoption, rather than remaining predominantly research-driven.

- QAAFI should draw on UQ's broader strengths in engineering, environmental science, and socioeconomics to develop holistic, actionable solutions to agri-food challenges. This cross-disciplinary capability positions QAAFI well to act as a convenor across institutions, rather than operating in isolation within the existing R&D space.
- QAAFI must actively engage with growers and industry bodies, including QFF and key peak bodies such as CANEGROWERS, Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers, Cotton Australia and others. Engagement should be proactive, structured, and ongoing (not limited to existing partnerships or informal consultation) and should explicitly support an industry-led approach to future work. QFF is prepared to facilitate this dialogue.

Term of Reference 2 – Governance, Organisation and Operations

No comment.

Term of Reference 3 – Teaching, Learning and Impact

QFF encourages QAAFI to deepen its teaching and mentorship initiatives with a clear focus on agricultural industry outcomes. Stronger industry involvement in curriculum design, placements, and research training would improve graduate readiness and ensure skills development aligns with real-world farm and supply-chain needs.

Term of Reference 4 – Research, Research Training and Impact

QFF recognises QAAFI's strong research record, and we expect the review to highlight how this research continues to meet member needs and translates into practical outcomes. We recommend prioritising projects in areas critical to Queensland agriculture, including:

- Water efficiency and irrigation innovation
- Climate adaptation and resilience
- Pest and biosecurity management
- Sustainable intensification of production systems
- Market diversification and value-adding opportunities

Importantly, these research priorities should be developed and governed through an industry-led framework that improves coordination across universities, RDCs, government agencies, and other research institutions. Fragmentation of agricultural R&D remains a long-standing concern for industry, resulting in duplication, gaps, and reduced return on investment. QAAFI is well placed to play a leadership role in addressing this issue.

Term of Reference 5 – Industry, Community and Partnerships

QAAFI has the potential to become a more visible and accessible bridge between science and industry. The review should strongly emphasise the need for QAAFI to proactively facilitate new partnerships and engagement pathways, rather than relying on the same relationships year on year.

There is a clear opportunity for QAAFI to adopt an industry-led partnership model, one that actively invites participation from a broader cross-section of growers, regions, and commodities, including those who currently feel disconnected from QAAFI's work.

While QAAFI undertakes some valuable partnership and engagement activities, many industry stakeholders continue to report limited ability to influence research direction,

investment priorities, or long-term program design. This has contributed to a sense of disconnection and disempowerment among parts of the sector.

Industry is also concerned about the persistent lack of coordination across agricultural R&D institutions. QAAFI should be encouraged, and supported, to take a stronger convening role to improve collaboration, reduce fragmentation, and ensure research efforts are complementary, strategic, and industry driven.

Term of Reference 6 – People, Culture and Diversity

No comment.

Term of Reference 7 – Resources

QFF believes QAAFI possesses the resources and potential to continue its mission. The review should ensure these resources are deliberately aligned to high-priority, industry-led programs and used to support coordination, collaboration, and engagement functions, not solely research delivery.

Conclusion

QFF supports QAAFI as a cornerstone institution within Queensland's tropical agricultural innovation system. To maximise its value to industry, QAAFI must strengthen its role as a proactive facilitator of industry-led research, improve coordination across the fragmented R&D system, and broaden its partnerships beyond traditional networks.

Ensuring industry has a genuine and ongoing role in guiding future work and can clearly see its input reflected in outcomes on the ground, will be critical to maintaining confidence, relevance, and impact.

Yours sincerely

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