



# QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

Primary Producers House, Level 3, 183 North Quay, Brisbane QLD 4000  
PO Box 12009 George Street, Brisbane QLD 4003  
qfarmers@aff.org.au | 07 3837 4720  
ABN 44 055 764 488

## Submission

20 December 2019

Department of Agriculture  
GPO Box 858  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Submission via: [haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/modernising-rdc](https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/modernising-rdc)

Dear Sir/Madam

### Re: Modernising the Research and Development Corporation System: Discussion Paper (September 2019)

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of intensive, semi-intensive and irrigated agriculture in Queensland. It is a federation that represents the interests of peak state and national agriculture industry organisations, which in turn collectively represent more than 13,000 farmers across the state. QFF engages in a broad range of economic, social, environmental and regional issues of strategic importance to the productivity, sustainability and growth of the agricultural sector. QFF's mission is to secure a strong and sustainable future for Queensland farmers by representing the common interests of our member organisations:

- CANEGROWERS
- Cotton Australia
- Growcom
- Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland (NGIQ)
- Queensland Chicken Growers Association (QCGA)
- Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO)
- Australian Cane Farmers Association (ACFA)
- Pork Queensland Inc.
- Queensland United Egg Producers (QUEP)
- Queensland Chicken Meat Council (QCMC)
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group (BRIG)
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area Irrigators Ltd (BRIA)
- Central Downs Irrigators Ltd (CDIL)
- Fairbairn Irrigation Network Ltd
- Mallowa Irrigation Ltd
- Pioneer Valley Water Cooperative Ltd (PV Water)
- Theodore Water Pty Ltd.

*The united voice of intensive, semi-intensive and irrigated agriculture*



QFF welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Modernising the Research and Development Corporation System: Discussion Paper. We provide this submission without prejudice to any additional submission from our members or individual farmers.

QFF acknowledges that there are a variety of views across our own membership with regards to the effectiveness of the various Research and Development Corporations (RDC) and therefore the future opportunities that can be realised through this review.

QFF member, Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) note that many of their members are disenfranchised from the existing RDC system. They also do not support merging their designated RDC with others, noting the diversity of priorities across the agricultural commodity groups. They also note that much of the research undertaken is not reflective of farmer needs and, as such, a more consultative process to identify future research priorities is needed.

QFF member Cotton Australia also supports the continuation of a commodity-based structural arrangement for RDC's recognising the differences between commodities and growing regions.

Regional relationships are critical to the success of any RDC with some areas have strong and connected champions which connect well with growers and their trusted on-farm advisors; whilst in other areas such relationships are nascent or have been damaged over time. The role of extension, and management of personal relationships is a critical function of the RDC's as it facilitates the communication and adoption of science.

QFF understands that the 'traditional focus' of the RDC's has been on productivity. This has led to frustrations where other research, (outside simply improving productivity), identified as critical is deemed to be outside scope.

This issue also highlights an important and related matter - that funding for agricultural research is in significant decline and research bodies, industry associations and farmers are finding it increasingly challenging to identify and successfully obtain funding or assistance. This is evidenced by the progressively high numbers of applications and prohibitively competitive process for the 'Smart Farm Grants' which now represent a significant source of research funding, outside the RDC framework and university grant processes. Whilst some commodities such as cotton have successfully secured private sector funding and international partners, this opportunity has not extended into other commodity sectors.

A further issue that must be considered is that productivity improvements are not reflective of profit. Whilst the Department clearly states that *improving productivity on farms contributes to profitability and competitiveness*<sup>1</sup>, many farms and industry sectors have not qualified the corresponding gains in profitability. Modern farming systems within the current social and environmental lens are progressively more complex and sophisticated. Any future changes to the RDCs must acknowledge this and assist to raise profitability across both agricultural systems and to individual farm level.

Yours sincerely

Dr Georgina Davis  
Chief Executive Officer

---

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/productivity>