

FINAL REPORT

ICN00019

Scoping training needs and efficient delivery pathways for adviser training with a focus on crop protection training

PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT CODE: ICN00019

PROJECT TITLE: SCOPING TRAINING NEEDS AND EFFICIENT DELIVERY PATHWAYS FOR ADVISER TRAINING WITH A FOCUS ON CROP PROTECTION TRAINING

START DATE: 01.07.2014

END DATE: 30.06.2015

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Summary

The project provided a report to the GRDC detailing findings and recommendations on future investment in crop protection training for advisers.

This will equip the GRDC and regional panels with the detailed understanding of crop protection training needs and requirements, for content development and delivery, and with the capacity and capability to shape and inform a possible future adviser, crop protection training initiative.

A draft report was delivered in May 2015, with the final report delivered on September 30, 2015. An appendix document was also delivered on May 11, 2015 and a face-to-face delivery and discussion of the report occurred at the GRDC offices in Canberra on September 17, 2015.

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Conclusions

Well trained advisers are critical to the ongoing success of Australian grain growers. Advisers have expressed a significant need for ongoing training in crop protection, as well as other aspects of crop agronomy. Much of the training of new advisers occurs on-the-job, as new graduates lack the knowledge, training and practice required to hone their skills as an adviser. Much of the training of new advisers occurs within retail agronomy networks, however an increasing number of new graduates are being employed and trained within medium-sized, fee-for-service consultancy businesses, agricultural supply organisations, and contract research and development (R&D) companies.

A key recommendation of this report is to develop processes that add to the existing on-the-job training, which occurs between senior advisers and junior or trainee advisers. At present, this relationship is largely uninformed by formally stated competencies, evidence of competency or records pertaining to the same. Development of a 'welcome to agronomy phone app', which contains these elements, as well as links to GRDC reference material is a key recommendation.

Also recommended is ongoing delivery of a suite of crop protection training workshops, targeted to the needs of both junior and senior grains advisers. Options are also discussed where efficiency of training delivery or co-ordination could be improved.

Outcomes

The GRDC provides a number of training workshops for grains advisers on crop protection issues. To inform future investment in this area, an evaluation of adviser needs, efficient delivery mechanisms and options for integration of delivery with projects and industry was conducted. This process scoped the training needs of grains advisers with a focus on crop protection training. Current workshops on offer, as well as future needs, were considered. Processes that ensure quality training outcomes were evaluated and discussed. The scope of current crop protection training on offer to grains advisers by the GRDC was defined. Adviser needs in crop protection training, along with the differing needs of junior versus senior advisers was discussed, as were the pros and cons of differing accreditation and competency-based learning models. Factors contributing to quality learning, which meet the requirements of industry and target audiences, and how this is achieved were identified and discussed. A database of key resource personnel for crop protection training themes was developed. Areas for process improvement were identified and discussed.

The primary benefit is more efficient and targeted delivery of training to grains advisers, leading to more efficient delivery of information required to drive change management, and adoption of new and appropriate technologies in crop protection by growers. This will in turn result in speedier adoption of best management practices by growers and therefore equate to a

faster return on research investment.

Achievements/Benefits

A total of 112 individuals were interviewed as part of this project. Multiple focus groups were conducted, including a specially targeted meeting of the GRDC's National Agribusiness Reference Group (NARG), and a high-end advisers group in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales (NSW). An analysis of multiple groups of individuals was conducted.

Groups targeted for interview included: Previous GRDC-supported training project deliverers; both senior and junior advisers from the retail and fee-for-service consultancy sectors; trainers; educators; multiple universities training agricultural graduates; agricultural students; multiple industry groups such as AgriFood Skills Australia, ChemCert, the Fertiliser Industry Association, CropLife Australia, the National Working Party on Pesticide Application, and others; multiple GRDC staff and panel members; and multiple large corporates, who also have an interest in having advisers well trained.

Information provided included details on key current training processes, areas for improvement, current and future needs, and issues relating to the co-ordination and efficiency of delivery. All outcomes were discussed in the final report delivered on September 30, 2015. The report contained 34 specific recommendations.