Empowering Next Generation Agriculture

Entrepreneurial Discovery Workshop – Report

Summary	A half-day workshop on Empowering Next Generation Agriculture was held on Tuesday 28th May 2024 at the Corryong Community Centre. The workshop was supported using the Quadruple Helix model, with participants ranging in experience and expertise across Community, Business, Government and Research. The aim of this workshop was to define the asset further, and link potential opportunities that will create social and economic benefit within the community. ***A range of opportunities were discussed and the group agreed that Empowering Next Generation Agriculture should progress to Stage 3 – Innovation Working Groups.*** Several farmers were apologies due to competing priorities – sowing crops before the forecasted rain. The importance of effective engagement with this cohort here on in was emphasised.
Key Assets	Agreed with those identified in RCA Innovation Opportunity proposition: • Reliable rainfall, fertile soils and distinct seasonal conditions • Long growing period/season compared to other temperate regions • Projected climate resilience compared to many regions • High-quality beef and dairy production with strong producer base • Significant broadacre cropping with increased seed production potential • Region's isolation ideal for growing crops with high biosecurity risk • Strong agricultural capability • Notable number of next generation farmers returning to the region • Local interest in value add, although not in practice yet • Upper Murray Beef brand registered. Additions from the group include: • Large water catchment, the Murray River (challenge is how to access) - unlocking the water opportunities could create transformative change and a strong thread for a focused project with 'quick win' steps emerged. • Region is attracting generational and non-generational talents, including some not necessarily connected to the land.
Key Challenges	Agreed with the challenges identified in RCA Innovation Opportunity proposition: • The regulatory and planning environment around land and water • Entrepreneurial appetite and constraints on access to capital or

	land • Market access and logistics Additions discussed by the group • Realising the potential and productivity of land that is under-utilised (is poor given the rainfall) • Culture and capacity (mindset, time, capital) for innovation and risk • Access to workers/ worker environment • Increasing number of large farms may support fewer livelihoods and create community leakage **Further discussion points around the regional Assets & Challenges** • No competitive advantage in genetics but is in the seasonal system. - i.e. matching livestock energy demands (calving & lactation) with pasture growth. Opportunity to better leverage this. Only ~ 30% of farmers are spring calving • Water catchment – not an asset until farmers can access? - Is there a way that access regulations can be changed? • How do we capture more of the accessible water (eg. rainfall)? • Larger farms can build capability through employment, but can also reduce employment opportunities, access to land for new farmers and number of families in the community - How to enable the two avenues?
The Innovation Opportunity	**10 Year Vision** Consistency in themes identified across the two break out groups: • Agriculture contributes to community prosperity and the Upper Murray is a preferred place to work and source product (recognised market leader) - Success is not size dependent, smaller land footprints are viable - Attracting people and partnerships to the region • Culture of innovation - Greater openess and responsiveness to new ideas, collaboration and ways of working - A more creative industry – e.g. market knowledge/ finding new markets; early adoption of new tech and practices **Ways to get there** • Higher value production ($ profit/hectare) - potential avenues - Value add / Decommoditise product offer - Diversification of production systems - higher value; smaller footprint, embracing future market needs and demands. e.g. medicinal crops - Production potential of land realised and natural resources/assets sustainably managed • Water is key - maximising access and optimising use. - Good opportunity to leverage DEECA help to address policy

	issue/s • Leading agriculture practices and farming systems; leveraging data-driven decision making • Strong employment practices – safe respectful workplaces with good culture and opportunities. Workers welcomed into the community • Meaningful partnerships (industry, education/training, research, etc.), linking out and bringing in - including but not limited to - leveraging innovation outside the region - linking a seamless education system and lifelong learning - growing connections and awareness outside the region Examples discussed include • Strong relationships with relevant research groups to provide data (CSU or equivalent) – building data-driven decision making • Access to water supply &/or technology to optimise utilisation **Adaptive verses transformative change discussion** Suggested potenital catalysts for transformative change (from low to high scale utilisation of assets) • Showcasing local examples (families in district) of successful transitions • Group/s of safe spaces to support innovation discussions • Producer/production system tours • Partnerships, as above Transformative interventions considered • Is it water? • Is it tech adoption? • Is it upskilling human capacity?
Conclusion / next steps	• Workshop participants confirmed there should be an Innovation Working Group (IWG) based on the current proposition, with 'new entrants' and the water catchment added to assets. • Elevate the opportunity to unlock and leverage the water asset. • Polish the language in the RCA Innovation Opportunity to sharpen the key message and attract involvement of the critical Upper Murray people. Develop an engagement plan to assist this. • IWG participants needed from outside the Upper Murray include: Prof David Lamb (Food Agility; CSU Global Digital Farm), AgVic, Riverina Plains, Holbrook Landcare CEO, Goulburn Murray Water • Understanding and unlocking greater water access has the highest potential for transformative change and impact in the Upper Murray and this would be the initial focus for the IWG.