Empowering Next Generation Agriculture

Innovation Working Group (Ag IWG)

How we got here –
A summary of IUM Stages so far, as relate to agriculture

Stage 1: Regional Context Analysis (RCA)

Identified 'Empowering Next Generation Agriculture' a potential innovation opportunity (1 of 5):

Proposition

Empower the next generation Upper Murray producers to develop and lead future facing agriculture production systems that leverage the region's distinct seasonal growing conditions, drought resilience, and future market opportunities, giving the region a competitive advantage in a climate impacted world.

With the energy, appetite and technology drive of the next generation producers, the region is well placed to develop its inherent and natural competitive advantage to meet current and future market demands and opportunities.

This may involve a portfolio of activities that considers the following as a starting point:

- How to leverage data and data-driven decision making, technologies and modern practices to improve productivity, sustainability and overall producer/regional market competitiveness.
- Innovative ways to support value add within the existing agriculture sectors and leverage the region's provenance story.
- How to leverage the region's isolation and suitability to growing seed crops, seed potatoes, industrial hemp and/or medicinal cannabis.
- Developing opportunities for agricultural activities and production systems that generate higher returns per hectare to enable viable incomes from a smaller land footprint

Stage 2: Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP)

Endorsed progression of 'Empowering Next Generation Agriculture' to an Innovation Working Group (Ag IWG) for further exploration. The EDP Workshop discussed & outlined:

10 Year Vision

- Agriculture contributes to community prosperity & the Upper Murray is a preferred place to work, partner and source product (recognised market leader)
  - Success is not size dependent, smaller land footprints are viable
  - Attracting & retaining people and partnerships to the region
- Culture of innovation
  - Greater openness 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

- Leading agriculture practices and farming systems; leveraging data & data-driven decision making
- Higher value production ($ profit/hectare)- potential avenues may be
  - Value add / de-commoditise product offer
  - Diversification of production systems - higher value; smaller footprint, embracing future market needs and demands.
  - Production potential of land realised and natural resources/assets sustainably managed

- Water is key - Maximising access and optimising use.
- Strong employment practices – safe respectful workplaces with good culture and opportunities.
- 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

Recommended

Initial focus for the Ag IWG be

- Understanding the potential to unlock greater water access in the region; and
- Engaging next/younger generation in exploring how to leverage data and data-driven decision making, technologies and modern practices to improve productivity, sustainability and overall producer/regional market competitiveness (*shortened & referred to as 'data-driven*)

Stage 3: Innovation Working Group (Ag IWG)

Where we are currently!

We would like to involve as many as possible, encouraging all producers and stakeholders to engage and contribute

Session 1 (13th August)

The first session (Ag IWG-1) on Aug 13th agreed

- Need for foundational work, such as a water audit, to position the community to understand what it has and if there are realistic options to pursue greater water access
    - This scoping is being explored & IWG will be kept informed
- IWG continue to explore – understand and refine – opportunity for a 'data driven' agriculture project
    - September: 1:1 interviews with 11 Upper Murray farmers to better understand their systems, challenges & opportunities
    - Early Oct: Online survey open to all UM farmers/producers to expand on above

Session 2 (14th October)- TODAY!

This (Ag IWG-2) workshop will build on the first Ag IWG, the farmer interviews and online survey to

- Test and refine the foundation for a project based on farmer involvement and partnership opportunities to benefit Upper Murray farmer productivity, prosperity and regional competitiveness.
    - Share – insights and learnings from the 1:1 farmer interviews
    - Brainstorm –
        - How can we do better with what we've got?
        - What opportunities would bring real value to the Upper Murray?
        - What may a regional project / initiative look like?
- Agree Next steps