New Rural Industries 1998 'Advancing Innovation' First National Conference

Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia

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New Rural Industries 1998
‘Advancing Innovation’
FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Perth, Western Australia
October 18-21 1998
at the Duxton Hotel

Conference Review
and Executive Summary
The conference evaluation survey and verbal feedback have confirmed that the conference exceeded delegate’s expectations and delivered its objective. That objective was to provide a forum that took an “across the board” stocktake of approaches to new industry development, challenged conventional wisdom, built networks and identified directions to increase Australia’s performance in new rural industry development. A dominant issue from the delegate’s survey and feedback was recognition of the need to adopt a national approach to new industry development, which is market focussed.

The following provides the delegates views on the conference:

**What stood out from the Conference**
- The innovative structure of the Conference and the ability of attendees to directly participate.
- The positive approach of the attendees and their desire to help build new industries.
- The high quality of the speakers and their presentation which provided continual stimulation.
- The understanding that innovation and market focus are both vital components of new industry development
- There is a depth of experience and support around Australia willing to contribute to new industry development.
- A national approach is needed, **NOW**. It is both inefficient and dangerous for state and regional support structures to either duplicate or compete with each other.

**Key Messages**
- A national collaborative approach to new industry development is needed.
- Customer focus is of critical importance: “know your market and what it wants to buy”.
- Effective partnerships are vital throughout the supply chain, incorporating voluntary practices of information sharing.
- An innovative culture is needs to be encouraged and supported within industries and government agencies.
- R&D needs to be commercially focused.
- New industries are all about new thinking in agriculture.
- Many people see new industries as regional and community development through enterprise development at the community level. New industry development may need to be more about a real appreciation of development of markets, clear differentiation of product, the concept of product branding, and industry growth "across regions".
- Use the current ‘leadership’ role of Agriculture Western Australia in New Rural Industry development to act as a catalyst for further development.
Some Comments......

"... Congratulations for taking the risk with a process orientated event, it paid off ..."

"... The best Conference I've been to, due to quality information and new information ...

"... The focus on process and lessons was very useful ...

"... All in all a relaxed atmosphere and with very informative speakers ...

"... Best speakers were John Jones, Promar International and Hetta Mollema, 3M; an
inspirational two days with a lot of information to take home and ponder ...

"... Would like to thank Monty House and Agriculture Western Australia for their
initiative in hosting the first national conference. I can only imagine these conferences
will become increasingly productive ...

"... The outcomes will improve as people reflect more on the information discussed...."

"... Congratulations on a job well done and getting the ball rolling..."
Section 1: History, Trends and Scenarios

New industry development is not an option but an imperative: Stewart Key.
Outlined challenges for the Australian agriculture sector. Presented options for enhancing the agriculture sector by looking to other industries’ characteristics and trends.

Overseas perspective of why new industry development is not an option but an imperative: John Jones.
Reviewed trends and scenarios for agricultural development worldwide, discussed the challenges for Australia, international perceptions of Australia and the opportunities for new agricultural industries.

Futures for new industries: Mike Stephens.
Presented a personal view of the future for the Australian agriculture sector.

Scenario plan for new industries: Professor Jo Barker.
Outlined four options for new rural industries in Australia. Discussed scenario planning methodology and how the information gathered can be incorporated in planning for the future for new rural industries in Australia.

New generations and new industries for rural revitalisation: Muresk, Orange and Gatton Colleges.
Presented the next generation’s perspective of new rural industry development and discussed their opportunities to add value to new industry development.

Key ideas
- The world in which we live and compete is changing; current ways will not sustain a competitive advantage into the future.
- New rural industry development can bring both economic and social benefits with strong economic multipliers.
- We need to bear in mind that benefits of industry development can flow more widely than to producers alone, i.e. to other stakeholders in the supply chain, to whole rural communities, and thereby through the whole economy.
- Australia has a range of natural advantages that lead us to a vigorous involvement in new rural industry development - we have good natural resources, a good image and good ‘brainpower’.
- There are more creative ways to envision a likely future for new rural industries than we have traditionally used.
- There is a pool of well qualified young people with potential to bring fresh thinking to new rural industry development.
- We need a holistic approach to food production to encompass management, production, marketing, value adding and consumer needs.
- Australia can capitalise on its resources of land, water, climate and expertise to develop as a “food bowl”. New industry development would play an integral role in this.
- There are many economic and sustainability issues confronting the future of agricultural industries—this presents an opportunities for new industries.

Key impressions
- It was an appropriate way to start off such a conference because it was thought provoking, current and widely focused.
- Governments need to invest more in new industry support programs.

Issues, challenges and implications for new rural industry development
- Present bonafide, well managed and documented new industry opportunities to commercial organisations and investors etc for funding.
- Capture and develop the ‘Australian’ brand for use with new rural industries.
- Start now to implement process changes and capture the advantage from Australian initiatives.
- We need to ensure we create whole community involvement in, and ownership of, new rural industry development.
- Encourage government at all levels to focus on the strategic importance of new rural industry development.
- Think outside the box we are currently in.
Section 2: Current Approaches to New Rural Industry Development

Debate: The best avenue for new industry development is driven by market pull as opposed to being driven by innovation
   Members of the Western Australia rural leadership program conducted an informative and entertaining debate on whether new rural industry development is driven by innovation or market pull.

Overseas new industry development: Study tour report: Dr Meg Howe
   Findings from the ‘New Industries Fellowship’ study tour to New Zealand were outlined.

Cocoa case study: Nick Richards
   Presented an overview of activities recently commenced with cocoa across the top end of Australia and how State government agencies and industry is working together to explore the possibilities presented.

Aquaculture case study: Jasper Trendall
   Outlined the development of aquaculture in Western Australia. Presented the long term challenges for the industry and discussed likely future scenarios for development.

Allocating resources: Rob Fletcher
   Presented a methodology for allocating resources to new industries development, particularly in regard to selection processes and support structures.

Strategic intervention case study: Ray Collins
   Provided a case study on industry development from the Persimmon industry. Outlined the approach in shifting the from a low value domestic industry to a high value, quality assured export industry.

Key ideas
- Active support from the local community in which an industry is being established is important in terms of organisational and project scale advantages.
- Empowerment of new industry groups has to be balanced with the level of intervention required to maximise their effectiveness.
- Particular personality characteristics are required for new industry development group members.
- A whole of chain approach is a key success factor in the establishment of new rural industries. It is particularly important for producers to visit their markets and understand consumer driven specifications, competition, out turn issues – ie active learning.
- The establishment of new rural industries is generally a long term project requiring dedicated continual effort by producers and the facilitators.

Key impressions
- Need a flexibility of approach to new industry development.
- Matching opportunities with capabilities occurs through effective team work between trade development and regional marketing officers, producers, processors and exporters.

Issues, challenges and implications for new rural industry development
- Do we support regional development or market driven approaches? They can be conflicting approaches to industry development.
- A major impediment to the establishment of a more dynamic rural sector is the lack of understanding of each participant’s role in the agribusiness chain.
- Shifting our heavily reliance on the export of minimally processed commodities to high value products for which price premiums may be achieved.
- All members of the value adding chain must work together to ensure a viable long term industry.
- In a global environment successful rural industries must continually improve market performance to remain viable. The need for the cost of production to be competitive is the major thrust.
- Recognise that with a small Australia domestic market new industry development must be export focused to enable substantial growth to occur.
Section 3: Lessons from Agriculture and Beyond

Developing innovation: Hetta Mollema
Described how 3M maintains a corporate philosophy and culture of innovation through which they have established market leadership in new product development.

Critical success factors and strategic issues in new agricultural enterprise: David McKinna
Identified and discussed the critical success factors and strategic issues which affect the performance of new agricultural enterprises.

Rural development on the Atherton Tablelands; Change, Choices and Challenges: Terry Cambell
Described the activities occurring in the Atherton Tablelands and the support process used to move from a region heavily dependent on tobacco to other industries.

Riverlink: Leading horticulture industry development in the Sunraysia-Riverland: Denise Millar
Outlined a joint project between multiple levels of government and the community, performing a major role in the horticultural development of the Sunraysia-Riverland region.

Key ideas
- There is a need for the nurturing and retention of knowledge and financial support of innovation.
- Branding and market protection strategies are vital.
- We need to free up employment systems to create an atmosphere whereby individuals work in a climate that enables innovators the freedom to “advocate, embark, pioneer and champion an idea”.
- No matter how little you produce of a product you need an infrastructure and market development, but until you have critical mass no one will be interested in investing in support and processing mechanisms.
- There is a need for government to provide a flexible framework of support for new industry development.
- Industry organisation and unity are essential in achieving and sustaining new markets and industries.

Key Impressions
- Good ideas to be allowed to arise and be developed.
- How do you attract funding for infrastructure, processing facilities and marketing development, when you don’t have enough product to work on?
- How do you encourage people to invest in industry when processing and marketing infrastructure and systems do not exist? This issue was highlighted to be a major constraint to new industry development.
- Industries need to be prepared to invest in new industries to ensure continued growth into the future.
- Strategic alliances with organisations distributing complementary, but non competitive, products can be valuable.

Issues, challenges and implications for new rural industry development
- The section challenged all involved with Australian agriculture to move from the comfort zone of commodity orientated agriculture.
- The 3M example illustrates that if you don’t pursue and react to consumer tastes you are at risk of losing your markets.
- There is a need for rural industries to invest in new industry/product development requiring strategic alliances in the developmental stages.
- Producers and value chain players must discard the existing paradigm that global markets want what we produce here and that the world will always beat a path to our door for our rural produce.
- Competitive advantage has been eroded in rural industries, in many regions of Australia. For Australian producers to maintain an effective presence they will need to become globally competitive in production and marketing of both new and traditional agricultural products.
- Collaboration is the way forward to achieve strength in numbers, lobbying power and market effectiveness.
- The 3M example highlights the need to create real mechanisms to drive, culture and support innovative thinking and action throughout organisations.
Section 4: New ways forward

Australia’s expert view on how to accelerate New Industry Development - Delphi report: Gibson Associates

Presented an expert and contemporary view on the best processes to accelerate new industry development in Australia.

Issues workshops: Agriculture Western Australia’s Extension Services Group

The workshops provided participants with the opportunity to build on issues raised during the conference to develop future directions for new industry development in Australia.

Hypothetical; New Industries Realities: Mike Stephens

Advanced ideas raised during the conference to expose the realities of new industry development and test and highlight how effectively Australia currently supports new industry development.

Key Ideas

• Supply chain management will be important into the future - we need to develop mechanisms to make these work through brokering, vertical integration and partnerships.
• Australia needs to invest in better business management skills.
• The delphi report was valuable in capturing the real state of play and identifying Australia weaknesses and opportunities so as to paint a picture of the future.
• There has been poor linking of research to the markets.
• Two schools of thought emerged from the issues workshop. One being that of a national/global agribusiness development approach, largely dependent on traditional top down or patriarchal approaches where new industry development was stimulated and guided by researchers. The second encompassed a community development approach, wherein innovation was stimulated by rural crises situations and a more localised focus was adopted to provide opportunity, and foster environments for change at local and regional levels.
• We need to support champions and teachers, apply mentoring, and showcase success.
• There is a need to increase R&D tax incentives for export focused products.
• R&D should be more commercially focused than at present.
• No matter how good the advice is, if the drive, passion, and skill are not present then innovation will not happen.

Key Impressions

• Delphi panel members generally had similar views. We appear to be thinking the same way around new industry development.
• There can be too much dependence on government grants and finance.
• More education/information is needed to make the finance sector more aware of the potential benefits that can result.
• The way forward is not yet clearer determined, we need significantly more work on the processes for new industry development in the future.

Issues, challenges and implications for new rural industry development

• A culture of openness, trust and mutual co-operation must be fostered between participants.
• Further development of supply chain management and marketing strategies for existing industries will provide a framework for new industries to realise export potential.
• Focus on the consumer before the technology – a lesson yet to be better understood and accepted.
• Develop a communication strategy to increase awareness of federal, start-up, R&D and extension programs.
• Within the process of new industry development we can focus on new industry development or regional development. Both areas have substantial implications for the way that we do things and there can be conflict between the approaches to each.
• There is a need to reduce bureaucracy and create ‘one stop’ shops.
• Adopt a national approach to new industry development in Australia.
• Action the key finding from this conference to influence policy makers towards better resource allocation to new industry development.
Section 5: Recommendations, actions and alliances

Summit: Future Directions
This workshop was developed to draw from a nationally representative group of 35 new industry proponents to determine actions and directions to accelerate the development of new agricultural industries in Australia.

The following provides an outline of issues and concepts raised during this summit. Further definition of the outcomes of the summit will be brought together in a discussion paper “Options for a national integrated new industries and product development strategy for Australian Agribusiness”. This will be presented for consideration by the Prime Minister’s Supermarket to Asia Council and other key government and industry groups.

Key Objectives
• Identify options for consideration on how industry and government can work together to accelerate and improve Australia’s performance in the development of new agricultural related industries and products.
• Assess the level of government and industry support for the development of a national new industries strategy and options for the development of an action plan that could form the basis of such a strategy.

Major Issues – Development of Sustainable and Competitive New Industries.
• Need to improve our ability to capture, value and manage knowledge.
• Require a change to a business (and market) culture with less focus on production.
• Infrastructure required to support innovation.
• Need to ensure we match resources to opportunities.
• There is currently inadequate access to capital for new innovative industries.
• There is currently no widely shared vision, attitude and understanding about new thinking, new industries or new products.

Key Challenges
• Breaking down the barriers (States, regulation, speed of change).
• Establishing supply chain competence.
• Accepting the need for new industries (and resources).
• Nurture tall poppies - role models.
• Cultural issues – develop strengths and overcome negatives.
• Globalisation- understanding your competitive position.
• Remoteness and scale – need for critical mass and developing systems to manage remoteness.
• Capitalisation – develop attractive investment proposals.
• Getting Australians to work together (State to state, region to region, state to federal).
• Changing traditional mindsets against entry to, and adoption of, new industries.
• Achieving whole of chain thinking and action.
• Risk aversion.
• Poor co-operation.
• Failure to accept globalisation.
• Closing the gap between providers of information, and commerce.
New Rural Industries National Conference in Perth

New Industries Conference a success

Peter Walmsley, communications and marketing officer, New Industries Program

The New Industries Program recently hosted the First National New Rural Industries Conference at the Duxton Hotel in Perth. The conference included outstanding speakers and delegates.

NZ rationalism helps bolster new industries

By Ryan McKinlay

Commercialisation ‘the main hurdle’

Many new industries, plagued by a boom and bust scenario, face significant hurdles. The key to success is effective commercialisation and quality assurance.

Theresa david mckinna, the agency, said: “Almost invariably, new agricultural enterprises fail because of their inability to effectively address these critical success factors.”

He told delegates that commercialisation is the key to success. “If we had effective market development, enterprises would be more successful,” he said.

The conference highlighted the importance of effective market development. “There is no doubt in my mind that enterprises would struggle if they had to rely on speculative stage,” McKinna said. He told delegates that less than supported 30,000 people.

The conference also addressed issues of sustainability and quality assurance. “Almost invariably, new agricultural enterprises fail because of their inability to effectively address these critical success factors,” said McKinna. He urged organisations to focus on sustainable practices and quality assurance.
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