

The Fresh Approach - Atherton Tablelands Information Paper

Introduction

Queensland's primary industries sector is changing. World-wide food shortages, rising food and fuel prices, climate change, skill shortages and increasing biosecurity threats are issues at the forefront of modern agribusiness.

To meet these challenges and capitalise on the opportunities, the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Honourable Tim Mulherin MP has announced a fresh approach to growing Queensland's primary industries. The fresh approach initiative refocuses the way DPI&F works to achieve the vision of a \$34 billion industry by 2020 – almost three times today's value.

Background

DPI&F's fresh approach is based around three pillars:

1. building skills for our future
2. delivering innovative research partnerships to grow investment
3. networking and modernising services

This 'fresh approach' to accelerate growth involves:

- partnering with schools, the Australian Agricultural College Corporation (AACC) and universities to create and market rewarding and attractive career paths
- progressing the national research, development and extension framework through 'centres of excellence'
- establishing agribusiness smart service centres and mobile services

DPI&F recently engaged JTA Australia to review its service delivery, with emphasis to:

- identify and profile DPI&F clients
- examine current client communication channels and consider efficient alternatives
- review clients' needs and satisfaction levels
- consider means of identifying and attracting new clients
- examine the role of technology in service delivery
- review the marketing of DPI&F services

The recurrent and key message that was given to us by our stakeholders is there needs to be a fundamental change in the way DPI&F does business. The fresh approach will begin to implement change so that we:

- better address our client needs
- transition our services to be more modern and 'client-centric'
- ensure the delivery of services is complimentary and more integrated

- balance client expectations by providing an appropriate blend of direct and indirect service
- communicate more effectively DPI&F direction, focus and intentions so that client's have a better understanding of what they can expect now and in the future.

Fresh Approach in Action

There have been a number of announcements regarding the implementation of the Fresh Approach initiative:

- As of 1 July 2008, the AACC administrative responsibility was transferred from the Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA) to DPI&F. The intent is to leverage the AACC campuses to upgrade skills across the sector and to promote the agriculture sector as a first choice career option for young Queenslanders.
- DPI&F has signed a 'Statement of Intent' with Professor Sandra Harding, Vice Chancellor at James Cook University to establish a tropical science collaboration with DPI&F. This collaboration will provide the basis for a new centre of excellence in R&D in north Queensland, focussing on tropical agriculture, aquaculture and biosecurity.
- The mobile office was launched which will engage clients throughout Queensland providing DPI&F services and products to producers in rural and remote areas.

Fresh Approach on the Tablelands

In a speech to a Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) forum in Townsville on 24 June 2008, the Minister announced his vision for the Atherton Tablelands. Central to plans is to have one purpose built facility on the Tablelands, which capitalises on the uniqueness of the Tablelands and its potential for economic growth and potential opportunities such as molecular bio-pharming, value added food products and tropical products.

The facility would consolidate the research stations at Kairi, Walkamin and Southedge, along with the AACC's Mareeba campus. To this end, the Minister has committed to an independent review to assess a location for a purpose built facility and its functionality. This review will include detailed consultation with staff, industry and the community. As the Minister stated in his address to CEDA, the facility on the Tablelands could be at a new or one of the above existing sites.

Tablelands Independent Review

An independent consultancy team has been appointed to lead consultation on the Tablelands. The team comprises of Dr David Watson, Mr John Herbert and Dr Anthony Pressland.

The appointment of these three consultants was based on their extensive experience across a broad range of sectors and their leadership and strategic management credentials.

The trio will use consultation outcomes to provide recommendations on the location and nature of a Tablelands facility by the end of September 2008.

The consultation period will formally commence with briefings in Brisbane on 18 August 2008 before an initial visit to the Tablelands from 22-25 August 2008 to engage staff, industry and other key stakeholders.

The consultancy team will visit the Tablelands a number of times to understand the issues and opportunities and present a final recommendation of a fit for purpose facility on the Tablelands.