Performance through collaboration

RESEARCH FINDINGS FACTSHEET

BUILDING FARMER LED INNOVATION

KEY POINTS

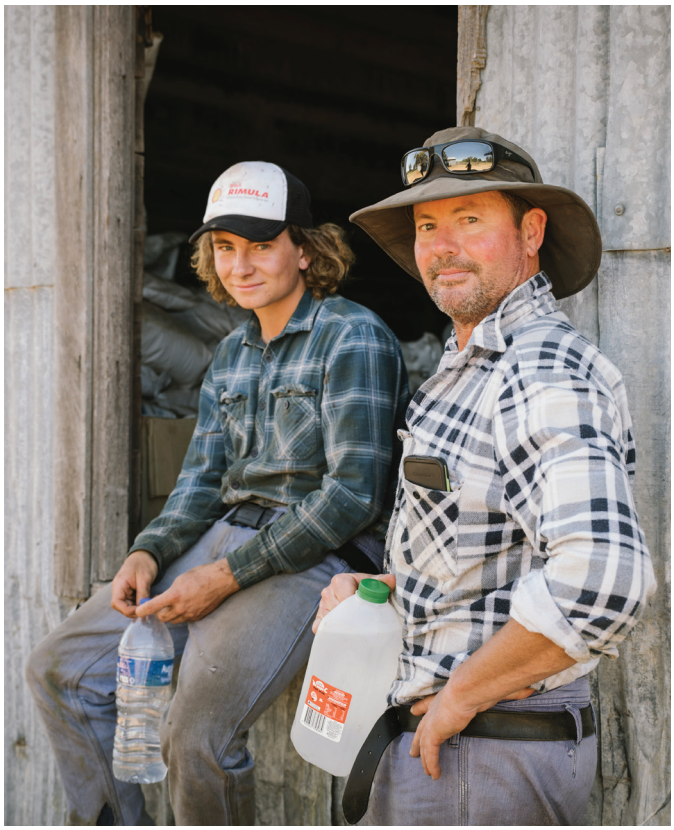
- Innovation systems, capability and culture were the subject of activities in five Soil CRC farmer groups to help address some traditional barriers to adoption of new soil management technologies.
- Placing farmers at the lead of the innovation process will improve results.
- An innovation partnership program approach was implemented, refined and adapted to inform phase two of a longer-term program to build farmer group innovation systems capability and culture.

OUR RESEARCH

The project used a participatory approach, adapted from a partnership model previously applied by others working with large commercially oriented agribusinesses. The aim was to build farmers, and farmer groups innovation systems, capability and culture to improve innovation, development and uptake of new soil management technologies and practices and address traditional barriers to farmer adoption.

The project supported five innovation managers, one from each farmer group, in a part time capacity to review, design and document an innovation strategy for their farmer group. The strategies developed and imbedded an innovation system and capability within the farmer groups and simultaneously began to develop or improve the organisational culture and capability required for continuous innovation.

The innovation managers were considered a 'cohort' for the purposes of peer to peer support, and received formal and experiential training in innovation and entrepreneurialism.



RESEARCH FINDINGS OUTCOMES

Each of the five farmer groups had systems and processes generally reflective of an innovation system from 'ideation' through to 'commercialisation and adoption'. However, in four out of five farmer groups, ideation phase activities involving farmers were limited, to non-existent. This means that there were little, if any activities within these farmer groups where new ideas could be discussed and analysed.

Organisational culture conducive to innovation is built up over time, as a result of taking risks and investing in an environment of uncertainty and change. Longer term approaches to supporting farmer group led innovation systems may be required to enable this development.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

Resourcing ideation activities that engage farmers, could be used to promote greater farmer-led innovation.

Building a culture of innovation in an organisation requires a long term perspective and commitment to enable repeated cycles of risk and investment in areas of uncertainty.

By understanding where the limits lie, organisations can build up those areas.

NEXT STEPS

This research is being expanded to more farmer groups in the Soil CRC through the project **Building Innovation Capability: Phase Two.** The project will build the partnership program, continue refining and adapting the model to establish famers as the drivers of innovations intended to improve their farming practices, with a focus on improving soil performance and farm productivity and profitability.

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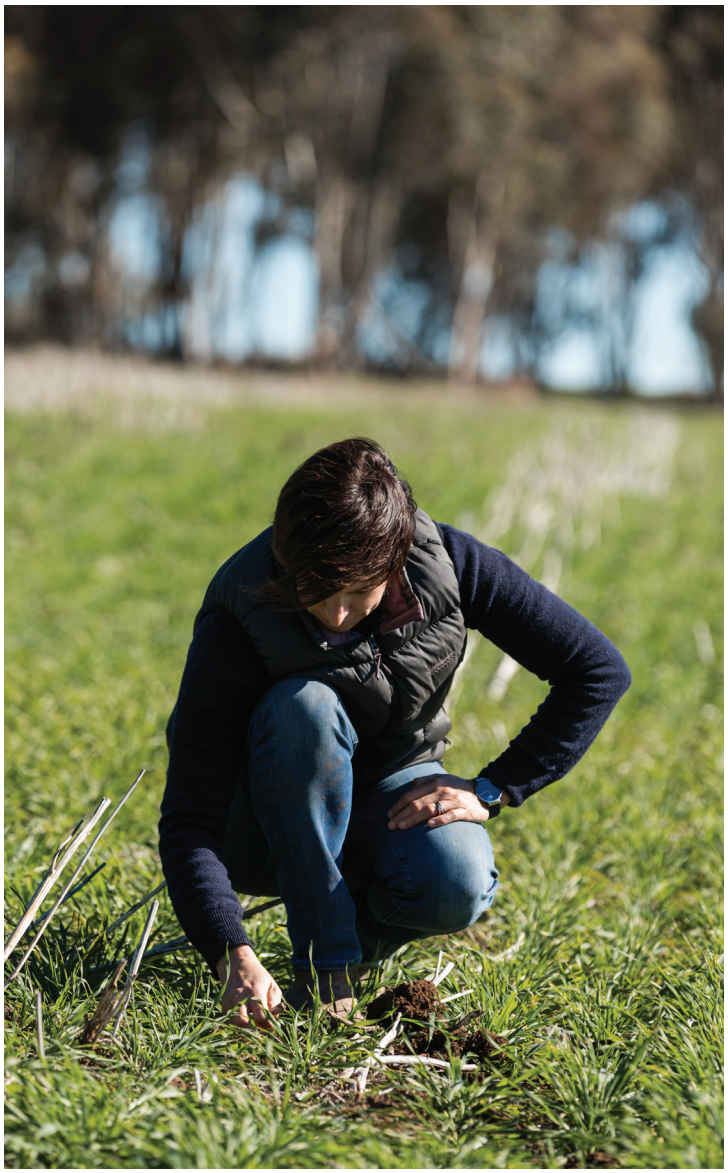

The CRC for High Performance Soils (Soil CRC) is bringing together scientists, industry and farmers to find practical solutions for Australia's underperforming soils. The CRC aims to enable farmers to increase their productivity and profitability by providing them with knowledge and tools to improve the performance of their soils. The Soil CRC is the largest collaborative soil research effort in Australia's history. The Australian Government and the CRC's 40 participants collectively contribute $167 million to the Soil CRC through both cash and in-kind contributions. The Soil CRC has funding until 2027.