INNOVATIVE HUMAN RESOURCES AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES – AGRIFUTURES AUSTRALIA

■ FAST FACTS

- AgriFutures Australia is a public/private partnership, supporting the next generation of leaders that will drive the future prosperity of Australian rural industries and communities through its AgriFutures™ Horizon Scholarship.

- AgriFutures Australia recognises women's leadership in agriculture through the AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Awards.

■ SUMMARY

- The supply of people into agricultural careers is not keeping up with the demand created by an ageing workforce. The median age of farmers and farm managers in Australia is 54 (2016). Most categories of agricultural occupations are undersupplied. Action is required now to ensure the future of the sector.

- Human capacity drives improvements in competitiveness through the adoption of research and development outcomes and innovation. With the explosion of new digital technologies, agriculture needs more highly skilled people from a range of academic, technical and practical backgrounds.

- To address these challenges, AgriFutures Australia invests in research and development for a more sustainable, productive and profitable rural sector and further understanding of national rural issues.

- AgriFutures Australia collaborates with the private sector, Australian Government, research and development corporations and not-for-profit organisations, highlighting to young people the opportunities a career in agriculture has to offer.

- The AgriFutures™ Horizon Scholarship program is aimed at students who have been identified as potential future leaders in agriculture and are studying an agriculture-related degree. The program gives students financial support for their study, professional development workshops, annual industry work placements, aligned with the scholar's areas of interest and their sponsor's industry, and opportunities to network and gain knowledge at a range of industry events. In 2018, the scholarship program supported 51 students.

- AgriFutures Australia also runs the AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Award. The award recognises the talent, leadership, essential role and achievements of women in agriculture and rural enterprise.

- The awards provide rural women with opportunities to develop their skills, resources and networks to benefit their industries and communities and help turn their visions into reality.

- This includes through financial assistance, professional development, mentoring and alumni networks.

CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE SDGs – AUSTRALIA'S COMMITMENT TO REDUCING FOOD WASTE

■ FAST FACTS

- Australia is working to reduce our food waste by 50 per cent by 2030 along the food value chain. Reducing food waste improves productivity and profitability of the sector while contributing towards Sustainable Development Goal 12 – Responsible consumption and production. Australia does this through collective action by governments, private sector, research organisations and civil society under the National Food Waste Strategy.

■ SUMMARY

- 3.6 million Australians experience food insecurity each year.

- At the same time, food loss and waste is estimated to cost the Australian economy $20 billion annually.

- The complexities of dealing with food waste needed an integrated approach to rethink how food waste can be prevented or used for other purposes.

- The Australian Government, in consultation with industry, civil society, academia and all tiers of government, developed the National Food Waste Strategy 2017 to support collective action towards addressing food waste. The strategy aims to halve Australia's food waste by 2030. It contributes towards global action on reducing food waste by aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 12 – Responsible consumption and production.

- The Australian Government, in conjunction with industry, invests in research to provide an evidence-base for the adoption of new approaches and technologies to address food waste. For example:

  - ► The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) is developing efficient processing, preservation and sensor technologies that are safe, sustainable and economically attractive to various players in the supply chain to convert edible food loss to healthy and nutritious food.

  - ► The Fight Food Waste Cooperative Research Centre aims to tackle the problem of food waste. They're doing this by reducing food waste throughout the supply chain, transforming unavoidable waste into innovative high-value co-products, and engaging with industry and consumers to deliver behavioural change.

- Industry and business play a crucial role in fostering leadership in setting voluntary industry standards on food labelling and cold chain efficiencies. They also partner with food rescue organisations to donate food that would otherwise be wasted. Food rescue organisations such as Foodbank and OzHarvest help reduce wasted food that is suitable for human consumption. Foodbank is Australia's largest food relief organisation. In 2017, Foodbank provided over 67 million meals through over 2600 charities and in 1750 schools.
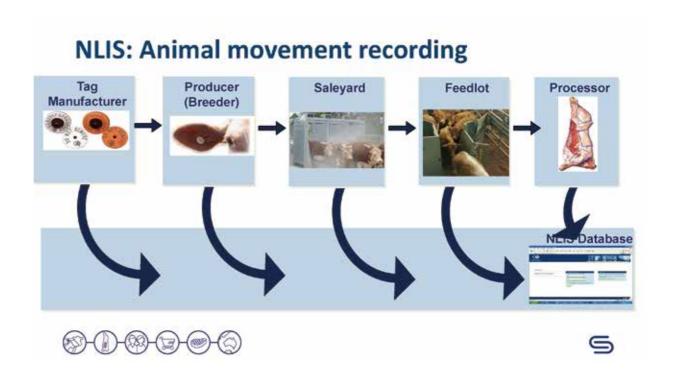
FOOD VALUE CHAINS
– NATIONAL LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

■ FAST FACTS

- The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) is Australia's platform for the identification and traceability of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. The system showcases Australia's innovative technology in the red meat sector's food value chain. It demonstrates our strong traceability and biosecurity systems that underpin market access for Australian red meat domestically and globally. It maintains the confidence of Australian meat products to consumers and also benefits farmers in improving herd management.

- The NLIS is one part of Australia's integrity systems which also includes the Livestock Production Assurance program (LPA) which is the on-farm quality assurance program supporting food safety, biosecurity and animal welfare best practice. The other element is the National Vendor Declaration (NVD) system which is the record of animal treatments required to be supplied with the sale of livestock.
See https://www.mla.com.au/meat-safety-and-traceability/red-meat-integrity-system/ for more information.

■ SUMMARY

- Australia has a strong reputation for exporting safe meat products that meet importing country requirements and domestic supply requirements. Traceability systems underpin Australia's reputation for delivering high quality, clean, green and safe food.

- Consumers and trading partners continue to want to know more about the products they buy. This includes information about food safety, animal disease status, provenance, authenticity, sustainability and animal welfare.

- To meet these consumer-driven standards, the red meat industry worked with the Australian Government to implement the NLIS. The NLIS provides a national platform for the identification and traceability of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs through the supply chain from birth to slaughter or export.

- The NLIS is ISO 9001 certified and underpinned by Australian state and territory legislation and regulations. It reflects Australia's commitment to market access requirements around food safety, traceability, biosecurity, and animal welfare and provides a competitive advantage in the global market. The system also maintains the confidence of consumers (both domestic and overseas) in the safety and quality of Australian meat products.

- The NLIS combines three elements: a visual or electronic ear tag, a property identification code (PIC) for identifying a physical location and an online database to store and access the data relevant to animal movements and related details.

- All animal movements along the supply chain are recorded centrally on the NLIS Database. This means animals can be identified quickly and allows the property of birth and residence to be easily located and contained if there were ever a food safety issue or exotic disease outbreak.

- The NLIS also provides opportunities for producers to improve the management and profitability of their livestock. The system has the ability to provide carcase feedback, accurate identification and storage of individual animal performance, animal weight and health records.

NLIS: Animal movement recording