

Communiqué

Agricultural Biotechnology Council of Australia

6 December 2012

New National Body Meets for the First Time

A new and significant era for Australian agriculture commenced today with the inaugural meeting of the Agricultural Biotechnology Council of Australia (ABCA).

The Council has been established as a national coordinating organisation for the Australian agricultural biotechnology sector, to encourage informed debate on biotechnology through the provision of credible, balanced, science-based information.

The calibre of the Council co-patrons is testament to significance and importance of the Council. The Hon. John Anderson AO, former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, brings with him a career working in agriculture, politics and national leadership. Professor Adrienne Clarke AC, is a former Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, former Chairman of CSIRO and is recognised as a leader within the Australian biotechnology industry. The two co-patrons are ideally suited to bring leadership in both agriculture and biotechnology on this milestone occasion.

Specific issues considered by the Council at its inaugural meeting on 6 December 2012 are detailed below.

Vision, Mission and Objectives of the Council

The Council agreed to the following Vision, Mission and Objectives:

ABCA's **vision** is that the current and potential benefits of agricultural biotechnology are fully recognised to ensure that the Australian farming sector can access and adopt this technology for the benefit of national and global food security, the nation's farming sector, and the environment, thus helping to deliver a more sustainable and prosperous future for Australian agriculture.

ABCA's **mission** is to ensure that public awareness, public policy and the regulatory environment is guided by scientifically credible and factually correct information regarding the full benefits that agricultural biotechnology offers to Australian farming as the world's farming sector seeks to double production to meet the food and nutritional requirements of the growing global population. ABCA's mission is guided by this global food security challenge and the role that Australian agriculture can play in working together to recognise that farmers will need access to the full range of modern innovative tools to maximise the output of our existing farming land while ensuring that the natural environment is protected, conserved and enhanced.

ABCA's **objectives** are to:

- act as a national coordinating group for the Australian agricultural biotechnology sector;
- increase public awareness of, and encourage informed debate about, biotechnology and, specifically, gene technology, and their applications in agriculture;
- provide the public, particularly farmers, with credible, balanced, science-based information on biotechnology, in order to enable them to make informed decisions about the application, uses and future of gene technology in Australia;
- provide information which places biotechnology and gene technology into context, as another tool/option/technology available to Australian agriculture;
- encourage and share research to ensure a better understanding of the benefits that agricultural biotechnology can offer.



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Identification of Challenges and Opportunities for the Australian Agricultural Biotechnology Sector

Council members discussed opportunities and challenges for the Australian agricultural biotechnology sector and agreed the following were of strategic importance:

- Development of an effective, evidence-based communications approach that is focussed on public awareness, public policy and the regulatory environment
- Identifying the value and benefits of the Australian agricultural biotechnology sector
- Supporting coexistence between agricultural production systems in Australia

As Australia develops its National Food Plan and prepares to make the most of the opportunities presented by the Asian Century, it is absolutely key that Australian farmers have access to every available tool and technology. Agricultural biotechnology is one such tool, which presents enormous opportunities, both for the productivity of Australian agriculture and in delivering global food security.

Peak sector organisations present at the inaugural meeting were: Ag Institute of Australia, AusBiotech, Australian Oilseeds Federation, Australian Seed Federation, Cotton Australia, CropLife Australia, Grain Trade Australia, Grains Research and Development Corporation, National Farmers' Federation and Science & Technology Australia.

The next meeting of the Agricultural Biotechnology Council of Australia will be held in March 2013.