

# ABCA Communique

6 February 2024



## Dr Joe Smith | Chair

The Agricultural Biotechnology Council of Australia (ABCA) convened on 6 February at the National Press Club in Canberra. The meeting was an opportunity for the leading farming, agricultural, biotechnology, industry, science organisations and key stakeholders to discuss a range of current and significant issues relating to biotechnology and Australian agriculture.

The challenge of achieving global food and nutritional security is complicated by climate change, marked by hotter and drier growing conditions and an increase in extreme weather events. Innovations afforded by agricultural biotechnology are critical in enabling Australian farmers to meet this momentous challenge. Against this backdrop, the Council highlighted how important it is for regulatory frameworks to keep pace with the many scientific advances being made in agricultural biotechnology so that farmers to have timely access to them.

The meeting received presentations from the three principal Australian government agencies involved with biotechnology regulation: the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR), and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). Members welcomed and discussed updates on key topics such as progress implementing the recommendations of the Third Review of the National Gene Technology Scheme, consultations on gene drive regulation and cost recovery, significant OGTR activities, FSANZ progress on updating its assessment of New Breeding Techniques and international cooperation on risk assessments.

Leading academics, Professors Ian Godwin (University of Queensland) and Rachel Ankeny (University of Adelaide), shared their insights on effectively communicating agricultural biotechnology innovations to the public and key stakeholders to help improve their awareness and acceptance. This sparked a roundtable discussion on the important role the whole sector must play in enhancing public and stakeholder engagement.

The Council reaffirmed its commitment to playing an instrumental role in helping to ensure that public awareness, policy formulation and the regulatory framework are all underpinned by accurate and objective information about the tangible benefits that agricultural biotechnology presents to Australian agriculture and the broader community.

For further details on the council's activities and comprehensive sector insights, we invite you to visit the ABCA website at [www.abca.com.au](http://www.abca.com.au).