

New blueprint to guide SA sheep industry growth

From member, Livestock SA

THE South Australian sheep and wool industry is developing a blueprint designed to drive profitability, innovation and sustainability for the whole industry value chain.

The *SA Sheep Industry Blueprint 2015-2020* is an initiative of Livestock SA and the SA Sheep Advisory Group. It started in February when more than 50 sheep industry stakeholders and decision-makers met at a workshop in Adelaide to scope the plan and identify key areas for the industry's growth and development.

The initial direction and objectives from the scoping workshop have been taken on by a whole-of-industry working group with 15 members and chaired by stud and commercial producer Allan Piggott, Tailem Bend.

Livestock SA and the working group have so far secured \$140,000 in State Government funding and, earlier this month, announced a five-year agreement with the University of Adelaide to develop and implement the blueprint. This includes appointment of a blueprint manager, Dr Stephen Lee, based at Roseworthy campus.

Chair, Mr Alan Piggott says the blueprint will tackle key issues in a range of areas, such as biosecurity, access to capital, feedback to producers, welfare and environmental advocacy, succession planning and industry communication.

"Our vision is for a sheep, wool and lamb industry that is innovative and progressive and is delivering profit and sustainability to all in the value chain. So the blueprint will be big on the collaborative actions and tasks that will lead to outcomes for the next five years," Mr Piggott said.

"Specifically, our goal is to increase productivity and value by 20 per cent by 2020 and through the scoping workshop, we've identified ways to make this happen.

"As a farmer, you plan your day, you plan for your business's future and you plan to prosper. The SA sheep industry should not be any different. We need a plan to grow our industry, to leverage our SA sheep levies by collaborating with other stakeholders and investors and to maintain or gain our share of South Australia's work force.

"We are not alone in planning for our future. The mining and energy industry in South Australia is currently reviewing its plan to 2020. Since each Australian farmer feeds 600 people – 150 at home and 450 overseas – an industry plan communicates to buyers of our products that South Australian farmers are professional and reliable food and fibre producers."

The scoping workshop identified five key objectives for the blueprint to address:

1. Grow the SA sheep industry's production and value from \$1.48 billion in 2015 to \$1.8 billion in 2020 while maintaining international competitiveness.
2. Develop a united value chain workforce plan from 2015 to 2020 that attracts new and energetic people to the industry.
3. Support a 20 percent increase in the engagement of quality consultants and advisers with increased use of business decision-support tools.

4. Act as a conduit for greater research, development and extension collaboration along the value chain at the regional, state and national level and develop a measure of greater adoption and uptake.
5. Develop a proactive and progressive industry communication plan that, through advocacy and champions, gives greater consumer confidence to increase their demand and engage the whole value chain.

Mr Piggott says developing a blueprint will start with the sheep industry plan before progressing to cattle. Consultation on the blueprint's aims and objectives has started, with meetings to be held in Minnipa, Cleve, Burra, Murray Bridge and Lucindale.

"As blueprint manager, Stephen is coordinating the next phase of the blueprint's development, with the working group, which includes state-wide consultation with producers and other industry stakeholders," Mr Piggott said.

"Stephen has extensive experience in applied research, technical extension and private sector work in product development and commercialisation. We are certain his skills will be an asset as the blueprint is developed and implemented."

More information: Stephen Lee, 0421 570 630 and stephen.lee@adelaide.edu.au or visit the website, www.livestocksa.org.au/pages/blueprint.php

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