



MEDIA RELEASE

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Sustainability focus of new joint sheep and wool framework

The Australian sheep sector is taking steps to demonstrate its credentials in sustainable production through development of a whole-of-industry framework.

The Sheep Sustainability Framework will seek to improve transparency and build trust with the Australian community by aligning industry practices and community expectations. It will define sustainable sheep production and track annual performance using a series of indicators.

Sheep Producers Australia and WoolProducers Australia, with support from Meat & Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation, are leading the framework's development.

Industry representatives and stakeholders are being consulted in development of the framework and this week, the project team announced sheep industry consultant, producer and researcher Professor Bruce Allworth will lead the consultation.

SPA Chair Chris Mirams says the framework will help the sheep industry to be proactive and to better understand its opportunities, challenges and impacts in key areas of sustainability.

"Sustainable sheep production is producing lamb, sheepmeat and wool in a way that is both profitable and responsible by caring for our natural resources, animals and people in our industry and broader community," Mr Mirams said.

"This process will enable us to be on the front foot in engaging with people both within and outside our sector and to discuss what is important to them in sustainable production, while also highlighting the great work we are already doing as farmers in producing quality protein and fibre.

"For our customers, consumers, investors and other stakeholders, this is about listening to them and understanding their needs as an integral part of our value chain."

WoolProducers President Ed Storey says the framework will provide the proof behind Australia's reputation as one of the global leaders in sustainable production.

"Our colleagues in the beef, dairy and cotton sectors have developed sustainability frameworks and the new National Farmers Federation 2030 Roadmap for Industry Growth calls for a national framework across agriculture to be implemented by 2025," Mr Storey said.

"We have observed multiple benefits in other sectors, such as protecting market access and enhancing communication with stakeholders, so with the peak industry councils for the sheep and wool industries collaborating in this work, it is exciting to consider what we will achieve together."

As Chair of the Sheep Industry Sustainability Framework, Prof Allworth will drive implementation of the framework and work with a committee who will oversee consultation with external stakeholders to provide wider perspectives from outside the industry.

“The framework takes an industry-wide perspective and works to highlight best practice on-farm while ensuring we deliver what consumers are wanting from us. In our wide-ranging consultation, we will identify the areas in which we perform well as well as those where there might be room for improvement,” Prof Allworth said.

“This is not about individual producers and is not about compliance, it is about the whole industry demonstrating our sustainability credentials. Many businesses throughout the supply chain are operating in ways that are sustainable and best practice, and these activities will be highlighted in the framework.

“Through the consultation, we will identify priority areas, select indicators to measure performance, and provide evidence of a commitment to continuous improvement to customers and consumers.”

Updates will be available from the SPA and WPA websites as work on the framework gets underway.

Biography - Professor Bruce Allworth

Since graduating with a Bachelor of Veterinary Science, Bruce has combined a consultancy career in sheep and beef production, and operating a sheep and cattle property at Holbrook, NSW, with a strong interest in post-graduate education and research. Prof Allworth worked at Massey University (1985) and the Mackinnon Project (1986-1988, Melbourne University), before establishing Allworth Sheep and Cattle Production Services. He completed a PhD in footrot eradication in sheep (1992-1995), and is now Director of the Fred Morley Centre at CSU's School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences.

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For interviews: Chris Mirams, 0409 205 235, and Ed Storey, 0438 309 500.

Photo caption: Pictured at the inaugural meeting of the Sheep Sustainability Framework project team are (from left), SPA Chair Chris Mirams, MLA Manager – Sustainability Strategy and Stakeholders Pip Band, MLA chef Sam Burke, MLA Lamb Brand Manager Anna Sharp, Framework Chair Prof Bruce Allworth and MLA Sustainability Communications Manager Sarah Hyland.