



# BOOSTING AGRICULTURE

## Investing in innovative agriculture

Fresh. Healthy. Sustainable.

Australia is a world leader in agriculture and land management, but our farms are under increasing pressure. The Greens will invest more than \$175 million in research and development, helping farmers put research into action on their farms, to enable our agricultural sector to be more efficient and sustainable.

Australia grows some of the world's best food, and our farms are known around the world for clean, quality produce. But Australian farmers are under increasing pressure from high costs and climate change impacts.

Investment in research and development can help farmers produce more efficiently and sustainably, but the old parties have under-funded Australia's public agricultural research and development. The Greens have a plan to boost investment in sustainable agriculture. This will help farmers, and support our key agricultural industries.

### > INVESTING IN SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

For decades, Australian farmers have grown high quality food across Australia, providing food security within Australia, and export opportunities. One of the reasons Australian farmers have been so successful is innovation, and constant improvement for more productive farming. But the old parties have under-funded Australia's public agricultural research and development, which is crucial to innovation.

It's particularly important that we boost funding for research and development (R&D), to address the broad, cross-sectoral issues our farmers are facing, like climate change and energy and water challenges.

### > FROM THE LAB TO THE FARM

As well as boosting investment in R&D, we have to make sure that new research and techniques are applied to make a real, practical difference for farmers and growers. R&D extension is the process of helping farmers translate new R&D findings and tools on their own farms. Without good extension support, R&D funding can't be translated effectively into more efficient and sustainable farm practices.

### > GREENS' SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

The Greens will increase agricultural research, development and extension funding. This will help make our farming sector more efficient and sustainable, by:

- **Investing \$75 million in additional research and development funding over four years.** Extra funding will boost key research, including through agricultural research and development corporations.
- **Providing \$100 million over four years for the establishment of a new Centre for Sustainable Agriculture.** The Centre for Sustainable Agriculture will focus on cross-sector agriculture issues that affect all farms, such as climate change, or water and energy challenges.
- **A network of 180 agricultural extension officers, costing \$67 million over three years.** From 1 July 2017, a nation-wide network of extension officers will help farmers identify new technology and techniques that can help them farm more efficiently and sustainably.

The Greens have also announced that we **oppose the backpacker's tax**. Reversing this tax will help farmers and growers boost regional farming economies, and assist tourism.

The Greens will also reverse the impact of Coalition cuts to Landcare by **providing an additional \$722 million in Landcare funding** over the forward estimates (2016-17 to 2019-20). Sustainable Landcare projects help farmers and the environment, by making sure that precious environmental and natural resources are protected.

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## > A CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Australia's agricultural research and development occurs through sector specific organisations,<sup>1</sup> but many of the biggest challenges for Australian agriculture impact farms across Australia. Problems like drought and other climate change impacts, biodiversity, carbon, social issues impact are not commodity-specific.<sup>2</sup>

The Greens will provide \$100m from 2016-17 to 2019-20 to establish and staff the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture. This will provide a huge boost to research and development, on key challenges that matter to farmers across Australia.

## > A NATIONAL R&D EXTENSION NETWORK

To have their full impact, research and development needs to have practical application on a farm. Agricultural extension officers work with farmers, helping them to identify which tools and solutions are right for their unique challenges. While governments have cut funding for extension, the Greens will establish a national extension network.

From 1 July 2017, a network of 180 extension officers across Australia will help translate R&D into meaningful change. This will help farmers, and make our agriculture sector more efficient and sustainable.

## > REVERSING THE BACKPACKER'S TAX

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Coalition introduced the 'backpacker's tax'. Under the changes, a much higher tax rate would apply to working holiday makers,<sup>3</sup> many of whom are crucial for farmers during harvest, and other parts of regional Australia.

The change was introduced without consultation, and opposed by farmers across Australia.<sup>4</sup> The Coalition has since

back flipped, and will 'delay' the measure for six months,<sup>5</sup> but that's just an attempt to take the issue off the agenda until after the election.

Simply delaying the tax isn't enough, as it doesn't provide certainty. The tax should be abandoned.

## > BOOSTING LANDCARE FUNDING

The Greens will also offset the impact of Coalition cuts to Landcare. There are more than 4,000 Landcare groups in Australia, and Landcare reaches about 75 per cent of farmers and land managers.<sup>6</sup> Landcare projects make a real difference to farms, waterways, coastal areas, and forests. Providing an **extra \$722 million in funding** over the forward estimates (2016-17 to 2019-20) will provide real support for farmers, to boost sustainable agriculture and natural resource management.

## > REAL FUNDING INCREASES

The Greens have a plan to significantly boost agricultural research and development, and ensure the benefits are available for farmers. The Coalition made cuts to the Cooperative Research Centre Programme and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation in the 2014-15 Budget,<sup>7</sup> and the ALP failed to take an agriculture policy to the last election.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/innovation/research-and-development-corporations-and-companies>

<sup>2</sup> <https://theconversation.com/rethinking-rural-research-in-australia-9048>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201516/Holiday](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201516/Holiday)

<sup>4</sup> <http://ausveg.com.au/media-release/drop-in-backpacker-numbers-threatens-future-of-veg-industry>;  
<http://www.nff.org.au/read/5182/petition-launched-against-proposed-backpackers-tax.html>;

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2016/backpacker-tax-to-be-delayed-in-partial-government-backdown-20160516-gowlkg.html>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.landcareonline.com.au/?page\\_id=1151](http://www.landcareonline.com.au/?page_id=1151)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-13/budget-biosecurity/5449304>; <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-16/rural-womens-cuts/5458150>.

<sup>8</sup>

<http://www.farmonline.com.au/news/agriculture/general/politics/no-ag-policy-for-alp/2669255.aspx>