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Vol 25. No. 1 January 2021 Australian Pork Newspaper PO Box 162 Wynnum 4178 Phone (07) 3286 1833 Email ben@collins.media



2020 Young Agribusiness Leader of the Year Rob Bayley.

Young Agribusiness Leader of the Year

HIGHLY respected leader at a local, state and national level, Rob Bayley is the 2020 Young Agribusiness Leader of the Year, a prestigious category supported by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

At a local level, Rob has encouraged piggeries to collate, analyse and share production and financial data to benchmark their operation.

This initiative forms the objective evidence on which producers can build continuous improvement in their production systems.

At a state level, Rob is a member of the Victorian Farmers Federation Pig Group.

Through his Victorian networks, he provides input on emerging issues for the sector and is an authoritative and trusted channel of communication in mobilising responses on these key issues.

At a national level Rob is a proactive member of the Australian Pork Young Leaders group, developing industry re-

sponses to national issues such as animal welfare, biosecurity and interstate movement of stock during COVID-19 restrictions.

Seven years ago, Rob took over the management of the Blackwood Piggery, established in the 1980s.

Rob has been instrumental in establishing a number of environmental and sustainability focussed initiatives in his Blackwood Piggery operation.

Effluent from the 550-sow piggery is pumped to a 6mL dam and the dam is covered to capture methane, a generator then converts it to electricity.

The plant generates 420MW per year, which powers the site and excess energy is sold back to the grid.

The pork industry has invested in the research of a number of these on-site initiatives and the University of Queensland has assisted in the project planning.

Under Rob's leadership, the Blackwood Piggery has become a key component and platform for this national project.

Other key technologies

pioneered under Rob's leadership include enhanced biosecurity, automated feeding systems, automatic climate control in the farrowing shed and heating systems in the nursery utilising ardent heat from the biogas generator.

Rob has recently completed the Australian Pork Industry Leadership Program curated by Australian Pork Limited.

The course included development of leadership skills, media training and an overseas visit to study piggeries in Denmark, with Rob taking the opportunity to add five days of personal time to visit piggeries in Germany.

These experiences and access to large-scale international operations have helped Rob develop the size and diversity of his global industry networks.

In turn, the networks provide Rob with insight into emerging issues and the opportunity to continue to mobilise projects that achieve progressive outcomes for stakeholders across the sector.

Australian pork's appetite for innovation

PORK dishes have always been prominent around Chinese New Year festivities, whether at a Haymarket restaurant in Sydney or celebrations in Beijing.

While the Chinese zodiac animal for the coming 12 months is the ox, in many respects 2021 will be the year of the pig.

The breathtaking investment China has made in rebuilding its pig herd is indicative of how seriously African swine fever impacted the food security of its 1.4 billion residents.

The recovery is being fast-tracked by the construction of multi-storey piggeries, housing tens of thousands of pigs at single sites, images of which corroborate estimates that this year China's herd could be back to 80 percent of its pre-ASF numbers of 440 million pigs.

The supercharged pork production generated by the rebuilt Chinese pig herd is almost certain to be the biggest driver in the global animal protein market for the coming 12 months.

As it returns to greater levels of pork self-sufficiency, China will enjoy more discretion in where it sources its imported pork and other meats.

Nonetheless, ASF is set to maintain influence over the global pork trade even if it doesn't spread into new regions, with keen eyes on efforts to contain the disease in Europe – most prominently Germany – and southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines.

Despite being relatively well shielded from the volatilities of the global meat trade, Australian pork producers



Point of View

by MARGO ANDRAE CEO



innovation initiatives to improve productivity, supply chain transparency, animal health and environmental sustainability.

The commercial uptake of technology means the pork industry has an even more resilient defence against the challenges it continues to face – whether they be ASF, anti-farming activists and even rival proteins.

Australian pork's appetite for innovation, which helped the industry throughout a turbulent 2020 in so many ways, will continue to be a tremendous asset as we embark on the exciting opportunities 2021 has to offer.

On a final note, APL encourages producers to be vigilant in managing the risks of mosquitos in regions experiencing a wet summer.

Diseases spread by mosquitos such as Ross River virus pose a threat to our workforce, though they do not pose health risks to pigs.

Nevertheless, severe insect bites can result in downgraded carcass value.

Producers should seek veterinary advice regarding livestock treatment and take steps to minimise the presence of stagnant water where

will no doubt experience market movements as a result of China's increased pork production.

In our domestic market we can expect a degree of renewed pressure from imported pork, as volumes of product from North America and Europe are shifted away from China.

Producers can be assured that Australian Pork Limited and supply chain businesses will work to defend the increased market share Australian pork secured over the past 12 months, as well as the gains made in export markets in 2020.

Amid the various disruptions caused by COVID-19 in 2020, consumption of pork rose to an average of 10.4 kilograms per person in Australia – a result made all the more positive by the larger share of the pork market enjoyed by Australian-grown product due to lower import volumes.

A further 30 percent rise in domestic consumption forecast in the coming months means the outlook for producers, in terms of farmgate profitability most importantly, is very encouraging.

This growth is well deserved and due reward for both the versatility

of our product and decisive industry efforts to ensure a wide range of cuts were appealing to consumers throughout COVID-19 lockdown measures.

We start the new year encouraged by the agility of our response to the curveballs of 2020 and we're determined to build on that momentum, particularly with the hope of a recovery to the foodservice industry and new direct-to-consumer market channels.

Just as growth of e-commerce is making pork dishes even more accessible to our customers, technology for farms and supply chains presents us with exciting ways to reinforce the integrity of Australian pork.

Which is why producers emphatically support APL's targeted



While the Chinese zodiac animal for the coming 12 months is the ox, in many respects 2021 will be the year of the pig. Photo: Markus Winkler

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Pork Industry Calendar of Events

2021

FEB 24-26 – Agritech West Africa Exhibition, Accra International Conference Center, Accra Ghana www.agritechwestafrica.com

FEB 26 – SA Pig Industry Day, Barossa Weintal, SA www.porksa.com.au

MAY 4-5 (POSTPONED) – Pan Pacific Pork Expo (PPPE), Gold Coast E: pppe@australianpork.com.au

AUG tbc – Kingaroy Baconfest www.kingaroybaconfest.com.au

NOV 15-18 – Australasian Pig Science Association (APSA) Conference www.apsa.asn.au/

How to supply event details: Send all details to Australian Pork Newspaper, PO Box 162, Wynnum, Qld 4178, call 07 3286 1833 or email: ben@collins.media

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Sustainability is the goal for us all

HERE'S hoping a wonderful Christmas with family, friends and loved ones was had, and a bit of well-deserved rest and relaxation.

Sustainability has different meanings to many and can be used as a motherhood statement unless it is backed up with a form of measurement.

Several companies now are making a commitment to sustainability that is more than only words.

All Australian Pork Limited major retailers have sustainability goals listed in their corporate responsibilities and the three key themes these companies look to address are people, planet and prosperity.

Sustainability has moved well beyond simply addressing environmental management in today's society and as such so must our industry.

I am very pleased sections of the Australian pork industry are leading the way on several areas of sustainability and that these are being publicly recognised.

SunPork Fresh Foods developed a world-first initiative to empower people with autism through work placement on their farms – Autism and Agriculture



General Manager –
Research & Innovation

by ROB SMITS



is an employment model in collaboration with Autism CRC.

Rivalea are active leaders in sustainable packaging practices, having won the Agriculture and Nurseries section of the APCO Packaging Sustainability Awards and the Woolworths Sustainable Supplier of the Year Award in 2020.

Both companies are demonstrated leaders in animal welfare and the use of biogas to reduce carbon emissions.

Other pork supply chains publicly promote aspects of sustainability in their enterprises.

Blantyre Farms promotes its sustainable credentials with biogas capture and conversion of methane into electricity and the use of food waste coupled with packaging recycling.

Westpork and Craig Mostyn Group both promote their animal welfare credentials and CMG was recognised for wastewater recycling at its Linley Valley processing facility.

Sustainability credentials should be part of every industry participant's business plan.

This includes producers, feed millers, manufacturers, artificial insemination suppliers, veterinary suppliers, feed additive companies, and stock and freight suppliers.

These credentials would ideally address the wide range of sustainable objectives considered essential as part of an engaged and responsible supply chain.

Climate friendly farming program leader at APL Gemma Wyburn developed an industry

sustainable framework in consultation with key APL team members, the Board and producers.

With the key sustainability pillars of people, pigs, planet and prosperity, this framework sets the sustainability direction of the industry for the next ten years.

This living document provides targets and measures for us to report on in order to track industry progress in this space and gives us a stronger platform from which to tell our story.

As consultation is ongoing, we want to hear from you.

Particularly around the measures you think are achievable across production, processing and in

a few cases, the whole supply chain.

Further consultation with the broader agricultural sector and the community are proposed for 2021.

Once approved by the APL Board, the next steps will be to develop implementation plans for key commitments and to start the collection of data by the end of 2021.

The pork industry has much to celebrate as a leading player in agriculture and the community.

Shining the light on the achievements made by the industry is a major strategic direction and one to which we can all contribute.



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SunPork Fresh Foods developed a world-first initiative to empower people with autism through work placement on their farms – Autism and Agriculture is an employment model in collaboration with Autism CRC.

Pork retail data shows continued growth

THE pork industry continued to be gifted with good news in retail sales in the lead up to Christmas 2020.

Reported to Australian Pork Limited each month, the November Nielsen Homescan data shows the continued growth of fresh pork in the fresh meat category.

Volume uplift of the total fresh meat category for the November period was up 3.7 percent when compared with the year prior, while fresh pork managed to gain 9.7 percent.

Independent supermarkets had the fastest growth in this period,



Marketing Matters

by KATHLEEN PINDSLE



with the IGA group and other independent or smaller chain supermarkets growing approximately 40 percent in volume for pork over the past four weeks.

The biggest winners for pork for the month

have been mince, stir-fry and diced pork as well as ribs and rashers.

There have been slight shifts away from chops and cutlets especially within butchers or non-supermarket channels.

In general, average prices appear to have fluctuated across retailers throughout this year, compared with 2019.

We certainly see consumers responding to these price changes, with ongoing switching to discounted cuts and retailers with significant specials.

Throughout 2020, the gain in pork sales was mainly driven by increased sales volume each shopping occasion.

However, we have also seen an increase in the number of shoppers buying pork more regularly – more pork in the

trolley for more people more often.

APL consumer research indicates positive shifts in perceptions of pork as a meat for everyday occasions, such as being “easy to cook”, “versatile” and “tastes great”.

This puts the pork category in a fantastic position leading into 2021.

After the tumultuous but overall positive year that 2020 was for pork in the retail sector, the marketing team have renewed confidence that pork is headed in a strong direction to face the new challenges 2021 will inevitably bring.

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Rabobank partners with Network 10 Farm to Fork cooking show

AGRIBUSINESS banking specialist Rabobank has announced it is partnering with Network 10 cooking show *Farm to Fork*.

The bank, a global specialist in food and agribusiness and one of the leading providers of financial services to Australian agriculture, has joined with Network 10 and

Farm to Fork's producers Dual Entertainment as a partner in season two of the television program.

The nationally aired show aims to help inform Australians how to eat and live well, inspiring viewers to not only cook at home but also have a better appreciation of where and how their food is grown.

Rabobank head of marketing Kate Holden said the *Farm to Fork* show was an excellent fit with Rabobank's purpose.

"As an agribusiness bank, we are committed to promoting the importance of the agriculture industry and growing Australians' understanding of where their food comes from," Ms Holden said.

"Australians have a strongly growing interest in the source and provenance of their food and *Farm to Fork* is a perfect vehicle to showcase the excellent produce our local farm sector grows.

"We want to be involved in telling farmers' amazing stories in both rural and urban areas and raising awareness of the farm to fork journey."

The 90-episode second series is hosted by celebrity chefs Michael Weldon, Courtney Roulston and Sarah Todd and features a number of Australian farmers sharing stories of their produce and how it is grown.

The program will focus on educating Australians about the journey from 'farm to fork', while showcasing 270 fresh and healthy recipes.

Farm to Fork airs Monday to Friday on Channel 10 at 4pm, with repeat broadcasts on Saturday and Sunday, and is also available on demand via 10play.com.au



Farm to Fork hosts Courtney Roulston, Michael Weldon and Sarah Todd.



ABARES head of forecasting and trade Dr Jared Greenville explained value creation is about creating jobs and income for Australians prior to a product being exported.

Australian economy thrives under raw deal: Insights

AN ABARES Insights article released recently explored whether Australia was missing out on domestic value creation opportunities because of the focus on trade in raw and minimally processed agricultural products.

'Analysis of value creation in Australia through agricultural exports: Playing to advantages' analyses returns from agricultural exports and compares value-creation pathways, such as adding attributes to products or downstream processing.

ABARES head of forecasting and trade Dr Jared Greenville explained value creation is about creating jobs and income for Australians prior to a product being exported.

"The public debate often asks whether Australia is missing out on value creation due to the focus on raw agricultural exports," Dr Greenville said.

"But for Australia, trade in raw commodities and a small set of minimally processed products have provided the largest and most important value-creation opportunities for Australian agriculture – a feature that is likely to continue in coming decades.

"Raw agricultural production activities are also evolving to be more consumer facing, with on-farm production practices changing to meet consumer demands.

"These include the addition of attributes to raw products, such as traceability and organic production.

"So, while these changes may generally increase the cost of production, they also generate returns for the economy, creating income and jobs similar to activities such as domestic processing."

Further steps to meet consumer demands

with changes to on-farm production, akin to planting new varieties that make for more specialised products, can also create additional export value.

"Past reliance on raw commodities and a small set of minimally processed products does not mean that this is the only value-creation path for the sector," Dr Greenville said.

"Other opportunities may exist, but a competitive and open economy is essential to ensure resources are effectively allocated to their highest value use where private enterprises can determine what to produce and where to sell."

The Insights article can be viewed by visiting agriculture.gov.au/abares/publications/insights/value-creation-in-Australia-through-agricultural-exports

Piggery effluent pumps

MOVING livestock effluent is a continuing challenge.

Liquids can be abrasive and even corrosive requiring flexible options in pump design to combat the issues.

Aussie Pumps chief engineer John Hales said, "Our Aussie GMP effluent pumps can handle solids in suspension, but in a few applications we see premature wear on cast-iron impellers."

"That's why we came up with the stainless-steel impeller option, to avoid premature failure and give longer uninterrupted service life."

The pumps are self-priming in design, with the capacity to pull contaminated liquids through a vertical lift of 6m.

Self-priming means the user never has to worry about priming the suction hose.

It's a simple matter of filling the pump with water and starting the motor.

Silicon carbide seals that are abrasion resistant are fitted as standard and

every pump in the ST series has a stainless-steel wear plate mounted inside the cast-iron body to protect the castings.

The company is proud of its big 3" and 4" pumps, which are now available not only in high flow but also high head capacity.

Using customer feedback from piggeries across the country, Aussie Pumps GMP engineers worked on programs to develop products that would not only pass solids

in suspension but would offer high heads as well.

The pump range starts with 2" ports and go all the way through to 4".

Bare shaft pumps in the same series are available with ports up to 8" that deliver flows of up to 9000LPM.

For further information including free technical documentation on Aussie Pumps complete agricultural package is readily available from aussiepumps.com.au



The Aussie GMP semi-trash range of effluent pumps have an option of a stainless-steel impeller for abrasive applications to extend life and performance.

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Traceability grants boost to exports

THE Australian Government is encouraging applications from farming groups, research organisations and other eligible industry bodies for grants to support projects that enhance traceability in the agricultural produce supply chain.

Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud said the \$3 million under Round Two of the Traceability Grants Program was an opportunity to boost the competitiveness of our farming exporters.

“Australia’s reputation as a source of premium produce has helped our agricultural exporters secure a strong foothold in markets throughout the world,” Minister Littleproud said.

“With greater export market competition and increasing demand from consumers about the origins and safety of produce, traceability systems are critical for access into these export markets.

“This program provides opportunities for successful applicants to carry out projects that enhance product traceability and the competitiveness of our produce.

“The first round funded a variety of innovative projects, including an app to track animals from farm to destination in real-time and a portable X-ray scanner for determining seafood provenance.

“This second round of the Traceability Grants Program is part of an overall \$7 million investment and an important component of the Australian Government’s Ag2030 plan in support of industry’s ambition of \$100 billion in farmgate value by 2030.”

Round Two of the Traceability Grants Program opened on November 25, 2020 and closes on January 21, 2021.

For more details or to apply visit the Community Grants Hub at communitygrants.gov.au



Round Two of the Traceability Grants Program closes on January 21, 2021.



Australian Pork Young Leaders meet in Queensland

AFTER many delays throughout a COVID-challenged year, the Australian Pork Young Leaders group were finally able to reconvene in Toowoomba last month.

It was an excellent meeting as usual, dampened only slightly by the fact that a few of our members from Victoria and NSW were not able to join in person, though they joined online.

Steering committee member Rob Martyn from SunPork facilitated the session, beginning with an introduction cov-

ering the background of the group.

The group is made up of a diverse but balanced mix of industry stakeholders – producers and farm staff, as well as transporters, sales representatives, vets, processors, wholesalers, marketers and consultants.

This diversity allows members the opportunity to share knowledge, provide each other with unique perspectives on certain industry issues and topics, and to build connections within and throughout the industry and supply chain.

The day was packed with excellent speakers – as is customary, APYL members were on the agenda to build their confidence as presenters and to allow them to share with the group.

Presenters spoke about their careers and the progress of their businesses and also shed light on the challenges and opportunities currently facing the industry.

Additionally, the group were fortunate to have present guest speakers, including Australian Pork Limited chief executive officer Margo Andrae.

Margo explained to the group how her background and passion for regional Australia and its industries have shaped her career.

Margo is passionate about next generation of pork industry leaders, seeing an amazing opportunity to reframe the pork industry in order to improve perceptions.

She also provided updates on upcoming activities and the strategic plan of APL.

A highlight for many in attendance was the last session – a pig carcass breakdown demonstra-

tion by SunPork Fresh Foods production specialist Darren Bowden.

Darren compared the leg, shoulder and loin of a standard carcass and a heavy carcass in terms of fat, yield and trim – a learning experience for all.

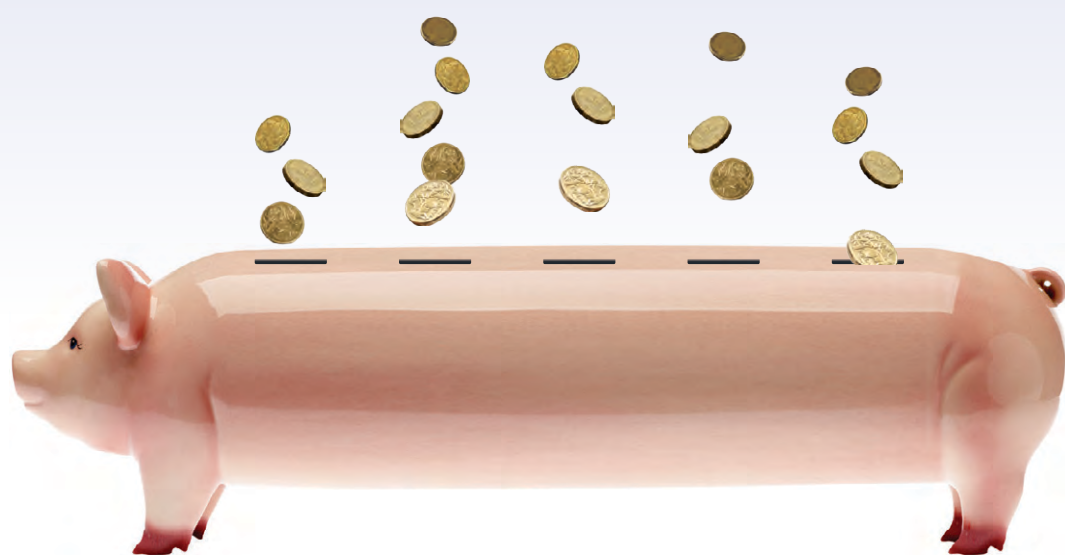
After a long and challenging year, it was great for the group to get together to network and enjoy each other’s company.

We have our fingers crossed for 2021 and look forward to seeing what it holds for the pork industry’s young leaders. **Rachael Bryant**



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How producers can prepare and respond to trespassers

A CRITICAL priority for Australian Pork Limited is protecting you, your family, staff and pigs from the impacts of trespassing by anti-animal farming activist groups.

Preparedness is your most effective defence – however ensuring you are equipped with techniques to diffuse trespass situations and are aware of your rights after a trespass

has occurred are also imperative.

Intrusions by trespassers compromise animal welfare and the biosecurity standards applied on your farm – ultimately, threatening the health of your pig herd.

Farm owners and their representatives have the right to refuse entry to anyone, irrespective of whether they have identification, and animal rights groups and other members of the public have no authority to carry out property inspections under the relevant Act of any state or territory.

Regardless of their motives, individuals who trespass on your farm should be made aware via clear signage that they do not have permission to be on farm and could be prosecuted, and that there is a serious risk of a biosecurity breach if they continue onto the farm.

The responsibility for farm security should be shared across all employees.

Ensure staff understand their rights and responsibilities if they encounter

a trespasser or believe a trespasser has entered the property.

Employees should be appropriately trained in the corrective actions to take in the event of a trespass situation.

If faced with an anti-animal farming activist on your farm, employees should not attempt to apprehend perpetrators.

It is important to de-escalate the situation.

Therefore only owners, managers or supervisors should engage with trespassers – all other people should be requested not to engage in conversation.

Contact police on 000 and state to the operator: “There are trespassers on my farm, and I require police to attend now.”

You can photograph or video the trespass, however try to avoid touching the site before the police arrive.

Recording important details such as times, dates or what you saw will also be helpful for the police.

During and following a farm trespass ensure you report damage to your property, how your ani-

mals have been impacted, any unknown vehicles including registration numbers and evidence left behind including surveillance equipment.

The health and safety of your herd are critical in the time immediately after a trespass situation.

To appraise the health impact for your piggery, we recommend ringing your local vet for advice and obtain an assessment of the animals affected in the trespass as well as arranging a farm audit through your state department of agriculture or the animal welfare regulator such as the RSPCA.

Finally, be mindful of incoming media enquiries – act in a reasonable, appropriate and non-physical manner.

APL is happy to assist you with any media enquiries you may receive, allowing you to shield yourself and your staff, to focus on your farming business and the welfare of your pigs.

The media phone numbers are available at australianpork.com.au/about-us/contact/

Learnings from the new team in the new year

AS the new year begins, I would like to share a few insights from the producer relations team, formed in the second half of 2020.

Noted in the December issue of APN, the producer relations team was created based on producer feedback that Australian Pork Limited should develop stronger

two-way communication and create a clear primary contact point for producers.

Initially phone calls were made to member producers on a regular basis, allowing for a sizeable transfer of information.

The team learnt a great deal about the way farms operate, specific challenges on certain farms or in certain locations, and about the producers and their family in a few cases.

In return, we have been able to offer information on industry trends and provide direct links to other teams at APL for details.

Specific calls to producers in November about the awareness and adoption of 10 key research initiatives was an important learning for the team and for the producers, who as a result requested over 260 of the one-page fact sheets for potential on-farm adoption of the proposals.

In 2021, APL will continue to provide

regular updates on research initiatives to producers through its communication channels.

With regular calls, we have learned the best times of the day and week to call producers, about their individual routines and their way of operating.

Many producers have provided positive feedback on the interactions and look forward to regular conversations.

APL industry liaison officers Tony Abel and Kirsty Richards have been extremely active networking with producers, processors, wider industry and government on African swine fever preparedness and biosecurity in general.

We are anticipating taking calls from even more producers during 2021, and continue to welcome requests for information as well as feedback on how APL can continue to provide the best service to its producers.

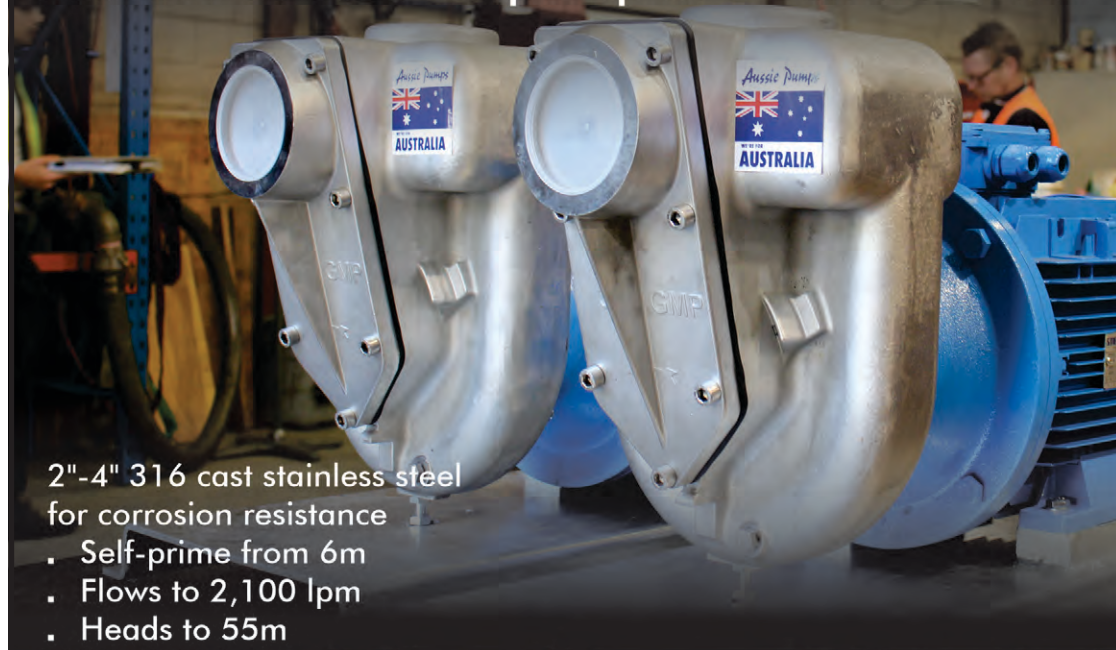


by **PAUL BONIGHTON**
Director Producer Relations



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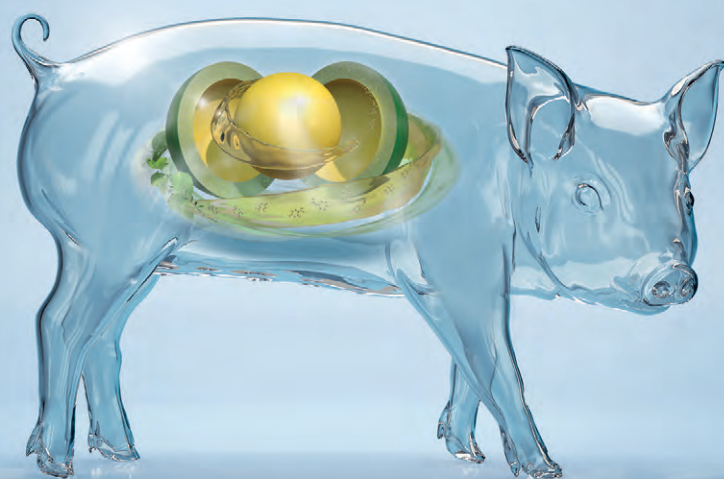
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Heavy hitters making moves

TWO heavy hitters of Australia's pork industry, both well known to me, are on the move, rounding out 2020 – a year in which everything seemed to move, one way or another.

Most recently, I received an email in December from John Pluske, chief executive officer and chief scientist of Australasian Pork Research Institute Ltd, advising me and others that he would be leaving Murdoch University as at January 1, 2021.

Professor Pluske has been working more than half his time in the APRIL role, which he took up in September 2018, with the balance for Murdoch.

Since joining Murdoch in 1999, Prof Pluske has held several leadership positions, including director of the Animal Research Institute and acting deputy vice chancellor Research and Development on two occasions.

Murdoch University is a foundation member of APRIL, along with three other universities in Melbourne, Adelaide and Queensland and industry and commercial entities.

While most in and around pork research and development circles were aware that John's energy and time were occasionally and not surprisingly somewhat compromised while wearing the Murdoch and APRIL heavy hitter hats, it'll be interesting to see where he pops up in the new year.

I did make a few quick enquiries prior to column

Cant Comment by BRENDON CANT



deadline but alas discovered no revelations I can share.

However, it is widely known that Murdoch University have been hit this year by the COVID-19 pandemic, as have other institutes around Australia heavily dependent on income from overseas students.

With student income down and balance sheets looking a bit iffy, redundancies have been offered.

With more than 20 years under his Murdoch belt, I can only surmise John may have been attracted to a decent redundancy package.

Whatever he decides to pursue, I wish him all the best.

A good bloke, an excellent researcher and a very respected person in pork circles, John will no doubt pop up somewhere – maybe even extending and expanding his APRIL role, which seems to me to be crying out for a bit more direction and leadership.

John might be just the man to drive APRIL forward, along with its chair

Tony Peacock.

Tony has also signalled his intent to move on from his main executive role as chief executive officer of Canberra-based Co-operative Research Centres Association this year, after a 10-year tenure.

Current vice-president Engagement and Global Relations at the Australian National University Jane O'Dwyer succeeds Tony, assuming the CRCA role in January 2021.

Therefore, maybe the new year is time for team Peacock and Pluske to push APRIL to become the body it had always promised to be since occupying the space so well filled by Pork CRC.

For the sake of pork research and development in Australia, let's hope so.

After all, our pork producers deserve to reap the rewards from a body dedicated to research and development.

After 15 well-documented and widely acclaimed years Pork CRC activities concluded on June 30, 2019, with a declaration that its post-CRC transition strategy would

be to ensure that the momentum of innovative research was not lost.

According to Pork CRC, APRIL's objective was to support research and adoption that improves sustainable production and efficiency in the pork value chain for Australian and New Zealand industries.

APRIL was also responsible for delivering results from research outcomes funded by Pork CRC.

My other heavy hitter mover is Rod Hamann, who joined the Board of directors of major Western Australian pork producer Westpork at its December 8, 2020 annual general meeting.

His most recent managerial role was at SunPork Fresh Food as executive general manager.

Highly experienced, Rod spent 17 years in the US and British pork industries where he held various technical, marketing and production operational roles, including executive vice president at Heartland Pork Enterprises, VP production at Murphy Farms and PIC USA national sales manager, plus UK technical manager.

I worked closely with John and Rod during my time managing communications for Pork CRC, where they were both directors.

Wearing his Murdoch hat, John also successfully managed numerous Pork CRC research projects. 🐷



John Pluske wearing his APRIL hat.



Rod Hamann wearing his Pork CRC hat during a Pork CRC Board visit in 2013 to Craig Mostyn Group's Linley Valley Pork in Western Australia.

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1. Australian Veterinary Journal Volume 97 No 7, July 2019



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The importance of communication



I HOPE everyone has had a much-needed rest and a chance to relax over the festive season after a very challenging 2020, hopefully in preparation for a more prosperous, easier and healthier 2021.

In the December issue of APN, I wrote about the situation of the mink industry in Denmark, which was devastating for producers around the country.

The issue continued to impact on most of Danish agriculture over the past month and unfortunately, the situation has worsened.

Protests were held by farmers and fishers in both Copenhagen and Aarhus on the November 21, with hundreds of tractors in each city and

Nordic News

by ASHLEY NORVAL



advice required, though if this advice isn't communicated effectively to properly trained staff, no difference will show in production results.

A case example from a farm I have been working with highlights my point.

The farm had begun back fat scanning their gilts and sows at mating and during gestation to get a more accurate idea of body condition and subsequently ensure they were on the right feeding curve.

Becoming commonplace in Denmark, the farm was not seeing any benefit of carrying out this routine and still had an issue with sows being too lean.

After a discussion with the mating shed manager, it turned out that in practice the farm was using the results of back fat scanning as a guide and their personal assessment of body condition score to assign the animal to a feeding curve.

Unfortunately, the practice caused issues between the owner and the manager, however the source of the issue was the lack of understanding as to why back fat scan results should be used rather than personal body condition assessment.

The reason why – being accuracy – was communicated frequently in both written and spoken media throughout Denmark over the past year and yet why is the message not getting to the farm staff?

This issue is not going away and will only continue the more we rely on staff that do not speak the native language of the country they are working in.

While there is an argument for staff compliance versus staff understanding, in general I believe employees want to improve and make a positive difference to the business.

If 2020 has taught me anything, it is that communication is key and we need to continue to seek effective communication strategies that can be implemented from a distance to all levels of farm staff.

the harbours filled with fishing vessels.

More recently, a parliamentary document was leaked, which clearly indicated that there were no grounds for the government order of the destruction of mink in accordance with the Danish constitution.

I do not know what the outcome of this evidence

will be but, as the majority of mink have been destroyed, it feels too little too late.

Though perhaps it could be used in the argument for producer compensation, the details of which have not been released in any form.

The mink industry issue, low pig prices and a total lockdown of Denmark due to a scarily high COVID-19 infection rate have combined to provide a challenging start to 2021 on this side of the globe.

I am hearing the phrase 'stay positive and test negative' fairly often, which in a roundabout fashion brings me to the point of my article this month – the importance of communication.

Capacity building and retention is a phrase we've heard a lot recently and while it's a challenging subject, during my time on farm over the past couple of months I have been reminded of the importance of effective communication and training, and the retention of knowledgeable and capable staff.

In these challenging times, it is hard for anyone to stay motivated at work, in particular those who couldn't return home safely to loved ones over the Christmas break and cannot see an end to the restrictions.

When analysing a production unit, we look at optimising nutrition, genetics, production routines and procedures, facilities and animals, and what all of these things have in common is the impact of effective staff and labour, which we generally think to augment in the same way.

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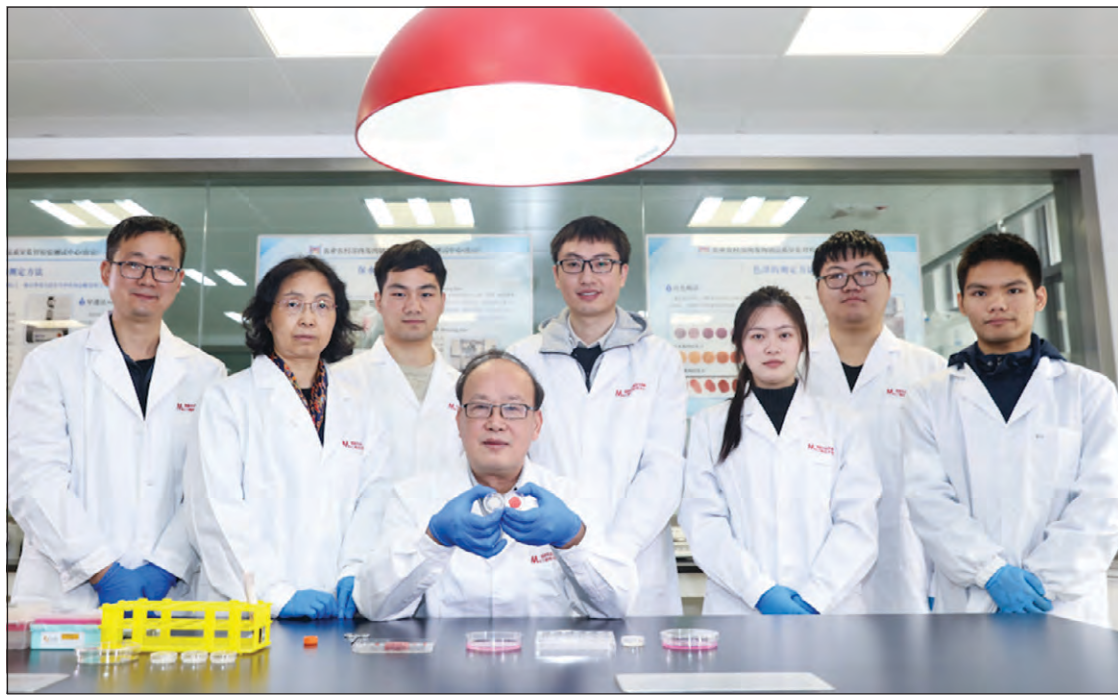
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In the next 10 years, cultivated meat will move out of the lab and onto Chinese consumers' frying pans.

Chinese cell-based meat startup raises \$A3.86M

MAINLAND Chinese cultivated meat startup Joes Future Food has raised almost \$A4 million in an angel investment round.

The food tech, recently rebranded from Nanjing Zhouzi, will be using the funding to ramp up research and development and overcome technical challenges in order to improve its current product – cultivated minced pork. Raising \$A3.86 million from Matrix Partners China in their latest angel funding round, Joes Future Food will be scaling up its R&D and production capacity to develop its cultivated pork product, which first debuted in November last year.

Led by Professor Zhou Guanghong, the prototype developed by the research

team at Nanjing Agricultural University represents mainland China's first ever cell-based pork product.

Specifically, the startup will be using the investment to overcome technical hurdles that many food techs face in the cultivated protein sector, including isolating stem cells, creating serum-free cell culture medium and cultivating cells on a large scale.

The team plans to further refine the colour and flavour of its cultured pork mince, with the aim of producing a final protein product that can be customised in terms of its nutritional value to suit the individual preferences of consumers.

Speaking at a fermentation and cultivated meat

seminar hosted by GFI Consultancy in Shanghai last year, Dr Shijie Ding, who also led the research centre that has spun-off into Joes Future Food, said he believes that the commercialisation of cell-based meats in China will be not too far into the future.

"In the next 5 to 10 years, cultivated meat will get out of the lab and eventually onto the Chinese consumer's frying pan," Dr Ding said.

Given the milestone the world's first commercial sale of cultured meat in Singapore reached before the end of 2020, most industry experts have set their sights on more landmark approvals to come in the months ahead.

Within the Chinese market, research indicates that it is likely that food safety and nutrition will be the key concerns that motivate consumers to choose cultivated meat – particularly in light of the coronavirus crisis-related supply chain disruptions and the African swine fever outbreak that hit China's pork stocks the hardest months before the pandemic struck.

Current director at Cellular Agriculture Australia and graduate of Yenching Academy of Peking University by Chloe Dempsey led a consumer study recently and found that 40 percent of Chinese respondents were aware of cultured meat and a massive 70 percent were willing to try it.

Of the main reasons consumers cited, ethical and environmental concerns were lower on their priorities, while other benefits such as food safety and framing it as a high-tech innovation led to greater consumer appeal.

Presenting her findings at the Future Food Asia 2020 conference held late last year, Ms Dempsey said, "What really works here is framing cultured meat as a product that will positively bring nutritional benefits, food safety and security."

"Many companies in the west often talk about cultured meat as the ethical or sustainable choice to appeal to consumers, but this is not the most relevant in this market, which needs to be taken into context."

New climate change measures welcomed

THE National Farmers' Federation reported that Australia's suite of climate change action measures recognise the agriculture sector's capacity to reduce emissions and mitigate climate change.

President Fiona Simson said the methodologies released by Energy and Emissions Reduction Minister Taylor complemented a suite of established measures and were another important tool in the toolbox.

Minister Taylor identified five methodology priorities.

"The two that the NFF are vitally interested in are soil carbon and plantation forestry," Ms Simson said.

"Soil carbon especially needs much more research and better information about the impacts of different management practices."

"We are pleased that these methodologies will be designed with industry."

"We also welcomed the Minister's reiteration this week of the substantial role agriculture has already played in Australia's emissions reduction."

Emissions from cropping and grazing have fallen by 69 percent over the past three decades, from about 300 million tonnes per year in 1990 to about 92 million tonnes today.

Ms Simson said the NFF maintained the view that farmers should have been compensated for the land clearing limitation laws that lead to the reduction.

"Our members are steadfast that these credits should not be forfeited," she said.

The NFF has a plan for agriculture to be Australia's next \$100 billion industry by 2030.

To get there, an important goal is for the farm sector to be trending towards carbon neutrality by the same year.

The NFF also supports an economy-wide net carbon neutral target by 2050, with several strict conditions.

"Farmers must be convinced that there are identifiable and economically viable pathways to net neutrality, including impacts from inputs such as energy, and any associated legislation must be fair and advantageous to agricultural," Ms Simson said.

"It's essential that there is no unnecessary regulatory impediment."

Farmers shared the government's view that a target must be underpinned by a robust plan. "At a government and industry level, there is a lot of good work underway on the path to a reduced emissions future," she said.

The Climate Research Strategy for Primary Industries aims to support farmers to use a common approach to develop sector specific greenhouse gas baselines and to create transparency and trust in comparing sectoral and individual responses.

"Accurate and agreed-to measurement methodologies are paramount to agriculture's full participation in emissions reduction efforts," Ms Simson said.

The NFF welcomed the new levy-funded, cross-commodity Agriculture Innovation Australia and its identification of climate as a priority area for investment and innovation.

"The AIA Climate Initiative is undertaking comprehensive consultation with RDCs, the NFF, state farming organisations and peak commodity groups."

"We commend Minister Littleproud on bringing AIA to fruition and its focus on climate," Ms Simson said.

Meat and Livestock Australia has also updated its plan for the red meat sector to be carbon natural by 2030, to include an investment program of \$230 million.

This commitment will complement and integrate with the AIA and CRSPI initiatives.

Ms Simson said other complementary government initiatives included:

- The low emission technology statement, which targets five priority technology stretch goals, of which soils carbon, clean hydrogen and energy storage are of considerable interest

- The Agriculture Stewardship Fund, which includes a grants scheme for co-benefits, biodiversity certification scheme and NFF's agriculture sustainability framework

- The King review of the Emissions Reduction Fund, which includes recommendations for a small-scale fixed carbon price and development of stacking or co-benefit options.

"There is no doubt the government has established serious initiatives backed by significant investment, which is entirely appropriate to proactively address the wicked dilemma of climate change," Ms Simson said.

"The farm sector not only conditionally supports an economy wide aspiration of net zero emissions by 2050, we are also engaged with the considerable and demonstrable efforts underway that will put agriculture in the best position to adapt in these changing times."



Commercialisation of cell-based meats in China will be not too far into the future.

Farmgate value likely to hit \$65 billion

AUSTRALIAN farmgate production worth \$65 billion is expected in 2020-21 on the back of the nation's second largest winter crop and promising rainfall outlook.

ABARES December quarter 2020 Agriculture Commodities report points to continued recovery for the farming sector from drought and resilience in the face of COVID-19.

ABARES executive director Dr Steve Hatfield-Dodds said, "Overall Australian agricultural production is bouncing back from the drought."

"Australian producers manage one of the most

variable environments in the world, so ebbs and flows in production are to be expected," he said.

"We're expecting a near all-time high winter crop, the best ever in NSW, and a more favourable outlook for summer cropping than we have seen in recent years."

"Livestock prices have also stayed high, with herd and flock rebuilding and continued international demand."

While production is forecast to rise by 7 percent to \$65 billion, exports are expected to fall by 7 percent from last year to \$44.7 billion.

"Exports have continued to find markets

during the pandemic, but the residual effect of past dry seasons and trade uncertainties are pushing down export value," Dr Hatfield-Dodds said.

"Recovery from drought is limiting production and exports of livestock products and fibres, with meat prices also falling as the African swine fever impact on China's pork production begins to lessen."

"There are a number of risks present for the rest of 2021 that remain a watch point, including wine trade with China and labour shortages for the horticulture sector."



ABARES executive director Dr Steve Hatfield-Dodds.

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Improved efficiency with a Venturi aerator in combination with a T8 Gorman-Rupp pump.

Venturi aerators improve overall tank equalisation performance

A FOOD production facility was looking to replace its unreliable surface aerators to save maintenance costs and improve efficiency at its facility.

The facility was very happy with the results when it converted the existing surface aerators to the bank-mounted Venturi aerator.

The installation resulted in annual operating cost savings of more than \$112,000.

Venturi aerators are used in conjunction with Gorman-Rupp pumps and

are mounted on the banks of basins and lagoons instead of needing to be installed within them.

The system has improved the overall equalisation tank performance to produce clearer effluent, control odours, settle solids, cool the water and hydrolyse fats, oils and greases causing them to float for better removal efficiency.

The former system was to add dissolved oxygen to mix and equalise the contents in the EQ tank using submerged aerators.

The addition of the dissolved oxygen would cause fats, oils and grease to float, so they would not be discharged with the plant's effluent into the publicly owned treatment works.

The submerged aerators were also supposed to provide cooling of the influent process washdown water at around 40C.

The aerators had been in operation for several years and were not achieving the desired conditioning objectives.

Further, whenever one of the submersible pumps

plugged or failed, the facility had to rent a crane to remove the pump for repairs and then had to use the crane to reinstall the fixed pump at additional costs on each occurrence.

As one or more of the submerged pumps failed at least once if not twice a year, the facility began to look for a more viable aeration, mixing and equalisation solution to keep it in compliance.

The facility environmental engineer decided to replace the existing aerators with a Venturi Aeration Model VA-1400 and a T8 Gorman-Rupp pump.

The Venturi aerator was designed to handle 82L/s.

This allows the contents of the EQ tank to be recirculated four times during a 24-hour period, achieving greater oxygen transfer, better mixing and improved equalisation.

With better circulation and cooling in the EQ

tank the fats, oils and grease are floated for separation and treatment, not discharged with the effluent to the local treatment works, thus reducing surcharges.

The plant was able to achieve a \$6,000 annual energy cost reduction, an \$89,000 annual reduction in chemical costs, a \$12,000 annual reduction in non-compliance charges and further maintenance cost reductions.

The facility environmental manager now has a system that allows him to achieve his discharge permit parameters and he has less concern over maintenance issues and costs.

The food manufacturer improved its efficiency with a Venturi aerator and will continue to experience fantastic results.

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The Venturi aerator was designed to handle 82L/s and allows the contents of the equalisation tank to be recirculated four times during a 24-hour period, achieving greater oxygen transfer, better mixing and improved EQ.

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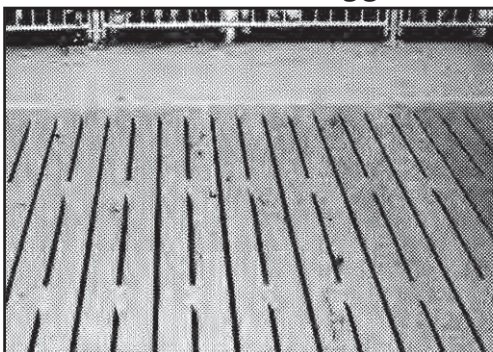
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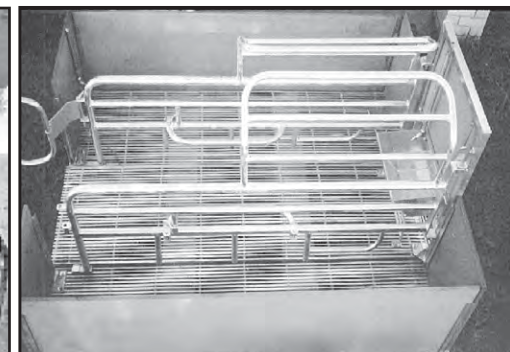
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Supporting producers and the community in 2020

Register now for Farm2Plate Exchange

AS we begin 2021, we wanted to share a part of the work undertaken by the Australian Pork Limited team over the past 12 months that not only directly supported producers but has also given back to the community.

In support of producers, the PorkStar team in partnership with Straight to the Source has developed a unique opportunity for smaller producers to amplify their brand and product stories online.

Launched in 2019, Straight to the Source is a subscription-based platform that champions primary and artisan food and beverage producers.

The platform enables businesses to connect directly with food professionals such as chefs, as well as thousands of potential consumers.

By partnering with Straight to the Source, PorkStar has enabled a range of smaller producers to build their presence online free of charge and accelerate their connections with important food industry influencers.

With these strong foundations in place, 2021 promises to deliver a key platform for producers to communicate their brand stories on this fast-emerging website.

When it comes to supporting our community, 2020 has been a year like no other for APL and the broader industry.

In 2020, APL launched two key initiatives working with food charity organisations Foodbank and OzHarvest.

Many restaurants, pubs and clubs across the country have been forced to close due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Given that over a quarter of Australian pork was consumed in foodservice outlets, alternative supply channels needed to be found.

While the rise in home-cooked meals increased pork sales at butchers and supermarkets, the impact on foodservice meant the supply chain remained under intense pressure.

With funding support from the Federal Government, APL partnered with Foodbank Australia to build a mutually beneficial program that supported members of the community in need.

The supply of pork to Foodbank was enabled by our wholesale network, making deliveries on a weekly basis across the country.

APL chief executive officer Margo Andrae said of the program: "We're proud of the role our industry is playing in providing food security for those in need, but we're also very grateful to Foodbank because the weekly supply arrangements have given processors and wholesalers added operational certainty for their businesses and employees."

Over the initial four-month period, more than 23,000kg of made-to-order pork including sausages, roasts, mince and forequarter chops were provided to Foodbank.

Based on the success of the initiative, APL and industry wholesalers are looking to continue the partnership with Foodbank moving forward.

Additionally, APL was able to secure pork placement on several menus as part of the OzHarvest Harvest Bites program.

This initiative enabled APL to work directly with leading chefs such as Orazio D'Elia and the OzHarvest team, making it possible for consumers to purchase restaurant quality meals delivered to their home.

The sponsorship helped put pork in the centre of exciting meal options, showcasing its versatility to consumers in their own home.

Importantly, for each individual meal sold through Harvest Bites, 40 new meals were provided directly to people in need.

The donations to Harvest Bites equated to 48,000 OzHarvest meals for Australians who might otherwise have gone without.

We were thrilled to collaborate with organisations such as Straight to the Source, OzHarvest and Foodbank in 2020 and to provide support to the local hospitality industry, suppliers, growers and the community in need.

Our industry is a generous one and we hope to continue in that spirit in the year ahead.

Kylie Roberts, PorkStar Marketing Manager

Supported by the Queensland Farmers' Federation, Farm2Plate Exchange is being held in the Scenic Rim region and will provide an exciting platform for ideas exchange between people working in food, farming and agritourism throughout Australia.

QFF chief executive officer Dr Georgina Davis who will be speaking at the event said food, fibre and foliage experiences were being increasingly sought after, as consumers desire to better understand where their produce comes from, learn how it is created and experience the environment where it is made.

"Many of Queensland's farmers are embracing new agribusiness ventures and agri-innovations, which are adding value to their produce with a growing network of agri-processing occurring on farm," Dr Davis said.

"In addition, farmers are becoming increasingly tech-savvy, strengthening new direct marketing and sales to consumers through new online platforms, agritourism and agri-experiences."

"The Farm2Plate Exchange will give farmers looking to diversify and take a more active role in the producer to consumer value chain an opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from others through a variety of insights and experience."

"This year's event has the theme of renewal and is aligned with ideas of adaptation and resilience."

For more information about the Farm2Plate Exchange and to purchase your ticket, visit regionality.com.au/farm-2-plate-ex-2021

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Workers urged to speak out if they are mistreated on farms

NATIONAL Farmers' Federation president Fiona Simson encourages workers to report any on-farm mistreatment or abuse to the relevant authorities.

"I continue to be saddened to learn of instances where often young men and women, many visitors to our country, are subject to mistreatment when working on Australian farms," Ms Simson said.

"Seasonal, short term workers are at the heart of our sector.

"Without them it just wouldn't be possible to plant, pick and pack our produce and get it to market.

"As a community, we must all work together to stamp out such abhorrent conduct – conduct that is not befitting of the standards and expectations of contemporary Australia, and in a few cases is simply illegal.

"Today and every day, I compel workers, who believe they have been mistreated to report their experience to the appropriate authority."

Ms Simson advises if a worker believes they have been underpaid, they must inform the Fair Work Ombudsman by calling 13 13 94, if the mistreatment is of a potential criminal nature, such as sexual as-

sault, it is a police matter, or a complaint should be made to the local police, Crime Stoppers on 1300 333 000 or in the case of an emergency by calling 000.

"Community members, be they politicians, farmers or farm workers, also have a duty to report operators potentially doing the wrong thing," Ms Simson said.

"Politicising and opportunistic statements are one thing, actions and solutions are another.

"It is important to highlight these issues in public discourse, but to get real action the available channels must also be utilised.

"Reporting, investigating and ultimately holding to account those not complying with the law is the most effective deterrent."

Reports of workers being underpaid damages Australia's reputation as a place of choice to live and work.

"The actions of a very few inflict a stain on our industry that unfortunately threatens to tarnish

the reputation of the majority who do the right thing," Ms Simson said.

"Most importantly, these actions have a profound, often long-lasting damaging impact on the men and women subject to them."

The NFF's Horticulture Council has spearheaded efforts to stamp out worker mistreatment and supports the grower-led Fair Farms initiative.

Fair Farms supports all members of the Australian horticulture supply chain with the tools, information and training they need to be a compliant and ethical employer.

"We have long called for the introduction of a national labour hire regulation scheme, to hold labour hire entities to account, which research shows is a link in the ag workforce, where wrongdoing occurs," Ms Simson said.

"I am angered by almost weekly media reports of workers having what can be a frightening experience on Australian farms.

"Enough is enough.

"I can't be more direct, if you are a farm worker and you believe you have been subject to mistreatment, you must report your experience either to the Fair Work Ombudsman or the police."

The introduction of a dedicated ag workforce solution, as called for by the NFF for four years now, would ensure foreign workers holding the visa would only be placed with fully accredited employers.

Other useful resources about workplace safety, rights and conditions are Fair Work Ombudsman's Horticulture Showcase, SafeWork Australia, Jobsearch and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

"We want you and others after you to have a positive experience on our farms – to do that we must work together to call out and weed out those standing in the way," Ms Simson said.



National Farmers' Federation president Fiona Simson.



A dedicated ag workforce solution would ensure foreign workers holding the relevant visa would only be placed with fully accredited employers.

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Antimicrobial stewardship pushes EU dairy farmers, China and fish farmers

THE impact of the World Health Organisation global program to reduce antimicrobial resistance and preserve antimicrobial drugs for future human and livestock use is being felt all over the world.

Currently the pressure is on dairy farmers in Europe, but China and the world's largest meat, fish and dairy producers are also in the news.

From January 2022, due to changes in European Union regulations, the blanket use of antimicrobial dry cow therapy will no longer be the norm on EU dairy farms.

Instead of routine treatment for all cows at drying-off, selective dry cow treatment should be implemented.

Indications for treatment include a clinical history of mastitis, suspicion of intra-mammary infection by an individual cell count, a positive bacterial milk culture including isolation and preferably antimicrobial susceptibility testing, and individual cow or farm risk factors such as damaged teats.

Those who have worked with cows will know the five-point mastitis control plan.

Around the world for more than 50 years, dry cow antimicrobial therapy has been one of the five points.

In a statement in 2019, the European Veterinary

Federation wrote, "The impact of decreased use of antimicrobials on human antimicrobial resistance following implementation of selective dry cow treatment will be minimal."

"Nevertheless, in a society which is critical of antimicrobial use in farm animals, there is a need to move toward standard use of selective dry cow treatment."

While the EU policy is mandated by legislation, Australian dairy farmers have been adopting selective dry cow therapy as part of good farming practice for years.

It is a sensible policy, especially if it can reduce a bit of antimicrobial use with little or no adverse effect.

China too has embarked on a program of reducing antimicrobial usage in animals.

An article in *Nature Outlook* on October 21, 2020, using a data set from 2013, reported that China consumed nearly half the world's antimicrobials – 162,000 tonnes, 52 percent of which was administered to animals.

A recent Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China bulletin stated that consumption of antimicrobials by China's agricultural sector had fallen by 57 percent between 2014 and 2018 to less than 30,000 tonnes.

It seems China is catching the world leaders in antimicrobial control.

According to a Swiss group that tracks the world's antimicrobial consumption, the figures suggest an unprecedented decline.

Previously, the most successful country was the Netherlands, which decreased its usage in livestock by 56 percent in the five years between 2007 and 2012.

China did the same thing in four.

The issue of antimicrobial resistance is not going away.

In November 2020, new data published in the world's only comprehensive sustainability assessment of 60 of the world's largest meat, fish and dairy producers – the Coller FAIRR Protein Producer Index, fairr.org/index/risk-opportunity-factors/antibiotics/ – found 70 percent or 42 firms rank as 'high risk' for antimicrobial stewardship.

All beef or dairy firms in the FAIRR Index rank as high risk and fail to disclose information on antimicrobial usage.

Norwegian fish farmers Mowi, Canadian packaged proteins firm Maple Leaf Foods, a major pork producer, and an aquaculture firm Bakkafrøst in the Faroe Islands are the top three performers in the FAIRR Index in 2020, and the only companies to rank as 'low risk' for investors.

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- 3 Promote and apply good practices at all steps of production and processing of foods from animal and plant sources
- 4 Adopt sustainable systems with improved hygiene, biosecurity and stress-free handling of animals
- 5 Implement international standards for the responsible use of antibiotics and guidelines, set out by OIE, FAO and WHO

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Grains research precinct to drive crop profits

A NEW grains research precinct at Murdoch and Curtin universities will help boost profitability for Australian grain growers and strengthen the national grain industry.

Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management David Littleproud said the precinct would support resilience in Australia's \$14 billion grain industry.

"The grains research precinct will support cutting-edge work on improved crop productivity and disease resistance by facilitating new research into crop pathology, plant physiology and genetic improvement," Minister Littleproud said.

"The Grains Research and Development Corporation has invested \$4.5 million to establish the grains research precinct in collaboration with Murdoch and Curtin universities, and the Western Australia Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

"Over the past five years the Australian Government has invested \$357

million in the GRDC in matched payments.

"This investment continues to support innovative projects around the country.

"Innovation and research are the key themes we are focussing on in support of the industry's \$100 billion in farmgate value by 2030 vision.

"The grains and oilseeds industry continues to make a huge contribution in search of that target, with ABARES forecasting a harvest worth \$14.7 billion in 2020-21."

Senator for Western Australia Slade Brockman attended the official opening of the precinct and hailed the new facility as an example of the government partnering with industry to grow the West's agricultural output, productivity and profitability.

"This research hub will support grain growers both here in the West and all over the nation to grow and innovate and stay on the front-line of grains research, technology and adaptation," Senator Brockman said.

"The fact that we are investing in this crucial infrastructure is a sign of our confidence in Western Australia grain growers and our commitment to seeing them thrive."

GRDC chair John Woods said the aim of the GRDC Grains Research and Development Infrastructure Grant program, which made the grains research precinct possible, was to boost capacity and capability in Australian grain research and development and to create enduring profitability for grain growers.

"This new precinct is an excellent example of collaboration between the GRDC and key research partners and will help us continue to deliver critical research, development and extension.

"We have invested in this infrastructure because it will enable crop research in key areas such as disease to be conducted efficiently, while at the same time ensuring GRDC has increased capacity and ability for research that benefits all Australian

grain growers," Mr Woods said.

The grains research precinct is mostly centred at Murdoch University though includes a collaborative facility at Curtin University, near the Centre for Crop and Disease Management.

The precinct infrastructure consists of:

Four physical containment Level 1 glasshouses and preparation rooms, four physical containment Level 2 glasshouses, ante rooms, preparation room and steriliser rooms, 0.9 hectares of irrigated, netted field plot area, a small office and amenities area, and a LED-lit and temperature-controlled growth facility at Curtin University.

Murdoch University Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor, Food Futures Professor Peter Davies said the work undertaken at the precinct was vital at a time of climate change impacting production and increasing global demand for food.

"Seventy percent more food will be needed to feed the world's 9.5 billion people by 2050, so the work we are doing in Western Australia will have a significant impact across the world," Professor Davies said.

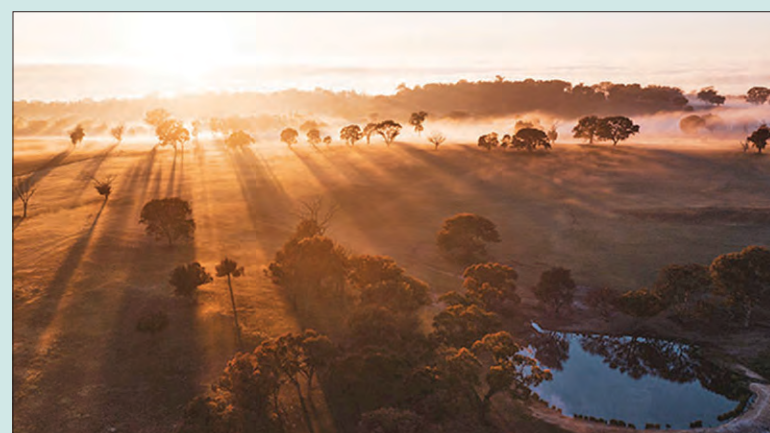
"Improving the quality and yield of grains through our research and development will help unlock unproductive land for production, as well as increase yield on our already productive lands.

"Our work will also enable farmers in third world countries to improve their production capacity by utilising our knowledge and skills, and the outcomes of our research."

For more information, visit grdc.com.au



Gary Smith from Murdoch University with Professor Chris Moran of Curtin University, John Woods of GRDC, Western Australian Minister for Regional Development, Agriculture and Food Alannah MacTiernan, Senator Slade Brockman and Professor David Morrison from Murdoch University joined forces to officially opened the grains research precinct in Perth. Photo: DPIRD



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results, and in spite of drought and the impact of COVID-19, feedback indicated an underlying confidence about agriculture and, for producers, their farming businesses.

To register your interest in completing our 2021 Stakeholder Survey, please register at agrifutures.com.au

Such confidence is supported by data from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, with Australian farmgate production expected to reach \$65 billion in 2020-21 on the back of the nation's second largest winter crop and promising rainfall outlook.

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FarmReady Hub launched to address skills and labour shortages

THE Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance and FarmReady Hub have partnered to launch a comprehensive online accreditation program for jobseekers looking to enter the Australian agriculture sector.

The Pre-Induction Micro-Credential program allows prospective agriculture employees to obtain a FarmReady Card that prepares them for work on farm and opens career pathways to all the employment opportunities across Queensland's agriculture sector.

Queensland Farmers' Federation chief executive officer Dr Georgina Davis said COVID-19 had caused unprecedented labour market disruption and required new and innovative approaches for an ongoing workforce.



"Demand for casual labour is expected to peak around March, with up to 26,000 jobs going unfilled," Dr Davis said.

"While Queensland farmers have already reported \$11 million of crop losses across a variety of commodities.

"There is a significant amount of work being done to find solutions, including encouraging Australians to consider farm work, however the industry is diverse and many job applicants are

underprepared."

FarmReady Hub is designed to take the guesswork out of farm work by ensuring new employees arriving at the farm gate are correctly prepared for an agricultural job, with an understanding of specific rural workplace health and safety and biosecurity requirements.

"The program offers a skills passport for jobseekers to include their licence details, permits, letters of offer and other qualifications thereby

allowing farmers to satisfy the necessary employment administrative requirements," Dr Davis said.

"FarmReady also benefits farmers by simplifying the business hiring process and streamlines the transfer of information from workers to farmers, employment agencies and contractors."

"The FarmReady Hub accreditation program will play a role in ensuring agriculture has a resourced, fit for purpose workforce that is responsive to technological advances and potential disruption for the future productivity of the sector."

For information and to register to undertake FarmReady accreditation, visit farmreadyhub.com

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New fair-trading law needed to enhance Australia's perishable agricultural markets

AUSTRALIA'S perishable agricultural goods markets need a new fair-trading law to address harmful practices arising from bargaining power imbalances that are not covered by current laws, the ACCC has found.

The ACCC's recently released Perishable Agricultural Goods Inquiry Report recommends the introduction of an unfair trading practices prohibition, and the strengthening of the small business unfair contract term protections and the Food and Grocery Code of Conduct.

The inquiry examined markets for perishable agricultural goods, including meat products, eggs, seafood, dairy products and horticultural goods.

The ACCC analysed the factors that affect the bargaining power of farmers, processors and retailers of perishable agricultural goods, and where this can lead to economic harm.

ACCC deputy chair Mick Keogh said, "The inquiry found that a number of features of perishable agricultural goods supply chains have the potential to cause harm to suppliers and the efficiency of markets more generally."

"In most perishable agricultural goods markets, there are many farmers, but few processors or wholesalers, and even fewer major retailers.

"This makes farmers particularly vulnerable to issues stemming from limited competition at the wholesale or retail level.

"In addition the more perishable a product is the weaker the farmer's bargaining power often is," Mr Keogh said.

The ACCC heard a range of allegations about conduct by parties with strong bargaining power relative to their suppliers.

Allegations listed in the report include unilateral variations of supply terms which greatly af-

fect farmers' income, and commercial retribution for suppliers who seek a price increase or raise concerns about the conduct of the other party.

While submissions to the ACCC included allegations of harmful conduct across all perishable agricultural industries, the most serious allegations arose in the chicken meat and horticultural industries.

"We will investigate potential unfair contract terms in the chicken meat industry following this inquiry, as well as reports that some horticultural wholesalers are trading in breach of the Horticulture Code," Mr Keogh said.

The report says a lack of price transparency in markets for perishable goods can also weaken bargaining power.

This is particularly the case for farmers, who are typically not in a position to influence the prices they receive for their goods.

"The effects of imbalances in bargaining power can weaken confidence in markets, reduce incentives to invest, and result in slower productivity growth," Mr Keogh said.

The report said that certain reforms already being considered would

address some of the issues identified through the inquiry.

These include proposals to strengthen Australia's small business unfair contract terms law, and the ACCC's new small business collective bargaining class exemption, due to come into effect in early 2021.

However, the ACCC considers that these upcoming changes will not be enough to address all the significantly harmful practices identified in the inquiry.

The ACCC has therefore recommended the introduction of an economy-wide unfair trading practices prohibition to address conduct that causes significant harm to businesses.

"Australian governments and agencies are already discussing a potential prohibition on unfair trading practices, and the findings of our report are further evidence that it's needed," Mr Keogh said.

Bargaining power imbalances are also present at the wholesale level of the supply chains of perishable agricultural goods, and processors and wholesalers exist in a highly contested tough bargaining environment, according to the report.

The ACCC has recommended that the Food

and Grocery Code, which governs certain conduct by grocery retailers and wholesalers in their dealings with suppliers, be made mandatory and include penalties for contraventions.

The ACCC also recommended that governments and industries should explore measures to increase price transparency in perishable agricultural goods industries, in order to increase competition.

The inquiry found that the introduction of the mandatory Dairy Code has increased transparency of prices and contracting arrangements, and reduced barriers to farmers switching between processors, which encourages competition.

While there may be room for improvement in some aspects of the Dairy Code, the ACCC considers that it is too early to be recommending substantial changes to the Code.

The ACCC received over 80 submissions to the inquiry, more than half of which were subject to confidentiality claims.

Submissions were received from participants and representatives across many perishable goods markets and from different levels of the supply chain.



Australians care where their food comes from

RESEARCH from the National Farmers Federation shows that almost one quarter of Australians said that COVID-19 had made them more conscious of where their food comes from.

NFF president and Liverpool Plains farmer Fiona Simson said panic buying and temporary supermarket shortages had caused angst for many Australians.

"It is logical that Australians have taken a greater interest in the origin of their meat, dairy, eggs, bread, fruit, vegetables and more," Ms Simson said.

"Inquiring consumers will have been pleasantly surprised to find that up to 96 percent of the food on their supermarket shelves is home grown.

"All Australians should take comfort in the fact that Australia is one of the most food secure nations in the world.

"Every year we produce up to two thirds more food than we can consume at home."

The increased interest was greatest in older Australians, with 1 in 3 over 55 reporting to now think more about the origins of their food.

Females were also more likely to be more conscious of the source of their groceries at 31 percent, compared to men at 24 percent.

National Agriculture Day celebrates the plentiful, quality, safe and sustainable food and natural fibres grown in Australia and the farmers behind it.

"Importantly, AgDay is also an opportunity for farmers to have an ongoing conversation with consumers about how and where our food comes from," Ms Simson said.

"Supply chain disruptions and a return to home cooking brought Australians back to basics and in effect, closer to farmers.

"A deeper connection and understanding between farmers and consumers are essential to NFF's goal for agriculture to be Australia's most trusted industry by 2030."



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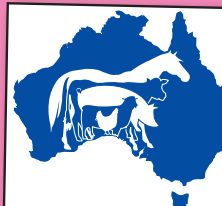


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