



# AgriFutures grow<sup>AG</sup>.

2023 Australian Innovation  
Immersion Tour to the USA

AgriFutures<sup>®</sup>  
**grow**<sup>AG</sup>

June  
2023

# Introducing

## AgriFutures grow<sup>AG</sup>. Innovation Immersion Tour

I am delighted to introduce you to AgriFutures Australia and the grow<sup>AG</sup>. Innovation Immersion Tour.

Focusing on specialty and plant-based crops, our Tour brings innovation-seeking producers, agronomists and other stakeholders together to be stimulated and connect with new approaches, technologies and partners.

One of 15 Australian national agrifood research and development funding agencies, AgriFutures also invests in and supports Australia's engagement with global agrifood innovation systems.

With significant ongoing investment in agrifood innovation in Australia, this is not just about developing technologies

and innovation in Australia - but also about accessing and adopting global technologies and innovation.

This engagement is crucial to further drive adoption and maximise value for producers, both locally and globally, and ultimately build the long-term profitability, sustainability and resilience of the global food system.

It's with this vision we created online agrifood innovation marketplace AgriFutures grow<sup>AG</sup>. and premier Asia Pacific agrifood tech event AgriFutures evoke<sup>AG</sup>.

grow<sup>AG</sup>. acts as a gateway to connect researchers, investors, and commercial partners from around the globe to Australia's agrifood innovators.

“grow<sup>AG</sup>. lifts the curtain on our homegrown innovators and showcases Australian agrifood research, organisations, innovation challenges and opportunities in one, free and easy to use location.”



growag.com lifts the curtain on our homegrown innovators and showcases Australian agrifood research, organisations, innovation challenges and opportunities in one, free and easy to use location.

And it's begun helping international collaboration opportunities relevant to Australia, find Australian partners.

Embraced by the local and global agrifood communities, the time is right for grow<sup>AG</sup>. to build on this success. Enter the inaugural AgriFutures grow<sup>AG</sup>. Innovation Immersion Tour.

I encourage our delegates to take in all the knowledge and expertise on offer; to share their industry's challenges, perspectives and tech solutions with you; absorb the tech they see in action and think about how it could be applied in Australia's

counter-seasonal environments; connect with peers like yourselves - and identify and build collaborations that will help bring these ideas, tools and connections home.

We are excited to be undertaking this inaugural Tour and would like to thank you - our international stakeholders and partners - for making an opportunity like this possible.

Beyond these few weeks, we invite you to continue to connect with the cohort around shared interests; to explore growag.com for relevant expertise and collaboration opportunities; and to visit Australia around evoke<sup>AG</sup>. in Perth, Western Australia, in February 2024.

**John Smith**  
General Manager, Levied and  
Emerging Industries  
AgriFutures Australia

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## Acknowledgment of Country

AgriFutures acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have passed away.





Oli Madgett,  
FarmLab

# AgriFutures Australia

AgriFutures Australia is one of 15 Research Development Corporations (RDCs) that service the Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) needs of Australian rural industries. We represent the research needs for 13 thriving rural industries (chicken meat, rice, honey bee and pollination, ginger, tea tree oil, pasture seeds, export fodder, thoroughbred horses, kangaroo,

buffalo, deer, goat fibre and ratite). With a head office in Wagga Wagga, NSW, we have a unique role among the RDCs as we are also responsible for investing into building the leadership skills of those who work in the industry, researching issues that affect the whole of agriculture, identifying and supporting emerging rural industries and engaging in the global agrifood system.

## Our vision

To grow the long-term prosperity of Australian rural industries and communities through:

- Investing in research, development and extension programs to meet the current challenges and future needs for our 13 rural industries.
- Investing in research, development and extension which aim to drive the growth and development of emerging, high-potential agricultural rural industries such as sesame, industrial hemp, insect protein and seaweed.
- Developing and delivering programs that respond to the specific workforce and leadership needs of those working in the Australian agricultural sector.
- Delivering programs that future-proof Australian rural industries by identifying and responding to national challenges and opportunities which impact the Australian agricultural sector.
- Engaging with the global agrifood innovation system to ensure Australia is a leader in accessing, adopting, developing and exporting agrifood technologies and innovation.

## AgriFutures 16:5:5 Roadmap consists of 16 priorities across five focus areas to be delivered over five years (2022-2027).

### Our Industries



In partnership with each of our industries, create value by:

1

Maximising the return on investment for your R&D levy.

4

Supporting our industries to prepare for and thrive into the future.

2

Listening to, engaging, collaborating and consulting with our industries.

5

Identifying, linking, and testing new technologies, practices, and innovations with the potential for our industries to uptake and adopt.

3

Delivering research and innovation that addresses the specific needs of each of our industries.

6

Assisting our industries to enhance their industry stewardship and build community and consumer confidence.

### Emerging Industries



Grow the value and diversity of Australia's rural economy by:

7

Driving the growth or development of emerging, high-potential rural industries.

8

Identifying new revenue streams.

### Workforce and Leadership



Assist in the development of the agricultural workforce by:

9

Understanding and responding to the future workforce needs of Australia's rural industries.

11

Supporting people in Australia's rural industries to build their motivation and skills to lead change.

10

Attracting and retaining a workforce that will ensure Australia's rural industries are future ready.

12

Responding to the specific workforce and leadership needs of our levied and emerging industries.

### National Challenges and Opportunities



Future-proof Australian rural industries by:

13

Identifying, understanding, and responding to national challenges and opportunities impacting Australian rural industries.

14

Facilitating collaboration across sectors and organisations including other RDCs and AIA.

15

Fostering responsible industry stewardship and building community trust.

### Global Innovation Networks



Engage with the global agrifood innovation system by:

16

Ensuring Australia is a leader in accessing and adopting, as well as developing and exporting, agrifood technologies and innovation.



# The online agrifood innovation marketplace

Explore, find and connect with expertise, research and investment opportunities from Australia and around the world in one, easy to use location.

## Why engage with grow<sup>AG</sup>?

Corporates and investors	Seeking innovation, investment opportunities and research partners.
Startups and solution providers	Looking for investors, strategic partners and new opportunities or ways to validate, develop and scale solutions.
Researchers and funding bodies	Looking to identify partners and opportunities, avoid research duplication and increase the impact, translation and commercialisation of R&D.
Global markets	Looking to engage, connect, understand and invest in the global agrifood innovation system.

 [connect@growag.com](mailto:connect@growag.com)

 [@growag](https://www.linkedin.com/company/growag)

 [@growAGglobal](https://twitter.com/growAGglobal)

## Engage with our global audience



**137,000**  
users from  
197 countries



**2,800+**  
research  
projects



**2/3**  
of users from  
Australian markets



**18,000**  
subscribers to  
grow<sup>AG</sup> updates

## Driving connection – deal flow



**1,000+**  
enquiries/  
connections



**245**  
commercial  
opportunities



**160**  
early stages  
discussions



**50**  
negotiations



**18**  
deals  
confirmed

Supported by a unique concierge team to enhance connections and drive relationships and partnerships.

## Submit to amplify → [growag.com/submit](https://growag.com/submit)



Investment opportunities



Innovation challenges



Research opportunities



Research projects



Commercialisation  
opportunities



Organisation profiles

Visit [growag.com](https://growag.com)

# Arianna Sippel

Senior Manager grow<sup>AG</sup>.  
Agrifutures Australia

**Agrifood tech innovation**



Arianna is responsible for driving AgriFutures grow<sup>AG</sup> (growag.com) the online innovation marketplace that showcases world leading agrifood research and investment opportunities in one, easy to use location.

grow<sup>AG</sup> enables interested parties around Australia and around the world to identify and connect with potential collaborators, investors, ideas and opportunities.

Arianna previously led Austrade's global agtech strategy, working to identify and connect investors, Australian businesses and stakeholders with local and international opportunities since 2015.

Arianna helped create and drive the Agriculture 4.0 initiative #AusAg40 and led Australian agritech missions to the USA in 2018 and 2019.

✉ arianna.sippel@agrifutures.com.au

🌐 growag.com

🐦 @AriannaSippel

🐦 @growAGglobal

in Arianna Sippel



in AgriFutures grow<sup>AG</sup>.



# John Smith

General Manager Levied and Emerging Industries  
Agrifutures Australia

**Levied and Emerging Industries**



John has 28 years of research, development and extension experience within the rice and cotton farming systems split between southern NSW and southern QLD. His research focussed on increasing productivity and resource use efficiency by better matching fertiliser and water application to crop physiology and developing any findings in commercial production scenarios.

In his role as General Manager Levied and Emerging Industries for AgriFutures Australia he oversees the RD&E investment programs across approximately 50 diverse levied and emerging rural industries. A common theme across these industries in which they manage research, development and extension will require productivity advances that meet community and consumer experience.

✉ john.smith@agrifutures.com.au

🌐 agrifutures.com.au

🐦 @AgriFuturesAU

in AgriFutures Australia



in John Smith





## Nicole Legovich

Senior Manager, Information  
Systems and Business Improvements  
**Agrifutures Australia**

### Information Systems and Business



Nicole joined AgriFutures Australia in February 2018 and is responsible for business improvements, as well as developing and maintaining the information systems used to support research activity and associated programs. With more than 15 years in the private sector, Nicole holds a Bachelor of Media, a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Degree and a Master of Marketing.

Nicole's background in publishing and marketing have been heavily grounded in technology and she brings these skills to her role at AgriFutures Australia. Her focus is on leveraging technology to provide better outcomes for stakeholders, both internal and external, so that AgriFutures Australia can continue to deliver high quality research for their industries.

✉ [nicole.legovich@agrifutures.com.au](mailto:nicole.legovich@agrifutures.com.au)

🌐 [agrifutures.com.au](http://agrifutures.com.au)

in Nicole Legovich



## Tim Schmidt

President of Australian Hemp Council  
**Australian Hemp Council**

### Industrial Hemp



Tim grew up in the Northern Tablelands of NSW on his family farm, a sheep, beef and cropping enterprise, after attending Orange Agricultural College and participating in the Minnesota Agricultural Student Trainee Programme. After managing the farm, Tim moved to QLD for a career in rural retail management specialising in agronomy and animal health management. In 2001 he and his family moved to Tasmania and purchased 'Woodlands', 358ha in northern Tasmania trading cattle, growing potatoes, and growing hemp for the last 16 years.

Over the last 8 years Tim has been advocating for the Tasmanian hemp industry through the Tasmanian Hemp Association, being the founding president of the Australian Hemp Council. The family has also set up a small business 'The Tassie Hemp Shop' growing, processing, and selling their own hemp products.

### Why I'm participating

Having been dedicated to Australian agriculture for many years, I thought the opportunity to see how common challenges for agriculture are been dealt with in the US. Insights gained from the immersion tour I believe may be helpful in improving systems and strategies in our region. I will also be seeking out any relevant developments relating to the US hemp industry, being of keen interest to me.

✉ [tim.schmidt@australianhempcouncil.org.au](mailto:tim.schmidt@australianhempcouncil.org.au)

🌐 [australianhempcouncil.org.au](http://australianhempcouncil.org.au)

in Tim Schmidt



in Australian Hemp Council





# Cal Callope

Yumburra Program Manager  
**Black Duck Foods**

## Native grains and foods



Cal Callope is a Butchulla, Anguthimri person, with family ties to Cherbourg and Mapoon mission. Living and working on Wurundjeri Country for over 9 years. Working in Aboriginal organisations within child and family welfare, health and native foods. The lens she brings has been formed by the often-silenced perspectives, knowledges, systems, and narratives of Aboriginal communities that she has lived and grown within and the blakfellas she has learnt from.

Black Duck foods is an Aboriginal social enterprise that wants to influence the direction of Australian agriculture toward a more sustainable future, a more inclusive future for Aboriginal peoples and the introduction of our domesticated food products onto the market.

### Why I'm participating

This opportunity will support our continuing understanding of our global context and solutions. It will provide a space to build relationships that ensures that Aboriginal knowledges and voices are included in these spaces, but also to build on those knowledges. How we can work together, to build solutions around how to share the land given our shared history.

✉ [caley@blackduckfoods.org](mailto:caley@blackduckfoods.org)

🌐 [blackduckfoods.com.au](http://blackduckfoods.com.au)

**in** Black Duck Foods



# Ry Collins

Chief Executive Officer  
**Bowen Gumlu Growers Association**

## Ginger, Hemp, Jackfruit and producer technology uptake



Ry Collins is the current CEO of Bowen Gumlu Growers Association and chief advocate of North Queensland's \$1.2 Billion fresh produce industry. An influential and strategic industry leader, Ry seeks to catalyse the future growth and prosperity of rural and regional industries and his community through collaboration and business transformation.

With over 20 years' experience working at a senior level across the agriculture, development and public sector industries, Ry has a strong business acumen with operational, project and c-suite skillset. Ry holds post-graduate qualifications in Business Administration from University of Southern Queensland, is an AICD Graduate and has completed further professional development in finance and strategy.

Ry is a Director on industry and economic development boards including Greater Whitsunday Alliance, Regional Development Australia and the Queensland Horticultural Council.

### Why I'm participating

I'm seeking to gain new knowledge, experience and connections that will assist me in developing new ideas and innovative solutions to address our industries' biggest opportunities and challenges. These include increasing producer technology adoption, improving industry connectivity and trade, investigating new options to address pest and disease issues, delivering valuable and globally relevant extension to producers, and enhancing best practice for sustainable agricultural production.

✉ [rycollins@bowengumlugrowers.com.au](mailto:rycollins@bowengumlugrowers.com.au)

🌐 [bowengumlugrowers.com.au](http://bowengumlugrowers.com.au)

**in** Ry Collins

**in** Bowen Gumlu  
Growers Association



# Tim Cassegrain

Director  
Cassegrain Tea Tree Oil

## Tea Tree Oil



Tim Cassegrain was born and raised on a dairy farm on the mid-north coast of NSW. Tim completed a Bachelor degree in Agriculture and Business, and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Agri-Commerce. Tim has amassed over 15 years of experience working in various sectors of agriculture.

He has worked in the dairy, beef, tea tree oil, cotton, grain, and hemp industries, gaining valuable knowledge as a worker, manager, and investor. Currently, Tim focuses most of his time on the tea tree oil business, hemp, beef and grain industries, using his experience as a base to identify and introduce innovation in these sectors.

### Why I'm participating

In order to stay competitive and maintain profitability, Australian farmers rely heavily on innovation to tackle the ever-changing challenges in the industry. A key tool to achieving this is through the collaboration and exchange of knowledge and technology among different agricultural sectors. Joining this tour presents an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals in agriculture and observe innovative biological practices that can further our goal of advancing through innovation for the purpose of achieving prosperity.

✉ [tjcassegrain@catto.com.au](mailto:tjcassegrain@catto.com.au)

 Tim Cassegrain



# Upendra Shekhawat

Horticulture Group Leader  
Northern Territory Department of Industry,  
Tourism and Trade

## Jackfruit, Vanilla, Industrial Hemp



Dr. Upendra Shekhawat has 20 years of experience in molecular biology, crop improvement, and allied agricultural sciences. He was awarded a PhD in life sciences from the Homi Bhabha National Institute in Mumbai, India. After a fulfilling career in hands-on research at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and Queensland University of Technology.

Dr. Shekhawat has recently taken up a senior position in the NT Department of Industry, Tourism, and Trade in Darwin. Dr. Shekhawat is spearheading industry-driven RD&E projects in a multitude of horticultural commodities. His professional philosophy is to leverage innovation, diversification, and smart farming to boost the profitability of growers and supply-chain stakeholders.

### Why I'm participating

The AgriFutures grow<sup>AG</sup>. International Immersion Tour will be hugely beneficial to me and my employer, the NT Plant Industries. It will expose me to the most recent trends in global agrifood technology and enable me to discover and implement potential interventions to alleviate some of the NT's challenges.

The knowledge I acquire from the 2023 Salinas Biological Summit will expand our understanding of the available biological solutions required to introduce climate-smart agricultural practises in northern Australia. The ideas I pick up during my interactions on the field trips to Central Valley horticultural produce growers will allow me to communicate much-needed grower knowledge to our stakeholders across the NT.

 [industry.nt.gov.au](http://industry.nt.gov.au)

✉ [upendra.shekhawat@nt.gov.au](mailto:upendra.shekhawat@nt.gov.au)

 Upendra Shekhawat



# Joshua Mackie

Technical Services Manager  
**Gilmac**

## Export Fodder



Dr Josh Mackie is a biologist working on agricultural problems and opportunities. He has a PhD in marine biology from University of Melbourne, and ten years research and teaching experience, including at California State Universities. He is passionate about improving the ecological compatibility of agribusinesses.

Currently at Australian Hay Exporter, Gilmac Pty Ltd, Josh develops NIR calibrations and conducts research on feed enhancement. He has started Gcology, a company that assesses livestock nutrition through their dung. Other projects include examination of methane mitigation in ruminants and use of recycled organic inputs in cropping systems.

### Why I'm participating

My objective is to gain insight into emerging technologies that enhance plant growth and processing efficiency, as well as opportunities for achieving environmental benefits in the production of fodder for livestock and through the partitioning of residues to maintain soil health and for energy generation. I also aim to share the findings of this exploration with the agricultural industry and research community in Australia. Having transitioned from research biology and teaching to agriculture five years ago, I believe that this experience will provide valuable networking opportunities and insights into agricultural needs and practices.

✉ [joshua.mackie@gilmac.com.au](mailto:joshua.mackie@gilmac.com.au)

🌐 [gilmac.com.au](http://gilmac.com.au)

in Joshua Mackie



# Mark Spees

Industry Service & Delivery Manager  
**Hort Innovation**

## Horticulture and Specialty Crops



Mark has a passion for creating business development, marketing and strategic investment plans that help pivot segments of the Australian horticultural industry into sustainable growth cycles. His responsibilities include stakeholder consultation with peak industry bodies (PIBs), growers, domestic and international researchers, universities and governments.

Mark creates high trust environments to unlock collaboration and partnerships opportunities for investments that align with industry 5-year Strategic Investment Plans (SIP) 2022-2026 for research, development, extension (RD&E) and marketing.

His current portfolio includes Vegetables, Onions and Melons. Previous portfolios have included temperate fruits such as Citrus, Table Grapes, Apples & Pear, Cherry and Summerfruit, along with Potatoes and Mushrooms.

### Why I'm participating

Hort Innovation Australia is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australia's horticulture industry. Its primary function is creating value for horticulture growers and those across the horticulture supply chain.

Each year, Hort invests more than \$120 million in R&D, marketing and trade programs on behalf of industry. Through these investments, we are working to improve the productivity, farm gate profitability and global competitiveness of specific industries, and Australian horticulture as a whole.

Key focus areas for collaboration include solutions and innovation that supports: Enhancing and safeguarding supply, sustainability priorities and research needs to support social and environmental stewardship and accelerating local and global demand.

✉ [mark.spees@horticulture.com.au](mailto:mark.spees@horticulture.com.au)

🌐 [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)

in Mark Spees



in Hort Innovation





## Scott Lewis

Managing Director  
**Lewis Horticulture**

### Pomegranate



Scott Lewis is a second-generation managing director of his family business Lewis Horticulture which established in 1973. Lewis Horticulture is located on a 75-acre site on the Adelaide Plains in South Australia, 30km north of the City of Adelaide. On this site Scott and his team operate a wholesale production nursery, manage mother stock plants (genetics), propagation, growing, sales and distribution nationally.

The business supplies Pomegranates, Olives and Figs to commercial growers and a broad range of ornamental plants to retailers, councils, and amenity landscapers.

#### Why I'm participating

The opportunity to visit some of the largest pomegranate and horticultural growing regions in America is of the most interest. Seeing the scale, innovation, technologies is all exciting. Being able to discuss pitfalls and the lessons learnt during the journey of these operations is even more exciting.

The Salinas Biological conference is of great interest to me and will provide significant learning opportunities. We currently utilise a range of beneficial biologicals in our production systems and having a greater understanding of what else is available and how it functions is a key learning goal of my company. Efficient use of resources is a key component to profitable production and I see practical utilisation of biologicals as an essential part of this process.

✉ scott@lewishorticulture.com.au

🌐 lewishorticulture.com.au

in Scott Lewis



## Frank D'Emden

Innovation Lead  
**Living Farm**

### Producer Technology Uptake



Frank has over 15 years' experience in Ag Tech innovation, leading teams that have pioneered digital soil mapping and developed award-winning software for the fertiliser division of one of Australia's largest public companies, Wesfarmers. His post-graduate research involved bioeconomic modelling and the adoption of Integrated Weed Management and No-Till Farming.

Frank's role at Living Farm involves business-level digital transformation, the development of Machine Learning applications for field research and nature-based carbon sequestration R&D. Frank is the immediate past president of the Society of Precision Agriculture Australia and leads sustainability initiatives at Grace Farm which is a premium wine producer in the Margaret River region.

#### Why I'm participating

I am joining the Immersion Tour to establish connections with biological input suppliers who may have appropriate solutions for various ag industries in Australia, and to offer field trial services for APVMA registrations and potentially a route to market for such suppliers.

Secondly, I am aiming to provide AgTech and carbon/renewable energy startups/scaleups with product testing in the Australian market, and if these solutions have a fit in Australia, provide a route to market. I am also aiming to gain an understanding of the potential US market for AgTech and carbon monitoring, reporting and verification solutions that Living Farm and other Australian AgTech providers are developing.

✉ frank@livingfarm.com.au

🌐 livingfarm.com.au

🐦 @frankdemden

🐦 @Living\_Farm

in Frank D'Emden



# Reuben Stonier

Farm Manager  
**Templeton Ginger**

**Ginger**



Reuben is a ginger grower from Maryborough, Queensland. Reuben's passion for farming started early on with his family working in the dairy industry. After school, he completed a cheffing apprenticeship but missed the farming industry so seventeen years ago, started with the Templeton family as a farmhand.

Now, managing their business expansion into Maryborough, farming various crops including ginger, sugar cane and soybean. He aspires to improve on farming practices, biosecurity and using technology as an aid to increase crop yields.

## Why I'm participating

Personally, participation in the immersion tour will further develop my knowledge and interest in implementing practical biological farming practices. Learning about the latest technology and research will help guide improvements in our farming practices for improving soil health.

Production of quality and high yielding ginger is underpinned by a healthy soil. Information that will be learnt from this tour will improve our company farming practices as well as other farmers in the industry by supporting industry extension activities.



✉ reuben@templeton.net.au

🌐 templeton.net.au

# Lindsay Callaway

Owner and Managing Director  
**Warral Maldon**

**Honey Bees**



Today, with more than 3,500 hives, the distinctive brand positioning of "*Bees love Warral, and we love bees*" goes back to 1896 and to Lindsay's great-great grandfather, making Lindsay a fifth-generation owner.

From hive production to transportation. From equipment standards to biosecurity. From honey to beeswax processing. From queen-bee breeding to quality standards. From treetop to tabletop.

"For generations, most people have had a distant view of beekeeping. Today, there's a lot of interest in bees and how we need bees for one third of our crops. And, of course, for yummy honey."

## Why I'm participating

It's far greater than I can articulate or understand. But my reason is staring us all in the face - one-third of the world's food source. To fulfill my business's *purpose* and *values* in 1. producing honey to global standards 2. ensuring one-third of the world's food source.

The tour will allow me to see some of the world's best at work. The industry needs visions and seeds-of-thought sewn for future harvest. I'm wanting the tour to challenge me, to grow me, and to help me play a positive future role of apiculture within Australia. And the world's future.

✉ lindsay@warralmaldon.com.au

🌐 warralmaldon.com.au

in Lindsay Callaway





Her current on-farm projects include scaling up technology adoption to increase efficiency in a challenging labour market and bringing a biological ARG management solution to market.

The farm and facility tours will enable evaluation of innovation within intensive agriculture, broadacre and horticultural systems to assess potential solutions as well as meeting farmers to find their crucial decision points used for adopting a particular solution.

 vibrantwheatbelt@gmail.com

 @farmKwren



**in** Karen Smith



[illegible]

AgriFutures<sup>®</sup>  
**evoke<sup>AG</sup>**

**20-21 February 2024**  
**Perth, Western Australia**

**Tickets on sale mid-2023**  
**evokeag.com**

## AgriFutures evoke<sup>AG</sup>. - Asia Pacific's premier agrifood tech event and network

AgriFutures evoke<sup>AG</sup>. is not just an event, it's a curated experience to inspire, engage, gather and connect the Asia Pacific region's agrifood tech community.

Born from insights garnered in the development of the AgriFutures Strategic R&D Plan 2017-2022, evoke<sup>AG</sup>. is a physical and online meeting place to explore challenges, ideas, insights, investment opportunities, and partnerships in agrifood innovation. evoke<sup>AG</sup>. connects global thought leaders, startups with customers and investors to attract investment into innovation and connect technologies back to farmers.

### AgriFutures evoke<sup>AG</sup>.

- Creates one arena to showcase innovation in the region and from around the world.
- Brings a global lens to Australia, New Zealand, and Asia as a hotbed for agrifood tech and related research excellence.
- Increases the capability of Australia, New Zealand, and Asia's agriculture ecosystems.

- Attracts the entire ecosystem – thought leaders, farmers, innovators, accelerators, researchers, universities, corporates, government, and investors.
- Provides a platform for startups to showcase their technologies to create deal flow and investment into the sector.
- Positions Australia, New Zealand, and Asia as active players in the international agrifood tech ecosystem.
- Builds a productive bridge between research and industry.

evoke<sup>AG</sup>. has rapidly become a 'must' attend, annual event for the global agrifood tech community. Supported by a digital platform, evokeag.com provides innovative news and ideas from across the world that elevates the conversation and connects the agrifood innovation community – every day.

We look forward continuing the conversations at evoke<sup>AG</sup>. 2024 in Perth, Western Australia on 20-21 February 2024.

Powered by



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Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development



**Explore, find and connect**  
with Australian agrifood tech  
innovation expertise, research  
and investment opportunities.

Visit [growag.com](https://growag.com)

[agrifutures.com.au](https://agrifutures.com.au)