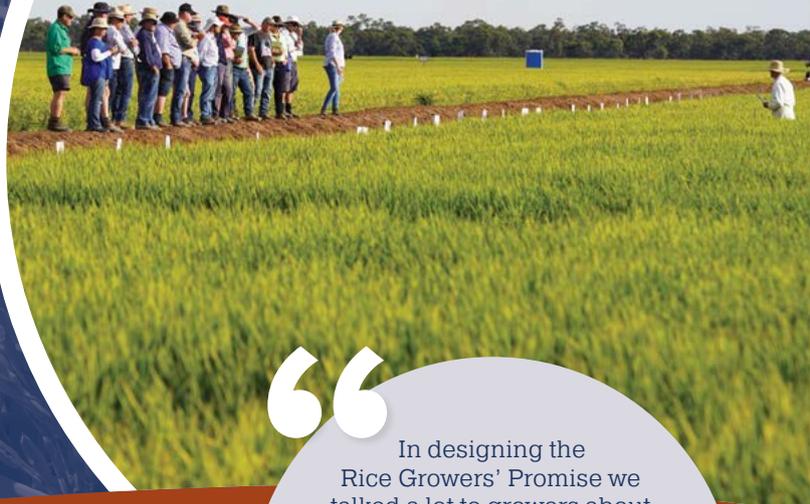


Stories

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Rice growers commit to sustainability 'promise'



“ In designing the Rice Growers' Promise we talked a lot to growers about what resonated with them. Trust and legacy were the biggest things — they want the consumer to know how well they grow their rice and that they want to be able to pass the farm on to their children. ”

Kimberley Beer, Murray Local Land Services

Multiple variations of an eye-catching new logo that attests to the Australian rice industry's commitment to global sustainability are about to be tested in the local market to gauge consumers' feedback.

The 'Rice Growers' Promise' is a key component of the Sustainability Credentials project, a collaboration between Murray and Riverina Local Land Services, SunRice, the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia and 21 rice growing businesses. The project aims to set locally applicable and internationally accepted sustainability credentials for the industry.

Kimberley Beer from Murray LLS says the Sustainability Credentials project sparked a surprising amount of interest amongst rice farmers and the wider industry, acknowledging the need to have proof of their commitment to sustainable practices for consumers, stakeholders and regulatory authorities.

“We have a long way to go before it's a fully functioning sustainability framework but we're into the design phase now and we're about to test variations of the sustainability logo in the marketplace, to get consumer feedback,” Kimberley says.

“We had a lot of discussions with the grower group about what resonated with them and they said trust — consumers being aware of how well they grow the rice; and legacy — the ability to pass on the farm to their children.”

The Rice Growers' Promise is based on three pillars that tell stakeholders what sustainability means to the rice industry:

- **Innovation** — continuous improvement through industry led innovation and technology;
- **Quality** — proudly producing fresh and trusted quality food that is directly traceable from paddock to plate; and
- **Community** — showcasing our passion and pride to build prosperous and safe communities for our children and future generations.

LOCAL STANDARD ALIGNS WITH UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The rice industry adapted the internationally recognised Sustainable Rice Platform's (SRP) Standard for rice growing to the Australian rice system by creating a National Australian Interpretation Guideline (NIG) of the SRP Standard, which is still currently in development. The NIG has helped guide the development of the Rice Growers' Promise, aligning it with multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Kimberley says while farmers were initially wary of the potential for more paperwork, much of the required data is already available through SunRice, a vertically integrated business that is majority-owned by growers.

The Sustainability Credentials project also allows for collaboration with other commodity groups to enable integration of other sustainability frameworks, as rice growers often have diverse enterprises with a mix of livestock, grain and/or cotton.

One of the big advantages for the industry, she says, is that rice growers are keen to help each other.

“Rice is an inclusive industry. Growers have their own extension program and many are in a WhatsApp group where they post photos and ask for advice and feedback. Our goal is to set the standard and drive continuous improvement to lift industry benchmarks to absolute best practice.”

Murray and Riverina LLS are proud to partner with rice growers, SunRice and the RGA to develop the Rice Growers' Promise, a commitment to an Australian sustainability standard for rice growing that is aligned with multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals. Funded by the Australian Government National Landcare Program.

LEARN MORE

- ➔ www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/murray/programs-and-projects/sustainability-credentials