

NRM and industry partnerships desktop study

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Scope and Limitations

This report has been prepared by the authors for NRM Regions Australia in good faith on the basis of available information. While the information contained in the document has been formulated with all due care, the users of the document must obtain their own advice and conduct their own investigation and assessments of any proposals they are considering, in the light of their own individual circumstances.

The opinions conclusions and any key recommendations in this report are based on assumptions made by the authors described in this report. The authors disclaim any liabilities arising from any of the assumptions being incorrect.

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Summary

NRM Regions Australia is leading a project that aims to increase the number of partnerships between NRM regional organisations and agricultural industries. Funded by the Australian Government and led by NRM Regions Australia, the purpose of the *NRM and industry partnerships* project is to “facilitate agricultural industries in increasing their market access”.

The *NRM and industry partnerships desktop study* is one component of this larger project. Its purpose is to inform other components of work in the *NRM and industry partnerships* project, such as their communities of practice, as well as providing material that can be used to inform and encourage NRM and industry partnerships.

The desktop study is a collation of 20 case studies of existing or recent sustainable agriculture partnerships between NRM regions and industry stakeholders. The industry stakeholders include peak industry councils, producer groups, Research and Development Corporations, agribusiness, processors, agriculture consultancies and individual producers.

The selected case studies represent a wide range of industries, geographic location and scale. They highlight the breadth, quality and variety of partnerships being implemented by NRM organisations in partnership with industry across Australia.

The case studies were analysed to identify common partnership attributes, drivers, and processes with the aim of identifying mechanisms that could be implemented to increase the number of partnerships between NRM regional organisations and agricultural industries.

Key findings

An initial analysis of the 20 cases studies identified several attributes important to the success of many of the partnerships:

- Co-benefits – environmental and productivity outcomes
- Commitment to co-design principles at the initiation and/or implementation phase
- Shared understanding and a common purpose
- Adaptive project management
- Market access drivers
- History of working together
- High levels of trust.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from analysis of the 20 case studies, the following actions are recommended for consideration by NRM Regions Australia. These actions will help support and build partnerships between NRM regional organisations and industry stakeholders to facilitate adoption of recognised sustainable farming practices.

1. Encourage and support NRM regional organisations to:

- Identify and communicate linkages between their Regional Plan sustainable agriculture and climate change strategic priorities and industry sustainability framework priorities when initiating projects with industry organisations. Appendix 1, *Australian Agriculture Industry Sustainability Frameworks* is a starting point for NRM regional organisations. The information will need to be updated as industries further develop their frameworks.
 - Actively promote the productivity and economic co-benefits of adopting sustainable management practices when initiating partnerships with industry.
 - Promote their skills and expertise in management, enhancement and monitoring of biodiversity including threatened species.
2. Provide opportunities to build skills and capacity within NRM regional organisations in:
- implementing co-design principles when initiating and implementing projects with industry stakeholders.
 - establishing and maintaining partnerships with industry organisations, including the private sector.

One way this could be achieved is through training support, workshops and/or mentoring either directly or through Communities of Practice.

3. Build understanding of how market access/social licence drivers are impacting Australian agriculture and how different sustainability reporting frameworks and approaches are being used by corporations, financial organisations and industry. Increased understanding may assist in building partnerships focused on addressing market access requirements and, in particular, partnerships with the private sector. Biodiversity and climate change are the key material risks from an international market access perspective.

Potential activities include producing a series of webinars featuring talks by corporate and industry sustainability managers and/or supporting a Community of Practice that includes corporate and financial sustainability managers. Examples of relevant reporting frameworks and approaches include the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Taskforce for Climate-related Financial Disclosure, Sustainable Sourcing and Natural Capital.

4. Pilot the concept of being ‘project ready’ by facilitating workshops and activities to support relevant NRM regional bodies and industry stakeholders to co-develop implementation plans for sustainability framework targets. Depending on the topic, these workshops could be at a regional or national scale.

The workshops would assist in building networks between industry and NRM regional organisations and would help develop an understanding of each party’s knowledge, skills, resources and perspectives.

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Background

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Agriculture markets, including export markets, are increasingly interested in knowing how the product they purchase/import is produced. For example, is it produced using sustainable farming practices including addressing climate risk? In addition, some export markets are signalling potential trade barriers with respect to management of carbon emissions and biodiversity.

Underpinning the *NRM and industry partnerships* project is the assumption that producers and industries that can provide evidence they are using sustainable farming practices will have a market advantage.

Many NRM regional organisations have, or have previously developed, partnerships with industry stakeholders to facilitate the uptake of sustainable farm management practices. While many of these partnerships do not mention industry sustainability framework targets or market access as specific outcomes, these partnerships have the potential to address market access drivers more explicitly.

The purpose of the *NRM and industry partnerships desktop study* is to identify the strengths of existing partnerships between NRM regional organisations and recommend actions that could be implemented to increase the number of NRM and industry partnerships. The outputs will inform other components of work in the larger *NRM and industry partnerships* project, activities of NRM Regions Australia, such as their communities of practice, as well as providing material that can be used to inform and encourage NRM and industry partnerships.

The *NRM and industry partnerships* project aligns with the MOU between NFF and NRM Regions Australia and the goal for regional NRM organisations to help agricultural industries implement their Industry Sustainability frameworks, and the Australian Farm Biodiversity Certification Scheme Trial.

Why the focus on partnership approaches?

Partnerships, at their best, offer a model of working that leverages the skills and resources of the different partners in a way that is designed to deliver better outcomes than if the parties were to operate individually.

The Oxford Dictionary definition of a partnership is *an on-going working relationship between people or organisations where risks and benefits are shared*. This dictionary definition is regarded as too narrow for the purposes of this review because the success of partnerships is dependent on ‘how’ they work, as well as ‘what’ they do.

Governments in Australia have an increasing emphasis on partnerships. The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is taking an active role in facilitating more multi-stakeholder partnering. The aim is to bring together the unique strengths and resources of

diverse partners to have more impact and achieve more sustainable outcomes for the environment than each partner could by acting alone.

State governments are also focusing on partnership approaches. In Victoria, the 'Our Catchments, Our Communities' strategy has been developed with the Department of Environment, Land Water & Planning (DELWP) in partnership with Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs).

In this review, partnerships between NRM agencies, government departments and the agriculture, aquaculture, and seafood sectors were explored. Many interpretations of the word 'partnership' were uncovered, with the term often being used to refer to a wide range of collaborative mechanisms, including alliances, consortiums and coordinated networks.

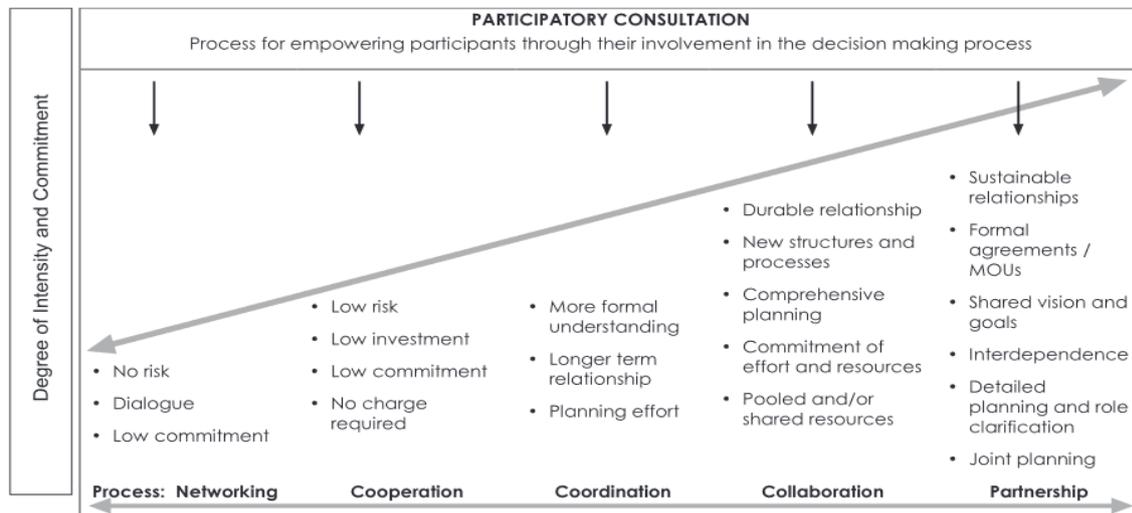
The Partnership Brokers Association identifies 10 key attributes for the 'how' of effective partnering. These are:

1. A clear understanding between the partners of the word 'partnership'
2. Agreement to a shared vision and common purpose
3. Account and allowance being made for individual partners' interests.
4. The co-creation of design, decisions and solutions
5. Commitment to sharing risks as well as benefits
6. Every partner contributes resources (whether tangible or intangible)
7. Partners share decision-making and leadership responsibilities
8. Partners commit to mutual/horizontal accountability
9. Partners work together to develop a principled approach to their partnering endeavours
10. Attention is paid to the partnering process as well as the partnership's projects.

Types of partnerships

The Continuum of Joint Effort developed by Success Works in 2002¹ offers a starting point to understand the level of participatory consultation and degree of commitment displayed in the different partnership approaches of the case study projects.

Continuum of Joint Effort



@ Success Works 2002

Working towards a sustainable future

Global context

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call for action by all countries and interested parties in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go together with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests².

The UN SDGs underpin many sustainability reporting frameworks and commercial, government and not-for-profit organisations are increasingly aligning their sustainability commitments to the SDGs. Australian agriculture sustainability frameworks are aligned with the SDGs. Corporate farming and major food and drink companies also reference the SDGs in their sustainability reports including NAB, Danone, McDonalds, Olam, Syngenta and Wesfarmers.

¹Victorian Council of Social Service, *Partnership Practice Guide: Guide 1, Preparing to Partner*

<https://vcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/VCOSS-Guide-1-Preparing-to-Partner.pdf>

²United Nations, 2015. *The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Australia's progress toward the SDGs 2030 targets is captured on the Australian Government's Reporting Platform on the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (SDGs)³.

Market access drivers for sustainability and climate reporting

Governments and stock exchanges in some countries have mandated the reporting of aspects of sustainability including carbon emissions. Ninety-six percent of the world's largest 250 corporations now report on their sustainability performance⁴ and these corporations are increasingly seeking information on the sustainability metrics of their suppliers including producers. A good example of this direction is Unilever's sustainable sourcing commitment⁵. Sustainability measures are required to access some markets, for example the EU Renewable Energy Directive has requirements for Australian growers supplying canola for biodiesel to be audited for their emissions reduction⁶.

The Task Force for Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)⁷ was established in 2015 to provide a framework for investors, lenders and insurers to assess how a company or business will endure or even grow as the climate changes, regulations evolve, new technologies emerge and customer behaviour shifts. TCFD reporting is now supported by more than 1000 public and private sector organisations including major corporations, national governments, central banks, financial firms, asset managers, regulators, stock exchanges and credit rating agencies. With Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) investment becoming mainstream, it is highly likely the TCFD framework will be more widely adopted.

Australian context

NRM regional organisations

Australia has 56 regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations. They are a mix of government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) that are responsible for delivering national priorities for natural resource management.

Each regional NRM plans and delivers programs that support healthy and productive country, viable communities, and sustainable industries. NRM regional organisations are committed to operating under the Principles of Integrated Natural Resource Management⁸. These include:

- Building environmental, economic and social capital
- Localism

³ Australian Government's Reporting Platform on the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (SDGs). <https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/>

⁴ *The time has come*, KPMG Survey of Sustainability Reporting, December 2020.

<https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/11/the-time-has-come-survey-of-sustainability-reporting.html>

⁵ Unilever, Sustainable Sourcing. <https://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/reducing-environmental-impact/sustainable-sourcing/>

⁶ Sustainable Grains Australia, *Certifying canola as sustainable for the European market: A practical guide for growers* http://www.australianoilseeds.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/17891/R-003_Sustainable_Canola_Fact_Sheet_V3_07Sep20.pdf

⁷ TCFD Task Force on Climate -related Financial disclosures <https://www.fsb-tcf.org/about/>

⁸ History of Natural Resource Management organisations. <https://nrmregionsaustralia.com.au/history-of-nrm/>

- Strategic and integrated regional planning
- Knowledge-based and innovative
- Sound governance and performance systems
- Diversity of approaches.

NRM regional organisations have a long history of forming partnerships with agriculture industries to achieve common goals. Often these partnerships are with smaller industry stakeholder groups, reflecting the localised nature of NRM regional organisation priorities.

Industry organisations

Agriculture industries in Australia encompass a wide range of advocacy and RD&E organisations. These include peak industry councils, multi-industry advocacy groups that are state or regionally based, Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) some of which include advocacy in their role, producer groups with an interest in RD&E, and single-issue producer groups.

Each of these organisations has its own strategic priorities and plans and its approach to sustainability and climate change issues will differ depending on its operating context.

The RDCs lead the development of sector and cross-sector RD&E strategies that form schedules to the National Primary Industries Research and Development Framework⁹. The intent is that the industry strategies draw on input from their internal and external stakeholders to identify key RD&E gaps and strategies to address them. These strategies include actions to address natural resource management issues and climate change. There is no common pool of funding to implement the strategies identified by the cross-sector and sector RD&E plans.

Industry Sustainability Frameworks

Several Australian agriculture industries have developed or are in the process of developing industry sustainability frameworks. These frameworks detail the sustainability topics deemed material risks to the industry, and the goals, indicators and metrics identified by industry stakeholders to address and report against these topics. Some sustainability frameworks track and report performance against indicators annually, others less frequently.

These frameworks have been developed through extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders and represent industry sustainability goals and indicators at the time of development. The industry stakeholders involved in their development include peak industry councils, processors, RDCs, and producers.

The purpose of the frameworks is twofold. One is to meet the growing expectation of customers, consumers, investors, and communities that agriculture production is sustainable by telling the story of how the industry is addressing sustainability issues. The second purpose is to inform industry and external stakeholder investment in research, development, and extension to ensure the long-term sustainability of the industry.

⁹ National Primary Industries Research and Development Framework <https://www.npirdef.org/>

There can be a misunderstanding among both NRM and industry stakeholders about the role of the frameworks. Industry sustainability frameworks do not have dedicated amounts of allocated funding. Rather, they act as a focus for stakeholders to direct investment and/or seek funding support.

The sustainability frameworks act as a reference for non-industry stakeholders interested in forming partnerships to achieve common goals. While the words used by industry frameworks may vary from the language used in NRM regional organisation strategic plans, the intent is often aligned. A target of 100% of producers implementing soil and nutrient management plans (Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework) is also a commitment to improved catchment water quality and soil management.

Appendix 1 documents the key environmental goals, indicators and targets for Australian beef, dairy, cotton, and wine industries. The grains, rice, horticulture, and wool industry frameworks are under development.

Appendix 2 documents key industry contacts

Approach

An initial scan of all NRM regional organisation websites and associated reports was undertaken to identify appropriate case studies of NRM regional organisations working in partnership with industry organisations to facilitate adoption of recognised sustainable farming practices. This first scan found few examples, an outcome that may be a reflection of changed funding arrangements. The scan was then widened to include partnerships that focused on adoption of sustainable land management practices and/or climate risk mitigation with the goal of achieving environmental sustainability in the agricultural landscape. This second scan also included partnerships involving individual producers and was not confined to industry organisations.

All NRM regional organisations were contacted via email and invited to suggest potential case studies of NRM and the agriculture/seafood sector working together for common outcomes.

Using this broader approach, 20 examples were identified and developed as case studies with additional examples included as snapshots.

Case studies were selected using the following criteria:

- The project showed alignment with agricultural industry sustainability priorities.
- The project involved industry or relevant private sector partners.
- The project was underway or recently finished.
- A key person was available to provide information and be available as a future contact point for the project.

Case studies supporting industry sustainability framework targets and market access were preferentially selected. Consideration was also given to the location and agricultural sectors involved to ensure project case studies reflected a range of geographical zones as well as agricultural sectors.

Development of the case studies involved conversations with a key contact, usually the project manager. The exception was three cases studies where sufficient information was available through desk top analysis. These conversations with a key contact were critical to understanding the nature of the partnership approach. Typically, projects report on objectives, activities, and outcomes. Very few projects publicly report on 'how' the partnership was established and managed.

To better understand the attributes or enablers of successful partnerships information collated for the project case studies focused on common priorities, key drivers, level of co-design, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities, data management, perceived success factors and any evaluation of partnership health.

The selected case studies represent a wide range of industries, geographic location, and scale. They highlight the breadth, quality and variety of partnerships being implemented by NRM organisations in partnership with industry organisations and producers across Australia.

A brief description of the case studies is provided in the following tables. The case studies are grouped based on their complexity, extent to which they directly address sustainability framework targets and level of private sector funding. An additional group of case study projects based on alliances to address common issues has also been included.

Table 1.1 Partnerships between NRM organisations and producers to increase adoption of sustainable land management and climate change adaptation practices.

Building Pastoral Sustainability	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, Pastoralists	<p>Designed in response to ongoing feedback from the SA Arid Lands pastoral community the Building Pastoral Sustainability (BPS) project aims to increase the uptake of technologies and land management practices that can increase productivity, generate economic returns, and improve land condition.</p> <p>A core BPS activity is the four-stage Property Management Planning (PMP) program that addresses the link between primary production, business management and natural resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of previous successful programs. • BPS is based on what land managers said they wanted in a program. • Benefits of participating are tangible. • High levels of trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic approach, the region has just come out of a drought and pastoralists are aware of climate change predictions and the need to be strategic in their planning. • Success of the previous property mapping program, EMU. • Networking opportunities. • Opportunity to try new technologies and management practices.
E-Beef Smart Farming in Northern Queensland	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Southern Gulf NRM, Northern Gulf NRM, Desert Channels NRM and Pastoralists	<p>E-Beef Smart Farming is supporting cattle producers to implement grazing and herd best management practices by demonstrating technologies which will assist them improve pasture productivity, groundcover, land condition, profitability, and business agility. The project has established six Smart Farm demonstration properties and associated Innovation Hubs (learning groups) across three NRM regional organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one support to assist graziers in adopting tools that they would not typically consider. • High levels of trust between participants, history of working together. • Locally relevant cases studies. • Social networking and peer to peer learning opportunities. • Training in how to use video conferencing to enable producers participate virtually in response to COVID-19 restrictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRM Regions – achieve more through collaboration, provides access to skills and knowledge existing within other organisations. • Graziers – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – low levels of technology literacy and keen to learn more about how these technologies perform in their grazing systems – support to install and operate the technologies – flexibility in the selection of topics and technologies • Commercial technology developers – need feedback from producers to refine the technologies.

Territory Conservation Agreements	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Territory NRM and Pastoralists	<p>The Territory Conservation Agreement (TCA) program has been supporting land managers who wish to protect high value natural assets on their lands (such as wetlands, riparian areas, or sites of significant natural habitat) since 2011. The program is designed to help bridge the gap between productivity and sustainability outcomes on working properties. TCAs are voluntary and are based upon management actions proposed by the landholder. Essentially, a TCA entails implementation of an agreed plan of management over a defined area of land for a specific period (usually 10 years). The agreement is a contract, but it is not registered upon the title of the property or binding to future owners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that management and economic outcomes and conservation outcomes are complementary. • Simple application process. The lack of 'paperwork' and high levels of assistance from Territory NRM staff is viewed positively. • The co-investment of at least 50% of the cost of the TCA by the pastoralists (demonstrates commitment). • Flexibility of the TCAs. 	<p>Producers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested in contributing to the preservation of areas of high conservation importance due to the presence of unique or iconic species. • Preserving areas of their properties that their family and staff used for recreation and enjoyment. • Demonstrating their commitment to conservation and sound land management as well as maintenance of their 'social licence to operate'. Many pastoralists already had areas they were protecting, TCAs provide recognition. <p>Territory NRM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate it is possible to implement conservation activities and get a management/productivity outcome. • Support producers with High Value Land assets.

Table 1.2 Partnerships to support producers achieve industry sustainability framework targets.

Wildlife for Wine	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
Rice Sustainability Credentials Project	<p>Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board, Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu, Barossa and Langhorne Creek wine grape growers</p>	<p>Wildlife for Wine supports grape growers in developing Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs), which help identify activities and opportunities that enhance biodiversity, providing habitat for beneficial native species, and so improving environmental values as well as benefitting viticulture. BAPs support the biodiversity requirements for properties participating in the Sustainable Winegrowing Australia scheme. The project also supports a monitoring and research component.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project addresses pre-identified common priorities in a collaborative manner. • The BAPs are a planning document that identifies actions to improve biodiversity. • The timing and nature of implementation is controlled by the grower. • The Hills & Fleurieu Landscape Board provides the underpinning expertise needed for successful implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve sustainable wine certification biodiversity scores. • Potential productivity outcomes • Reducing the use of pesticides • Point of interest to consumers, growers can promote their involvement. • Grape growers interested in moving 'beyond best practice'. • Impact investors keen to enhance biodiversity.
	<p>Murray Local Land Services, SunRice, Ricegrowers' Association of Australia</p>	<p>Murray Local Land Services (MLLS) has partnered with SunRice, the Ricegrowers' Association (RGA) of Australia, 21 rice farming businesses on a project to develop a rice industry sustainability credential framework, aimed at highlighting growers' quality product and environmental stewardship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are direct benefits for all the partner organisations. • The time and investment by all parties including funding from SunRice and the National Landcare Program will allow the sharing of information and processes that will benefit other commodity frameworks. • The project is allowing collaboration with other commodity groups so there can be an integration of sustainability frameworks. • The steering committee brings partners and stakeholders together to monitor progress and share knowledge to effectively guide the development of the framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased productivity and environmental health on farms. • Improved worker safety, business integrity and consumer confidence. • Benchmarked data that will drive continuous improvement. • Access to premium markets and improved investor interest. • Accreditation of product to an international standard. • Improved land management practices across the region. • Stronger networks with the rice industry and its farmers.

Evaluating grazing systems biodiversity and designing pathways to carbon neutral 2030	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	South Coast NRM, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), NSW Department of Primary Industries, CSIRO, The University of Melbourne, Advanced Choice Economics Pty Ltd, Aurora Environmental Albany, Integrity Ag & Environment, The Mullion Group Pty Ltd, and Australian National University	<p><i>Evaluating grazing systems biodiversity and designing pathways to carbon neutral 2030</i> is a transdisciplinary farmer-centric, multi-stakeholder five-year project which aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop practical, cost-effective farm-level accounts for a range of production systems and drive producer participation in the Australian beef industry Carbon Neutral 2030 Initiative (CN2030), 2. Quantify benefits of biodiversity for enhance grazing land management and profitability. 3. Undertake a literature review of the differences between grazing systems and management in terms of soil carbon sequestration, pasture persistence and profitability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to look beyond normal funding opportunities. Identify the gaps and where your organisation can add value. • Critical to get it 'right' and make it a positive experience for funders and participants. • Flexibility, important to focus on areas of strength and partner where there are gaps. • Access to the Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitators network, this is valuable for large scale extension activities involving farmers. 	<p>South Coast NRM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MLA RD&E investment call aligned with a South Coast NRM priority. The skills and capacity South Coast NRM bring to the project are their focus on the end user, making sure the tools developed are user friendly and their access to the Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator network. • The scale, there are capacity building and leadership benefits in being involved in a national project. <p>Producers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding their current carbon emissions and how they can monitor these themselves without paying external consultants. • Potential to generate additional income through ACUs. • Access to markets.

Table 1.3 Partnerships between NRM organisations, industry organisations and producers to address social licence issues and increase adoption of sustainable land management practices.

	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
Boosting the Bunyip Bird Yield	Riverina Local Land Services & Ricegrowers' Association of Australia	This project aims to stabilise or improve the Australasian Bittern population and increase habitat across the Coleambally and Murrumbidgee Irrigation Areas by working with rice farmers to grow Bittern Friendly Rice and provide additional habitat on farm. Incentives are available to rice growers to provide additional and improved habitat on farm for this threatened species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone sees the benefits for their own organisation. • Ricegrowers are proud to host the birds and know they are making a difference. • Partners have deliberately kept the arrangements informal, allowing for project flexibility. • Steering committee brings partners together regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility benefits to the rice industry who are playing a role in protecting a threatened species.
Clean Coastal Catchments – Macadamias	North Coast Local Land Services & Macadamia Growers Association	The Clean Coastal Catchments (CCC) Project has worked with 50 macadamia farms on the NSW North Coast to improve land management practices that reduce the impact of agricultural production on the marine estate. Incentive funding was rolled out in partnership with the NSW Local Land Services (LLS) agency, providing landholders with grants worth up to \$5000. The aim is to stop erosion on farmland so that less soil flows into coastal rivers to contaminate water quality in estuaries and marine habitat downstream.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common objectives of all partners who understand each other's roles, strengths and weaknesses and needs. • Macadamia integrated orchard management practice guide and associated documents clearly define best management practices. • LLS rapport with macadamia growers. • Grass roots development of innovative ideas supported by trials and extension activities that provide meaningful results available to the entire industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds are made available for landholders, which provides an incentive. • The Australian Macadamia Society, Horticulture Innovation Australia and NSW Department of Primary Industries have produced a set of guidelines and associated case studies that outline best management practices in orchards. • A strong working relationship is in place locally between the Local Land Services and the NSW DPI's Macadamia Development Officer.

Corner Inlet Connections – Dairy linkages	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority & GippsDairy	Part of the Corner Inlet Connections project, the Dairy linkages project delivered the Fert\$mart program to around 90% of dairy farmers located within the Corner Inlet catchment. Fert\$mart is a Dairy Australia initiative and involves the delivery of best practice soil & nutrient management plans specific to individual farms. The CORE 4 program was also delivered which involved extension services, identification of high-risk nutrient runoff hot spots and works on 18 farms to minimise nutrient runoff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corner Inlet is highly visible from many places within the catchment. It is picturesque and many who live and work in the catchment recreate within the catchment and waterways. The landscape is highly valued, and people are connected to it as they see it daily. • Projects are designed, delivered and managed jointly. • Multiple needs are met by partners. For example, Fert\$mart Plans are delivered with the goal of improved water quality within Corner Inlet. • A Water Quality Improvement Plan is in place with all partners working towards protecting and improving water quality in the Inlet. • Time and effort is invested into the industry partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect and enhance Corner Inlet. • To fulfil goals within the Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework.
Cows out of Creeks Tasmania	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	DairyTas, Tasmanian Government, NRM North, Cradle Coast NRM & NRM South	The program was designed to encourage intensive graziers to exclude stock from waterways – every cow out of every creek in Tasmania by 2030. Installation of off-stream watering systems including troughs, pump, pipe, water tanks and fencing to ensure cows are not accessing waterways. Funding has also covered stock crossings so that stock are not walking through creeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong systems and processes managed by DairyTas. • DairyTas has a proven track record of delivery. • DairyTas contractor, Rachel Brown is the main driver and contact point for Cows out of Creeks. • Strong networks and connections within Tasmania promotion of opportunities with farmers and encouraging farmers to get involved. • The overall success of the fluid partnership model has enabled it to have longevity, which is very 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared common goals for the NRM regions, DairyTas and the State Government. • Each NRM region has had differing goals under different Federal Government funding programs, but they recognise the well-known benefits of removing stock from waterways for protecting natural ecosystems. • The partnership with NRM North, has recently seen a significant increase through investment in the Launceston City Deal and the River Health Action Plan. Removing stock from waterways in the Tamar Catchment is a major project,

			important to farmers and to achieving real on-ground outcomes.	<p>managed by NRM North as the Tamar Action Grants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenhams supported Round 6 and Round 7 in Circular Head through promotion with their suppliers. This gave DairyTas excellent traction with beef producers, in a way that would have been hard to achieve otherwise. Tas Water supported Round 7 in Circular Head because they have an interest in improving water quality into their Smithton Water Treatment Plan.
DairyCare	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	GeoCatch, Western Dairy, South West Catchments Council NRM	Nutrient run-off from agricultural land is a significant source of nutrients entering waterways and estuaries in the Geographe catchment. Dairy sheds have the potential to be a key point source of nutrients. The aim of DairyCare was to improve dairy farmers management of dairy shed effluent through a combination of technical support and incentives to upgrade effluent management systems and maintenance programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement that there was a shared problem with water quality associated with agricultural runoff and a shared responsibility to work towards a solution. Co-design process. 18 year previous history of GeoCatch and Western Dairy working together. It takes time to build trust. Commitment to supporting farmers every step (from dealing with planning applications, approaching neighbours, preparing effluent reviews and effluent management plans, and providing incentives). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement among all stakeholders there was a common problem based on findings from the Vasse Wonnerup wetland and Geographe Bay water quality improvement plan (2010) and ongoing water quality monitoring across the catchment. Opportunity for farmers to access funding incentives to support system upgrades. History of successful partnerships and working together.
Measuring On-farm Natural Capital	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Perth NRM, Commonland, Western Australian Government, Producers and Agribusiness	The aim of this project is to establish a Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) framework and data platform in partnership with farmers and industry stakeholders. The intent of the NCA framework is that it can be used to inform management decisions as well as communicating environmental credentials. Natural capital refers to the stock of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overarching vision around meeting the challenges to remain food secure. Natural Capital (measure to manage) fits with the vision. Co-designed with farmers. The farmers involved want to learn, share, and measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and managing constraints for remaining food secure. Measuring our natural capital provides us with a good indication of our land's inherent productive capacity and resilience. Evidence-based NC indicators a farmer can use to show whether they are drawing down or building natural capital stocks.

		renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructive measurement. End users want the evidence and farmers want clear metrics to inform investment and management decisions. • Collaboration and sharing of findings to all interested stakeholders. 	<p>Investors and consumers want evidence-based indicators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To better understand the benefits of NCA in informing productivity outcomes. • Access to farmers – for NCA academics.
uPtake	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Western Australian Department of Water and Environmental Regulation & Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Peel-Harvey Catchment Council, Leschenault Catchment Council, Lower Blackwood LCDC, Oyster Harbour Catchment Group, Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee, South West Catchments Council, Agribusiness, MLA, Western Dairy	uPtake is a partnership project designed to improve nutrient-use efficiency on grazing farms in south-west Western Australia. It aims to improve farmer and industry knowledge, confidence and uptake of the science supporting fertiliser recommendations. Farmers need to trust the data they are using to make decisions. To help build this trust the project is establishing at least 36 fertiliser trials across the south-west over a range of soil types with contemporary pasture species to develop phosphorus response curves; trialling innovative technology and building partnerships and capacity with industry, catchment groups and farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement among all stakeholders there is a common problem of nutrient loss to water ways from grazing land and a shared responsibility to work towards a solution. • History of successful partnerships and working together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catchment groups have a commitment to implement actions to improve water quality. • Social licence – farmers recognise they are contributing to nutrient loss into waterways. • Opportunity to be involved in local, independent trials to test national fertiliser recommendations and assess the potential risk to productivity. • Build understanding of the economics and risks associated with optimising fertiliser use efficiency.
Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project (MIP). Johnstone and Tully catchments.	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Terrain NRM, Innisfail Canegrowers, Tully Canegrowers, Australian Banana Growers' Council, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	Designed by the community, the Wet Tropics MIP is an innovative farmer-centric project piloting a new approach to reef water quality projects. The project utilises local knowledge and science to work with landholders to trial context specific solutions to reduce nutrient, sediment and pesticide loads reaching the reef from the Tully and Johnstone catchments. Based on building relationships and trust between partners, responsibility for implementation of the project at the grass roots level is shared between Terrain NRM and Canegrowers employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place-based strategy customised to individual farms and local landscapes. • Local-scale water quality monitoring data brought back to landholders to bridge the gap between farmers and water quality science. • Farmers are an integral part of designing and piloting new solutions to improving water quality. • Wide range of treatment options including denitrification bioreactors, in-drain constructed and landscape 	<p>Canegrowers – To ensure the industry is sustainable. It also addresses industry BMPs and social licence.</p> <p>Australian Banana Growers' Council – addresses industry BMPs, collaborative, integrated approach.</p> <p>Farmers – Landholders want to do the right thing but want to see evidence their practices are part of the problem and practice change can make a difference. Rapid, timely, targeted sub-catchment and paddock scale water quality information provides the link between practice and science landholders are seeking.</p>

			wetlands, and high-efficiency sediment basins	
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Table 1.4 Partnerships with significant private sector involvement

Bega Environmental Management Systems (BEMS) & Better Farms	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	South East Local Land Services & Bega Cheese	<p>Bega Cheese works with farmers who supply milk to the company to reduce the environmental risks on farm. The <i>BEMS</i> project began in the Bega and Bodalla region. Bega Cheese together with South East CMA (as it was at the time) saw an opportunity to work together with farmers to identify all environmental risks not just those related to the river and irrigation on farm and address these practically within the region.</p> <p>In recent years, the program has been extended to the broader dairying region of NSW and into Victoria where Bega Cheese draws milk supply from, the new project is known as <i>Better Farms</i>. BEMS still continues in the Bega Valley.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bega is trusted and provided the introduction to LLS and landholders initially. • LLS sought funding through the NSW government and the Australian government initially. Bega Cheese then sought funds with LLS support. Both organisations sought funds where possible as the project matured. • The project has built and changed throughout and has at times included leadership and training opportunities to local farmers along the way. • Strong and trusted local relationship between LLS & Bega Cheese key staff members. • LLS brought strong technical expertise to the on ground works and built rapport quickly with farmers. • Bega Cheese brokered the relationship with farmers and encouraged them to take the opportunity to address on farm environmental risks. • Positive interaction between the farmers and the Indigenous Work Crews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial drivers were for farmers to be able to continue to gain access for irrigation water through The Bega River Health Agreement, the project was broadened to include all on farm environmental risk management. • Benefits are mutual to South East LLS, Bega Cheese and local farmers who share the goals of improved land management, protection of waterways and the coastal environment. • Bega Cheese delivered the project using language used in their quality assurance program which was familiar to their suppliers. • All dairy farmers were able to participate – the program was aimed at building awareness of environmental risks and complementing milk production on farm.
Carbon Farming co-funded position	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Burnett Mary Regional Group and GreenCollar	BMRG and GreenCollar co-fund a position within BMRG’s Bundaberg office to answer land managers queries and undertake property assessments throughout the Burnett Mary region with the aim of establishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous history of working together on common projects. • Mutual trust. 	<p>BMRG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share resources and ideas, generate new opportunities for regional land holders.

		potential carbon projects. The intent is each partner will help each other in developing the skills needed to deal with the new and emerging environmental credits industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned interests, both organisations have extensive experience in landscape management. • Opens opportunities for both parties to develop new funding streams • Understand each other’s perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New opportunities for funding, expand their role and profile. <p>GreenCollar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to networks, landholders, BMRG interface with all landholders, not just one industry. • Align with organisations that share the same objectives.
Project catalyst	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Reef Catchments, Terrain, NQ Dry Tropics, Australian Government Reef Trust, Coca-Cola Foundation Great Barrier Reef Foundation, sugarcane farmers, agribusiness, and WWF.	Project Catalyst began in 2009 as a pioneering partnership between WWF, the Coca-Cola Foundation, Reef Catchments, and a dedicated group of sugar cane growers with the aim of reducing agricultural runoff impacting the reef. The project assists growers to develop, trial and evaluate a range of innovative farming practices. The focus is on practice changes that have environmental as well as social and economic benefits. The project is structured so that the participating growers have input into the list of practices evaluated, helping to create a culture of innovation and collaboration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project longevity, innovation projects need to run for many years to deliver meaningful results. • Grower input and peer-to-peer learning. Growers share their innovations and results with each other without any reservations about who owns the intellectual property. • Trust-based relationship between growers and service providers. • Culture (a positive, safe environment to innovate) supported along the way. • Diversity of project partners. • Innovative sugarcane farmers willing to experiment and invest in modern farming techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify sugar cane farming practice changes that have environmental as well as social and economic benefits. • Meet Great Barrier Reef water quality targets. • Demonstrate sugar cane farmers are taking responsibility and doing their part to safeguard and conserve the GBR.

Table 1.5 Partnerships based on building alliances to address common priorities.

Mallee Dryland Sustainable Agriculture Strategy	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key drivers
	Mallee CMA, Mallee Sustainable Farming, Birchip Cropping Group, Agriculture Victoria	The Mallee Dryland Sustainable Agriculture Strategy is a partnership plan for the use of groups in the Mallee Catchment area with a common goal to enhance and encourage sustainable dryland agriculture in the region. The group was initiated to tackle concerns around Mallee soils – the importance of soil health and its direct link to maintaining the productive capacity of Mallee farms. Risks to the region’s soils include wind erosion and soil structure decline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership is built on more than the strategy, it focuses on collaboration and work towards a common vision. • The partnership makes the most of each partner organisations strengths and technical expertise and capacity. • The ongoing partnership approach has brought funds and on-ground actions into the region, leveraged as a result of the development of the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership group developed the strategy to ensure the large area (largest CMA area in Victoria) of the Mallee could be serviced to address changing on-ground circumstances in the region enhanced by recent drought conditions. • The partners share the vision of the strategy optimises the productive capacity of Mallee dryland agricultural landscapes, while enhancing natural and cultural landscapes and communities.
Reef Alliance: Growing a Great Barrier Reef Program (GGBR).	Partners	Summary	Success factors	Key learnings
	AgForce, Australian Banana Growers’ Council, Burnett Mary Regional Group, CANEGROWERS, Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd, Fitzroy Basin Association, Growcom, NQ Dry Tropics Ltd., NRM Regions Queensland, Queensland Dairyfarmers’ Organisation, Queensland Farmers’ Federation, and Terrain NRM	In 2015 12 of the 14 Reef Alliance partners proposed a collaborative approach to deliver the Reef Trust III initiative by establishing the Reef Alliance: Growing a Great Barrier Reef Program (GGBR). The collaborative approach of the GGBR enabled project management efficiencies through the establishment of one database, one consistent monitoring and evaluation framework, one reporting mechanism and reef-wide communication. These efficiencies meant more funding was available for on the ground delivery. On the ground activities were a combination of extension and incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common database which improved efficiency in reporting and quality control. • Integrated framework which provided the flexibility to shift funds and targets between regions (same commodity). • Central administration and reporting. • Shared tools and resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple partners across regions and sectors provide efficiencies but it requires a significant input of time to establish an effective and collaborative understanding of project processes. Adaptive governance approaches should explicitly be built into collaborations. • Success indicators and contract arrangements for ‘innovation projects’ should be linked to the innovation cycle with less emphasis on immediate practice change outcomes. • Demonstrating the value of the project’s approach and evaluating its impacts was a challenge. Impact measures should include

				social indicators (e.g. gains in awareness, knowledge, gains in attitude and commitment) rather than only SMART targets (e.g. practice change per hectare in narrowly defined priority areas).
Tri-State Murray NRM Regional Alliance	<p>Partners</p> <p>NSW Murray Local Land Services, NSW Western Local Land Services, South Australia Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, Goulburn Broken CMA, Mallee CMA, North Central CMA, North East CMA</p>	<p>Summary</p> <p>The Tri-State Murray NRM Regional Alliance brings together the seven natural resource bodies from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia along the full length of the River Murray Corridor.</p> <p>The Alliance was formed in 2015 recognising that where there were opportunities to work together, they could deliver better and more cost effective social, economic, and environmental results. This is especially the case for rivers and adjacent landscapes where catchment and community-wide coordinated action across land and water is critical to achieve landscape change.</p> <p>The alliance has four key program areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fish Connections – 2. Aboriginal Economic Independence 3. Land Resilience 4. Co-ordination and collaboration 	<p>Success factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits and values of working together are clearly defined and communicated. • All partners have a clear desire to make a difference on the ground. • Alliance members have a proven track record of working together and have gained credibility. • Each partner has brought funds to the table allowing them the freedom to drive their own agenda, timeframes and provide the freedom to make mistakes and learn together. • Past and current collaborations between the members is a demonstration of the real benefits of increasing impact, capturing efficiencies, sharing capability and enhancing data collection to evaluate performance. • Values of the partnership have been identified and a program logic is in place. Annual workshops are held to identify success factors and how they will be measured across the Alliance. 	<p>Key drivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of coordinated infrastructure and habitat projects across three States and the length of the Murray River. • Connecting and delivering with regional communities; industry; private, government and not-for-profit service providers; research; and Traditional Owner groups. • Operates at the scale relevant to the species needing recovery; to identify sustainable solutions for industry; attracting private sector partners; and connecting to Aboriginal people and the broader community. • Works are prioritised, coordinated and communicated so that projects deliver the best ‘bang for buck’. • The significant capability and best practice approaches are shared quickly allowing for adaptive management and improved natural resource management across dryland and irrigated agriculture; biodiversity issues and climate and natural environments.

Analysis and Insights

Common enablers

An initial analysis of the success factors of the 20 cases studies identified several partnership attributes¹⁰ or enablers common to many of the case studies. These enablers were:

1. Co-benefits – environmental and productivity outcomes
2. Commitment to co-design principles at the initiation and/or implementation phase
3. Shared understanding and a common purpose
4. Adaptive project management
5. Market access drivers
6. History of working together
7. High levels of trust.

Co-benefits – environmental and productivity/profit outcomes

Case study projects recognised and promoted the link between improved environmental/sustainability outcomes and improved productivity outcomes and focused on both when working with farmers. Project managers believed providing evidence that it is possible to manage natural resources for environmental outcomes while also improving farm productivity and resilience was a necessary component for any project aiming to facilitate changes in farming practices.

Several case study projects had allocated funding to conduct independent cost-benefit analysis to provide evidence that farmers can help drive significant improvements for the environment without jeopardising the viability of their farming businesses. Examples include Territory Conservation Agreements, Building Pastoral Sustainability, Project Catalyst and e-Beef.

Insights and observations

- The concept that it is possible to manage natural resources for environmental outcomes while also improving farm productivity and resilience is not always well understood by industry stakeholders.
- Defining the expected co-benefits at the project initiation phase, including any market access benefits will assist potential industry partners understand the business case for being involved. Some industries have a better understanding of the co-benefits than others but often this knowledge is linked to individuals and can be lost as people change roles.

¹⁰ *Brokering Better Partnerships Handbook* 2nd Edition (Sep 2019), Partnership Brokers Association
[Brokering-Better-Partnerships-Handbook.pdf \(partnershipbrokers.org\)](https://partnershipbrokers.org/Brokering-Better-Partnerships-Handbook.pdf)

Commitment to co-design principles at the initiation and/or implementation phase

Eleven of the case study projects identified some level of industry and producer input into the design of the project. Input ranged from being fully engaged in the project design and development process from the start (Wet Tropics IMP) through to farmers having input into 'what is delivered and how it is delivered' once funds have been obtained. Project managers involved in co-designed projects were strongly supportive of industry and farmer involvement considering it an essential requirement for successful partnerships.

A perceived barrier to farmers and agribusiness being involved in the design phase of the project was 'lack of time'. The assumption being they lack sufficient interest to allocate the time required to participate. Project managers acknowledged this assumption had not been tested and there maybe opportunities to seek farmer input at the design phase using video technology or direct consultation.

Insights and observations

- Case study project managers who had implemented co-design principles were strong supporters of this approach. They reported it helped build mutual understanding and formally recognises and values the skills and knowledge the different partners bring to the project. They also found partners, including producers wanted the ownership that comes with being involved in project design and delivery. Some commented that producers like to share their knowledge not only through peer to learning but also to improve project delivery.
- Using a co-design approach with industry will help foster greater ownership, increasing the likelihood of funding and/or delivery support. Frequently industry involvement is confined to a 'letter of support' as part of a funding application, a passive tick the box exercise that does not encourage involvement and misses an opportunity to draw on the knowledge and resources industry partners may have.

Shared understanding and a common purpose

Project managers considered a shared understanding and a commitment to common outcomes essential when initiating and maintaining partnerships. This shared understanding was built by recognising the different priorities and drivers of the partners and drawing on them to identify a common purpose. Improved water quality case studies were the most common example. Industry partners were motivated by social licence, market access and regulatory concerns, land holders were interested in doing the 'right thing' but not at a cost to productivity and NRM organisations had a commitment to improving catchment water quality.

Project Catalyst, funded by Coca-Cola, is an example of a project utilising a range of different drivers to achieve a common purpose.

Insights and observations

- Few projects referenced linkages between case study project priorities and broader industry and community sustainability priorities. This is a missed opportunity with respect to funding partnerships. NRM regional organisation strategic land management priorities are generally

well aligned with industry sustainability framework priorities and commercial food and beverage company sustainability goals. However, this is not commonly understood by both industry and NRM stakeholders.

- Making the linkages more explicit by documenting how NRM organisational activities are contributing to broader industry goals including market access, sustainability and productivity goals, would help build industry understanding of the potential benefits of collaborative NRM and industry partnerships.

This could be done in a similar manner to the way in which industry sustainability frameworks and company sustainability plans reference the UN SDGs. For example, a statement that “this project is delivering against the beef industry sustainability priority for improved land management practices” on communication material and/or project webpages will build industry understanding that NRM organisations play a key role in assisting agriculture industries achieve and report against their sustainability priorities.

Adaptive project management

In the case studies, this attribute was linked to a commitment to shared decision making and capturing and acting on farmer and stakeholder input as the project progressed. One outcome of this approach was more effective project delivery.

This was also considered important for good governance. A key learning from the *Reef Alliance: Growing a Great Barrier Reef Program* project was the importance of building adaptive governance approaches into collaborative partnerships involving multiple partners across regions and sectors.

Insights and observations

- Adopting a flexible and adaptive approach to project management is also important in ensuring ongoing funding support.

History

A previous history of working together was identified as key enabler by nine case study projects, both from a partnership trust perspective and as a means of generating additional funding.

While trust and history are often linked to ongoing staff relationships, the long-term case study projects reported strong project processes and a history of success negated loss of key staff and tacit knowledge.

Market access/social licence

Metrics and evidence for market access was identified as a partnership enabler for case study projects utilising industry BMP programs and/or accreditation schemes. *Wildlife for Wine* and *Measuring for Natural Capital* are examples of project case studies directly addressing existing and potential market access drivers.

The case study *Carbon Farming co-funded position* project is an example of the potential for NRM organisations to take a leadership role in facilitating carbon farming partnerships and biodiversity credit schemes.

Insights and observations

- Market access is a driver that will grow over time as major food and drink companies and retailers increasingly seek evidence-based metrics that the product they sell is sourced sustainably^{11,12}. There is also growing recognition that some countries may introduce carbon taxes to prevent carbon leakage, taxing imported products with a higher emissions intensity than products produced locally. An example of this is the proposed European Carbon Border tax.
- NRM organisations have skills and expertise in resource condition and biodiversity monitoring and management that could be useful to industries and companies wanting to meet and/or report against their sustainability goals and /or new market access concepts like 'Nature positive'. 'Nature positive' is a concept being embraced by countries and companies to address declining biodiversity. While still under development, it is being supported by the natural capital coalition which is made up of stakeholder groups from business, finance, conservation and civil society, government and policy, science, and academia.¹³

Trust

While eight project case studies identified trust as a standalone enabler it was more frequently described by project managers as an outcome of a co-design approach and a previous history of successful partnerships.

At the implementation level, comment was made that the importance of a long-term, trust-based relationship between producers and their service provider cannot be over-stated. Project evaluation feedback from producers is that this is a critical component in helping producers have sufficient confidence to take the initial steps to change practices. Industry stakeholders are an important source of information in identifying the appropriate service providers.

Insights and observations

- Trust was considered an essential component of successful partnerships but needed to be built over time through a commitment to common priorities, a genuine respect for each partner's perspectives, strengths and needs, and a positive track record of delivery (reliability).

¹¹Euromonitor International, Rethinking Sustainability: No Purpose, No Gain; 2020.

<https://go.euromonitor.com/white-paper-sustainability-201027-rethinking-sustainability.html>

¹² Consumer Goods Forum & Futerra, The Honest Product, 2018

<https://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CGF-Futerra-Transparency-and-the-Honest-Product-teaser.pdf>

¹³ Capitals Coalition, 2020. *Natural Capital for Biodiversity Policies: What, why and how (draft)*.

<https://naturalcapitalcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/DRAFT-Natural-Capital-for-Biodiversity-Policies-202011.pdf>

- Once a strong partnership project is established, understood and respected (e.g. *Bega BEMS and Better Farms, Project Catalyst*) and the model is in place partners will seek funding from different sources adapting the project as needed to obtain ongoing funds.

The following partnership attributes were not mentioned by case study project managers as key partnership success factors or documented in project case study reports/websites as enablers. The exceptions were the project case studies featuring alliances. These were *Reef Alliance: Growing a Great Barrier Reef Program, TriState Alliance, and Mallee Dryland Sustainable Agriculture Strategy*.

Governance

Governance arrangements across the case study projects were generally appropriate, varying with the size of the project. Small projects had no formal governance structures. Large multi-stakeholder projects had governance frameworks consisting of a steering committee supported by technical working groups or reference groups where appropriate.

Insights and observations

- An identified gap with some projects was a lack of industry/farmer representation on steering committees and working groups. This could be an issue for projects which also lack formal mechanisms for grass roots feedback, potentially reducing their capacity to adapt and improve.
- A key learning from the *Reef Alliance: Growing a Great Barrier Reef Program* project was the importance of building adaptive governance approaches into collaborative partnerships involving multiple partners across regions and sectors. They found it took time to establish an effective and collaborative understanding of project processes.

Data management and privacy

None of the case studies mentioned data management and privacy as an area of concern for industry partners. However, all projects stated they had processes in place to manage data privacy issues in line with government privacy regulations and farmer preferences.

Insights and observations

- Information about data management processes was not always publicly available and to allay potential industry and producer concerns this information could be made more accessible and transparent.
- Projects focused on market access and assisting industry meet sustainability requirements should consider at the outset how data will be shared and managed.
- Data management companies such as Starling (<https://www.starling-verification.com/>) that can collate and verify information on deforestation and ground cover using satellites are being commissioned by multinationals such as Nestle to provide data on suppliers' practices. These companies may play a future role in high-risk biodiversity areas such as the Great Barrier Reef and understanding how this data may be used may need to be considered when developing partnerships with business.

Monitoring and evaluation of partnership health

This was a key gap for most of the case study projects. Three of the case study projects have formally monitored and evaluated the 'health' of the partnership with the others relying on informal feedback. *Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project* conducted an evaluation of partnership health and *Tri-State Alliance* regularly monitors the success factors of the partnership. The *Mallee Dryland Sustainable Agriculture Strategy* has identified several key partnership performance indicators which it monitors including social networking changes.

Boosting the Bunyip Bird Yield is planning to review the effectiveness of the partnership. The *Corner Inlet Connections* project was audited as part of a general West Gippsland CMA Partnership Health Audit.

Insights and observations

- Partnerships can be assumed and often not formalised. The Partnership continuum can be a useful tool to have a deliberate discussion about the level of partnership and share expectations from both sides at the project initiation stage. Project formation acts as a catalyst for the partnership and the formalities are often missed, with assumptions being made that can lead to misunderstandings and potentially distrust as the project progresses.
- There is an opportunity to build NRM organisational skills in establishing, maintaining, and auditing the health of partnerships with respect to partnerships with industry or major corporates.
- Acknowledgement of all partners (including minor contributors) involved in projects is important to build trust and co-ownership. NRM regional organisation and industry websites could include partner logos and contributions.

Additional observations

Multi-regional delivery partnerships

Several of the case study projects utilised industry environmental assessment tools and associated BMP programs. These included Fert\$mart and DairySAT (dairy), Hort 360 (horticulture) and SmartcaneBMP (sugar).

From a national perspective it can be difficult for an industry organisation to separately support several different NRM regional organisations to deliver the same industry program. Alliances between NRM regional organisations to deliver industry NRM and climate risk programs across multiple regions are more likely to generate industry support.

This co-delivery approach could be particularly useful for smaller NRM regional organisations as it allows for sharing of skills and resources between NRM regional organisations as well as between NRM and industry. An example of this is the *e-beef* case study project.

Carbon sequestration

Many NRM regional organisations are already exploring different options for supporting Carbon Farming or carbon offset programs, with examples being the Victorian CMAs Change Adaptation and Mitigation initiative, Catchment Carbon Offsets ¹⁴, and the case study *Carbon Farming co-funded position* project. Increasingly there will be growing opportunities for non- ERF carbon sequestration partnerships with businesses and industries wishing to offset their carbon emissions to meet their carbon neutral pledges. An example of this is the Meat and Livestock Australia supported *Evaluating grazing systems biodiversity and designing pathways to carbon neutral 2030* case study project.

Project ready

Not being project ready and reacting to funding as it was announced was a strong frustration among both industry and NRM stakeholders. There would be benefits in encouraging NRM regional bodies and stakeholders to work together to prepare 'hypothetical' projects addressing common targets rather than wait for the funding announcement and then pull something together at the last minute. Alternatively, they could be encouraged to work together on implementation plans for the relevant framework targets.

This would also address a key barrier identified by the GHD report, *Integrating NRM with Industry-Led Sustainability*,¹⁵ "the lack of clear entry points for engagement".

¹⁴Clifton, Moss, Brunt, Pitfield and Rissman. (2018). *Catchment carbon offsets to build climate resilience in catchments and help the water sector achieve net zero emissions*, Proceedings of the 9th Australian Stream Management Conference. Hobart, Tasmania. <https://asnevents.s3.amazonaws.com/Abstrakt-FullPaper/51508/clifton+et+al+catchment+carbon+offsets-final.pdf>

¹⁵GHD, (2019), *Integrating NRM with Industry-Led Sustainability Initiatives*, AgriFutures Australia Publication No. 19-027. <https://www.agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/19-027-digital.pdf>

Recommendations

Based on the findings from analysis of the 20 case studies the following actions are recommended for consideration by NRM Regions Australia. These actions will help support and build partnerships between NRM regional organisations and industry stakeholders to facilitate adoption of recognised sustainable farming practices.

1. Encourage and support NRM regional organisations to:
 - Identify and communicate linkages between their Regional Plan sustainable agriculture and climate change strategic priorities and industry sustainability framework priorities when initiating projects with industry organisations. Appendix 1, *Australian Agriculture Industry Sustainability Frameworks* is a starting point for NRM regional organisations. The information will need to be updated as industries further develop their frameworks.
 - Actively promote the productivity and economic co-benefits of adopting sustainable management practices when initiating partnerships with industry.
 - Promote their skills and expertise in management, enhancement and monitoring of biodiversity including threatened species. This is an area of growing importance where industry stakeholders lack skills and knowledge.

2. Provide opportunities to build skills and capacity within NRM regional organisations in:

- implementing co-design principles when initiating and implementing projects with industry stakeholders
- establishing and maintaining partnerships with industry organisations including the private sector.

One way this could be achieved is through training support, workshops and /or mentoring either directly or through Communities of Practice.

3. Build understanding of how market access/social licence drivers are impacting Australian agriculture and how different sustainability reporting frameworks and approaches are being used by corporations, finance, and industry. Increased understanding may assist in building partnerships focused on addressing market access requirements, and in particular partnerships with the private sector. Biodiversity and climate change are the key material risks from an international market access perspective.

Potential activities include producing a series of webinars featuring talks by corporate and industry sustainability managers and/or supporting a Community of Practice that includes corporate and financial sustainability managers. Examples of relevant reporting frameworks and approaches include the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Taskforce for Climate-related Financial Disclosure, Sustainable Sourcing and Natural Capital.

4. Pilot the concept of being 'project ready' by facilitating workshops and activities to support relevant NRM regional bodies and industry stakeholders co-develop implementation plans for sustainability framework targets. Depending on the topic these workshops could be at a regional or national scale.

While this would be a hypothetical exercise, it would help build networks between industry and NRM regional organisations, build understanding of each other's knowledge, skills, and perspectives, and develop co-design and partnership initiation skills. It could also support creative and innovative approaches as projects would not be constrained by funding criteria.

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Appendix 1 Australian Agriculture Industry Sustainability Frameworks

Australian Agriculture Industry Sustainability Frameworks – common goals, priorities, topics, and indicators

Industry	Beef	Dairy	Grains (under development)	Horticulture (under development)	Cotton	Wine
UN SDGs	2,6,7,13,14,15	2,6,7,12,13,15	6,12,13,14,15	2,6,12,13,15	6,12,13,15	
			Goal: Industry engaged in incentivised. environmental stewardship programs.			Based on BMP Certification and auditing
Land Management Practices	Priority 5. Improve Land Management Practices	Goal 8: Improve Land Management	Goal: Proactively improve the health of our soils			Soil health Nitrogen use efficiency
Soil Health	5.1b Soil health.			Topic: Best practice management	Improved soil health	Standard: Manage land and soil to minimise degradation and optimise soil organic matter and remediation.
Fertiliser /nutrient management	5.1 Minimise nutrient and sediment loss	8.2 100% of farmers complete and implement a soil and nutrient management plan		Topic: Nutrient, soils, and land management	Nitrogen use efficiency	Standard: Select fertilisers and soil additives to minimise risk to the environment.
Groundcover/erosion	5.1a Number of days per year soil covered by vegetation. 5.2 b) (v) Percentage of regions achieving healthy ground cover gain					

Industry	Beef	Dairy	Grains (under development)	Horticulture (under development)	Cotton	Wine
Water quality/riparian management	5.1c Water quality	8.1a 100% of stock excluded from waterways 8.1b 100% of riparian zones actively managed and maintained		Topic: Minimising impact on waterways		
Water						
Water use efficiency	6.3 Efficient use of water	9.2 Improve water use and water productivity to utilise 2.0 tonnes of dry matter per ML used	Ongoing improvements to water use efficiency in rainfed grain production.		Priority: Decrease in the amount of water need to grow a bale of cotton	Standard: Manage water use on the property: A Water Management Program is documented
		9.3 100% of farmers recycling water from dairy sheds				Standard: Water is harvested, extracted, stored, used and discharged in accordance with licences and permits
		9.4 100% of farmers monitoring water consumption				Standard: Maintain water sources and infrastructure.
		9.5 100% of farmers have a water security risk management plan by 2020 and are implementing it by 2030				Standard: Manage water to minimise environmental harm.
Biodiversity	5.2 Balance of tree and grass cover			Topic: Biodiversity and pollinators	Priority: Benefitting from biodiversity	

Industry	Beef	Dairy	Grains (under development)	Horticulture (under development)	Cotton	Wine
Increase area under conservation	<p>5.2 a) (i) Percentage of cattle producing land set aside for conservation protection purposes</p> <p>5.2 a) (ii) Land managed by beef producers for conservation outcomes through formal arrangements</p> <p>5.2 a) (iii) Percentage cattle producing land managed for environmental outcomes through active management</p>				Area of land managed for conservation	
Biodiversity Action Plan		8.3 100% of farmers have and implement a documented biodiversity action plan				Standard: Manage Biodiversity on the property. Biodiversity Management Program is established.
Manage and improve biodiversity	<p>5.2 b) (i) Percentage of national forest cover gain</p> <p>5.2 b) (ii) Percentage of national forest cover loss</p> <p>5.2 b) (ii) Percentage of national forest cover loss</p> <p>5.2 b) (iii) Percentage of national woodland gain</p> <p>5.2 b) (iv) Percentage of national woodland loss</p>	8.4 Zero net deforestation by 2020			Reduced Environmental Toxic Load (ETL) for bees	Standard: Develop strategies to protect and improve biodiversity.

Industry	Beef	Dairy	Grains (under development)	Horticulture (under development)	Cotton	Wine
Climate change	Key Priority 1. Manage Climate Risk				Priority: Acting on climate change	
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity	6.1 e) Percentage total CO2e reduced by beef industry from a 2005 baseline. R&D priorities: Soil carbon sequestration, co-benefits of vegetation planting, pasture species that increase carbon stocks	10.1 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity by 30% across the whole industry (from a baseline of 2015)		Topic: Carbon value and greenhouse gas emissions	Reduced carbon emissions per bale Improved on farm energy use efficiency Increased use of renewable energy	Reduce emissions intensity
Reduce net carbon footprint	6.1d) Carbon sequestration		Goal: Reduce our industry's carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions	Topic: Energy use	Carbon positive cotton	Energy use efficiency
Adaptation	6.2 Climate change adaptation and preparedness		Goal: Future-proof the industry from climate related risks through investment and development of adaption tools.	Topic: Climate variability and adaptation		Climate adaptation – separate program
Chemical usage			Goal: Redesign, reduce and/or develop alternative chemical use while ensuring productivity, safety, and environmental outcomes.	Topic: Pest management and agricultural chemicals	Priority: Efficient responsible pesticide use	Standard: Select pest and disease control strategies to minimise risk to the environment. Standard: Store, manage and dispose of chemicals to minimise the risk of environmental harm.

Appendix 2 Contacts – Australian Agriculture Industry Sustainability Frameworks

Australian Eggs

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<https://www.australianeggs.org.au/what-we-do/sustainable-production/sustainability-framework/>

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<http://australianpork.com.au/industry-focus/environment/environmental-sustainability-an-industry-priority/>

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Dairy Sustainability Framework

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Grains Sustainability Framework – under development

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<https://www.graingrowers.com.au/sustainability/grains-sustainability-framework/>

Horticulture Sustainability Framework– under development

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<https://www.horticulture.com.au/hort-innovation/our-work/horticulture-sustainability-framework/>

Rice – under development

<https://investors.sunrice.com.au/investors/?page=sustainability-reports>

Sheepmeat and Wool Sustainability Framework– under development

<https://www.sheepsustainabilityframework.com.au/>

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Wine Sustainability Framework

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