



# A GUIDE TO ESTABLISHING SUCCESSFUL ON-FARM INNOVATION PLATFORMS©



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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

**The purpose of this guide** is to provide farmer groups and extension specialists an insight into how they can best support and facilitate the development of on-farm innovations, through the use of Innovation Platforms. Whilst users of this guide may recognise a number of common participatory extension approaches that they may be experienced in using, this guide provides an overall framework for developing farmer initiated action, in partnership with stakeholders associated with agricultural value chains. As a first step, let's have an overview of innovation and Innovation Platform characteristics.

**Innovation** is described as the process of applying new or existing knowledge to address a specific issue or opportunity, with the view of achieving an improved outcome or benefit. Innovations may directly relate to new and improved processes, services, products or approaches towards enhancing systems. Innovation as it is applied to an agricultural context relates to a process of ensuring that a new practice, technology or “way of going about the business” can be adapted and refined to the local farming environment.

**An Innovation Platform** comprise a group of individuals, who include farmers and others often representing a range of different organisations and businesses that provide information, knowledge, products and services along agricultural value chains. An Innovation Platform therefore is best described as a community of individuals and organisations representative of an agricultural value chain that come together for a common purpose or outcome. Innovation Platforms therefore bring together farmers, farmer organisations, research and extension expertise, agribusiness services and personnel, marketing, finance and others.

### **Critical success factors for establishing an Innovation Platform**

When embarking on the establishment of an Innovation Platform, critical success factors include;

1. Select an existing, active local group network who have common production systems, agricultural enterprises and interests.
2. Identify stakeholders on the basis of their contribution of information, knowledge and experience, ability to present new ideas, ability to provide diversity to the group, introduce new ideas, concepts and perspectives.
3. Identify a specific focus for the Innovation Platform group through undertaking a needs analysis to identify the issues and opportunities along the agricultural “value chain” Ensure group consensus and agreement to the focus.
4. Identify the required “steps and actions” to address the need or opportunity. Allocate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders with specific timelines, and ensure that everyone has a role to play.
5. Adopt sound governance principles to ensure that “group rules and expectations” are understood and shared by all stakeholders. Listen to all stakeholders, and ensure they all have an equal voice.
6. Ensure that a skilled facilitator capable of maximising cooperation and collaboration between all stakeholders and the ability to ensure a “team spirit” leads the Innovation Platform group.
7. Be prepared to be flexible and pragmatic. Adjust your direction when you need to, since agricultural systems are very complex and things do change.

## 1. UNDERSTANDING INNOVATION AND INNOVATION PLATFORMS

### 1.1 DEFINING INNOVATION

Innovation is described as the process of applying new or existing knowledge to address a specific issue or opportunity, with the view of achieving an improved outcome or benefit. Innovations may directly relate to new and improved processes, services, products or approaches towards enhancing systems. In the case of agricultural systems, there is the need to adopt an agricultural value chain approach and to explore opportunities at all points along the various chains. The process of innovation aims to develop a process that develops new and ideas, processes, products and services and replaces existing ones.

Innovations largely emerge out of creative thinking, lessons are learned from failures, information is generated into knowledge. Managing the process of innovation is a complex and challenging task, since it is important to capture as many ideas and potential opportunities as possible. These then need to be evaluated and prioritised. Engaging with and motivating stakeholder participants is an equally important task, ensuring that there is open and transparent communication and the opportunity for everyone to have an equal say. Organisations who are represented need to be open to new ideas and approaches.

### 1.2 WHAT IS AN INNOVATION PLATFORM?

An Innovation Platform comprise a group of individuals, who include farmers and others who represent a range of different organisations and businesses that often provide information, knowledge, products and services at various points along agricultural value chains.

An Innovation Platform therefore is best described as a community of individuals and organisations that are representative of an agricultural value chain, who come together for a common purpose or outcome. The Innovation Platform undertakes a range of activities and functions that aim to facilitate the sharing of information and knowledge in an open network – with a focus on identifying, and addressing a shared problem or opportunity amongst stakeholder participants. A range of organised and structured activities are undertaken to address the problem or opportunity. These activities can include research investigations, that in turn develop and refine new practices, technologies and innovations. Innovation Platforms operate at two levels, these being the strategic and operational level.

The concept of innovation is not new to agriculture at all. Australian farmers have been innovators “Since the year dot”. We only need to look at how agriculture has developed in Australia over the past 200 years, from the “stump jump” plough, to the “Sunshine stripper”, the development of integrated cereal-legume-livestock farming systems, no-till cropping systems, precision agriculture and so-on. It is the development of on-farm innovations by farmers for farmers that has been critical to developing sustainable and profitable farming systems across Australia. Whilst research, development and extension has identified the technological opportunities, it has largely been the efforts of the innovative thinking and problem-solving skills of farmers who have been able to adapt, develop and adopt such technologies and practices on-farm that has delivered success.

### 1.3 WHY ARE INNOVATION PLATFORMS IMPORTANT?

Innovation in agriculture is best described as the process of ensuring that a new practice, technology or “way of going about the business” can be adapted and refined to the local farming environment and conditions. Developing the innovation by taking into account the characteristics of the local farming systems will help to ensure that practice change will eventuate as part of the on-farm trialling and adaptation process; providing that any perceived constraints are addressed in the process. It is also important addressing the potential barriers to adoption, and address any perceived or real constraints to adoption that may exist.

Innovation Platforms provide the process and environment to bring stakeholders together in a supportive and professionally facilitated process. Activities undertaken by the Innovation Platform can be wide and varied. Common elements include an assessment of current value chain/production systems constraints (and opportunity assessments), collective problem-solving processes, information and knowledge sharing, training and capacity building, and evaluating new and/or adapted farming practices and best management practices through on-farm research and demonstrations .

### 1.4 STRATEGIC AND ON-FARM INNOVATION PLATFORMS DEFINED

Innovation Platforms are required at the different levels of management and governance of the agricultural sectors and industries, these being (1) at the strategic level and (2) on-farm level. Strategic Innovation Platforms focus on the industry as a whole. For example, how best can government and industry related policy support the development of the agricultural sector, address specific impediments to growth and value chain efficiencies, and ensure that industries are profitable and sustainable. Strategic Innovation Platforms can be established at the regional, State and Federal levels of government, driven by the key industry leaders and peak grower organisations. Strategic Innovation Platforms whilst focussing on the “big picture” elements of an innovation system can provide a direction for localised on-farm Innovation Platforms to address. Some of our best farmer leaders operate at both the strategic and on-farm level, and importantly provide leadership skills critical to the successful operation of on-farm Innovation Platforms. Whilst the focus of this guide is on-farm innovation platforms, having an appreciation of the role and existence of strategic Innovation Platforms is important.

On-farm Innovation Platforms are designed to address local and regional issues, and are identified by stakeholder members who are often associated with the range of agricultural and environmental value chains that are associated with local farming systems. The on-farm Innovation Platforms bring together farmers, farmer organisations, research and extension expertise, agribusiness services and personnel, marketing, finance and others. On-farm Innovation Platforms frequently focus on the development and adaptation of new technologies, farming practices and agricultural value chain efficiencies that can be readily adopted on-farm.

## 2. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR ESTABLISHING INNOVATION PLATFORMS

### 2.1. SELECTING THE LOCATION AND GROUP FOR THE INNOVATION PLATFORM

Ideally, the location of the Innovation Platform will target an agricultural district that shares common agricultural production systems characteristics and farm enterprises. It is also important that farmers engaged in the Innovation Platform share similar challenges and opportunities. The farmer group itself needs to have sound governance, respected leadership and engagement with its' membership base.

### 2.2. UNDERSTANDING THE STEPS IN FORMING AN INNOVATION PLATFORM GROUP

The formation of any group involves four stages of development;

**a) Developing the group vision and purpose**

During this initial process, the group establish their vision and purpose for existence, that is, “the why” they exist, often described as the groups’ “value proposition”.

**b) Group establishment**

Often described as the “forming, norming and storming” the group forms and establishes its’ norms, accepted behaviours, specific goals, and addresses any specific differences of opinions and purpose. Identification of group membership, and engaging with a wide range of potential stakeholder members are also important activities during this phase.

**c) Kicking the goals**

The group set about identifying their specific goals and outcomes, and developing a plan to achieve these. This is very much activity and process driven, undertaking a wide range of activities in an effort to achieve the desired outcomes.

**d) Maintaining group sustainability**

The group needs to maintain a purpose and relevance to its’ members. This can be achieved through undertaking a “stocktake” that helps to ensure the group continues to adapt to members’ needs and focuses on identifying and addressing opportunities. Shared leadership, succession planning (group leadership) are important elements. Group membership may evolve, an important element to ensuring sustainability of the group and alignment of required skill sets. Not all groups survive, having achieved their original purpose they may fold; this being an acceptable outcome.



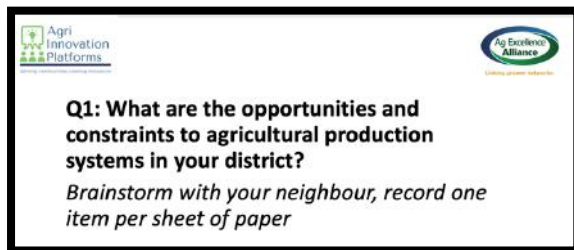
A shared common vision for the group is essential to long-term success.

### 2.3. IDENTIFYING THE SPECIFIC FOCUS FOR THE INNOVATION PLATFORM

It is essential that when the Innovation Platform group is established, there is a pre-agreement to the specific focus for the group, according to the agricultural commodity or technological-management focus. This will help ensure that there is a common interest and linkage between the farmer members and other stakeholders associated with the Innovation Platform. Failure to do this will result in the group having no clear direction nor a common sense of purpose. Having a specific focus on agreed agricultural enterprise will provide the opportunity to undertake a comprehensive value chain focussed needs analysis.

*As an example, there may be a group of dryland cropping farmers who want to develop improved weed control in grain legumes. So, all farmers are engaged in crop production, the focus is on how to improve on-farm weed control, and the specific commodity is grain legumes. It doesn't matter if all the farmers are not engaged in grain legume production, the main thing is that there is the interest to participate.*

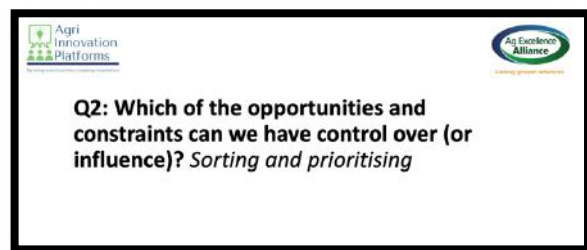
Being able to identify the local issues and a focus for the Innovation Platform's group activities is a critical part of the process in setting the group's direction. The following slides provide an example of some of the key questions that the group needs to address. This activity can be carried out in small working groups, with participants recording their ideas on "sticky notes". Each group can then report back to the main group after they have addressed each of the questions "one by one". Ideas/issues/opportunities that are recorded on "sticky notes" are then placed on a wall in the room, and then sorted according to common themes (and the location that the issues occur along the agricultural value chain). A skilled facilitator will help the group reach a consensus and a clear focus for the group's action plan.



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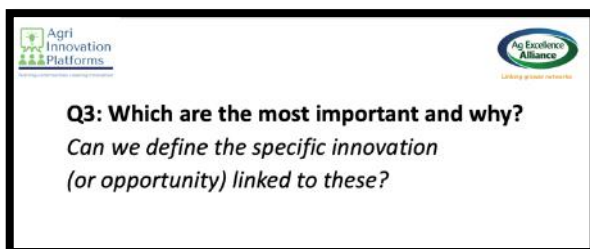
**Q1: What are the opportunities and constraints to agricultural production systems in your district?**  
*Brainstorm with your neighbour, record one item per sheet of paper*



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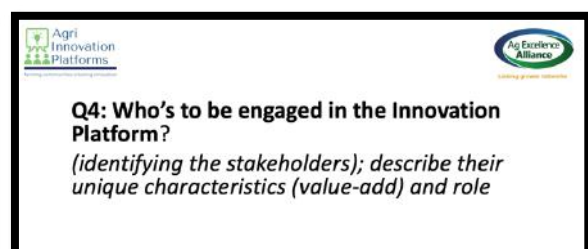
**Q2: Which of the opportunities and constraints can we have control over (or influence)?** *Sorting and prioritising*



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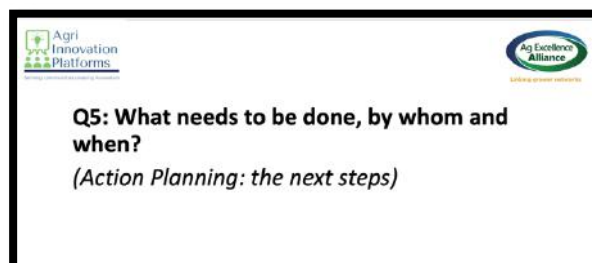
**Q3: Which are the most important and why?**  
*Can we define the specific innovation (or opportunity) linked to these?*



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**Q4: Who's to be engaged in the Innovation Platform?**  
*(identifying the stakeholders); describe their unique characteristics (value-add) and role*



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**Q5: What needs to be done, by whom and when?**  
*(Action Planning: the next steps)*

## 2.4. IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE ON-FARM INNOVATION PLATFORM

Identification and the validation of stakeholders to be engaged in the Innovation Platform is an important process, and is critical to overall success. It is important to ensure that stakeholders engaged in the Innovation Platform are likely to make valued contributions (including the generation of new information and knowledge, sharing of experiences, the ability to present new ideas, concepts and perspectives; that may be unique and considered to be innovative to other group members). Ideally the stakeholders that are invited to participate in the Innovation Platform will have some existing relationship with other stakeholders/farmers associated with the sponsoring (or originating) farmer group.

An important role of the founding members of the Innovation Platform is to identify who else will be invited to participate in the Innovation Platform. Identifying these stakeholders will be an iterative process, in that there will be several cycles of identification and invitations to participate. As the Innovation Platform group form, undertake needs analysis (next step), additional expertise and partnering organisations will be identified over an extended period of time. It is therefore important to be flexible in this process. Not everyone invited to participate will be willing to do so, nor may they be compatible to the general group norms and interests.

## 2.5 THE VALUE OF A SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS EXERCISE

A social network analysis can be undertaken as a means to objectively map out and identify the range of stakeholders and organisations that ideally would be invited to participate in the on-farm Innovation Platform group.

A well-constructed social network analysis identifies both the range of stakeholders and their relative strength (or dominance) of linkages between each and everyone within the network. For example, there may be some stakeholders who offer a lot of potential expertise (and benefit) as members of the Innovation Platform, who for one reason or another have weak relationships with other network members. In this instance additional effort is required to bring such stakeholders into the Innovation Platform as members, and to foster improved relationships.

The key steps associated with a social network analysis are summarised;

1. Identify the network of people and organisations to be assessed as participants in the network, and gather background information on their specific characteristics (specific skill sets, knowledge and experience related to the industry and area of innovation).
2. Develop a survey questionnaire that focusses on identifying existing and potential relationships between stakeholders (including frequency and strength of existing relationships), barriers to potential relationship establishment (and collaboration), information and knowledge flows.
3. Undertake the survey, then analyse and summarise the information (including knowledge flow characteristics, existing relationships, and opportunities for building new and/or strengthening existing relationships).



4. Develop a relationship building strategy and action plan to reach the desired outcomes (associated with building the level of collaboration, communication and knowledge sharing across the network).
5. Monitor and reassess the network within a specified time period.

## 2.6. UNDERTAKING A NEEDS ANALYSIS (ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES)

An important step in the Innovation Platform group establishment process is to undertake a needs analysis. Ideally the needs analysis will adopt a “value chain approach”, that is consider all of the issues and opportunities for innovations at all steps along the value chain. This includes research, education and training, on-farm production including technological opportunities, marketing, value-adding, industry and government policy and environmental sustainability. This will help to provide an overall picture as a whole in terms of identifying all of the issues and opportunities, who the range of stakeholders are, potentially identify innovations available, and the role that the different stakeholders can play. It is then important for the group to refocus on the specific issue or opportunity that they wish to address in their activities for the Innovation Platform.



An Innovation Platform group in action, identifying issues and opportunities associated with local farming systems.

## 2.7. GROUP VISIONING AND ACTION PLANNING; VALUABLE GROUP PROCESS

Undertaking a group “visioning exercise” is a valuable exercise useful in engaging all group members as part of a participatory driven exercise. Developing a “what if” scenario can be initiated by tasking the group to “paint a picture” in terms of describing how they would ideally expect their farming environment to look like within a set time frame, say in 20 years’ time.

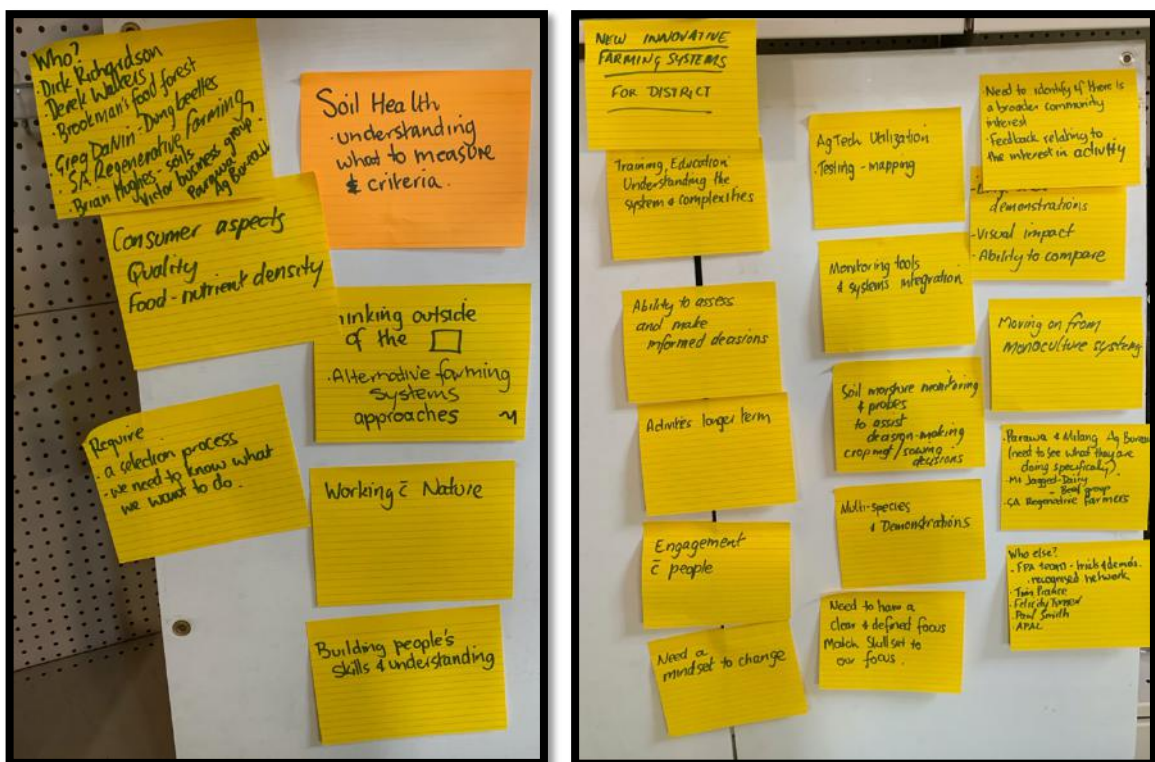
*For example; “What would an ideal production system for Crop X look like in 20 years’ time assuming that over this period of time you were able to have access to all of the latest technologies and innovations?” A follow up question would ask “what are the main technologies or innovations do you consider would have been developed and adopted by farmers to achieve this outcome?”. A final question might be “to achieve your outcome or vision, what resources and steps will be required to achieve such an outcome?”*

The visioning process helps to generate a common goal and outcome, and also identify potential solutions or opportunities to reach the desired situation. The process encourages creative thinking and problem solving, help identify the challenges and constraints that may be faced, and importantly address how these can be addressed.

Coming out of this process is the opportunity to identify the specific steps and actions that are required. This is a useful process in setting direction and opportunity for the group. It is important that the group focusses on what they have control or influence over, so that activities can then be actioned. This action planning process needs to involve and engage with all participants, so that there is collective group ownership over the whole process.

Action Planning involves the following steps;

1. Identify common goals and outcomes.
2. Development of milestones that can be monitored and measured.
3. Identification and allocation of group and individual roles and responsibilities.
4. Establishes a time-bound schedule of activities (and milestones).
5. Implementation, monitoring and modifying planned activities and timelines according to the circumstances.





A collection of ideas from a brainstorming session conducted by the group is a useful means of identifying what the group needs to do to achieve the project goals.

## 2.8. DEVELOPING AN INNOVATION STRATEGY: BUSINESS PLAN CANVAS

The development of an Innovation Strategy for the group is an important step in taking forward the specific innovation idea or concept. This in itself serves as the “business plan” for developing the innovation opportunity, and is a useful process for identifying all of the necessary steps, processes and resources that are required.

Utilising a “business plan canvas” as a facilitated group process provides a simple and straight forward process that engages all participants. Importantly roles and responsibilities together with timelines are assigned to help ensure that everyone is clear on “who needs to do what and by when” and is characteristic of an “action planning process”. Characteristics of action planning cycles include the following;

- Group-based workshops provide the opportunity for all participants to be engaged in identifying and assessing the opportunities including the development of the “business plan canvas” as described above.
- Action planning involves a process of problem identification and diagnosis, action implementation, review and assessment, and then a repeat of the process.
- Participants roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, timelines for action, with measurable and defined outcomes are established and followed. “lessons learned” are shared, and changes implemented as part of a “continuous improvement” philosophy.

		<b>INNOVATIVE FARMING SYSTEMS BUSINESS PLAN CANVAS</b>			
<b>KEY PARTNERS (WHO?)</b>	<b>OUR PROJECT DESCRIPTION: WHAT?</b>			<b>SEGMENTING FARMING SYSTEMS (WHAT? WHO?)</b>	
	<b>KEY ACTIVITIES (WHAT?)</b>	<b>VALUE PROPOSITION (WHY?)</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIONS (HOW?)</b>		
	<b>METHODOLOGIES (HOW?)</b>	<b>RESOURCES (WHAT?)</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCES (HOW?)</b>		
<b>ACTION PLAN (WHO? WHAT? WHEN?)</b>		<b>PROJECT LEADERSHIP: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES (WHO?)</b>			

An example of a Business Planning Canvas: a useful tool for Innovation Platform groups as a means of establishing an action plan.

### 3. MANAGING INNOVATION PLATFORMS EFFECTIVELY

#### 3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNOVATION PLATFORM GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

As is the case with any group, the level of “group rules and expectations” will vary considerably. It is important however that these elements of sound group governance are clearly established and shared by all members. Often the less formality the better, however a set of specific group operational guidelines will provide the correct structure and operational principles to help ensure success.

Such principles will mirror the existing guidelines associated with the original farmer stakeholder group who have taken the initiative to establish the Innovation Platform group in the first place. Positive characteristics include the following;

- shared and respected leadership.
- attention to detail in relation to administration including the recording of outcomes from group activities and events.
- regular communication with all members including the advanced notice of specific meetings and events.
- identification of the required resources required to achieve outcomes, including the sound management of resources.
- the ability and willingness to seek project funding support.
- valuing all member contributions towards group activities and processes.

#### 3.2 SOUND LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION CRITICAL TO GROUP FUNCTIONING.

It is important that the Innovation Platform has sound leadership that is shared, inclusive and respected. Such leadership should not be dominating, but allow adequate discussion amongst all stakeholders, and importantly an ability to reach consensus. Linked to this is the importance of having a group facilitator that allows “all voices to be heard”, opinions and ideas to be expressed and critiqued, but not ridiculed. An important part of the “innovation process” is the identification of new and innovative approaches to addressing specific issues and opportunities and a “thinking outside of the square” mentality.

#### 3.3 FACILITATING INNOVATION PLATFORMS; TIPS AND APPROACHES

The success of any Innovation Platform is only as good as the group facilitator who guides them! It is always a challenge to bring people together having diverse interests, communication skills and agendas, given the range of organisations and views relating to agricultural production systems. In some instances, there may be a reluctance for different stakeholders to share information, particularly if there are commercial interests as may be the case with agribusiness input suppliers or consultants. In these circumstances skilful facilitation is required, in order to firstly agree on common goals and objectives, and secondly the willingness to contribute knowledge and information (the “Intellectual Property”).

The success of any Innovation Platform will be determined by the group's ability to address issues along the value chain, dealing with issues both on and off-farm. Dealing with a range and diverse set of interests, challenges and opportunities will result in a different set of stakeholders being engaged, and so a skilled facilitator will need to determine how best to bring out the best outcomes according to the characteristics of those stakeholders involved in problem solving and making well-informed decisions. It is also critical that discussions and activities remain focused on the group goals and outcomes (ensuring that the group does not become side-tracked or lose focus of their purpose and intent).



A skilled facilitator will establish ground rules that are clearly understood by all.

Attributes of a skilled facilitator will include the following;

- Ability to maximise cooperation and collaboration between all stakeholders of the Innovation Platform through sound communication skills and the ability to network.
- Critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- A strong sense of negotiation skills, conflict resolution, with an understanding of “power play relationships” and the ability to manage these in a diplomatic and perceptive manner.
- A broad understanding of the agricultural system, having the ability to question conventional thinking (and mindsets), the ability to challenge participants (in a non-threatening manner).
- An ability to maintain participant interest, engagement and contributions to the Innovation Platform discussions and actions.



A skilled facilitator will help to ensure the above group characteristics are achieved.

A skilled group facilitator needs to take the Innovation Platform members on a “journey of discovery” whereby it is the combination of the input of all members that determines the end result (and achievements) of the Innovation Platform group. The journey that the facilitator embarks upon with the Innovation Platform group is in fact a cycle that comprises the following steps;

1. Group formation and orientation.
2. Determination of the group focus based on a needs and opportunity assessment, which leads to “problem definition” and describing a suitable innovation process and the actual innovation.
3. Undertake a membership stock take, to identify the existing skill mix, and identify any additional members and/or organisations who should be invited to participate to achieve the right balance of complementary skills and capabilities.
4. Develop a process of problem solving, identifying options for action (linked to the specific innovation and/or technological opportunities) as part of professionally facilitated workshops.
5. Support activities outside of the workshops, such as the specific “field activities” that may include testing, evaluating, adapting and refining solutions, improved practices and technologies.
6. Supporting a foci on scaling out and maximising adoption including building capacity amongst Innovation Platform stakeholders and possibly the wider farming community.
7. Assist in driving the process of monitoring, evaluating, analysing and assessing opportunities for systems improvement.

A successful facilitator will be able to achieve the following outcomes;

- Ensure that participant roles, responsibilities and actions are well understood and supported and that there is on-going commitment from all.
- Support open and transparent communication between all members, address any break-down in communication, and ensure that everyone has an “equal voice” particularly in group discussions and workshop activities.
- Will have a natural ability to deal with dominating personalities, or conflict within the group, ensuring that everyone has an equal voice and is valued for what they bring to the Innovation Platform group.
- Have an ability to bring in new stakeholders to the Innovation Platform, particularly where a unique skill or experiences is required to complement the existing skill set.

### 3.4. TROUBLESHOOTING FOR INNOVATION PLATFORMS

There are many challenges and pitfalls associated with the establishment and functioning of Innovation Platforms, so to avoid an Innovation Platform going “pear shaped” here are some issues to be aware of;

#### a) **Domineering influences within the group dynamics**

Beware of those characters who like to dominate and influence group discussions and processes. This is an issue if there are one or two individuals within the group have their own specific agenda that they wish to address, which otherwise is not shared by the majority of participants. A skilled facilitator can often deal with these inequities. Ensuring that all participants can vote on a range of options will be worthwhile exercise. Outside of group activities some “deeper conversations” may be required with dominating individuals.

**b) The wrong sort of “profit drivers” dominate**

Engaging with a wider range of stakeholders will often result in engagement with agribusiness organisations that are focused on selling products and services to farmers. Whilst many of these operators are highly experienced and offer a considerable amount of “local knowledge” there is the need to adopt a balanced approach in relation to group activities and technologies/practices that are explored by the Innovation Platform.

Establishing “rules of participation” is highly recommended, in that the intent of the Innovation Platform is not to serve as a sales outlet for such organisations. It is important that such agribusiness organisations recognise and value their engagement, such as an increased level of perceived credibility by farmers, expanding their network of farmers and other stakeholders, and the ability to build their own technical skills and knowledge.

**c) Ensuring realistic expectations are maintained**

The group participants need to have realistic expectations in relation to what can be achieved within a reasonable timeframe, with the resources that are available for specific project activities. Whilst it is great to have a group of highly motivated individuals, it is important to “take a step back” and see what can be realistically achieved. Importantly, identifying the type (and scale) of resources required is an important consideration.

**d) The technology or practice has no proven scientific basis**

Whilst creative thinking and “out of the square opportunities” are encouraged as part of the innovation process, it is important that due diligence is performed in relation to the likelihood that the specific practice has scientific merit that can be proven in a replicated field trial basis. Therefore, such practices or technologies ideally will be at an advanced stage of development, or proven to provide benefits in other industries or allied situations.

Linked to this is the need to manage risks associated with the specific technology or practice, and not to be overwhelmed by specific claimed benefits that can not be proven or substantiated through on-farm trials and demonstrations. Ideally, the Innovation Platform will have stakeholders engaged who are skilled in this validation process.

**e) A scientific approach to evaluating technologies**

It is critical that any on-farm evaluation or assessment is based on guiding scientific principles of research (including demonstrations and comparisons). This includes the ability to validate and compare different treatments, knowing what factors need to be measured, monitored and analysed and being able to reach objective conclusions without the emotion.

It is important that clear monitoring and evaluation procedures are put into place that is able to measure and assess the benefits and impacts of the new technologies and innovations. Adoption characteristics including ease of adoption, adoption rates, reasons for non-adoption and dis-adoption should be monitored and recorded.