

Introduction

The Climate Change Research Strategy for Primary Industries (CCRSPI) is a collaborative response to the opportunities and challenges posed by climate change for Australian agriculture, fisheries and forestry. It is a joint initiative of the rural research and development corporations; the state and territory governments; the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; and the CSIRO.

Recognising the pressure that growing demands on land, energy, water and research investment were placing on the primary industries, the Primary Industry Standing Committee developed the National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension (RDE) Framework – an initiative to provide a more collaborative approach to rural RDE. The CCRSPI partnership was established in 2007 to develop the National RDE Framework's climate change research strategy on behalf of all primary industries.

By bringing together research agencies, investors and governments, the CCRSPI partners have been able to explore research, development and extension capacity, research priorities, emerging needs and opportunities related to climate change and primary industries. CCRSPI delivered the National Climate Change Research Strategy for Primary Industries in 2008, and has since operated as a collaborative partnership focused on identification, coordination and communication of key climate change related research needs and priorities.

The initiative's ongoing objectives include the revision of the 2008 Strategy and the delivery of a national conference.

CCRSPI 2008 Strategy

The scope of the CCRSPI 2008 Strategy was broad, covering cross-sectoral issues that related to climate change impacts, adaptation and mitigation, and required consideration over the short (three years), medium (five years or more) and long term (10 years or more). It also involved a preliminary assessment of all current research activity to assist with identifying gaps in activity and resources.

The Strategy was endorsed by the Primary Industries Standing Committee and the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporation Chairs and was released as the CCRSPI Phase 1 report. It demonstrated the value of national coordination, the significant opportunities for collaboration at many levels, and the need for substantial new investments to address the challenges and opportunities of climate change.

There have been significant developments in climate change research and research programs within the primary industries sector since 2008, as well as major changes in federal and state policies. In light of this, 2012 will see the delivery of a revised CCRSPI Strategy and associated Theme Plans.

CCRSPI Conference 2011

The overarching objective of CCRSPI is to achieve cross-sectoral collaboration across primary industries. The CCRSPI Conference was a primary tool in realising that goal.

The inaugural CCRSPI Conference was held on 14–17 February 2011 at the MCG in Melbourne.

Bringing together over 300 scientists, farmers, research managers and policy makers, the Conference was an opportunity to share knowledge and information, and ensure the best available science in the agricultural sector is understood and interrogated for relevance by other sectors.

The Conference was structured around 11 themes:

1. Farming systems
2. Landscape management
3. Water management
4. Plant adaptation
5. Animal adaptation
6. Soil management
7. Socio-economic
8. Greenhouse gas accounting
9. Transformational adaptation
10. Knowledge and communication
11. Impacts and forecasting

There are some overlaps between these Conference themes, due to the complex nature of climate change and the broad nature of the themes themselves. They were chosen in order to allow CCRSPI to be flexible, and to align with the Primary Industries Adaptation Research Network themes and other sector RDE strategies.

The 80 presentations made at the Conference are available as an enduring resource at www.ccrspi.org.au. The synthesis papers stemming from the Conference provide an additional legacy that will help inform the ongoing implementation of CCRSPI.

CCRSPI synthesis papers

Synthesis papers based around each the first nine Conference themes were commissioned and presented as keynote presentations during the Conference, each one acting as the opening presentation of the relevant concurrent session. The Organising Committee invited a primary author for each topic to develop the synthesis paper and then present the summary and conclusions at the Conference. The executive summary of each synthesis paper was published in the Conference handbook.

Each paper provided an introduction to the theme, the current situation and recommendations for future RDE in the area.

Eight synthesis papers commissioned for the Conference now published within this Special Issue journal provide an insight to the themes discussed at the CCRSPI Conference.

Mr Craig Burns

Chairman – CCRSPI Steering Committee