



## Future Drought Fund Consultation/Feedback

The following consolidated feedback is provided by the Corangamite Catchment Management as a response to the Future Drought Fund Consultation and is aligned specifically to the following discussion questions:

1. Does the draft funding plan provide an appropriate framework to guide spending on drought resilience initiatives?

The objectives are holistic and based on a social ecological systems approach, which is great as it incorporates agricultural productivity / economic resilience, improving management of and building natural capital / environmental resilience of agricultural landscapes, plus building the social resilience of communities.

The funding principles look sound and include collaborating and partnering with diverse stakeholders to design and deliver programs, and enacting community-led, co-design, and or end-user approaches.

The proposed key features of new programs sound very good, however we think there is still value in having some 'small programs', if they are integrated (re. the first dot point: Fewer and longer-term programs that are better integrated). Smaller programs eg. grants provide opportunity for greater inclusion and reach, such as opportunities for Landcare networks and community groups to be part of FDF programs.

2. Which current FDF programs should be retained?

All programs seem to have merit, however they need to clearly define what the program's purpose is, what they want to achieve and how the programs talk to one another. No value in working in silos.

The FDF programs also need to acknowledge and communicate with other Australian Government programs such as NHT and Smart Farms to reduce confusion and overlapping of investment.

3. Which current FDF programs could be integrated with existing programs or built upon to drive efficiency or to maximise impact?

There is opportunity for increased information sharing and potential collaboration with regional NRM bodies / CMAs. Many of the FDF funded activities complement CMA regional delivery programs, particularly sustainable agriculture and biodiversity projects. This has been identified in the Productivity Commission recommendations and interim response relating to natural capital:

**Opportunities for achieving greater public benefits (page 6)**

*The Australian Government should enhance the public benefits being delivered by the Future Drought Fund, including:*

- *making support for transformational actions a higher priority*
- *investing more in activities that build natural capital, drawing on support from relevant organisations*
- *continuing the shift to place-based planning and actions for supporting social resilience.*

The above could be achieved by involving regional NRM bodies / CMAs and Landcare for greater community reach and impact.

Sustainable Agriculture Facilitators (SAF's) and Soil Coordinators could be better integrated into FDF hubs / nodes.

We suggest stakeholder reference groups consisting of a range of relevant stakeholders (consisting of those who represent sectors of the 3 FDF inter-connected strategic objectives) be established to help support governance and implementation for drought nodes be established. This would help build transparency, shared ownership and increase reach.

We agree that a public statement of expectations for the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs program and individual Hubs would help clarify and communicate the purpose and role of the hubs, and hopefully identify opportunities for increased partnerships, eg Landcare.

4. *How should the Hubs' role be better defined to deliver more impact for their regions? Are the proposed funding options for the Hubs appropriate?*

The funding options proposed seem sound, supporting drought nodes to be the 'go-to' for drought information. For competitive funding rounds, a consistent and transparent approach is needed, and it would be beneficial for local knowledge to be included in the decision making process for project funding.

We question whether the drought nodes deliver a balanced approach across all three themes (NRM, productivity and community). Each drought node would have a strong interest/experience in one of the three themes and we believe this limits their ability to engage affectively and consistently. It would be more appropriate to have nodes that can focus on their area of interest/expertise.

The engagement and communication regarding the drought hubs have been poor from the very beginning and did not get much better as time went on. Better clarity and definition regarding their role would be very useful. Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) play a key role in the delivery of NRM and Sustainable Agriculture projects. The drought hubs could make better use of the skills and expertise in these organisations.

The Corangamite CMA had to initiate engagement with the nodes to seek out information because it was not forthcoming.

5. *What implementation pathways and governance options are the most appropriate ways of actioning regional plans?*

What role did the hubs/nodes have in the development of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning (RDRP) program? It would seem logical for the hubs to be the 'go-to' for their relevant plans and be supported by the drought innovation officer / knowledge broker, however, it might be difficult if they don't already feel a sense of ownership. See reference group comments above.

6. Should a future iteration of the FBR program be more focussed on specific learning areas or target particular cohorts of farmers (e.g., young farmers, remotely located farmers, smaller landholders and/or those operating on marginal land)?

Possibly, there are benefits to this approach but we still want some flexibility as well. There may be opportunity for some tailoring for specific target audiences. There will likely be specific cohorts/themes/issues more relevant to some areas than others.

The partners who deliver the program will understand the specific areas of need relevant to their communities / regions. For example, some regions have strong well-established women in agriculture networks, young farmer groups and Landcare groups which could form a ready made audience for a program.

This could be a key role for the SAFs, given they are already playing a key role in understanding the needs of their rural community.

7. How should public and private good be balanced in a future iteration of the FBR program? Should the program require farmer co-contributions?

The suggestions to include more on NRM and transformational change as part of the program sound beneficial. Getting a co-contribution from participants may help build buy-in and increase commitment to attend programs. The public/private benefit changes depending on the project/activity. Perhaps co-contributions need to be a sliding scale?

8. Should the FDF provide training on how best to use and interpret information from existing climate tools, including but not limited to 'My Climate View'? If so, who could benefit most from such training?

Yes, this would be useful for farmers, farm advisors, students, extension staff.

Our experience in getting landholders to use online tools is that adoption needs to be made easy with clear instructions that cater for all ages and technical skills.

9. Should the long-term goal for CSA be providing adaptation information to better support practice change in response to climate projections?

Yes

10. Should the FDF prioritise natural capital management projects through discrete programs (such as a new Drought Resilience Soils and Landscapes program) or should NRM continue to be embedded throughout most streams of investment? Or both?

Given the ecological systems approach proposed in the FDF vision and objectives, it makes sense to embed NRM throughout.

We believe that all programs need to have the three themes embedded throughout, but having programs with clear outcomes relating to NRM, Community and Productivity enables organisations to clearly see where their potential projects fit into the FDF.

11. How can First Nations communities be supported so that their knowledge and practices to care for country can be maintained for the benefit of their communities and land?

First Nations communities will best be able to answer this question, noting it is a bit strange that there are many recommendations about First Nations yet the language used in the Plan/Strategy seems to only mention env/social/economic values and never cultural.

12. Should the FDF focus on innovation, or broader extension and adoption of tried and tested practices to enable change at scale in Australia? Or both?

There is a need for both. To engage a full suite of landholders it would be necessary to have some programs focusing on early adopters and innovators; and other programs that support the conservative late majority with proven best practices.

Supporting innovation to gather quality, science-based data is vital. There is a gap in current funding programs for long term research which is very important for landholder adoption and practice change. There is value in funding the continuation of existing programs and/or projects that meet the objectives of the FDF and can provide valuable long term data sets eg: 4 years of soil test results versus 8-10 yrs.

13. Should transformational change, and partnerships that facilitate it, be prioritised by the FDF? What incentives or programs would best support transformational change? Or should the FDF continue to also build incremental change – that eventually lead to transformation – and focus on the preconditions (knowledge, skills and support etc) that enable individuals and communities to make transformational changes?

Building incremental change that eventually leads to transformation.

14. What Drought Resilience Innovation Challenges could be targeted in the proposed new innovation pilot program?

We suggest the following be considered:

- Stubble retention in cropping systems without the need for burning
- Best practice raised bed cropping practices adopted on farms to minimise soil erosion, habitat loss and nutrient loss into watercourses, natural wetlands and associated biodiversity valued on farms. This should include no draining or cropping of wetlands. (We acknowledge this is not necessarily a drought issue but more relating to climate change)
- Broadacre annual cropping that avoids bare ground over summer after harvest
- Farm dams with reliable water supplies, providing habitat refuges and quality stock water
- Getting more perennial native grasses back onto farms, for drought resilient and productivity
- Shelterbelts for stock health.
- Demonstrating the creation of microclimates with strategic tree planting.
- Adoption of grazing practises that maintain groundcover all year round.

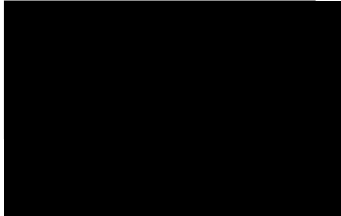
15. What enabling activities are essential to the success of the FDF and should be directly funded to support FDF programs?

Given the FDF focus on both incremental and transformational change, it would be useful to support longitudinal studies to measure long term impact of FDF participants and their

communities. This would help check the assumptions that incremental change activities lead to transformational change over time.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with this feedback and look forward to further involvement in this program into the future.

Regards



CEO Corangamite Catchment Management Authority

*healthy and productive lands and waters  
cared for by thriving communities*

