

THE AUSTRALIAN MEAT AND LIVE-STOCK RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
APPROACH TO FUNDING RURAL RESEARCH

Ian McCausland*

SUMMARY

The **AMLRDC** was formed as a result of Government and industry desire to put research and development on a more commercially oriented footing so as to achieve greater benefit for the whole meat and livestock industry. The Corporation's approach to research and development funding is driven by the expertise and enthusiasm of its Directors and by the AMLRDC Act, which requires funding according to an R & D Plan prepared in consultation with the industry.

The North Australian **Programme** of Research and Development provides a good example of the Corporation's new approach to funding of rural research. Presented with a series of overlapping and disparate projects, the Corporation withheld funding while it conducted a review to determine what was required to meet its stated objective of increasing turn-off of North Australian herds by 20% by 1994. The review provided the new direction needed and through appointed research and development co-ordinators the Corporation put together a package of research involving three States and nine organisations, which has a real chance of meeting the stated objective on time.

INTRODUCTION

The **AMLRDC** began operation in July, 1985 under a new Act and with the object of achieving a greater benefit for the industry for each dollar spent. During its first full year of operation the Corporation clearly demonstrated its new approach to the job of funding R & D. It announced that it would place increased emphasis on funding of projects beyond the farm gate, and would take a more "commercial" approach to all R & D funding. The effect of this new approach was to be dramatically seen in the Corporation's first project funding decisions of April, 1986, when the proportion of "off farm" projects, as a percentage of the total, rose from 25.4% the previous year to 40.2%. But perhaps even more important than this shift in resources was the underlying change in approach to funding. The Corporation is determined to push R & D through to its final conclusion - a benefit to the industry. Perhaps the best on-farm example of this approach is seen in the North Australian **Programme**.

THE CORPORATION

To understand the new approach of the Corporation, it is first necessary to know the genesis of its formation, its requirements under the Act and the people who are the Directors.

The AMLRDC Act, 1985, which established the Corporation, arose because of a perceived need by the industry and the Government to put R & D on a more commercial footing and to bridge the research and development to

*Executive Director, AMLRDC, Aetna Life Tower, Cnr. Elizabeth & Bathurst Streets, Sydney, N.S.W. 2000

implementation gap which is **acknowledged** to exist in Australia. The Act gives the Corporation wide powers to achieve the stated objectives, which are to improve the productivity and market performance of the meat and livestock industry through **research and development**, and to improve the accountability for R & D expenditure. It is particularly worthy of note that “meat and livestock **research and development**” is stated to cover “production, processing, storage, **transport and marketing**”, without giving special emphasis to any one of these areas.

Also of **relevance** to the Corporation’s approach is the manner of selection of the Directors, and **their background**. Directors are selected by a Minister’s Committee which has three producer organisation appointees, three processor organisation appointees, and an independent Chairman. **In a clear departure** from membership of the AMRC, none of the present Directors are **associated with** organisations which are the traditional recipients of **meat and livestock research and development** grants. All are leaders in their field and have relevant experience to bring to bear to Corporation decisions.

They are:

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| Peter McInnes B.Sc. Ph.D. | Chairman, ex Chief of Animal Production Department of Agriculture, N.S.W. and ex Dean of Agriculture of the Queensland Agricultural College |
| Brian Booth B.Sc. Ph.D.
F.R.A.C.I., F.A.A.T.S. | ex Scientific Director Welcome Australia |
| Kevin Bowtell | Managing Director of Intanat (Australia) Pty. Ltd. a meat processing company, and ex Chairman of the Australian Meat Exporters’ Federal Council |
| Noel Fitzpatrick M.Sc. | Deputy Secretary, Department of Primary Industries and ex Director of the Western Australian Department of Agriculture |
| John Hall B.Ec.M.Sc.Ag. | Group Manager, Marketing Systems, Australian Meat and Live-stock Corporation |
| Brian Hickman D.Sc. F.I.M.
A.I.M.M. | Managing Director, Australian Minerals Development Laboratories |
| Gerald Martin | Sheep producer and member of the Sheepmeats Council of Australia |
| Sandra Welsman B.Sc.A.A.I.M. | Past Manager Marketing Policy CSR Limited’s Oil and gas Division; currently Head of Dockyard Development, Department of Defence |
| Tony Wharton B.Sc. | General Manager of the Brisbane and Ipswich Metropolitan Regional Abattoir in Queensland. He is also Chairman of Directors of an export meat company - Queensland Meat Producers. |
| Richard Wilson | Cattle producer and Chairman of the CSIRO Tropical Animal Science Advisory Committee |

THE R & D PLAN

Under the **AMLRDC** Act the Corporation is required to investigate and evaluate the needs of the industry and to develop a R & D plan according to those needs. It must then fund research and development in such a way that the Plan's objectives are met. Once the Plan is in place, the Corporation is , unable to fund projects unless they, in the Corporation's opinion, advance those objectives in the R & D Plan.

To formulate the Plan the Corporation publicly sought submissions and received over 100 written replies. These were evaluated and a draft Plan submitted to the major national industry bodies - The Sheepmeats Council, The Cattle Council of Australia and the Australian Meat Exporters' Federal Council. When all supported the Plan, the Corporation considered it had an industry **mandate** to proceed.

Putting together the intent of the Act to put R & D on a **more** commercial footing, the expertise and enthusiasm of the Directors to bridge the R & D to implementation gap, and the requirement to fund according to our R & D Plan, it can be seen that a radical new approach was inevitable.

THE NORTH AUSTRALIAN PROGRAMME

This then provides a background to the Corporation's approach to funding of projects which address its Objective 3.1 "Increase of low turn-off in Northern Australian cattle herds **by about 20%** without corresponding increases in cost, with emphasis **on** improving nutrition and breaking lactational anoestrus".

In April 1986 a number of projects were received, many of which addressed this objective. However, they came from different organisations or sub-sections of the **same** organisations and if they had been funded as presented then there would have been little chance of obtaining the desired objective.

The Corporation decided to hold a review meeting in Rockhampton in May 1986. Chaired by Corporation Director, Mr. Richard Wilson, the review focussed **on** how the objective could be met.

Twenty three scientists were present with three Corporation Directors and after two days of intense discussion the meeting decided that the objectives should be approached through three routes.

1. Animal production
2. Pasture production
3. Animal/pasture management

The Corporation selected as co-ordinators four people **whom** it believes **have** the expertise, experience and enthusiasm to put together a **co-ordinated programme** of research and development which would reach the stated objective. These people are:

Keith Entwistle **B.V.Sc.**, Ph.D.
Q.D.A.H., **M.A.C.V.Sc.**
(Overall Co-ordinator)

Associate Professor, Graduate School of
Tropical Veterinary Science, James
Cook University of North Queensland

Dick Holroyd **B.V.Sc. M.Sc.**, Ph.D. Supervisory Husbandry Officer
Queensland Department of Primary **Industry**

Peter Hopkins **B.V.Sc., M.V.Sc.** Ph.D. Deputy Director, Division of Animal
Husbandry, Queensland Department of
Primary Industry

Barry Walker **B.Agric., M.Agric.**
Ph.D. Director, Pasture Management Branch,
Queensland Department of Primary
Industry

When these Co-ordinators got together to decide on the approach needed it soon became obvious to them that while research is needed to achieve the objective by 1994, it must be completed well before that date and the major effort transferred to development and demonstration work to ensure implementation.

Further, to determine priorities and areas of emphasis to achieve the 1994 **target, the Co-ordinators compiled** information and statistics on pastures and cattle numbers in Northern Australia. Through use of a simulation modelling process, the most sensitive areas where research inputs would have the most profound impact were determined. Through this process a co-ordinated package of R & D covering and integrating the three areas of animals, pastures and **management has been put together and in the first year attracted Corporation funding of over \$1 million.**

This North Australian **Programme** is symbolic of the Corporation's new approach to rural research funding - research that is driven by a clear objective and co-ordinated across disciplines, organisations and even States. We hope that rural researchers in other areas of Australia will note this change in approach and voluntarily get together to design co-ordinated programmes to **address the Corporation's objectives.** Both myself and the **Corporation's** On-Farm Project Officer, Dr. Ian Johnsson, will welcome approaches from groups of scientists **who wish to adopt this approach.**

In conclusion, the days of passive receipt of funding technique oriented projects by the Corporation are fast disappearing - instead is an approach which welcomes co-ordinated projects whose overriding discipline is to meet the Corporation's objectives.