

The Crop Science Society of SA

P.M.B. No.1

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Submission to the Research and Development Enquiry.

Since 1975 the Crop Science Society of South Australia Incorporated (CSSSA) has advocated for the use of sound science to provide improvements in agricultural crop production for South Australian producers. CSSSA is an active organisation of farmers, farming consultants and agricultural research scientists. It was felt that a society was needed to provide a forum for the exchange of information between people in academic and applied fields; between research, teaching, extension workers, farmers and marketing representatives.

CSSSA provides a forum for the interchange of ideas from a membership extending beyond that spanned by any existing organisation. Currently, the society has over 300 members from rural and metropolitan SA, as well as a small interstate membership. Meetings are held on the third or fourth Wednesday of the month at the University of Adelaide's Roseworthy campus.

In recent years due to past government policy, Agricultural research and development (R & D) has been on a declining trend and has reduced the progress of Agricultural science in this state. The flow on effect has hindered the progress of the broader agricultural community as at the same time we have seen significant interstate developments. The reduction in research positions held at key institutions such as the Waite & Roseworthy Campuses of the Adelaide University has been apparent, and it is critical to reverse this trend, and the larger trend in regional decline. Whilst the private sector employment & investment has increased marginally, this has not accounted for the reductions in the government and tertiary education sectors.

The growth of scientific and cultural knowledge and understanding of environmental and agricultural systems has been an instrumental source of value for the state. The leadership from many sectors of the Ag research industry has led to national & international recognition, including life members of the Crop Science Society. This leadership has imparted significant knowledge on the bulk of the membership which has led to innumerable gains for the industry as a whole.

The extension of key R & D has led to improved gross production as well as an increased efficiency in highly competitive markets and changing environments. There are many vectors for extension of R & D nationally. At the state level, tertiary institutions, government departments, public bodies (such as CSSSA) and private sectors are all critical in dissemination of this. Investment in R & D is also critical to extension.

The retention of regional industry and labour for rural economies has been an ongoing difficulty for the state. It is well documented from the initial expansion of agriculture in the late 1800's. The shift of focus of agricultural research from government farms to the tertiary education sector and private industry has not been sufficient to maintain the rural focus. The decline in "Government Farms" has been partly offset by investment in urban research capacity but the cooperative funding has not been sufficient to maintain the rural focus. Skerrick's of this past investment can be seen at the Roseworthy Farm, Minnipa Ag Centre, Turretfield Research Station and Clare PIRSA/SARDI to name four. An increase in investment to specifically facilitate regional research and education is critical to maintain the local research capacity to maximize local growth opportunities. There is also a need to consider making regional positions permanent, rather than as two or three year contracts or funding cycles, to provide security to the work force.

The existing labour force is limited in its capacity at the regional level to facilitate research & extension opportunities within the industry. There is an opportunity to increase current work placement programs and develop scholarship opportunities which could form part of tertiary undergraduate and postgraduate study. Basing these at the regional level will increase the local capacity significantly.

South Australian businesses', universities', and research institutes' R&D funding can be increased by aligning financial rewards from funding bodies to goals that are set to increase value adding and manufacturing. Tax offsets can also be tailored to promote investment by business in higher risk, higher reward opportunities, which may presently be ignored in favor of lower risk research business models.

Further on education, it is exceptionally important that young researchers develop local knowledge with their study and in extension of their research. Having locally trained researchers & education providers will ensure enduring benefits for the industry. The reduction of government funded R & D has reduced the number of employment opportunities for graduates and hence reduced enrolments. It is fundamentally important to re-instate this capacity through scholarships, bursary's, co-funded positions (with industry) & direct funding of key positions.

Recently, there has been an up-tick in the interest in Ag Science at secondary & tertiary education levels. This shows that the improvements in awareness & education is providing required gains. This must be maintained, or even increased if the industry is to maintain a steady stream of quality graduates.

We invite the Commission to make contact with the society if required for further details with regards to the enquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig Davis.
President of the Crop Science Society of SA (Inc.)