



Connecting with levy-funded research



Communication has proven to be a critical tool to enable information sharing and help drive practice change and adoption on a business level.

With over 15 active levy investments, fifth generation onion producer and Chair of the Executive Committee for Onions Australia, Darren Rathjen, said the 'Australian onion industry communications program' (VN18003) is key to keeping industry up to date with the latest research and development and marketing outcomes.

"The project has been an integral conduit between the work being undertaken across Australia to boost the productivity, profitability and sustainability of the onion sector and onion levy payers," Mr Rathjen said.

This program is funded by Hort Innovation and managed by Cox Inall dentsu with support from Onions Australia. Its role is to connect growers with the knowledge insights and ability to create positive change in the areas of biosecurity, soil and plant health, meeting consumer expectations and trade development.

Mr Rathjen said the communications program is the industry's way of showcasing advancements in research and development and demonstrating the value for growers in adopting industry best practice and the latest innovations.

"The levy is an investment in, and for, the entire industry. Australia is leading the way in the onion's world in terms of research and development," he said.

"Growers only benefit from that investment if it is communicated to them, and they are made aware of the best management practices.

"The communications program enables us to keep updated on the latest research findings that will help facilitate improved business productivity and industry prosperity."

Levies collected from industry in 2020/21 amounted to \$1.04 million, with \$1.09 million being invested into R&D and \$194,503 in Marketing and the onion strategic investment plan for 2022-2026 gave the industry a \$244 million farmgate value.

The benefits of the Onion Fund research and development (R&D) represent a sound return on investment for growers, as R&D investments have an aggregated benefit-cost ratio average of 2.33 to one.



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Stemming from this investment, there are several ways for businesses to learn about, and implement, outcomes from the onion levy investment.

“There is a quarterly newsletter, which gives growers an insight on new research and development and marketing outputs,” Mr Rathjen said.

“Case studies which leverage peer-to-peer learning to help encourage practice change, podcasts which bring the latest industry insights straight to you in the fields, an annual magazine which is a ‘bible’ of each years R&D investments, state updates and more.”

Mr Rathjen encourages other growers to engage with as many different resources as possible to ensure they are up to date with the latest best practice.

“The communications program has continually evolved over the past seven years to reflect what growers want to read about and ensure that they are getting the information they need, the way they want it.

“It enables me to ensure I am not missing out on important updates such as changes to insecticide permits as they become available.”

Mr Rathjen said that engaging with the communications program is one of the most important ways that growers can continue to become more profitable, productive, and sustainable.

“The levy is one of our most valuable tools to further the growth of our industry,” he said.

“And each individual project is designed to provide a clear return on our collective investment into the industry.

“To find out more, I recommend you head to the Onions Australia Website for a one-stop-shop of all the communications resources at <http://www.onionsaustralia.org.au>.”

Link to resources

Podcasts: <https://www.onionsaustralia.org.au/news-updates/podcasts/>

Case Studies: <https://www.onionsaustralia.org.au/news-updates/case-studies/>

R&D Videos: <https://www.onionsaustralia.org.au/news-updates/rd-videos/>

Annual Magazine: <https://www.onionsaustralia.org.au/news-updates/annual-magazine/>

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For more info on the about the project, visit <https://www.onionsaustralia.org.au/news-updates/news-events/> and <https://www.horticulture.com.au/growers/onion-fund/>



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