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Wool industry questions flock move

The Land

WOOL industry groups have heaped pressure on Australian Wool Innovation to reverse its decision to withdraw funding support for the Information Nucleus Flock program.

The program started in 2007, is managed by the Sheep CRC, and funded by AWI, Meat & Livestock Australia and the Australian Meat Processors Corporation. It provides data for Australian Sheep Breeding Values used by more than 70 per cent of terminal and maternal ram breeders but only 30pc of Merino ram breeders.

Last week AWI said it would not fund the second phase of the program because of a lack of a commercialisation focus – making the science practical for the industry - in the Sheep CRC's business plan to the organisation.

But Wool Producers Australia is urging AWI to reconsider support for the program because it believes it holds significant financial benefits for woolgrowers.

"We strongly believe the nucleus flock should be retained," WPA president Geoff Power said. "We are asking the question if there is something wrong with the business plan what can we do to fix it."

Mr Power said while it was up to individual producers to take on the data generated through the project, enough research had to be done to ensure there was solid information to be commercialised.

Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association president Helen Cathles said members supported the program's continuation once the Sheep CRC handed it over to industry in 2014 and would investigate how it could happen.

"Genetic research is vital to the future of superfine wool producers and the sheep industry as a whole," Mrs Cathles said.

"Embracing the research being conducted by the Sheep CRC is a high priority for our membership, as it offers new solutions to improve on-farm operations and their business bottom line."

The Victorian Farmers Federation has written to AWI seeking advice on why the project was not accepted and what the board would require for it to be funded. It is believed the AWI board considered it at its meeting last week.



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