

21 October 2012

Beef performance on the menu

Brad Cooper

LIFTING beef performance in Australia's north has taken centre stage in Brisbane.

Industry heavyweights mingled with academics, scientists and top-level bureaucrats on Tuesday to see Queensland Premier Campbell Newman launch a new research effort that aims to lift beef production in northern Australia.

The Northern Beef Research Alliance, comprising the University of Queensland, CSIRO and the Queensland Government, is the latest initiative offering a more coordinated approach into how production challenges and constraints are tackled in the future.

Cattle welfare, nutrition, fertility, methane mitigation and pest and disease management will top the list of research priorities.

Mr Newman said the collaboration formed part of his government's ambitions to boost the output of Queensland agriculture.

"The Northern Beef Research Alliance is about getting a better research effort, better efficiency of the research dollar and to improve the productivity of the beef sector," he said.

State Agriculture Minister John McVeigh, who was also at the launch, reconfirmed the Newman Government's commitment to implementing policies that would elevate agriculture to one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy, while doubling food production by 2040.

"The Northern Beef Research Alliance is one of several new strategies which will underpin Queensland's wider economic growth, resulting in a more productive and resilient economy," Mr McVeigh said.

"There is considerable potential for the northern beef industry to provide significant and sustained wealth creation."

Dr Greg Harper, director of external engagement, CSIRO Animal, Food and Health Sciences and a Meat and Livestock Australia director, said northern Australia was facing increased opportunities in tandem with more challenges given its close proximity to the booming economic development and rampant population growth of Asia.

He said the pressure of the resources industry on skilled labour and increased public scrutiny of sustainable land management and animal welfare practices, were two of the challenges facing producers in the region.

"The Northern Beef Research Alliance represents a unique opportunity to bring together the intellectual and creative power of three outstanding research organisations to create game changing technologies and opportunities for a well-positioned and vital industry.

"Like never before we have the opportunity to leverage off the discoveries made in sequencing the human genome, to provide genetic and biological solutions for the reproductive limitations of northern cattle.

"With our understanding of the rumen and its microflora, we foresee techniques for mitigation of methane from northern cattle, that do not compromise performance or environmental resilience. And through our knowledge of non-coding RNAs, we foresee breeding animals that are resistant to diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease.

"Each of these novel technologies will not become innovations until governments approve them, and someone in industry adopts and commercialise them. From CSIRO's point of view, the Northern Beef Research Alliance links us closely with valuable partners along the path to innovation."

Cattle Council of Australia executive director David Inall said the collaboration had a strong emphasis on extension, meaning any scientific outcomes would be shared and taken to the frontline where it was needed most.



Queensland Premier Campbell Newman with Cattle Council of Australia president Andrew Ogilvie at Tuesday's launch.

<http://qcl.farmonline.com.au/news/state/livestock/cattle/beef-performance-on-the-menu/2630013.aspx?storypage=0>