



# Who's Who in the Zoo

## VegNET Phase 2



### The Levy Investment Process

#### How the levy system works

On behalf of Australia's primary industries, the Department of Agriculture collects, administers and disburses agricultural levies and charges on rural commodities and products under the authority of Commonwealth legislation. In 2018-2019, the department disbursed \$18.2 million in levies, charges and Commonwealth matched payments to Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (Hort Innovation) for investment in R&D, of which \$9.42 million was collected through the vegetable levy.

Hort Innovation is one of the nation's 15 Rural Research and Development Corporations tasked with investing horticulture levies and Australian Government contributions into initiatives that help industry be as productive and profitable as possible. Together, Hort Innovation and Plant Health Australia (PHA) are responsible for the expenditure of the vegetable levy.

Revenue that is collected from a levy or charge is directed to either biosecurity preparedness, emergency plant pest and animal disease responses, marketing, research and development or residue testing. Hence, primary industries that choose to invest using the levy system, such as the vegetable industry, are often better equipped to respond to the emerging trends and challenges that arise from operating in highly competitive world markets. To find out more information about the vegetable levy fund, [click here](#).

#### Key messages

- You have a say in how your levy investment funds are invested!
- VegNET regional development officers (RDO's) work with growers, advisors, researchers and other relevant stakeholders to collaboratively assist growers and their communities in achieving their self-identified goals
- Your local Regional Extension Advisory Group will play a key role in developing your five-year Regional Extension Strategy
- Victorian (N, W & SE) growers are encouraged to reach out to your local RDO, Hugh Wardle, with any and all questions and concerns as well as just to have a chat! (hughw@rmcg.com.au, 0427 109 057).

#### Vegetable Fund snapshot

<b>45+ investments</b> Currently underway	<b>180+ resources and reports</b> Ready for you to use	<b>\$9.42 million</b> Levy collected in 2018/19
<b>\$18.2 million</b> Invested in R&D in 2018/19	<b>\$471.87 million</b> Potential impact of industry SIP	

Figure 2: A Vegetable Fund Snapshot

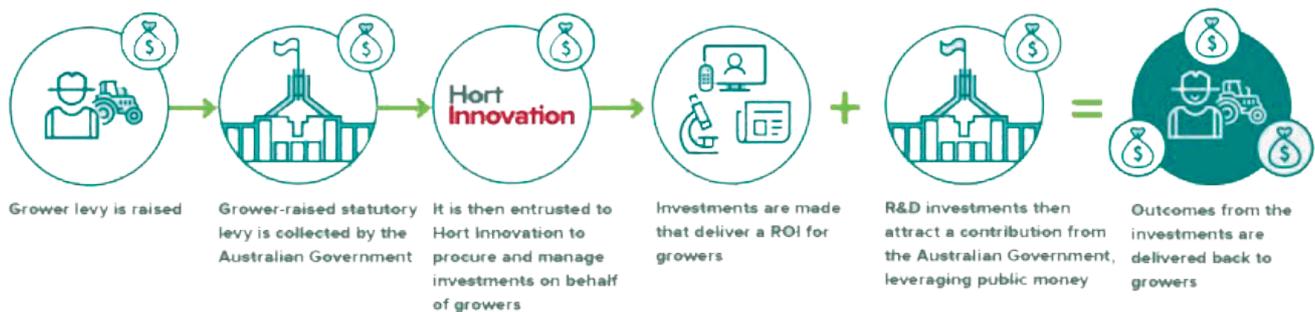


Figure 1: [How the levy system works](#)

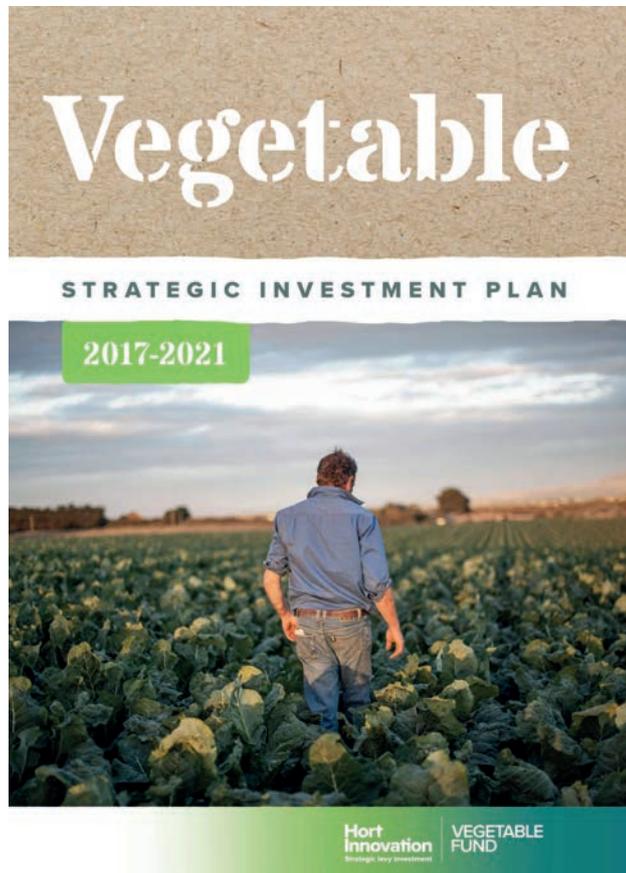
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### What activities does my levy contribution fund?

It is important that the investment of levy funds represent the interests of and opportunities for a their respective industry. To ensure this, in close consultation with industry, Hort Innovation creates and renews Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs) for each industry fund (See Figure 3). The SIPs are used by industry-specific Strategic Investment Advisory Panels (SIAP), whom provide advice to Hort Innovation regarding potential levy investments, to ensure that levy investment decisions align with industry R&D priorities. Find out more about this process here.

The SIAP acts as an intermediary between growers and Hort Innovation. Growers can submit their ideas for research and development to Hort Innovation through Hort Innovation's [online investment idea proposal form](#). Ideas remotely in line with the Vegetable Fund strategic investment priorities get passed to the Vegetable Fund SIAP whom provide further advice to Hort Innovation on how to translate said idea into a practical project proposal.

Visit Hort Innovations' [Your investments](#) page for details of current and completed levy-funded work, or their [Research reports and more](#) page to access investment outputs such as grower fact sheets, guides and research reports.



### Who carries out the Vegetable Levy funded R&D activities?

Project proposals are distributed and made public for potential delivery partners to respond. Responses are assessed, often with assistance from industry, and the best service provider is chosen to undertake the project. Contracts are issued, and the project begins.

Service providers of Hort Innovation levy-funded projects can range from universities and other research institutions, to industry bodies, state agencies, corporates, not-for-profits, independent providers and everyone in between. For example:

- The VG15076 – 'Creating value from edible vegetable waste' project was delivered by CSIRO
- The VG14048 – 'Review of current irrigation technologies' project was delivered by Irrigation Australia
- The VG15070 – 'A strategic approach to weed management for the Australian vegetable industry' project is being delivered by the University of New England
- The VG15020 'Strengthened biosecurity for the Australian vegetable industry – stage 2' was delivered by AUSVEG.

Some Hort Innovation projects are too complex for one service provider to undertake the project alone successfully. This may occur for several reasons including geographic constraints, gaps in either expertise or regional connections within a single organisation or timeframes and available manpower. In these cases, service providers can either partner or subcontract to fulfill the requirements of the project proposal.

### VegNET

#### How do growers benefit from Hort Innovation projects?

A great example of providers partnering to deliver a Vegetable levy-funded project is the National Vegetable Extension Network (VegNET) project. Currently in Phase 2, VegNET is an umbrella term for 10 national VegNET projects, each of which fund regional development officers (RDO's) in key vegetable growing regions throughout Australia.

Figure 3: [The Hort Innovation Vegetable Strategic Investment Plan 2017-2021](#)

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Through VegNET Phase 2, the RDO's, are responsible for taking an innovation systems approach to problem solving within their region. This is different from Phase 1, in that the RDO's role focusses on:

- **Facilitating** stakeholder collaboration and design processes (and their annual review)
- **Brokering** delivery of some projects/activities by other providers, and
- **Directly participating** in key projects designed to bring about improved practice change and associated benefits.

This includes, but not limited to connecting researchers/ research to growers, engaging with regional agronomists, delivering special events, creating and distributing R&D outcome-related practical materials that are targeted at growers and gathering information to inform future R&D projects. These activities include R&D forums, grower site visits and [Twitter posts](#).

RDO's from each region are also responsible for establishing structures within their region that ensure the right people are engaged in the process of deciding 'fit for purpose' delivery of extension services for their region. To do so, each VegNET project/RDO have been contracted to establish and work with a Regional Extension Advisory Group (REAG), comprised of a diversity of growers, technical advisors and relevant stakeholders with intimate knowledge of their specific regional contexts, to develop a five-year Regional Extension Strategy. The Regional Extension Strategy will lay a path forward in addressing regional challenges and operationalising solutions, work with regional stakeholders to attract co-investment and provide implementation support for projects that deliver on the strategy. Figure 4 illustrates the regional process for strategic regional priority setting and project delivery.

## VEGNET VICTORIA

Victoria has two RDO's, one for each defined region of Victoria.

**The North, West & South-East regions RDO is Hugh Wardle** (RMCG, [hughw@rmcg.com.au](mailto:hughw@rmcg.com.au), 0427 109 057).

**The Gippsland region RDO is Bonnie Dawson** (Food & Fibre Gippsland, [bonnie.dawson@foodandfibregippsland.com.au](mailto:bonnie.dawson@foodandfibregippsland.com.au)).

To best extend R&D to Victorian growers, RMCG is working with the AUSVEG VIC, in a complimentary role assisting with the distribution of information and levy-funded research outcomes through the [AUSVEG VIC website](#), one of AUSVEG VIC's distribution channels. On the AUSVEG VIC website growers can find a calendar of events, a library of resources including case studies, videos, reports and fact sheets/technical notes, an archive of VegNET and AUSVEG VIC newsletters and further information about AUSVEG VIC and VegNET.

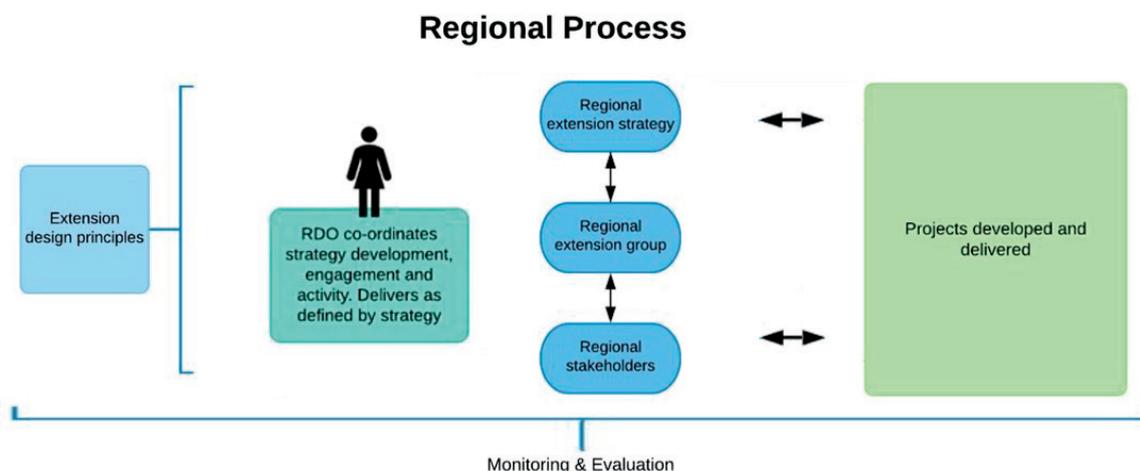
Growers are encouraged to contact their local RDO's to access the latest information and resources generated from the RDO's extension program activities as well as details about events and how to best stay informed.

### For more information contact:



**Hugh Wardle**  
**Victoria (N, W & SE) RDO**  
**0427 109 057**  
**[hughw@rmcg.com.au](mailto:hughw@rmcg.com.au)**

Figure 4: The overall regional process of growers seeing benefit from their levy investments



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