The set of papers in this special edition is an output from a remarkably effective partnership, the project leadership team of the “Accelerated Adoption through Sustainable Beef Profit Partnerships” project. The members of this team are, in alphabetical order, Andrew Alford (andrew.alford@dpi.nsw.gov.au), Richard Clark (richard.clark@dpi.qld.gov.au), Garry Griffith (garry.griffith@dpi.nsw.gov.au), Paul Hyland (p.hyland@uq.edu.au), Cynthia Mulholland (cynthia.mulholland@une.edu.au), Peter Parnell (peter.parnell@dpi.nsw.gov.au) and Janice Timms (janice.timms@dpi.qld.gov.au).
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The newly refunded Cooperative Research Centre for Beef Genetic Technologies (Beef CRC) has the ambitious targets of increasing the level of adoption of new technologies in the Australian beef industry from 25 to 35 per cent, and of decreasing the combined R&D and adoption lag from twelve to seven years. These targets are part of the overall focus of the Beef CRC on generating $179m in extra industry profit annually by 2012. However, current beef R,D&E activity is not providing a sufficient catalyst for increasing the speed or level of adoption of new technologies, so a "business-as-usual" approach will not assist in meeting the Beef CRC’s financial target. A new approach is required.

In this special edition of the AFBM Journal, a brief background to and overview of the new approach - the Beef CRC’s "Accelerated Adoption through Sustainable Beef Profit Partnerships" project - is provided. This project is based on implementation of a Sustainable Improvement and Innovation model, which in turn is built around a Continuous Improvement and Innovation process. The key differences from existing approaches are:

- The focus on accelerated improvements, innovations and adoption instead of on general awareness activities relating to the availability of new technologies;
- The design and management of the project based on scientific theories and evidence;
- The explicit intent to build the capacity to understand, implement and sustain such an approach;
- The approach of working within a partnership and network of partnerships framework; and
- The provision of tools that allow partners to measure where they are now and to monitor how their business practices and processes have changed over time.

In subsequent papers in this special edition, the scientific theories and evidence that were used to design and implement this project are outlined. Then the main elements of the project and how it is organised and managed are described. Finally, achievements and failures to date are reported, and the opportunities that such a project presents to beef businesses and value chains to improve their economic performance are canvassed.

This special edition has been put together by the project leadership team. At the time of writing, the members of this team are, in alphabetical order, Andrew Alford (andrew.alford@dpi.nsw.gov.au), Richard Clark (richard.clark@dpi.qld.gov.au), Garry Griffith (garry.griffith@dpi.nsw.gov.au), Paul Hyland (p.hyland@uq.edu.au), Cynthia Mulholland (cynthia.mulholland@une.edu.au), Peter Parnell (peter.parnell@dpi.nsw.gov.au) and Janice Timms (janice.timms@dpi.qld.gov.au). A considerable acknowledgement is also due to the project State and Region Coordinators (Brigid Nelson, Felicity Hamlyn-Hill, Mick Sullivan, Steve Exton, Dougal Purcell, Ben Hebart, Sue-Ellen Shaw and Christina Grogan) and all the BPP facilitators, beef business partners and technical specialists who have contributed to the project since its inception.

We believe that the Sustainable Beef Profit Partnerships project will encourage the adoption of improvements and innovations in the Australian beef industry and will contribute to achieving the Beef CRC’s profitability outcomes. We are committed to reporting this evidence in the future as it arises. The project leadership team is committed to the principles and practices of the Sustainable Improvement and Innovation model, to advocating their use in the Beef Profit Partnerships, and to applying them to our own project management processes. By publishing the design, management, achievements and failures of the project in this form we wish to expose our thinking and decisions to wider scrutiny. We invite feedback from interested readers, and offer our assistance and support for applications or adaptations of this model in other industries and regions.

Dr Peter Parnell
Project Leader
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