

Communique – NSW Hemp Industry Taskforce

23 April 2024

The A/Chair, Alison Bowman, Group Director Plant Systems, welcomed members to the third meeting of the NSW Hemp Industry Taskforce, on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture.

The Taskforce noted the biennale Australian Industrial Hemp Conference, which was held on 16-18 April in the Hunter Valley, NSW. The Conference brought together stakeholders from across the Australian industrial hemp industry to discuss key issues in relation growing and producing industrial hemp products, and market access.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the research and development priorities to support the growth of the industrial hemp industry, with a focus on what was required for the NSW-based growers, processors, and consumers of hemp-based products.

The Taskforce commenced its consideration of research and development priorities with a presentation from AgriFutures. Dr Olivia Reynolds, Senior Manager, Emerging Industries, AgriFutures Australia provided an overview of the *Australian Industrial Hemp Strategic RD&E Plan (2022-2027)*. Associate Professor Guy Roth from the University of Sydney Institute of Agriculture presented on the Narrabri Industrial Hemp Variety Trail, supported by Mark Skewes, Industrial Hemp Variety Trials (IHVT) National Coordinator. The Taskforce thanks Dr Reynolds, Associate Professor Roth and Mr Skewes for their time and expertise.

The Taskforce then discussed a number of research and development priority areas that cut across the needs of the various segments of the industrial hemp industry. The priorities were considered under 4 sub-headings:

- *Hemp cultivation and production* - including the role of a breeding program, agronomic packages for different varieties by regions, and provision of extension and advisory support.
- *Industry biosecurity* - including measures to manage the increased risk and pressure from pests and diseases as the industry expands and grows, and the benefit of traceability in managing risks, providing quality assurance and proving provenance.
- *Industry Standards and quality assurance* - including initiatives for guaranteeing seed quality and better seed supply (such as a seed certification scheme), developing industry standards for construction (learning from international experience), and research and development to support standards in other hemp products (such as clothing and food products).
- *Consumer Knowledge* - including initiatives to raise awareness and educate the public on the benefits of hemp products, to address barriers that hemp businesses currently face and improve the overall marketing of hemp-based products.

Key considerations in the Taskforce's discussion were who should lead research and development priorities, and the opportunities for funding.

The Taskforce has resolved to revisit this discussion at its next meeting.

The next Taskforce meeting is scheduled for Thursday 16 May 2024.