



FUTURE FARMING Productive, Competitive and Sustainable

BETTER SERVICES TO FARMERS

Better Services To Farmers

- What do Victorian farmers need?
- How can DPI help Victoria's farm sector manage change?
- How can DPI work better with the private sector and community groups?
- How can we best focus our resources and services?

These were the questions considered in reviewing DPI's role in providing services to farmers. It showed that things are changing – both the operating environment and the support farmers need to manage it.

Given this, DPI understood that to better support the Victorian farm sector, a new service delivery model was needed. In developing the new model, DPI looked at its services to farmers and the new approaches emerging in the agriculture sector both here in Australia and overseas. Importantly, DPI also spoke with farmers, industry groups and service providers in the farm sector.

At the heart of the new model is a focus on collaboration with a range of service providers in the farm sector. Why collaboration? The pressures and challenges we increasingly face are complex and if we are to solve these effectively and efficiently, we must work more closely together. Flying solo simply won't get us there.

DPI is launching its model, Better Services To Farmers. The direction is set and once implemented, farmers will start to see services that are better targeted, more accessible and more relevant. These services will support their ability to make more informed decisions, be adaptable, capture opportunities and manage risks.

Farmers' needs are changing

Victorian farmers operate in a competitive, global business environment. With that, the entire farm sector faces new pressures and emerging opportunities that are complex and challenging.

Drought, bushfires, climate change, increasing costs and competition for resources, and market access concerns are just some of these challenges.

Farming demographics are also changing. There are fewer farmers today and they have different types of farming businesses.

To meet the challenges of this new environment, farmers said they need services that are better targeted, more accessible and relevant.

The Victorian Government is responding by reshaping and strengthening services to support the farm sector to be productive, competitive and sustainable.

It has committed \$205 million over four years (2008-11) through the Future Farming strategy.

Farmers' needs are changing and will continue to change rapidly. In recognising this, DPI needs to change the way it does things too.



Better Services To Farmers will meet these needs

As the farm sector evolves, government services must also evolve.

DPI wants to continue supporting farmers and agriculture sectors to make more informed decisions about their business. It has helped many farmers to date and knows it can do more. So by changing the way some services are delivered, DPI can remain effective and relevant, and provide better services to farmers.

In designing and delivering services, DPI will partner and collaborate closely with more private and community service providers who are well placed to meet the changing needs of farmers. This way more farmers across all sectors can access more information that is useful, timely and relevant. This is not a new idea. Throughout DPI, many projects have been successfully delivered to farmers in partnership with farming groups and the private sector to improve farming businesses.

DPI will continue to invest in its people, and will work proactively to build the capability of the farm service provider sector as a whole.

In some areas, DPI's role will depend on the priorities and co-investments of the farm sector.

DPI will focus on the following types of services:

- Streamlined planning and regulatory requirements for farm development and ongoing operations, including biosecurity, natural resource management, and land use planning
- Access to relevant research and development (R&D) and advice on how to integrate it into farming systems

- Access to markets, market information and assistance with value chains
- Access to relevant government assistance programs, including appropriate emergency response and recovery
- Advice on policy developments that impact on farm businesses (such as carbon markets, energy and water reform)
- Advice and compliance on animal welfare and other issues enabling freedom to operate
- Advice on preventing chemicals entering the food chain and the environment
- Protection from exotic diseases, weeds and pests, and assistance with managing endemic diseases, weeds and pests.

DPI is modernising its service delivery model, based on the building blocks outlined in the Future Farming strategy:

- Delivering services tailored to meet the needs of farming families and small and large farm businesses
- Piloting a range of service options to farm businesses, including online support tools and mobile computing
- Building on the latest research on the take-up of appropriate technology by farm businesses
- Increasing the ability of DPI field staff to provide information within a 'whole farm' systems perspective, to enable better decision making.

Farmers will start to see improvements this year

Over the coming year, farmers will see services that are better targeted, more accessible and more relevant.

Planning is well underway. Implementation will be gradual, with change taking place over the next 6 to 18 months. Importantly, it involves discussion and planning with farm service providers, industry groups, farmers and employees.

Farmers will see DPI actively partnering with other effective service providers to deliver information and training programs to more farmers.

Over the next three to six months, farmers and stakeholders will see:

- Key products and services identified across all farm sectors
- The latest R&D starting to be more readily available
- A review of existing services and who provides them
- DPI partnering with more private sector and community providers in an environment of cooperation, not competition
- Agreement on new ways of working together, formalised in partnership agreements
- Baseline surveys to determine satisfaction of the services farmers receive from their providers.



For more information go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/betterservicestofarmers or call 136 186.

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