



VALUE-ADD PRIMARY INDUSTRY & SOILS & CULTIVAR RESEARCH DISCOVERY REPORT

Overview

The Entrepreneurial Discovery Process is a series of workshops that will endeavour to define and obtain support for the initiatives for innovation and economic development, based on evidence.

The workshops are an opportunity for key business, government, community and research stakeholders to verify the evidence presented in the Regional Context Analysis about a particular local asset, and to confirm that there is at least one innovation opportunity which can develop from that asset. The workshop begins with discussion about the specific asset, and then engages in a process of imagining how the innovation opportunity based on this asset might develop over the subsequent 5-10 years. Depending on the outcomes of these conversations, the final part of the workshop moves to explore how this might be achieved, and identifies barriers to be addressed. Following the workshops an Innovation Working Group (IWG) may then be established to drive the defined project if it is deemed to be a viable opportunity.

Due to limited availability, the decision was made to combine two of the innovation opportunities into one workshop. These were the Value-add Primary Industry and the Soils & Cultivar Research. Information was provided for both opportunities and discussions explored innovation opportunities in both areas before the targeted opportunity was defined.

Workshop Summary

The evidence for establishing a workshop to define opportunities for value add primary industry and soils & Cultivar research included the diverse array of soils and evident changes in weather patterns and climate change, with many policies and frameworks including climate action goals. Some soil research has already been conducted in the area and combined with the significant amount of data on the impact of climate change on the primary industry sector indicated an investigation into research opportunities and interest within the area. Economic and historic data demonstrates the strength and overwhelming contribution of the sector to the project area. With almost half of the consultation with stakeholders identifying the local farming industry as one of the regions greatest and strongest assets. Historical data demonstrates the longevity of the industry irrespective of natural disasters and adversity. Economic data demonstrated agriculture, fishing and forestry to contribute 41% of the areas total outputs.

The opportunity to value add to the industry was identified due to the lack of availability of local produce locally, the costs of production, transport, selling and processing, the gap in current production systems and techniques with what is available, and the overall quality of the produce leading to the ability to increase the value of the industry significantly through simple and collaborative value add.

Discussions at the workshop included:

- The ability to increase adaptation of practices to suit changes in weather and climate patterns through partnership and collaboration
- What opportunities are already existing within the sector in the area
- The need for succession planning knowledge, and supports for implementation
- Increased ability and reduced costs for local processing - the infrastructure required
- What motivates the primary industry sector producers to implement change and what deters them
- How to enhance the coordination and collaboration of activities and knowledge
- What is the identity of the district and how can it be strengthened to improve business practices, community decision making, sustainability and partnerships with stakeholders

The clear take-aways from the workshop was that primary industry is vital to the survival of communities in the region. To ensure this succession planning, skilled workforce, collaboration between landholders and industry experts, and potential branding or quality recognition is required.

With the increased trend in change of land ownership the workshop formed the proposition that by implementing a strong framework or cooperative for vertical integration in primary production that local employment and economy will continue to be supported. This framework will potentially establish partnerships, local collaboration and infrastructure development to guide future primary industry production decision making.

Conclusion

The opportunity discussed has significant merit and is achievable. An Innovation Working Group (IWG) should be established to define ideal outcomes and pursue short term goals.