



Expression of interest - Cotton Grains Cattle Program Overview - WA and NT

Supporting a sustainable, integrated Northern Australian Cotton, Grain & Cattle production system

- Expressions of interest close at 5pm (AWST) Friday April 8.

Background

The emergence of a cotton industry in Northern Australia as an evolution of existing irrigated annual and dryland cropping (including hay production) provides opportunities for an integrated agricultural system which can significantly enhance cattle production and profitability.

This 'Cotton, Grains and Cattle' (CGC) Program aims to maximise the productivity of cropping and beef production farming systems in the Kununurra (Ord) Region of Western Australia and in the Katherine and Douglas Daly regions of the Northern Territory, and in developing crop production areas of north Queensland (Gilbert River system). Synergistic investment in both development and research could result in substantial local and regional economic outcomes, with community, animal welfare and environmental benefits.

Four key themes have emerged during preliminary engagement with stakeholders representing cropping and beef industries, which are guiding CRCNA's investment priorities:

1. Sustainable, adaptable cropping systems;
2. Enhanced cattle production systems enabled by cropping;
3. Communities are supported and benefit from enhanced cropping and cattle systems;
4. Integrated farming systems are sustainable; and

The CRCNA seeks project proposals which address knowledge gaps that have been identified under these themes by the representatives of cropping and beef production systems. The intention is to support the further development of integrated CGC farming systems, through Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) projects including (but not limited to)

- Optimising agronomy and enabling cropping diversity
- Crop protection and biosecurity
- Developing and maintaining local capacity to support industry growth
- Meeting best practice animal welfare and production objectives; and
- Developing and maintaining compliance with environmental standards tailored to tropical climates and landscapes.

All projects supported by the CRCNA will include capacity building and extension components to enable industry uptake. Project proponents are encouraged to consider and incorporate the testing of project-specific technologies (where relevant) to demonstrate the suitability and functionality of technological advancements in remote, tropical applications.

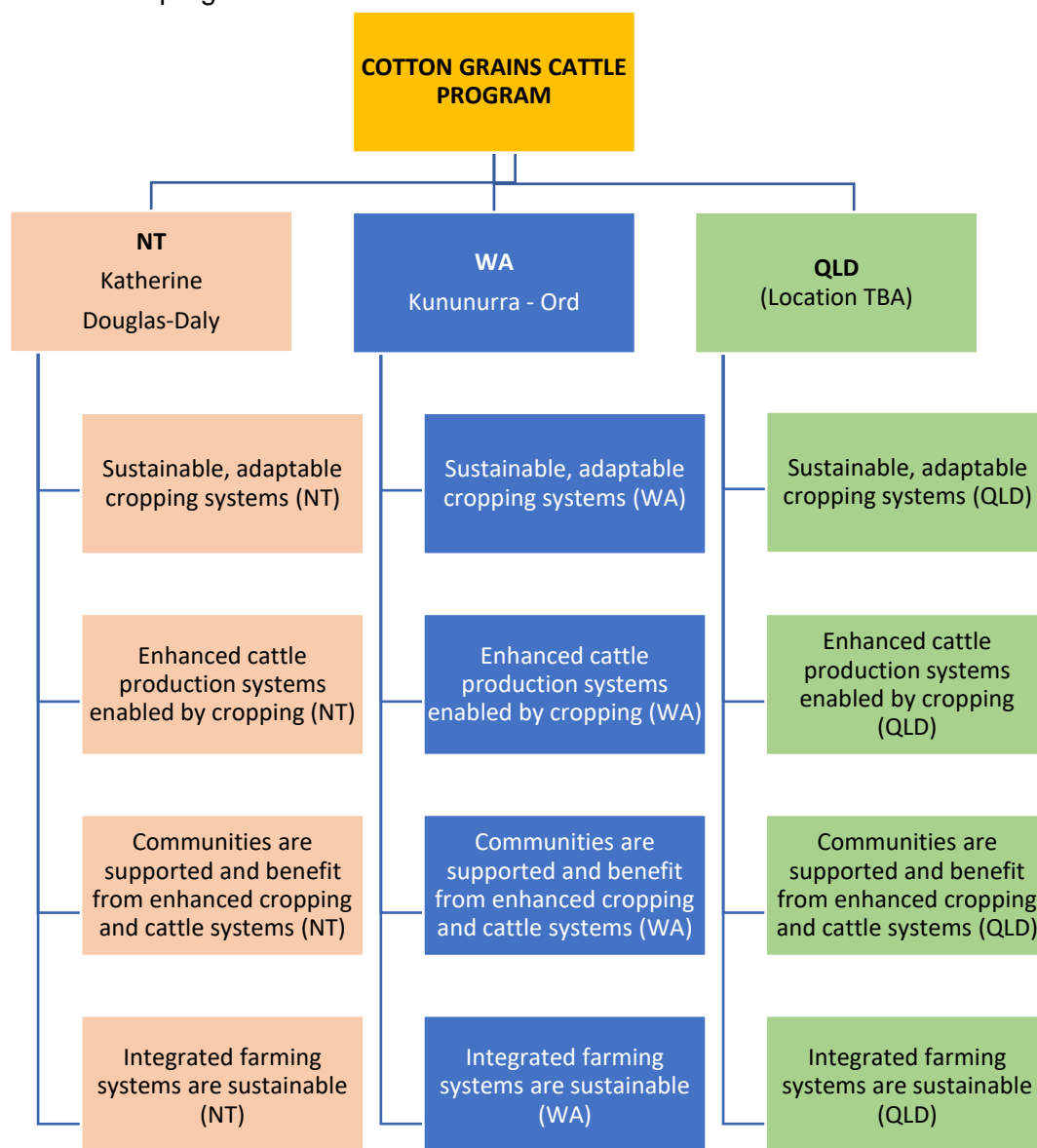


CGC Program Structure

The Cotton Grains Cattle Program extends across Northern Australia, with geographic focus areas in northern Western Australia (Kununurra), the Northern Territory (Katherine-Douglas-Daly) and in north Queensland. The CRCNA strongly encourages potential partners to consider cross-regional projects which address geographically consistent priorities wherever relevant, however projects which address a single geographic area are also anticipated.

This current call for EOIs relates to northern Western Australia and Northern Territory projects, with a call for Queensland-focused proposals to be made in April/May 2022. Potential proponents are strongly encouraged to contact Dr Debra Pearce, CRCNA Senior Project Manager, to discuss concepts and their cross-regional applicability prior to submitting an EOI.

The overall program structure is illustrated below.





CRCNA investments under each of the themes of work may integrate vertically (addressing multiple streams) and/or horizontally, targeting solutions across multiple geographic areas. Proponents are invited to present and demonstrate innovative concepts which focus on specific local, industry-driven R&D requirements. An outline of investment areas under each theme is provided below.

Theme	Investment overview
<p>1. Sustainable, adaptable cropping systems</p>	<p>The CRCNA seeks proposals which will address priority uncertainties and impediments and present solutions to agronomic issues affecting both irrigation and dryland cropping in Northern Australia. This theme will consider proposals addressing any or all the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable broadacre cropping systems (including opportunities and implications associated with different cropping sequences/rotations, and sustainable crop protection) • Optimising cropping windows • Nutrient management and crop production practices • Development and/or use of tropics-appropriate technologies to support crop production • Crop protection and stewardship • Cropping industry capacity building including regionally-relevant extension to support growers and agronomists to implement best practice • New variety development and testing • Economic viability of cropping rotations, including the development of economic decision support tools
<p>2. Enhanced cattle production systems enabled by cropping</p>	<p>This theme aims to inform the further development of intensified beef production systems supported by the availability of locally produced feed.</p> <p>The CRCNA seeks proposals which will contribute to economically sensible, physically achievable, environmentally responsible, welfare driven and ethically sound intensified animal production in the region.</p> <p>The objectives of this theme are to identify and encourage the adoption of beef production practices which will result in the universal marketability of tropically grown cattle.</p> <p>The goal is to maximise conversion and production (and therefore profitability) outcomes through the development of feeding systems tailored to various age cohorts in the herd.</p> <p>This system will provide economic integration opportunities with the local crop production industry. It will contribute to reducing the carbon impact of northern beef production systems through tailored diets and feedlot management to maximise the growth potential of cattle.</p> <p>Project proposals are expected to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicalities of intensified beef production systems in the tropics. • Animal welfare and ethical beef production. • Rotational cropping options for beef production. • Aquaculture-based methanogenic and beef production. • Economic analysis to inform decision-making. • Stewardship and social licence.



<p>3. Communities are supported and benefit from enhanced cropping and cattle</p>	<p>The CRCNA recognises and supports the co-dependence of strong communities and strong agricultural systems, particularly in remote, difficult-to-staff environments.</p> <p>Proposals are invited which target aspects of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural skills and training, including skills for <i>new to this region</i> production activities. • Recruitment and development of both labour and expertise for best practice cropping, beef production, processing and logistics aspects of the cotton-grains-cattle integration. • Skills development in and use of agricultural technologies and the adoption of other innovative practices, including increasing local capacity to maintain cropping and intensified beef production system technologies. • Indigenous business development in Northern Australia, particularly those enabling increased Aboriginal participation in local cropping, intensified beef production, agricultural processing and logistics. • Professional skills development for experienced industry participants (including farmers, pastoralists, agronomists and researchers) to better understand northern / tropical conditions and their implications for maximising outcomes from the cotton, grains and cattle integration. <p>Other proposals for supporting capacity building in the region may be considered.</p>
<p>4. Integrated farming systems are sustainable</p>	<p>This research theme seeks partners to develop and apply innovative approaches to identifying, implementing and monitoring sustainable water use and environmental outcomes from farming systems.</p> <p>Reaching and maintaining compliance with project-specific environmental approvals and more general national standards is central in retaining legal and social licenses to operate.</p> <p>Identified priorities are provided below. Integration with the outcomes sought from other themes within the CGC Program is strongly encouraged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable water use and quality and environmental outcomes from farming systems • Sustainable farming systems within the local environment and regulatory framework • Innovative environmental monitoring and management standards and benchmarks appropriate to the scale, climate and accessibility of northern WA and the NT. • Use of tropics-appropriate technologies to support social licence compliance. • Carbon offsets in Northern Australia.



Eligibility

To be considered eligible, any responses to this EOI must:

- Demonstrate that the lead proponent has strong partnerships in place to deliver on the required activities
- Demonstrate how they will deliver this proposed project within a maximum 4-year timeframe
- Be able to secure cash and in-kind commitments from the lead organisation and research partners to match the requested CRCNA funding - at least 25% cash and 25% in kind of the total project cost
- Have a proven track record across the skills required to achieve the objectives of the EOI.

Selection criteria

Selection criteria for the assessment at this initial EOI stage will include:

1. Alignment of proposed objectives and deliverables with regional stakeholder-identified priorities
2. Demonstrated industry participation and involvement in project development, including Indigenous stakeholders
3. Evidence of project management capability, including technical competency in delivery the project and administrative capacity (including appropriate systems) to meet project reporting and financial management obligations.

The process

- This is an open EOI process with submissions due **5pm AWST Friday 8 April 2022**
- Responses should be provided by filling in the required EOI form
- EOIs will be evaluated by an expert Steering Committee and CRCNA staff
- Successful proposals will be presented to the CRCNA Board for final approval.
- Once approved, successful proponents work with the CRCNA project managers to develop a detailed project plan and budget.
- This plan forms the basis of the CRCNA participant agreements and contracts which need to be fully executed before projects commence.
- That the EOI Selection Panel will involve CRCNA .

How to apply

- Proposals are to be submitted on the EOI form available [here](#).

Further information

The CRCNA's general EOI guidelines are available [here](#).

Potential proponents are strongly encouraged to contact Dr Debra Pearce on 0437 391 817 or email d.pearce@crcna.com.au to discuss concepts and to make further suggestions on priority investment opportunities to build an integrated cotton, grains and cattle industry in Northern Australia.