

A photograph of a woman and a man standing outdoors, smiling and holding several avocados. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark jacket over a grey turtleneck. The man is on the right, wearing a dark green sweater over a light-colored collared shirt. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

Stakeholder engagement and consultation framework

2022

Who we are

As the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australia's horticulture industry, Hort Innovation's primary function is creating value for horticulture growers and those across the horticulture supply chain.

As part of our commitment to industry, we are very focused on how we work with our stakeholders and the company values have been embedded in everything we do:



Growth

We're for growers



Collaboration

We're for achieving together



Innovation

We're for innovators



Courage

We're for the brave

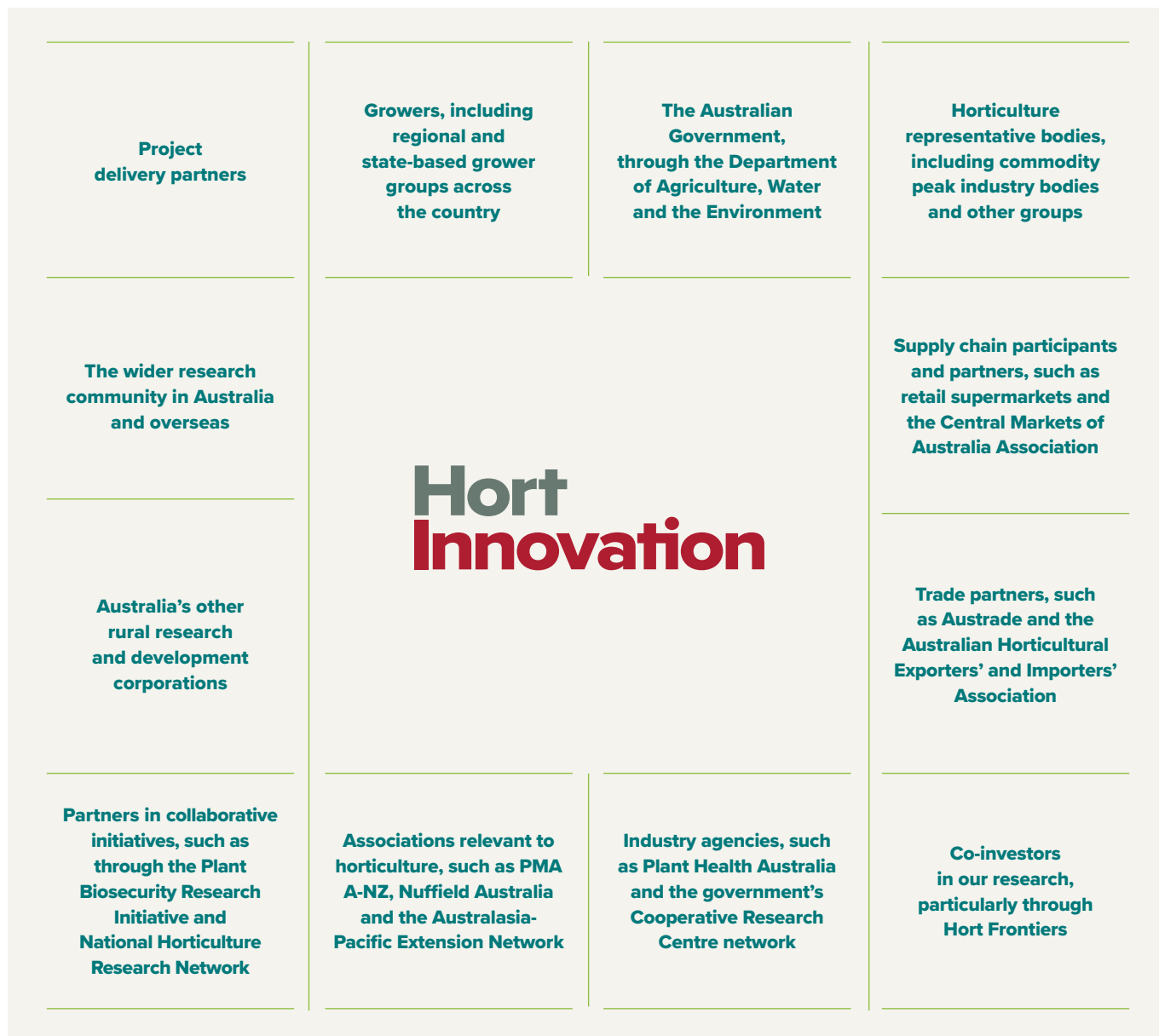
Hort Innovation operates to implement the Hort Innovation Strategy 2019-2023 developed with vital input from more than 350 participants. We facilitate opportunities for stakeholders to contribute towards setting investment priorities and activities across RD&E and marketing through processes that include:

- Strategic planning
- Investment prioritisation
- Procurement of services
- Delivery of projects
- Performance reporting
- Communication and extension activities.

Our stakeholders

We have a range of stakeholders and delivery partners including levy payers, commodity peak industry bodies and industry representative bodies, government, delivery partners and investors as well as key supply chain participants.

Our operating environment is depicted in the table below. To see how Hort Innovation works with industry to invest levy funds see **APPENDIX 1**.



On 20 June 2020, Hort Innovation entered into a [Statutory Funding Agreement \(SFA\) 2020-2030](#) with the Australian Government. This Agreement details five interlinked performance principles: stakeholder engagement; RD&E activities; collaboration; governance; monitoring and, evaluation.

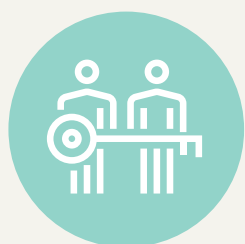
Our commitment to best practice stakeholder consultation

In December 2021, the Australian government released the [Best Practice Guide to Stakeholder Consultation for Hort Innovation and Guidelines for Statutory Funding Agreements](#). This document outlines Hort Innovation's Stakeholder engagement and consultation framework in accordance with these Guidelines and defines our approach to consultation, the mechanisms used and consultation activities.

What our stakeholders can expect from Hort Innovation



1. Transparent



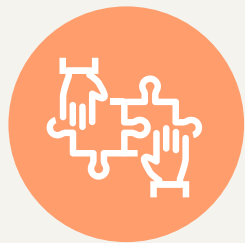
2. Accessible



3. Straight forward



4. Well planned



5. Fit for purpose



6. Responsive



1. Transparent

Our approach

We will communicate expectations and methodology in advance of consultation.

We will conduct consultation via a range of channels and forums to accommodate the industry's varying needs.

We will be clear about how your feedback has been considered and incorporated.

Mechanisms and consultation activities

- The **2022-2026 Strategic Investment Plans** (SIPs), developed in consultation with industry, lay the foundation for decision-making in levy investments and represent the balanced interests of the industry from which the levy is collected.
- **Annual Investment Plans** (AIPs) explain how levy funds are invested over a twelve-month period and include:
 - ❖ Funding availability for each industry
 - ❖ How each industry is investing against their SIP outcomes
 - ❖ Details on current investments across R&D and marketing.
- Hort Innovation has been actively engaged in publishing research projects and commercial opportunities on the AgriFutures Australia **grow^{AG}** and **evoke^{AG}** web pages. As of February 2022, there are 281 Hort Innovation RD&E investments showcased, and this will continue to grow over time.
- The Hort Innovation team is accessible **directly or through our website**.
- Communication channels owned by Hort Innovation include:
 - ❖ Company website and social media channels (**Facebook**, **LinkedIn**, **Twitter**, **YouTube** and **Instagram**)
 - ❖ Monthly electronic direct mail (EDM): Growing Innovation
 - ❖ Quarterly EDM: Impact Update
 - ❖ Regular **press releases** generating media coverage (TV, print, radio, online)
 - ❖ Key organisational documents include:
 - **Company Annual Report**
 - **Company Strategy**
 - **Corporate policies and governance documents.**
 - ❖ Key project information includes:
 - **Fund Annual Reports**
 - **Project summaries**
 - Online activities such as webinars.
- Hort Innovation recognises the need to equip delivery partners with tools and resources to optimise project delivery and has developed a suite of **resources dedicated for delivery partners**.





2. Accessible

Our approach

We will be polite, courteous, and respectful.

We will strive to build enduring and trusted partnership through all our interactions.

We will seek to listen, understand and respond to our stakeholders in a timely manner.

We will provide information in summary and extended formats to suit the varying needs of our stakeholders.

We will ensure resources and services are accessible as appropriate.

Mechanisms and consultation activities

- Hort Innovation works closely with industry Strategic Investment Advisory Panels (SIAPs) to ensure we are investing in areas that will deliver the highest potential industry impact for our levy payers.
- For investments made through our [Hort Frontiers strategic partnership initiative](#), an advisory mechanism like the SIAPs is in place. Here, Expert Advisory Panels (EAPs) work with Hort Innovation to guide investments in each of the seven Hort Frontiers funds:
 - ❖ All EAPs feature a broad cross-section of specialist representatives, including growers, subject matter professionals, and state government experts
 - ❖ The status of these advisory mechanisms is depicted in **Table 1** in **APPENDIX 2**. Some industries have chosen to establish SIAP subcommittees to specifically provide advice on marketing and trade investments
 - ❖ To provide a framework for advice and decision-making, each of the Hort Frontiers funds is governed by a Co-Investment Strategic Intent outlining key investment themes that must be met for projects to be successful
 - ❖ Hort Innovation is committed to building diverse and inclusive panels and welcomes [Expressions of Interest \(EOIs\)](#) from applicants with various backgrounds, perspectives and experiences.

Continuous improvement

At the time of writing, Hort Innovation is pursuing a co-design process to help clarify the roles and responsibilities of Hort Innovation and industry including the levy investment advice mechanism. An update on this work can be found on the Hort Innovation [website](#).

The company website undergoes regular reviews and maintenance to improve user experience and access to information.





3. Straight forward

Our approach

We will be clear and concise in our communication.

We will assist our stakeholders as promptly, completely, and accurately as possible.

Guided by our company values, we encourage and will consider our stakeholders' needs and preferences as expressed through consultation and feedback.

Mechanisms and consultation activities

- The **Growers Sentiment Survey** gauges how well we communicate and interact with growers.
- The **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** gives members and levy payers a chance to share feedback and ask questions.
- Attendance at conferences and events is maximised by arranging stakeholder meetings at the same time and location to increase convenience and reduce burden on time.

Continuous improvement

Feedback is sought through a range of channels to ensure we continuously meet and improve on the ways we engage with stakeholders.





4. Well planned

Our approach

We will focus on delivering efficient, effective outcomes for growers.

We will be mindful of stakeholder availability when it comes to consultation and inputs.

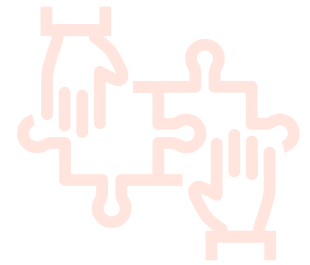
Mechanisms and consultation activities

- Meetings and workshops are arranged in consultation with relevant parties to make sure timings align and agendas are clear – communications are also issued in advance, RSVPs and questions are managed and follow-up communications are shared with next steps.
- Events, meetings and conferences are made available on the company website and updated as required to ensure stakeholders have the right information and can access content in a timely manner.

Continuous improvement

We will continue to review the effectiveness of these engagements to ensure we are driving improvements wherever possible.





5. Fit for purpose

Our approach

We will ensure review and evaluation of feedback to meet the evolving needs of industry.

We will implement varying methodologies to best suit the demands of the situation and remain mindful of other consultation and expectations on our stakeholders.

We will be aware of seasonal demands and manage the timing of consultations and meetings as effectively as possible (e.g., AGMs, stakeholder consultation).

We will ensure **Regional Extension Managers (REMs)** play a key role in making sure what we do is fit for purpose and relevant to specific regions and seasons:

- > REMs focus on delivering results that can be directly applied to horticulture businesses. They leverage available industry data and intel to guide their activities and priorities.
- > Regionally based, they work within their regions to bring broad coalitions together to share skills and capacity, to solve identified regional problems. This is guided by Regional Extension Strategies developed through a consultative process within regions.

Mechanisms and consultation activities

- Hort Innovation regularly attends, participates and engages with stakeholders via events including:
 - ❖ Industry conferences such as Banana Congress, Hort Connections and Berry Quest; and strategic meetings with key levy payers, commodity peak industry bodies and groups on key issues relevant to Hort Innovation activities
 - ❖ Meetings with commodity peak industry bodies where financial and other information is discussed. This complements regular dedicated email updates to the CEO and Chairs of each commodity peak industry body as well as an annual forum
 - ❖ A monthly industry trade connect forum to:
 - Provide commodity peak industry bodies with an opportunity to share the work/support being provided to industry in international trade
 - Connect and learn from each other
 - Discuss challenges they are facing in supporting the horticultural export industry
 - Provide an update on current international trade projects and initiatives
 - ❖ Two-way communication with industries through levy-funding of industry communications programs.

Continuous improvement

An industry development portfolio review undertaken in 2021 as well as a needs analysis of Hort Innovation's industry development delivery partners in 2020 has enabled Hort Innovation to better understand what's working well, and what areas need support to flourish and meet the needs of industry.

Hort innovation is currently working with commodity peak industry bodies to revisit roles and responsibilities.





6. Responsive

Our approach

We will assist our stakeholders as promptly, completely, and accurately as reasonably possible.

We will provide a culture of continuous improvement, especially when delivering value for growers.

We will listen and learn from grower feedback on our performance. This includes grower perceptions of Hort Innovation as investors in R&D and marketing, communication and interaction with growers, and our information products and services.

Mechanisms and consultation activities

- Hort Innovation engages with a range of stakeholders (see **APPENDIX 3**) to ensure our investments are meeting the needs of industry and delivering R&D outcomes that deliver impact for their operations and the wider industry.
- We are committed to seeking input from growers and other industry participants through project reference groups and steering committees specific to individual investments. The need for a reference group or steering committees is often determined by Hort Innovation with industry prior to sourcing an investment.
- A Growers Sentiment Survey of growers is facilitated by Hort Innovation through an independent organisation. **The last survey was published in 2021.**

Continuous improvement

At the time of writing this, Hort Innovation is looking to enhance the survey structure to drive greater insights and process improvements.



Monitoring and evaluating our performance

Hort Innovation operates under an **Organisational Evaluation Framework** to meet its evaluation requirements, as outlined in the current Deed of Agreement and identified by Hort Innovation itself. The Evaluation Framework outlines performance metrics across corporate and investment (levy fund and project-specific) levels. Hort Innovation's performance is ultimately linked to the overarching vision outlined in the **Hort Innovation Strategy 2019-2023**: "Hort Innovation exists to drive a prosperous and healthy Australia by providing the best knowledge and solutions to create a world-class horticulture sector".

Corporate performance measures ensure that Hort Innovation's functions and processes support the achievement of the Strategy. A key initiative to validate Hort Innovation's performance with grower stakeholders is delivered via the Growers Sentiment Survey.

The Growers Sentiment Survey tests satisfaction and engagement levels with levy payers.

Investment performance is measurable at the strategic levy and co-investment fund level, and at the project-specific level. Key initiatives that are used to validate investment performance include:

- Independent **ex-post impact assessments** at a fund level and whole-of-horticulture level aligning to the Council of RDC impact assessment guidelines and procedures (R&D levy and Hort Frontiers investment). Sampled R&D levy investments completed between 2017/18 and 2019/20 (n=45) recorded an average benefit-cost ratio of 3.56:1.
- Annual Strategic Investment Plan KPI performance reports (strategic levy investment).
- Independent project evaluations (midterm and final) as required (project-specific).

- Regular engagements with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) and the Australian Trade and Investment Commission, including fortnightly teleconferences such as:
 - ❖ Annual performance meeting (with DAWE) includes feedback from commodity peak industry bodies
 - ❖ Annual tripartite meeting between Hort Innovation, commodity peak industry bodies and DAWE
 - ❖ Independent Review of Performance
 - ❖ Senate Estimates hearings.

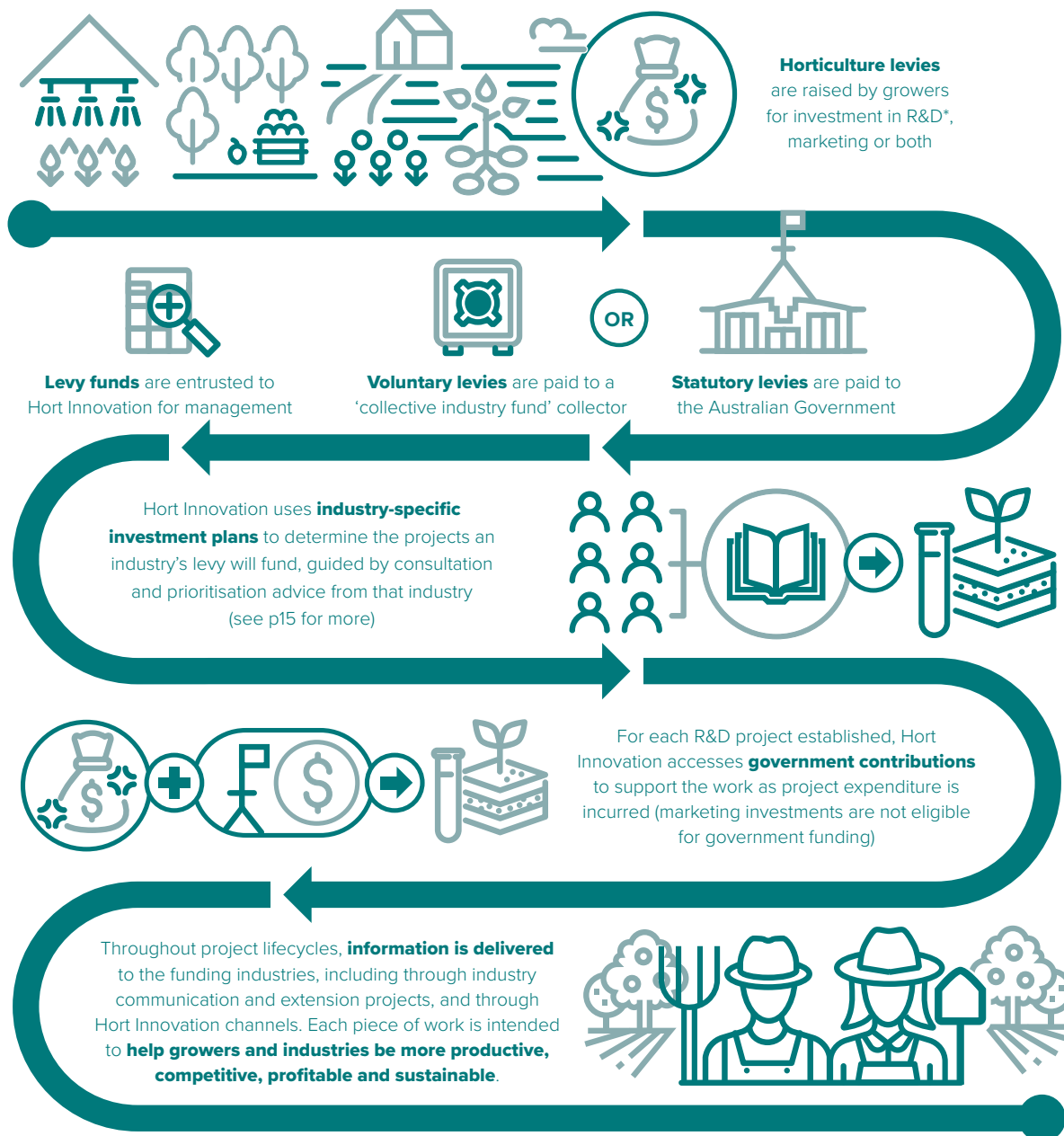
Hort Innovation welcomes feedback in terms of how it meets its service standards and encourages stakeholders to speak directly with staff members to share their feedback. Alternatively, general comments, suggestions for improvement, or feedback relating to standard of service can be provided through completing the online **feedback form** on the Hort Innovation website.



APPENDIX 1

Levy funding investment model

This is the core funding model for Hort Innovation's work, involving the investment of statutory or voluntary industry levies, together with government contributions where applicable, into R&D, extension, marketing and international trade efforts. Levy investments are specific to each industry's needs, but the projects can be collaborative across multiple industries for maximum efficiency and impact.



APPENDIX 2

TABLE 1: Status of industry advisory mechanisms

INDUSTRY	ADVICE MECHANISM	COMMODITY PEAK INDUSTRY BODY REPRESENTATION
Almond	R&D Strategic Investment Advisory Panel (SIAP)	Yes
Apple and pear	Separate marketing and R&D SIAPs/Strategic Marketing Panel (SMP)	Yes
Avocado	Separate marketing and R&D SIAPs	Yes
Banana	Separate marketing and R&D SIAPs	Yes
Blueberry	Combined berries and individual SIAPs	Yes
Cherry	R&D SIAP and marketing working group	Yes
Chestnut	No SIAP – utilising existing R&D and marketing committees through Chestnuts Australia Incorporated	Yes
Citrus	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	Yes
Custard apple	No SIAP – marketing working group and consultation aligned with the Custard Apples Australia Annual General Meeting	Yes
Dried fruit	R&D SIAP	Yes
Dried grape	R&D SIAP	Yes
Lychee	R&D SIAP and marketing working group	Yes
Macadamia	R&D SIAP and marketing committee	Yes
Mango	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	Yes
Melon	R&D SIAP	Yes
Mushroom	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	Yes
Nashi	R&D SIAP	Yes
Nursery	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	No
Olive	R&D SIAP	No
Onion	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	Yes
Papaya	R&D SIAP and marketing working group	Yes
Passionfruit	No SIAP – alternate advise methods used, marketing committees established	Yes
Persimmon	No SIAP – alternate advise methods used, marketing committees established	Yes
Pineapple	R&D SIAP and marketing working group	Yes
Pistachio	No SIAP – participation on the Pistachio Growers Association Incorporated R&D Committee	Yes
Processing tomato	No SIAP – alternate advise methods used	Yes
Potato (fresh and processing combined)	R&D SIAP	Yes
Prune	R&D SIAP	Yes
Pyrethrum	No SIAP – directly engage with grower group and Botanical Resources Australia	No
Raspberry and blackberry	Combined berries R&D and individual R&D and marketing combined	Yes
Strawberry	Combined berries and individual R&D only	Yes
Summerfruit	R&D SIAP and Marketing working group	Yes
Sweetpotato	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	Yes
Table grape	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	Yes
Turf	Marketing and R&D combined SIAP	Yes
Vegetable	Pre- and post-farmgate R&D SIAP	Yes

APPENDIX 3

Commodity peak industry bodies

Hort Innovation and commodity peak industry bodies have distinct but complementary roles to play when it comes to supporting Australia's horticulture sector. To ensure that together we are always working effectively in the best interests of levy payers and industry, it's important that these working relationships are strong, cooperative, and clear. Our commodity peak industry bodies include:

- Almond Board of Australia (ABA)
- Apple & Pear Australia Limited (APAL)
- Avocados Australia Limited
- Australian Banana Growers Council Inc
- Berries Australia
- Australian Blueberry Growers Association
- Cherry Growers of Australia Inc
- Chestnuts Australia Inc
- Citrus Australia Limited
- Custard Apples Australia Inc
- Dried Fruits Australia
- Australian Dried Tree Fruit Inc
- Australian Lychee Growers Association
- Australian Macadamia Society Limited
- Australian Mango Industry Association Ltd
- Australian Melon Association Inc
- Australian Mushroom Growers Association Ltd (AMGA)
- Australian Nashi Growers Association
- Greenlife Industries Australia (formerly NGIA)
- Australian Olive Association Ltd
- Onions Australia
- Papaya Australia Ltd
- Passionfruit Australia Incorporated
- Persimmon Australia Incorporated (PAI)
- Growcom Australia
- Pistachio Growers Association Inc
- PPAA (Potato Processors Association of Australia Inc)
- Australian Processing Tomato Research Council Inc (APTRC)
- Australian Prune Industry Association
- Botanical Resources Australia (Pyrethrum)
- Raspberries and Blackberries Australia
- Strawberries Australia
- Summerfruit Australia Ltd
- Australian Sweetpotato Growers Inc
- Australian Table Grape Association
- Turf Australia Limited
- AUSVEG

APPENDIX 3 (cont.)

Delivery partners and investors

We work closely with some 170 delivery partners and investors for the continued delivery of projects across RD&E and marketing. Our delivery partners and investors include:

- Research and Development Corporations
- Commodity peak industry bodies
- Regional industry associations
- State and Territory Governments
- Universities
- CSIRO
- Cooperative Research Centres
- Global research partners
- Private consultants
- Small to medium enterprises and corporations
- Agricultural Innovation Australia (AIA)
- Horticultural producers
- Drought Resilience and Innovation Adoption Hubs.

Key supply chain participants

We work closely with supply chain participants who inform and support project delivery. Our key supply chain participants include:

- Retailers
- Wholesalers
- Exporters
- Freight and logistics operators.

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