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Contents

page

i	Contents
iii	Editorial Board
iv	Foreword
v	The character of Rural Extension and Innovation Systems Journal

Research – Peer refereed papers

1	Mohammad Ali, James Hagan, Rod O'Connor, Nick Christodoulou & Rodney Collins Enhancing grain producers' capacity for business resilience: Evaluation of the Farm Business Resilience Program in Queensland
16	Sharna Holman Supporting the adoption of documented farm biosecurity plans through a multi-pronged extension strategy: A case study from the Australian cotton industry
27	Michael Kirchner, Mirjana Zavodja & Max Krott Effective transfer of scientific information by Integration Forums: The case of land use in New Zealand

Field Notes – Industry relevant papers

39	Eleanor Buchanan, Jesse Clune, Kristen Stirling & Anne-Maree Boland Fostering early-career professional growth: Lessons from project delivery in the New South Wales flower industry
44	Noel Ainsworth Designing sustainability reporting to meet the needs of small-to-medium enterprises

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reiseditor@apen.org.au

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Foreword

Volume 22, Number 1 of the Rural Extension and Innovation Systems Journal brings together three peer-refereed Research papers and two Field Notes. The five papers address quite different challenges, but together they speak to a longstanding question in extension that remains remarkably current: what does it take to support meaningful and sustained change in practice?

Extension scholarship has long moved beyond simple models of information and technology transfer. The more difficult challenge is putting this understanding into practice: developing the capabilities, relationships, institutional arrangements and approaches that enable people and organisations to learn, adapt and act in increasingly complex settings. The papers in this issue offer different perspectives on this challenge, spanning farm business resilience, biosecurity, connections between science and practice, professional development and sustainability reporting.

The first Research paper, by Mohammad Ali and colleagues, examines Queensland's Farm Business Resilience Program and the ways in which business planning, tailored knowledge and skills development, participatory on-farm activities, and ongoing reflection can strengthen grain producers' capacity to respond to challenges such as climate variability. Drawing on evaluation data collected across the program, the paper highlights the importance of locally responsive and participatory extension approaches in supporting learning, decision-making and practice change. Importantly, resilience here is not simply a matter of providing producers with better information, but of strengthening their capacity to anticipate challenges, make decisions and adapt over time.

The second Research paper, by Sharna Holman, examines efforts to increase the adoption of documented farm biosecurity plans in the Australian cotton industry. The study identifies complexity, limited knowledge and a lack of perceived benefit as important barriers to adoption and explores how these were addressed through a coordinated extension strategy combining co-designed resources, grower workshops, ongoing communication and integration with the industry's myBMP program. The paper demonstrates the importance of not only designing appropriate extension activities but embedding them within wider industry structures and processes that can reinforce and sustain practice change.

The third Research paper, by Michael Kirchner, Mirjana Zavodja and Max Krott, examines how science-based solutions for more sustainable land use can be effectively transferred into practice in New Zealand. Drawing on the "Moving the Middle" project, the authors analyse 19 Integration Forums that connect research and practice and find considerable variation in their effectiveness. Their findings challenge assumptions that the movement of scientific knowledge into practice can be driven primarily from the science side. Instead, effective transfer emerges largely as a 'pull' process, with Integration Forums that activate actors in practice achieving greater effectiveness. The paper therefore draws attention to the institutional spaces and relationships through which scientific knowledge becomes relevant and usable in practice.

The two Field Notes approach the broader challenge from different directions. Eleanor Buchanan and colleagues turn attention to the people who deliver extension. Reflecting on the experiences of early-career extension professionals involved in a project with the New South Wales flower industry, they show how professional capability develops through real-world project responsibility, collaboration with industry partners and experts, communication, monitoring and evaluation, engagement with growers, and reflection on experience. Their contribution is a useful reminder that increasingly complex expectations of extension also require investment in the capabilities of extension professionals themselves.

In the final Field Note, Noel Ainsworth considers how sustainability reporting can be made more useful and achievable for small-to-medium enterprises. Rather than simply transferring reporting approaches developed for large organisations, the paper proposes a structured process that combines divergent exploration with careful prioritisation of the sustainability issues that matter most to a business and its stakeholders. Drawing on extension concepts including design thinking, experiential learning and program logic, the paper also illustrates how extension approaches can be applied beyond more conventional agricultural settings to help organisations respond to emerging and complex demands.

Taken together, the five papers suggest that one of the enduring challenges for extension is no longer simply recognising the limitations of linear knowledge-transfer models. That critique is well established. The continuing challenge is how to put alternative understandings of extension into practice: how to build adaptive capacity, create supportive institutional arrangements, connect science and practice, develop capable extension professionals, and design processes that respond to the particular circumstances of those involved.

There is no single model for doing this. Indeed, the diversity of contributions in this issue suggests the opposite. Effective extension is necessarily shaped by the problem, the people involved and the institutional context in which change is being pursued. What connects these papers is an attention to the practical work required to create the conditions in which learning, adaptation and change can occur.

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Severine van Bommel

Chief Editor

The character of the Rural Extension and Innovation Systems Journal

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The *Rural Extension and Innovation Systems Journal* is an innovative extension publication of APEN. The journal covers extension aspects of rural systems. It is for professional extension practitioners, researchers, educators, farmers, farmer groups, corporate agribusiness managers, professional farm business consultants, extension and development officers, and postgraduate students who want to help extend the available knowledge about efficient and effective agricultural extension and development activities. Extension has many definitions but to provide guidance we will adopt that found on the Australasia Pacific Extension Network website (<http://www.apen.org.au>). There are four types of papers published: Research, Literature reviews, Practice, and APEN conference keynote papers.

Research papers

Research papers contain research into agricultural and natural resource change management, extension, development and innovation systems issues that follow rigorous and recognised disciplinary research methodologies. Papers will be reviewed by the Editor and double-blind reviewed by two Editorial Board members or selected reviewers. Papers for this section target professional extension practitioners, researchers and educators. They should not exceed 7500 words.

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Literature reviews should be academic reviews in the fields of agricultural and natural resource change management, extension, development and innovation systems issues. The paper should follow a well-defined structure and will be reviewed by the Editor and double blind-reviewed by two Editorial Board members or selected reviewers. Maximum length is 5000 words.

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Field notes provide a forum for practitioners and academics to share their experiences and practical innovations with others in the fields of agricultural extension, farm management and natural resource management. They are informal, accessible articles that document successes, failures and lessons from extension professionals' experiences. Field notes are assessed and edited to ensure coherency and suitability by the Editor or an extension professional. Maximum length is 4000 words.

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The Editor will decide whether a paper meets the criteria for acceptance and then send it out for review under the relevant guidelines. Those articles accepted after the review process will be published.

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When submitting a manuscript corresponding author will be asked to submit an *Authorship, copyright and submission declaration*, which is available from the journal web site. It affirms that:

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- The manuscript contains original work of the author(s) listed and where you have included the work of others this has been fully and appropriately acknowledged.
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- All participant involvement in the research has been voluntary and based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation in it. Participants were provided with an opportunity to consent and to withdraw at any time.
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