



CRDC PARTNER RELATIONSHIP REVIEW

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY - SUMMARY REPORT 2022

Background

The Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC) is a statutory authority established in 1990 by the Australian Government to work with industry to invest in research, development and extension (RD&E) for a more profitable, sustainable and dynamic cotton industry.

The primary focus of CRDC is around providing practical support to the cotton industry.

The current strategic plan is coming to an end with a new strategic plan about to be released. The current plan describes CRDC's vision as powering the success of Australian cotton through world-leading RD&E.

These investment will be split across the five key focus areas of the Plan:

- o increasing productivity and profitability on Australian cotton farms;
- o improving cotton farming sustainability and value chain competitiveness;
- o building the adaptive capacity of the Australian cotton industry;
- o strengthening partnerships and adoption; and
- o driving RD&E impact.

Ensuring that there are strong and vibrant relationships between CRDC and their key stakeholders is important. Previous measures were undertaken in 2016 and again in 2019.

CRDC has identified a need for a further measure of the strength and health of the relationship between CRDC and these stakeholders. This report summarises the results of the 2022 CRDC stakeholder survey.

About the research

To better understand the success of its engagement and work (to date) with its stakeholders, CRDC engaged Intuitive Solutions to design and implement a program of research to capture and collate the experiences of CRDC's organisational stakeholders in their dealings with the organisation.

This feedback process covered topics including:

- o stakeholder organisational details, to enable profiling and reporting of results for key stakeholder groups;
- o fundamentals of the partnership with CRDC;
- o outcomes and dividends from the partnership with CRDC;
- o empathy and alignment between stakeholders;
- o how CRDC does things;
- o RD&E and sustainability initiatives;
- o CRDC's performance in terms of their 5 year strategic plan; and
- o overall satisfaction with the partnership, engagement and trust in the CRDC.

To reflect the nature of the nature of the different relationships across the stakeholder audience, a mixed mode was implemented, as follows:

- o one on one telephone interviews (approximately 25 to 30 minutes) with CRDC's key stakeholders; and
- o an online (10 minute) survey of other stakeholders.

HEADLINE METRICS

- ✓ overall satisfaction with the CRDC partnership with your organisation
- ✓ satisfied with the way CRDC is engaging with you in your role
- ✓ satisfaction that CRDC is an organisation you can trust



UNPACKING THE PARTNERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- ✓ fundamentals of the relationship
- ✓ outcomes and dividend from the relationship
- ✓ Commercialisation experiences
- ✓ empathy & alignment
- ✓ how CRDC does things
- ✓ perceptions around success on RD&E and sustainability
- ✓ open mic responses

The stakeholder feedback exercise

Cotton Research & Development Corporation (CRDC) invited its key stakeholders to provide feedback on the health of the partnership, to identify what was working effectively, and also highlight what the opportunities were for strengthening the partnership. This feedback exercise was undertaken across September and October 2022. It had previously been undertaken at a similar time of the year in 2019 and 2016.

The feedback was collected through one of two pathways:

- o a total of 60 stakeholders took up the opportunity of responding to an online survey. Feedback was received from Government, industry, grower representative organisations and research organisations; together with
- o contributions from 11 key stakeholders who participated in a one-on-one telephone interviews.

The design allowed for both quantitative satisfaction ratings to be collected in addition to open-ended feedback on the issues raised and discussed during the online survey and telephone interviews. This key point summary provides a high level overview of the feedback provided.

We note that the online survey in 2022 attracted 60 responses from an available invitation list of some 101 stakeholders (representing a 59% response rate). This was a pleasing result and a stronger response rate to what was achieved in 2019.

The areas explored throughout the survey sought stakeholder's perceptions of the engagement and partnership with CRDC. Given the small sample size and nature of the questions, some caution should be exercised in interpreting these results.



A note on comparisons to the 2019 and 2016 research

The stakeholder feedback survey is sent to around 100 key stakeholders of CRDC during each research period. Naturally, these stakeholders represent various audience segments that work with CRDC and the cotton industry more broadly.

The sample file provided by CRDC labels each stakeholder into one or possibly two audience segments (as shown on the right).

Whilst the make-up of the broader sample remains roughly similar from 2016 through to 2022, those who go on to complete the survey may present a different audience segment make-up to those presented in previous years of research.

The tables on the right list the audience segments of those who have complete the survey in each of the three research periods, both by count of survey completes and also proportion of representation of the total number of completes.

Please note that the proportions will add to over 100% due to stakeholders having possibly two audience segments applied to them.

The following report presents the 2022 results with any like-for-like comparisons to 2019 and to 2016 research.

Comparisons of 2022 results to 2019 and to 2016 should be considered with these differences in audience segment make-up in mind.

The impact of COVID19

We also note that the 2019 stakeholder survey was undertaken just months before the outbreak of COVID-19 in Australia. The environment for stakeholder engagement then was very different to the environment for the 2022 stakeholder survey.

Consideration of this very different operating environment should also be considered when interpreting difference in the 2022 and 2019 results.

Audience Segment (survey completes)	2022	2019	2016
Ag industry	7	8	18
Cotton industry	10		
Commercial partner	4	-	-
Extension program partner	5	1	3
Government	9	7	9
Industry representation	13	15	15
Other Ag	6	2	1
Research partner	38	31	50
Universities	9		
TOTAL	60	43	59

Audience Segment (survey completes)	2022	2019	2016
Ag industry	12%	19%	31%
Cotton industry	17%		
Commercial partner	7%	-	-
Extension program partner	8%	2%	5%
Government	15%	16%	15%
Industry representation	22%	35%	25%
Other Ag	10%	5%	2%
Research partner	63%	72%	85%
Universities	15%		
TOTAL	60	43	59

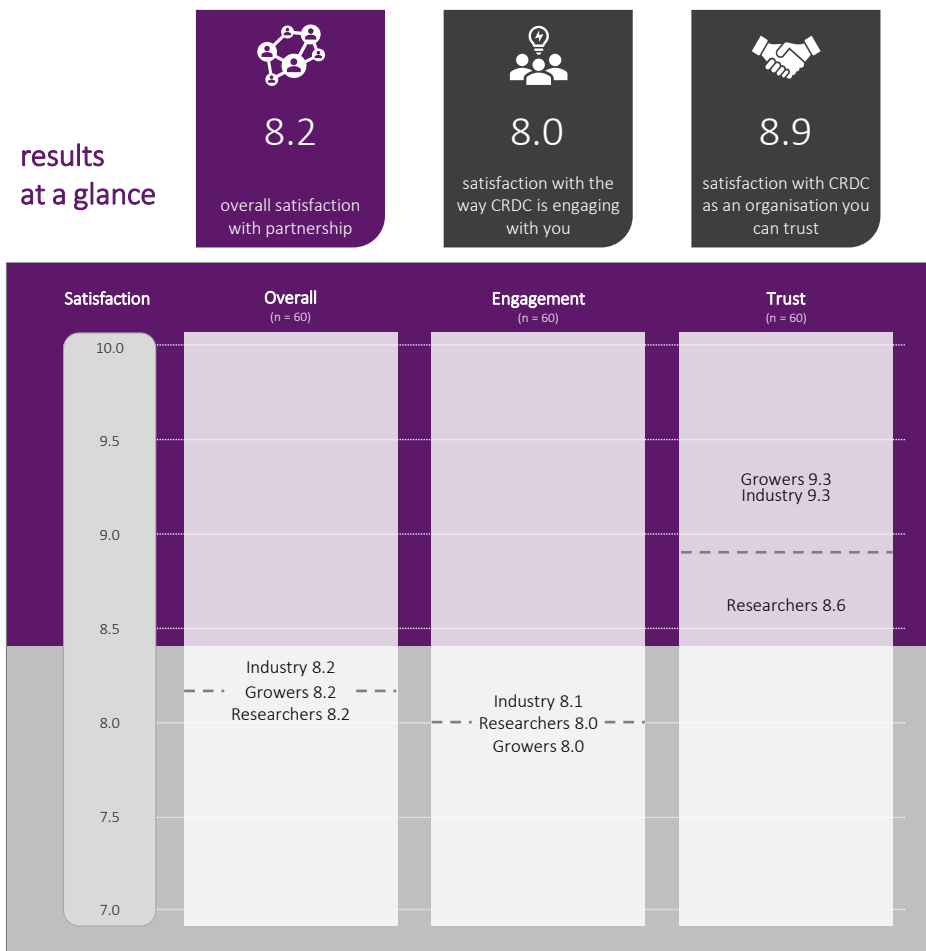
Reference to Performance Monitoring Plan	Goal	Metric	2019 Result	2022 Result	Base:	Notes
CRDC Business Strategy, Page 3	1. Develop overall business measures to support the Business Strategy	Partner satisfaction rating (rating out of 10) <i>Question reference: Q21</i>	8.4	8.2	n = 60	
CRDC Business Strategy, Page 11	3. GROW the business: Objectives (DRAFT)	3.1 Maximise the benefit from delivery of the RD&E Plan (percentage of industry stakeholders satisfied with RD&E Plan performance) <i>Question reference: Q25, % rating Successful, or Very successful</i>	67%	70%	n = 60	
CRDC Business Strategy, Page 11	3. GROW the business: Objectives (DRAFT)	3.5 CRDC is a valued partner in the industry's social licence framework (percentage of stakeholders who report CRDC is a valued partner) <i>Question reference: Q24, items 2 and 3</i>	n/a	93%	n = 60	Baseline result. Rating 6-10 for either of the two items.
IP&C Strategy, Page 4	2.1 Measures, Targets and Data Sources Processing effectiveness (stakeholder engagement) (IP&C 3.3)	Increase in external stakeholders' engagement (% been involved in any CRDC commercialisation activities or processes) <i>Question reference: Q12, % Yes</i>	n/a	20%	n = 60	Baseline result.
IP&C Strategy, Page 4	2.1 Measures, Targets and Data Sources Processing effectiveness (stakeholder satisfaction) (IP&C 3.4)	Increase in external stakeholders' satisfaction <i>Question reference: Q14, item 3, mean rating</i>	n/a	6.9	n = 11	Baseline result. Asked only to stakeholders who have been involved in any CRDC commercialisation activities or processes.
RD&E Strategic Plan, Page 14	4.1 Partnerships and Collaboration	Partner satisfaction rating (rating out of 10) <i>Question reference: Q21</i>	8.4	8.2	n = 60	Same result as per first row above.
RD&E Strategic Plan, Page 17	4.3 Innovation and Commercialisation	Researchers report satisfaction with CRDC commercialisation support (researchers reporting satisfaction / total researchers) <i>Question reference: Q14, item 1</i>	n/a	50%	n = 8	Baseline result. Rating 6-10 for the item. Asked only to researcher stakeholders who have been involved in any CRDC commercialisation activities or processes.
RD&E Strategic Plan, Page 19	5.1 Impact and Effectiveness	Communications satisfaction ranking (stakeholders reporting value of communication / total stakeholders) <i>Question reference: Q19, items 2 and 4</i>	n/a	98%	n = 59	Baseline result. Rating 6-10 for either of the two items.

The stakeholder ratings

The 2022 feedback from CRDC stakeholders has shown that:

- CRDC has sustained strong results across each of the three headline organisational performance metrics measured in the survey (as shown opposite).
- Again in 2022, stakeholders reported a high level of satisfaction in the trust of CRDC. A collective rating of 8.9 (with almost one in two – 48% – rating 10 out of 10 on this trust measure) highlights the strong foundation the current relationships are built on. While this provides no guarantee of satisfaction with the partnership and engagement with CRDC, it is an important foundation from which to build.
- Overall satisfaction with the partnership (across all stakeholders) was again strong with a rating of 8.2. This rating is supported by almost three in four (72%) who rated at an 8 or above but dampened by a small number of stakeholders (9%) who rated below a 6. The report will explore the feedback and where there may be opportunities to further strengthen stakeholder satisfaction.
- In the 2022 survey, feedback across the various stakeholder groups was largely consistent.

It is important that CRDC also acknowledge and respond to the feedback provided by stakeholders.



What's working

The ratings and feedback provided in the 2022 stakeholder survey highlighted the perceived strengths of the current engagement and relationship with stakeholders. They included:

- ✓ Recognition of CRDC as one of the industry custodians.

Consistent with the feedback reported in 2019, many stakeholders acknowledged CRDC as one of the key 'industry custodians'. The reputation of having a 'whole of industry' role and responsibility is an important positioning for CRDC to continue to support.

From the feedback, it is evident that this perception is a result of not only CRDC's investment across many different areas impacting industry, but also an outcome of the investment of time to support other agencies and organisations in their own development (i.e. reviews or strategic planning discussions).

- ✓ A consistent acknowledgement of CRDC as one of the better performing RDCs.

While the value of being 'better' than other RDCs is arguable (given for example some sectors are much bigger and more complex), it was evident on unpacking the feedback that stakeholders were acknowledging the value an organisation (CRDC) seen as organised, pro-active, responsive and working effectively with other industry organisations.

It is those organisational attributes which are vital in the relationships with stakeholders.

- ✓ The majority of stakeholders acknowledge a strong relationship with CRDC.

There are many factors contributing to this consistent view reported in the research. Importantly, the feedback indicates the importance of the direct personal relationships CRDC has across stakeholder organisations.

The feedback also noted the stability in senior positions at CRDC provided longevity to these relationships and had built a solid corporate understanding and empathy of stakeholder organisations.

- ✓ More than just R&D - the supporting role in building sustainability and social license.

Several stakeholders made unprompted references to the supporting work CRDC had undertaken around industry sustainability.

While most acknowledged there were many contributors to building industry sustainability, the feedback acknowledged the investment CRDC had made in creating momentum for this important area of focus.

✓ Speaking up and speaking out.

A consistent theme throughout the discussions with key stakeholders was the pro-activeness of CRDC in bringing issues likely to impact the working relationships to the table for early discussion and resolution. This pro-activeness was appreciated and acknowledged by stakeholders.

Feedback also reflected on the frank feedback provided to stakeholders from CRDC. While at times this discussion could be confronting, there was an appreciation that this frankness supported and strengthened the relationships.

Clearly there is a balance to be achieved in how forthright CRDC can and should be, but the sentiment of the representations should be understood.

The feedback provided by stakeholders has highlighted several areas which are contributing to the strong overall ratings of the relationship with CRDC.

Against that however there was, in the 2022 stakeholder survey, several areas and aspects of the relationship which stakeholders identified that offers CRDC opportunities to further strengthen its engagement and relationship with its stakeholders.

These are explored next.



Where the opportunities for improvement are

It is often challenging when an organisation scores strong and consistent ratings to identify areas where improvement can be achieved. Stakeholders, whilst providing a strong endorsement of the CRDC relationship, did identify several areas that could be strengthened. These include:

✓ Has COVID triggered a new model for direct stakeholder engagement?

During the discussions, it was evident that a return to some face-to-face engagement is occurring and is seen as important. It was noted CRDC were instigating face-to-face meetings, and this was seen as a positive move.

That said, the consensus view was that a more curated engagement solution going forward would be required. There is an opportunity for CRDC to lead this thought process and develop a model approach to direct stakeholder engagement.

✓ Balancing bureaucracy with getting things done.

Stakeholders agree that good project governance is an essential attribute for all RDCs. That said, there was feedback during the research encouraging CRDC to consider reaching a different balance between governance practices and the value returned from some of the perceived very detailed bureaucratic processes.

In part, the feedback appeared to be a call out for an ability to move faster towards implementation of research and delivery of research outcomes. These stakeholders noted the increasing pressure on all organisations to be agile and responsive to changing customer and market needs.

Clearly an appropriate balance needs to be struck and supported.

✓ Is it time or is there a need to reset the priority setting processes?

While most stakeholders acknowledged the need and utility of getting grower input into priority setting, there was discussion around the success of the current processes.

Some stakeholders encouraged further consideration and discussion around identifying opportunities to rethink and refresh the process model to ensure greater representation from growers in this important process.

- ✓ Leverage all the capabilities of stakeholder organisations.

Across some of the larger stakeholder organisations, there was an acknowledgement that they had not been sufficiently active in promoting the range of skills and capabilities that are available to CRDC.

While the onus sits with those organisations to better promote their capability resources, there is an opportunity for CRDC and these organisations to extend the understanding of the skill and capability resources and leverage these as required.

- ✓ Manage the refocus now underway in several organisations.

A small number of stakeholders highlighted the change in their own organisational focus.

The changes were understood to likely impact the CRDC relationship with a more commercial-leaning and/or specific ROI model being adopted in some stakeholder organisations. Most identified the change as a trigger for increased tension within the relationship with CRDC and the need to actively manage the changing expectations before they impact more deeply on the relationship.

This was acknowledged as a two-way responsibility, not just that of CRDC.



Research Program The research program was designed to obtain feedback on the health of CRDC’s relationship with their stakeholders. The research is aimed to provide some key indicator metrics together with some diagnostics that will provide insights to support a program that will deliver stronger relationships with these key stakeholders.

Target Audience The target respondents for this research were identified by CRDC. A listing of the stakeholder organisations and the individual representatives that were in scope for the research were provided to Intuitive Solutions by CRDC.

Methodology A total of n = 11 one on one telephone interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders. These interviews were conducted across the period of 19th September 2022 to 5th October 2022.

For the online survey, a list of stakeholders was provided including the key contact details. The program initially targeted a total of n = 101 identified stakeholders. A total of n = 60 surveys were completed with key stakeholders. This represents a 59% response rate. The response to the online survey included stakeholders across the following Audience Segments (stakeholders could be in more than one segment):

Audience Segment	People approached	Survey participants	Response Rate (%)
Ag industry	11	7	64%
Commercial partner	5	4	80%
Cotton industry	11	10	91%
Extension program partner	6	5	83%
Government	12	9	75%
Industry representation	33	13	39%
Other Ag	10	6	60%
Research partner	57	38	67%
Universities	17	9	53%
TOTAL	101	60	59%

Questionnaire The online survey and face to face discussion guide explored issues on the following topics:

- fundamentals of the partnership;
- outcomes and dividends from the partnership;
- commercialisation experiences;
- empathy and alignment;
- how CRDC do things;
- key metrics; and
- other feedback.

A range of Likert rating scale, closed and open-ended questions were used throughout the survey to accomplish this.

Want more information?

Contact Cotton Research and Development Corporation

Ruth Redfern
Executive Manager, Communications
e: ruth.redfern@crdc.com.au

Contact Intuitive Solutions

Michael Sparks
Director
e: msparks@intuitivesolutions.com.au

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