

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA



Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture

# How does extension 'fit' in the landscape of knowledge sources and support available to North West Tasmanian agrifood producers?

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## Overview

- Agriculture and food processing are increasingly knowledge intensive.
- NW Tasmanian agri-food has been dominated by large processing companies.
- SME producers struggle to find knowledge they need be sustainable in the face of rapid changes, particularly in climate and technology.
- Project is first step toward establishing a regional agri-food knowledge cluster.
- Funded by Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Future Drought Fund IDEAS grant 2022-2023



## Regional agri-food systems and innovation

- Agri-food systems sit at intersection of natural systems and economies; require decentralised control because reliant on local knowledge and skills (van der Ploeg 2016).
- Knowledge management and sharing **throughout regional value chain** and capacity to learn and adapt are essential (Dung et al. 2020, Stone & Rahimifard 2018).
- Needs collaboration structures such as clusters to bring people together and make the most of cross supply chain synergies and manage risks holistically (Jai 2018).
- Trust and social capital and ability to support agri-food SMEs to acquire and used knowledge are essential (Rotz et al. 2019).



## Methods

- Advisory group input into design of knowledge tool.
- Web searches for relevant knowledge holder entities
- Group and individual interviews with:
  - agri-food, NRM and regional development bodies,
  - Drought Hub staff, and
  - knowledge entities, e.g. agronomists, researchers, agri-tech businesses,
  - rural business advisors.
- Qualitative research approach using thematic reflexive analysis
  - Inductive, iterative approach (Braun & Clark 2019).



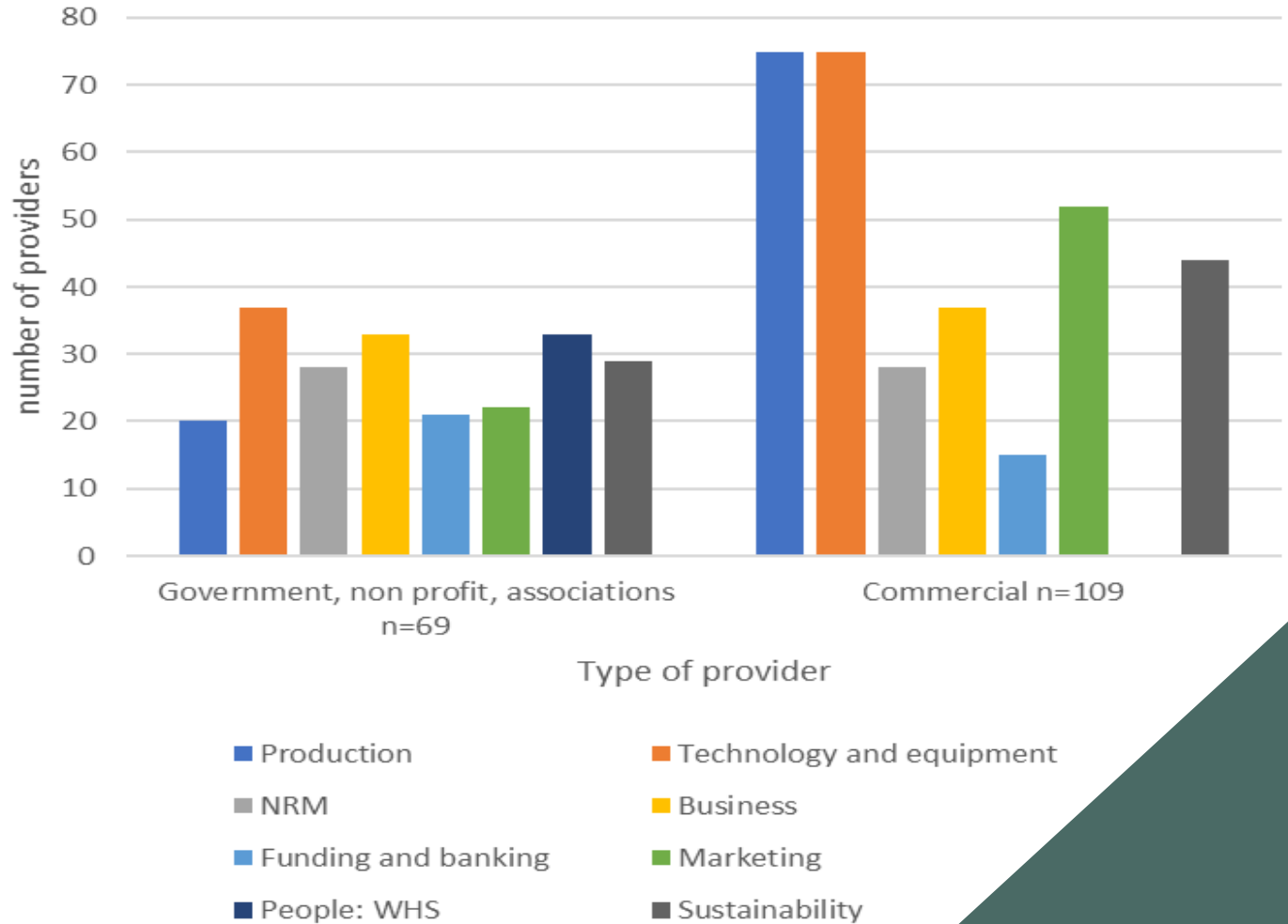
## About the Agri-food Knowledge Matrix

- Excel workbook with spreadsheets for individual sectors and multi-sector relevant agri-food SMEs.
- Identifies and arranges knowledge holder entities according to when/where knowledge could be used:
- agri-food production sectors (horticulture, dairy and livestock, seafood, food processing)'
- areas of practice (e.g. production, technology and equipment, NRM, business, funding and banking, people – wellbeing, marketing, sustainability),
- stages of the innovation/change process (awareness, decision making, implementation, monitoring and review)

# The Agri-food Knowledge Matrix

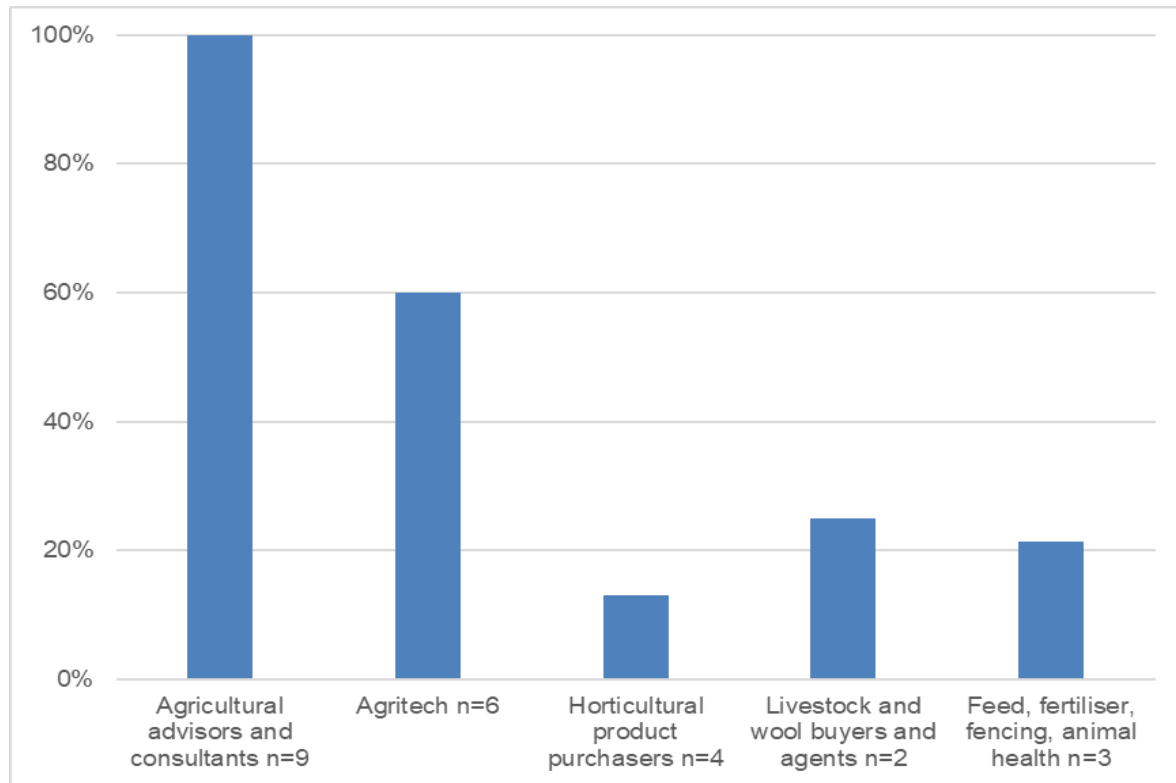
1	Area information and/or support										Innovation stage				
	Production	Technology and equipment	NRM	Business	Funding and banking	Marketing	People, Work Health & Safety	People Working	Sustainability	Advocacy	Extension?	Awareness	Decision Making	Implementation	Monitoring/Evaluation/Continuous Improvement
2	<i>We provide info/support/resources for innovation:</i>														
34	Legal Aid														
45	Tasmanian Fire Service														
46	Tasmanian Irrigation														
47	Agriutures														
48	TIA									X					
49	TasTAFE														
50	University of Tasmania														
51	Sprout Tasmania														
52	RESEED														
53	Tasmanian Agricultural Education Network														
54	Agritas Trade College														
55	2BTEN														
56	Agricultural Advisors and Consultants									X					
57	Seedlab Tasmania									X					
58	The Van Diemen Project									X					
59	Enterprize Tasmania									X					
60	SWITCH Tasmania									X					
61	Primary Employers Tasmania (part of TFGA)									X					
62	Soil Wealth														
63	Sustainable Table														
64	Banking Services for Agribusiness: *Some tools available on websites														
65	Business Consultants									X					
66	Digital and other equipment suppliers and related service businesses.									X					
67	Tasmanian Small Business Council														
68	Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry														
69	North West Community Legal Centre														
70	Live Well Tasmania														
71	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre														
72	Flinders Island Aboriginal Association Inc.														
73	Brumby Hill Aboriginal Corporation														
74	North West Ecofest														
75	Headspace														
76	Anglicare														
77	Rural Alive and Well (RAW)														
78	Lifeline														
79	Beyond Blue														
80	MensLine Australia														
81	Men's and Community Sheds														
82	West North West Working (recruitment and training)														
83	Advisory services of processors & purchasers of farm produce									X					
84	Advisory services of processors & purchasers of farm produce/livestock									X					
85	Water and Irrigation														
86	Valuer services - fee for service.														
87	Legal Services														
88	Private Equity														
89	Mental Health Providers														
90	Insurance (for agribusiness)														

**Information and support relevant to multiple sectors of agri-food businesses by area of support**





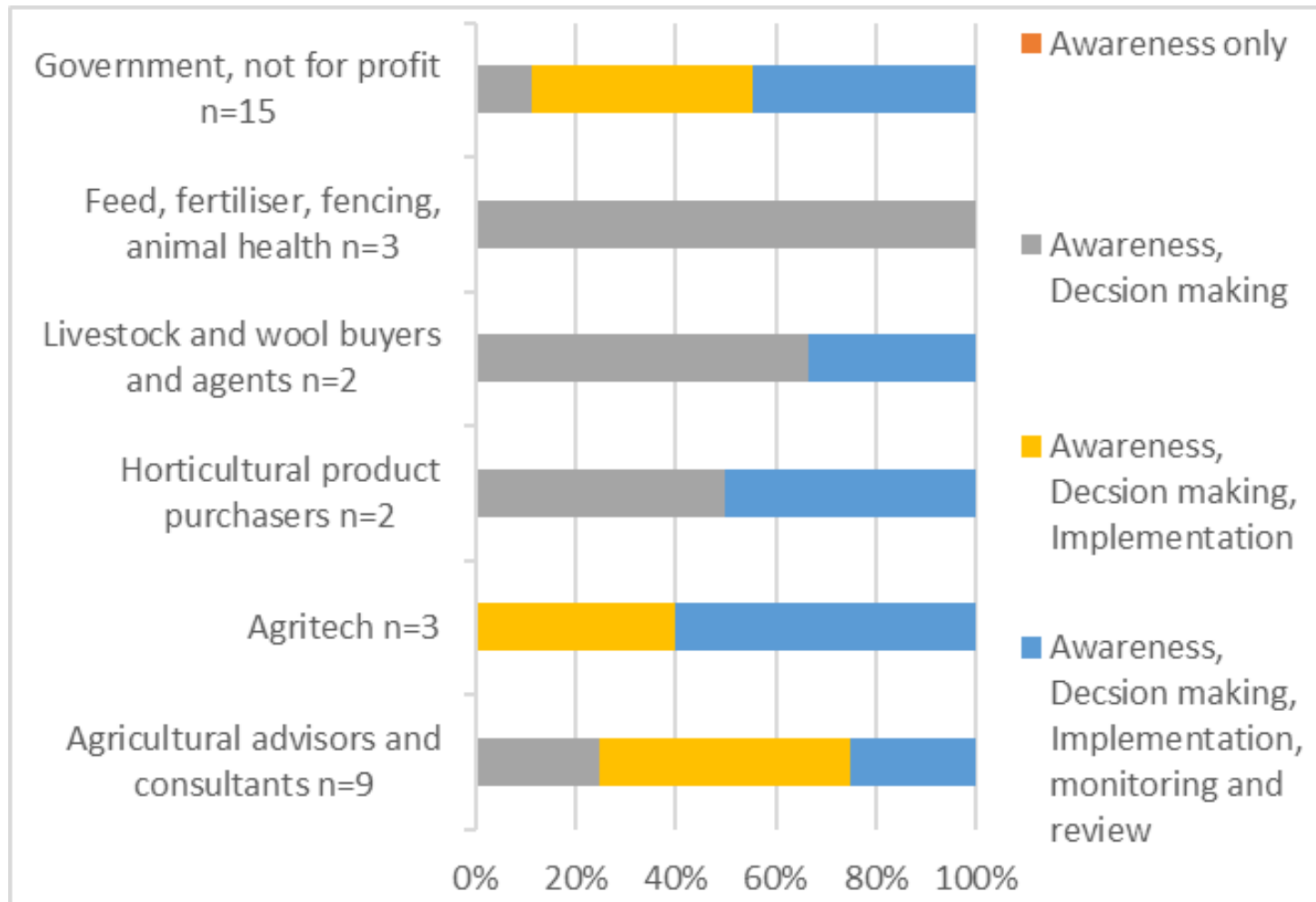
## Where does extension fit?



**Proportion of commercial suppliers engaging in extension by type of supplier**



## Innovation stages: reach of extension services





## Who is connecting and co-creating knowledge across the value chain?

- Analysis of knowledge holder websites suggest some aim to collaborate across the value chain:

*DairyTas works to deliver both Tasmanian-specific and Australia-wide dairy research, development, extension and education activities that support and develop dairy farmers to build robust and sustainable businesses... cooperates with a range of industry and government stakeholders... works to leverage additional funds... (Dairy Australia 2023)*

*We're connecting the community of agritech innovators, farmers, investor groups, government regulators, researchers, industry bodies and interested public to catalyse profitable innovation, expand sustainability and environmental awareness.... (Australian Agritech Association n.d.)*

- SME food processors are less well served by extension than SMEs in grower sectors.



## **Where extension could fit in NW Tasmanian agri- food knowledge sharing**

- Extension providers active across sectors and most knowledge areas.
- They are more likely to be serving all innovation stages (especially later ones) than knowledge holders as a whole: extension is a key part of the innovation cycle (Rahman 2015).
  - suggests extension well placed to play intermediary role in supporting resilience of agri-food value chain and SME producers within it.
- Extension could be vital in making the connections and building the collaborations required across the regional value chain for agri-food businesses to learn and innovate together to build prosperity within North West Tasmania.



## Next steps

- Making the matrix more user friendly and accessible to agri-food producers with input from SME agri-food producers.
- Matrix should then be embedded in an organisation/structure that can keep it updated.
- Further work to confirm the nature of a cluster that would be most effective to make the most of cross value chain synergies and manage risks holistically for a resilient value chain in NW Tasmania.
- A role for extension?



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