

LUCERNE AUSTRALIA STRATEGIC PLAN 2010



LUCERNE
AUSTRALIA

Foreword

Lucerne Australia was formed in 2005 after a public meeting saw unanimous support for the concept. Prior to this, there was no effective or pro-active independent body to represent the lucerne seed industry. The initial phase of Lucerne Australia's existence saw it become a proactive and effective body to tackle issues which had otherwise been left to individuals with varying success. Lucerne Australia soon became the recognised and respected point of contact for the industry.

As Lucerne Australia accomplished its original goals set by the membership, it recognised a need to develop a plan that would allow it to step up to the next level of capacity building and encourage the organisation to undertake a fresh strategic approach and to create a succession plan to maintain and build on the momentum of the inaugural committee.

The current landscape in which the lucerne seed industry operates requires Lucerne Australia to continually assess how it conducts its business. Recent assessments have highlighted that to maximise and prioritise the R&D spend, there is an even greater need for Lucerne Australia's involvement in helping to direct research and facilitate extension and knowledge dissemination.

This strategic directions document was developed following a strategic planning workshop with the Lucerne Australia executive and industry stakeholders in spring 2009. It is designed to provide a focus for Lucerne Australia, outlining its vision, mission, values and short- and long-term goals. Another important component of this strategic plan will be the implementation of formalised areas of responsibility for members of the executive.

We consider this strategic directions document to be a living document that should continue to grow and evolve as the Association evolves. I welcome input and comment from our members and look forward to working with you as we strive to achieve our vision for Lucerne Australia.

Shane Oster
Chairperson



Table of Contents

FOREWARD

1. LUCERNE AUSTRALIA PROFILE
 - 1.1. History
 - 1.2. Membership and Role
 - 1.3. Organisational Structure
2. VISION
3. MISSION
4. VALUES
 - 4.1. Holistic Industry Perspective
 - 4.2. Supportive Network
 - 4.3. Representative and Inclusive
5. KEY ISSUES
 - 5.1. Research Direction
 - 5.2. Succession Planning
6. STAKEHOLDERS
7. PORTFOLIOS OF LUCERNE AUSTRALIA
8. NEW RESEARCH, EXISTING RESEARCH ADAPTATION, AND EXTENSION AND DISSEMINATION
 - 8.1. New Research
 - 8.2. Existing Research Adaptation
 - 8.3. Extension and Dissemination
9. INDUSTRY AND MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION AND INDUSTRY ISSUES
 - 9.1. Industry and Membership Promotion
 - 9.2. Industry Issues
10. COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISATION PROMOTION AND INDUSTRY NETWORKING
 - 10.1. Communication and Organisation Promotion
 - 10.2. Industry Network
 - 10.2.1. Local
 - 10.2.2. National
 - 10.2.3. Global





1 LUCERNE AUSTRALIA PROFILE

1.1 HISTORY

Although there have been bodies that have represented the interests of the lucerne seed industry in the past, the industry arrived at a point where it felt it was no longer truly represented. Bodies such as SAFF (South Australian Farmers' Federation) Small Seeds Committee had over the years been very active in the representation of the industry. SAFF Small Seeds then had linkages through to a national level via the GCA (Grains Council of Australia). Representation through SAFF and consequently the GCA saw the voice of the lucerne seed industry diluted amongst the interests of other seed and grain commodities.

Immediately prior to the formation of Lucerne Australia, grower representation was largely left in the hands of the ASF (Australian Seeds Federation), which is primarily a seed marketing and processing representative body.

A public meeting was held to gauge interest for the formation of a new peak industry body to represent the interests of lucerne producers and the associated industry. Unanimous support of over 100 attendees for the model presented saw the formation of Lucerne Australia in October 2005.



1.2 MEMBERSHIP AND ROLE

Lucerne Australia aims to incorporate all relevant sectors of the Australian lucerne seed industry and has formed a membership body that acts in the best interests of the industry as a whole. As at 2008/09 harvest, the majority of the membership (approximately 72%) and revenue (approximately 86%) were sourced from seed producers. The 2008/09 membership produced around 74% of the Australian lucerne seed crop.

The associate members (non-producers) of Lucerne Australia have very strong representation with over 30 industry businesses holding 2008/09 membership. Lucerne Australia aims to be a critical linkage between the producers and associated industry.

All members of Lucerne Australia are encouraged to be active and are often called upon for input into direction setting and information gathering. It is a major part of the Executive Committee's job to interact with members and industry to accurately represent their views.

Lucerne Australia's primary objective is to convey the views of its members to the appropriate targeted audience. It has chosen to remain as an independent body so that the issues at hand do not become diluted through a multi-tiered membership structure. Lucerne Australia has many affiliations with other bodies and has proven its capacity to work effectively with each of these at appropriate times. It has shown that formal linkages and memberships with other organisations have not been required to this point. Going forward, Lucerne Australia will continue to seek and strengthen partnerships with other groups.

1.3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Lucerne Australia's affairs are managed by an Executive Committee of members, and it operates within the powers of the Lucerne Australia Constitution. The Committee is made up of five seed producers and three associate members to reflect the dynamic of the membership. Each position on the Executive Committee is held for a term of two years, with half of the seats elected at each AGM. The Chairperson is elected from within and by the Executive annually. Sub-committees are formed by the Executive on an as-needed basis to investigate and manage specific issues.

An Executive Officer is employed to carry out the duties in a manner set out by the Executive. The roles of secretary and treasurer are carried out by the Executive Officer. The EO is the primary contact point for the organisation and is largely responsible for pursuing alternative funding sources.

Each year after the AGM, the Executive Committee will review the entire strategic plan and the portfolios within it. It will allocate areas of responsibility to each member of the Executive, and the actions for these portfolios will be set at this time.



As Lucerne Australia looks to the future, it will aim to explore new income-generating opportunities whilst maintaining a management structure that fosters a strong financial position. To achieve this, it is critical that Lucerne Australia continues to seek and encourage a vibrant and active Executive to manage the organisation.

There may be need in the future to re-design the management structure of LA to suit its future needs.

2 VISION

To lead and enhance a sustainable Australian lucerne seed industry.

3 MISSION

To be a focal point for the industry and to enhance the Australian lucerne seed industry by:

- Uniting the stakeholders
- Acting as the main point of communication and facilitation within the membership, the wider industry and community
- Supporting research and development for the industry
- Providing opportunities for the next generation of seed producers to have an active input into the future

4 VALUES

The following principles guide the way that LA will carry out its vision and mission.

4.1 HOLISTIC INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

Lucerne Australia focuses on the needs and issues of members, giving them a voice on matters of industry significance and ensuring that decision making is representative of members.

4.2 SUPPORTIVE NETWORK

Lucerne Australia provides an environment whereby member and stakeholder organisations regard Lucerne Australia as a support network and an open forum for sharing information.

4.3 REPRESENTATIVE AND INCLUSIVE

Lucerne Australia aims to achieve its direction from working within the membership at a grass roots level to reflect a growing and changing industry. Collaboration is needed with all industry bodies to seek outcomes for the betterment of the whole industry.





5 KEY ISSUES: SWOT ANALYSIS

Following a review of the organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis), the following were identified as key issues LA needs to consider as it moves forward. (These are not listed in any particular order.)

Strengths:

- Grower initiated and formed organisation
- Representative of majority of seed production
- Single representative body
- Well recognised within some governmental departments
- Successful, proactive and productive industry representation since established
- Linkages formed with key bodies (e.g. RIRDC, Rural Solutions SA)
- Promotes a more united industry
- Represents the whole industry, not just growers
- Links growers and industry together
- Targeted, industry specific group
- Locally recognisable
- Managed by people with a direct interest and experience in the industry
- Varied skills, experience and knowledge within the membership and Executive
- Responsive and engaged membership
- Keeping things simple
- Sound financial position
- Perceived sense of value from sponsors
- Professional point of contact
- Quick response to important issues of concern

Weaknesses:

- No legislative powers
- Low funding base and limited resources



- Relatively high membership cost compared to other organisations
- Availability of active members able to commit to the Executive Committee
- Limited communication with members
- Minimal benefit exclusive to members
- Emphasis of organisation weighted in line with membership (towards growers)
- Still over half of certified lucerne seed producers in Australia not members
- Lack of Australia-wide membership and recognition
- Perception of being focused only on Keith, South Australia

Opportunities:

- Expand membership
 - Expansion within South Australia
 - Australian representation
 - Formation of sub-branches
- Utilise untapped funding opportunities
- Become a very pro-active organisation with implementation of structural changes
- Further unite the industry
- Build an international communication network
- Link with other industry-based groups, nationally and internationally
- Better inform members about matters within the industry
- Highlight existing achievements to industry
- Improve production by adopting new systems and practices
- Gain international recognition of Lucerne Australia
- Support promotion of Australian lucerne seed
- Add to the value of seed produced through better market research on seed as a product and breeding programs
- Improve communication channels between end market and producers
- Become the main communication conduit from industry to growers
- Maintain the continuity and quality of supply of lucerne seed
- Build better recognition within relevant government departments
- Gain representation on relevant local, state and national bodies

Threats:

- Loss of membership via:
 - Disgruntled growers through representation on divisive issues
 - Lack of delivered outcomes
 - Membership fees being too high
- Loss of momentum with loss of active Executive Committee members



- Lack of succession planning for the Executive Committee and employees
- Public perception of the lucerne seed industry in relation to environmental effects
- Members not recognising value in membership
- Members not aware of what is happening within Lucerne Australia
- Divisive issues alienating sectors of membership
- Downturn in lucerne seed industry resulting in lower funding from members and potentially less members
- Loss of public lucerne varieties
- Production (levied income) risks from:
 - Industry downturn
 - Lack of available irrigation water or rainfall
 - Loss of pollinators
 - Pests and diseases
- Damaging policies
- Bio-security breakdowns – incursions of golden dodder, Varroa mite etc

5.1 RESEARCH DIRECTION

Lucerne seed contributes to approximately half of the levied income collected by the RIRDC Pasture Seeds Section. These funds are then matched dollar for dollar by the federal government. With the funds collected, the RIRDC Pasture Seeds Section then provides support for projects to develop the pasture seeds industry. Since its formation, Lucerne Australia has grown a healthy, interactive relationship with the RIRDC pasture seeds committee and now has the right to an elected seat on the committee. This helps to provide direction to the pasture seeds committee to target the most relevant research projects for the industry levy.

The current research-project funding process focuses on assessing submitted research proposals, with only a small proportion of RIRDC's budget allocated to commissioning research based on individual needs. In the future, Lucerne Australia would like to encourage RIRDC to place more emphasis on developing a commissioned research approach. In conjunction with this, Lucerne Australia will utilise its seat on the pasture seeds sub-committee to aid RIRDC in determining the relevance and suitability of proposals submitted from the research community.

To expand funding opportunities in the future, Lucerne Australia will seek out other funding bodies, aiming to win funding from other organisations besides RIRDC. This will allow co-funded projects and potentially larger budget projects. Developing linkages with other industry research programs (such as the horticultural or honey bee programs) can be one of the ways to achieve this goal.



Lucerne Australia would ultimately prefer its main research role to be directing funding and providing endorsement to research bodies, rather than to be the research body. The Lucerne Australia Executive possesses neither the time nor expertise required to carry out the R & D needed in the industry.

5.2 SUCCESSION PLANNING

Sub-committees serve as areas to encourage mentoring of future Executive Committee members. It is anticipated that the Chairperson will step down to the Vice Chair position. The election and re-election of committee members follows the guidelines of the Lucerne Australia Constitution.

Organisational records and contact details are kept in a manner that can be passed directly to any subsequent replacement Executive Officer. Cross training is in place so that if the Executive Officer is unable to carry out the role, other staff can continue the work requirements of Lucerne Australia.

The small size of the employed workforce means that it is not viable to succession plan for the role of the Executive Officer.

6 STAKEHOLDERS

The following are identified as key stakeholders and are consulted as required when developing goals and strategies for moving forward:

- Member organisations
- Sponsors
- Aligned member organisations
 - SAAA (South Australian Apiarists Association)
 - AFIA (Australian Fodder Industry Association)
 - White Clover Growers Association
 - Mackillop Farm Management Group
 - Ag Excellence Alliance
- Aligned industry organisations
 - SARDI (South Australian Research and Development Institute)
 - CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific Industry Research Organisation)
 - ASA (Australian Seeds Authority)
 - ASF (Australian Seeds Federation)
 - GCA (Grains Council of Australia)
 - SAFF (South Australian Farmers Federation)
 - NFF (National Farmers Federation)
 - Pollination Australia
 - SAIA (South Australian Irrigators Association)



- NIC (National Irrigators Council)
- RIRDC (Rural Industry Research and Development Corporation)
- GRDC (Grain Research and Development Corporation)
- RDC's (Pastures Australia)
- Non member lucerne seed growers across Australia
- ISF (International Seeds Federation)
- APVMA (Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority)
- AQIS (Australian Quarantine Inspection Service)
- DAFF (Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)
- USDA (United States Department of Agriculture)
- Catchment management bodies
 - SENRMB (South East Natural Resource Management Board)
 - CMA (Catchment Management Authority)
- Local, state and federal government



7 PORTFOLIOS OF LUCERNE AUSTRALIA

Following are the strategic priority areas for LA:

- New Research, Existing Research Adaptation, and Extension and Dissemination
- Industry and Membership Promotion and Industry Issues
- Communication and Organisation Promotion and Industry Networking

Each of these strategic priority areas will have:

Goal--a long-term vision for this priority area.

Strategies--the approaches Lucerne Australia will apply over the medium to long term to achieve the goal.

Short-term Actions--actions that can be undertaken and reported on monthly to achieve progress over the next 12 to 18 months to set Lucerne Australia on the path to achieving the goal for this priority area. The heads of all portfolios will provide their action lists at the second meeting of each year.

Long-term Actions--actions that can be undertaken over a 5-year term.

Review--held annually after AGM and involving any retired committee members, the review will ensure portfolios deliver gains for members.

8 NEW RESEARCH, EXISTING RESEARCH ADAPTATION, AND EXTENSION AND DISSEMINATION

8.1 NEW RESEARCH

Goal:

- Achieve meaningful research outcomes to improve the industry, driven by industry's needs and priorities.

Strategies:

- Use industry expertise and membership to identify, determine and focus research priorities.
- Work with funding and research bodies to develop a commissioned research approach.
- Optimise research outcomes for investment dollars.
- Assist other research organisations to focus their efforts to optimise research outcomes for the lucerne seed and related industries.
- Work closely with Lucerne Australia's nominated representative on the RIRDC pasture seeds sub-committee.

Actions:

- Use member surveys and communication dialogue to help identify research priorities.
- Commission a study to analyse the yield benefits of using European honeybees in lucerne seed crops.



- Ensure that Lucerne Australia's representative on RIRDC is familiar with the projects and views being endorsed by the Executive Committee. Liaise with LA/RIRDC representative to ensure open communication on all matters relating to LA/RIRDC matters.
- Provide letters of endorsement for project submissions when appropriate.
- Approach RIRDC in writing about developing a commissioned research approach and how this could be achieved.

8.2 EXISTING RESEARCH ADAPTATION

Goal:

- Highlight existing research, technologies and management practices that have relevance to the Australian lucerne seed industry.

Strategies:

- Summarise and consolidate existing literature that will benefit the lucerne industry.
- Ensure appropriate authorisation has been received before distribution.
- Work with funding and research bodies to investigate local adaptation of ideas.
- Use industry expertise and membership to determine and focus research priorities.
- Optimise research outcomes for investment dollars; in particular, ensure that research funding isn't wasted on research that already exists.
- Catalogue these research papers on the LA website.

Actions:

8.3 EXTENSION AND DISSEMINATION

Goals:

- Promote the adoption of new and existing research and technology.
- Disseminate research outcomes as soon as they are available.

Strategies:

- Use conferences and field days to promote research outcomes and adoption.
- Distribute information in a format that is appropriate for the targeted audience.
- Contribute articles on a regular basis to the Lucerne Leader and website.

Actions:

- Set up a portable display for holding research documents.
- Ensure that there are research briefs available for the membership.
- Post or link to research on the Lucerne Australia website.
- Promote research launches.



9 INDUSTRY AND MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION AND INDUSTRY ISSUES

9.1 INDUSTRY AND MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION

Goals:

- Expand the membership of Lucerne Australia
- Promote a positive image of and generate interest and access to the Australian lucerne seed industry.

Strategies:

- Quantify and promote the financial gains made for members by Lucerne Australia.
- Identify why non-members don't join
- Identify a target of membership to gain
- Maintain an interesting, professional and relevant website to attract and inform readers about the Australian lucerne seed industry.
- Interact with non-members, promote the benefits of membership and find out how Lucerne Australia can better cater for them.
- Investigate satellite membership branches (e.g. NSW)
- Aim to make Lucerne Australia more nationwide

Actions:

- Invest time each month updating and improving the Lucerne Australia webpage.
- Gauge interest from other areas of sub-branches for Lucerne Australia.
- Investigate potential models for a sub-branch system.
- Organise a public relations road trip.

9.2 INDUSTRY ISSUES

Legislation, industry issues, red tape

Goals:

- Identify inhibiting industry regulations and investigate solutions that will enhance the industry.
- Deal with industry issues as they arise.

Strategies:

- Work with regulatory bodies to construct alternative solutions to problematic legislation
- Work with regulatory bodies when legislation is being created or reviewed
- Develop relationships with the state and federal government
- Work with associated industry groups (e.g. ASF)
- Work with special interest groups from their inception
- Promote Lucerne Australia as the first point of contact when industry issues arise.



- Develop an appropriate network of relationships to ensure that issues can be addressed quickly and effectively (e.g. relationship with APVMA)
- Identify threats and develop contingency plans for threats to the Australian lucerne seed industry.

Actions:

- Form media linkages to aid in promotion of industry issues and timely information dissemination.
- Speak with the relevant body about basic seed importation standards.
- Communicate with the SENRM and VIC CMA about the current golden dodder status in production areas.
- Subscribe to APVMA email alerts.
- Consult with industry to identify trade prohibitive regulations.

10 COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISATION PROMOTION AND INDUSTRY NETWORKING

10.1 COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISATION PROMOTION

Goals:

- Develop a two-way communication stream with stakeholders
- Provide key information to industry stakeholders
- Be a respected and valued national peak body, effectively representing the interests of the Australian lucerne seed community.

Strategies:

- Create awareness that Lucerne Australia is the first point of contact for accessing the lucerne seed industry.
- Communicate the views of the Lucerne Australia membership.
- Provide an effective means of two-way communication for industry on:
 - Research extension and updates
 - Relevant political issues
 - Policy updates and impacts
 - Market information
 - Best practice
 - Industry news
- Host public forums for relevant industry issues.
- Seek the opinions of consumers and the perception of Australian lucerne seed industry to develop strategies for improvement.
- Use conferences and field days to gain future research direction.

Actions:

- Collate articles for quarterly newsletters with relevant key industry topics.
- Provide potential concepts for the major annual event for Lucerne Australia.



- Co-ordinate conferences, field days and public forums.
- Provide the fastest, most effective means of communication (e.g. SMS)
- Archive media releases and articles.
- Develop a proactive policy to effectively communicate with media.

10.2 INDUSTRY NETWORK

10.2.1 LOCAL

Goals:

- Provide opportunities for the lucerne seed industry to network on a frequent basis.
- Ensure members and stakeholders value being a participant in LA.

Strategies:

- Promote and encourage members and stakeholders to participate at local events.
- Foster stronger connections between non-member stakeholders (such as NRM) and LA.
- Maintain and foster relationships with appropriate industry bodies.

Actions:

- Ensure that there is an up-to-date list of non-member lucerne seed producers.
- Maintain personal contact with members and non-members on a regular basis (guide: 20 documented conversations per year).
- Investigate formal and/or informal meetings with other appropriate industry bodies

10.2.2 National

Goal:

- Provide the opportunity for industry stakeholders within Australia to come together.

Strategies:

- Provide a framework to represent the various lucerne seed production areas of Australia.
- Improve national networks to develop a conduit for the transfer of knowledge for the enhancement of the Australian lucerne seed industry.

Actions:

- Maintain a presence at events that are pertinent to the lucerne seed industry, especially in key production areas.
- Identify and maintain contact details of relevant groups to the Lucerne Australia network, such as:
 - plant breeders
 - researchers
 - users of lucerne seed



10.2.3 Global

Goal:

- Strive to develop relationships with personnel in key market and production areas throughout Australia and internationally to promote Australia's lucerne seed industry.

Strategies:

- Actively strive to form communication networks.
- Create dialogue with other lucerne seed-based industry organisations.
- Relay referenced international dialogue to members.
- Provide membership with up-to-date global information.

Actions:

- Identify and encourage overseas specialists to engage with the Australian lucerne seed industry.
- Seek to host international experts in a given field on a regular basis.





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