

Berry advisory mechanism (MT23003) – a new way to engage

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Berries Australia have a new three-year strategic levy investment project 'Berry advisory mechanism (MT23003)' which is part of the Hort Innovation Strawberry, Blueberry, and Raspberry and Blackberry Funds that will change the way industry engages with Hort Innovation to prioritise research, development and extension projects using berry industry levies and Australian Government co-investment.

Through this project, Berries Australia will consult widely across the Australian berry industries to provide high-level project scoping and investment ideas to Hort Innovation. As part of this project, Berries Australia has engaged a Research and Development (R&D) Manager who will work with the Hort Innovation Industry Service and Delivery Manager and the Hort Innovation R&D Managers to identify and co-develop R&D investment recommendations based on industry needs and priorities.

The purpose of the advisory mechanism is to streamline the way industry needs are identified and integrated into project investment recommendations. The first part of the mechanism involves a Berry Ideation Panel, consisting of growers, researchers and technical experts, agronomists, Berries Australia representatives and industry development officers. This panel will meet at least once per year in a facilitated workshop to identify R&D needs for each berry category. R&D concepts from this workshop will be developed into investment recommendations by the Hort Innovation R&D Managers, in consultation with the Berries Australia R&D Manager.

Each berry category has a prioritisation panel - replacing the previous SIAPs (Strategic Investment Advisory Panels) - consisting of levy-paying growers representing all growing regions, peak industry body committee members and non-board member growers. While considering the Berry Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2022-26, the role of the three berry industry prioritisation panels includes providing advice to Hort Innovation regarding prioritisation of investment recommendations and endorsement of projects for progression to a tender process and ultimately a project.

The new advice mechanism kicked off with an Ideation Panel Workshop in March consisting of 20 members including the berry IDOs, growers, and technical experts across all berry categories and regions. Participants shared their insights and experiences of key issues facing growers in the different regions and berry crops. Four main themes emerged from the workshop as industry needs:

- Effective pest and disease management
- Demand creation and ensuring quality fruit supply to consumers
- Sustainable and resilient production systems
- Quality planting stock

Potential berry-specific projects were developed into investment recommendations to go to the Berry Industry Prioritisation Panels. The panels met in June to consider the recommendations. Priority projects that were endorsed included supporting BerryQuest 2025, pest and disease issues across the berry industries (Chilli thrip and Leafrollers) and supporting effective and timely agrichemical access.

With the advice received at the June prioritisation panel meetings, Hort Innovation is currently developing 2024/25 Berry Industry Annual Investment Plans. These plans include industry fund information including current and proposed R&D projects. An update will be provided in the next edition of the Australian Berry Journal.

Want to know more?

You can find the full details about the new Industry Advice Mechanism at bit.ly/BA-IAM and if you have an idea for a Berry industry R&D project, please reach out to:

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