

# Cultural dimensions of a large-scale mixed-farming program: competing narratives of stakeholder actors

Animal Production Science 49(10) 956–965

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## Abstract

Grain & Graze was an innovative, multi-scale, multi-organisational, inter-disciplinary and triple bottom line research, development and extension (RD&E) program conducted to investigate and improve mixed-farming systems in Australia from 2003 to 2008. This paper reports on a sociological evaluation of the program's institutional arrangements that was undertaken as one of a small number of social research projects within the program. Based on discourse analysis and investigation of participant experiences, it found the program was characterised by two competing views of what the program was or ought to be. Weaving across the program's formal and informal elements and national and regional scales of management, these 'narratives' reflect the program's coexisting 'revolutionary' aspirations and 'organisational' aspirations. Attention to the coexistence of these narratives and the way they were expressed within the program provides insight into the values, complexity and challenges of agricultural RD&E programs. It points to the significance the broader philosophical and governance context has for contemporary agricultural RD&E programs and other public science and sustainable development initiatives.

**Publication Link:** <http://www.publish.csiro.au/paper/EA08302>