

# Grain & Graze: an innovative triple bottom line approach to collaborative and multidisciplinary mixed-farming systems research, development and extension

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## Abstract

The Grain & Graze program attempted to improve the 'triple bottom line' of mixed-farming systems in Australia through a major program of research, development and extension (RD&E) that operated across nine regions, with a total budget of A\$31 million provided by four R&D corporations and over 60 regional partners. Regional activities were complemented by a series of national projects and management and governance arrangements were organised at both regional and national levels with significant producer input. While the two-tiered management structure resulted in both tensions and opportunities the outputs of the program were substantial including 278 demonstration and trial sites, 180 training courses, over 200 publications, tools and manuals, over 100 research papers and a database of national and regional data. Over 8000 producers participated in program events, over 5000 actively trialled new activities and around 3200 adopted recommended practices despite severely unfavourable seasonal conditions over the 5 years of the program. A return on investment of 3.4 : 1 for the core funders was comparable to some other agricultural RD&E programs if lower than others. The program expanded the scope of farming systems RD&E in Australia through explicit recognition of the triple bottom line and development of formal and informal approaches to integration across these dimensions. It established regional and inter-regional networks of producers and scientists that can be expected to have ongoing significance. The papers that follow in this special issue reflect the magnitude of the program's achievements.

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