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AIA and Circular Australia partner to support the transition to a circular economy

To help the transition of the agricultural, fisheries and forestry sectors to a circular economy, Agricultural Innovation Australia (AIA) has announced a partnership with Circular Australia.

Circular Australia is an independent, national peak not-for-profit body working to transition Australians, governments and businesses to a circular economy by 2030.

AIA CEO Sam Brown said that the partnership will ensure agriculture, fisheries and forestry has a voice at the table in important discussions around Australia's circular economy transition.

"With the agreement of Australia's federal, state and territory environment ministers to work with the private sector to design out waste and pollution, keep materials in use and foster markets to achieve a circular economy by 2030, it is crucial that our primary industries engage in the conversation.

"This partnership enables them to address their circular economy opportunities and challenges alongside industries such as construction, resources, FMCG, engineering, property and finance. It presents an invaluable opportunity to learn from other sectors' experience in navigating our nation's transition to circularity," Mr Brown said.

AIA joins Circular Australia's Circular Leaders Program, which is designed for organisations committed to leading the transition in their industries towards the 2030 goal.

Through the partnership, AIA and Circular Australia will work to catalyse nationally significant and scalable circular economy initiatives across agriculture, fisheries and forestry, with several key objectives:

1. **Understand circularity in agriculture:** With stakeholders, collectively determine what circularity looks like for Australian agriculture and cultivate the sectors' contribution to the formulation of a national framework, including analysing the potential impact on existing business models and practices
2. **Identify key challenges and opportunities:** Pinpoint the challenges that may hinder the transition to a circular economy, and the opportunities that have the potential to significantly benefit the sectors, including creating viable markets for secondary resources.
3. **Sector representation:** Ensure the sectors have a voice in leadership discussions surrounding circularity through participation in taskforces.
4. **Collaboration:** Explore opportunities to collaborate with other industries and sectors and learn from their initiatives, leveraging insights to drive innovation in Australian agriculture.

5. **Harnessing expertise:** Leverage Circular Australia’s expertise and insights to inform strategic decisions and drive meaningful outcomes in Australian agriculture.

Circular Australia’s CEO Lisa McLean, who is a member of the Federal Government’s Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group, underscored the importance of cross-sector collaboration in advancing Australia towards a circular economy.

“There is a growing need and momentum within the economy and all levels of government to drastically reduce waste streams, keep resources in use for longer, find sustainable ways of recycling and repurposing waste into inputs that can be shared or reintroduced for production processes.

“No single organisation can achieve a circular transition on its own. We are thrilled to have agriculture, fisheries and forestry at the table in our Circular Leaders Program to map a course for action to achieve a circular Australia towards 2030,” Lisa McLean said.

As an example, out of the approximately 90,000 tonnes of plastics that are consumed in agriculture annually, only about seven per cent are currently being recycled.*

AIA recently hosted scoping workshops attended by a number of rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and other industry stakeholders, including Australian Meat Processer Corporation, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Meat & Livestock Australia, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Australian Pork Limited and the Bega Regional Circularity Co-operative, to identify gaps, opportunities and industry focussed activities that would benefit from circular economy approaches at scale.

“We also participated in the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water’s Circular Economy and Food Roundtable - the outcomes of which will inform the upcoming meeting of the Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group on ‘Food & Resources’ and help the Federal Government shape its framework to transition to a circular economy by 2030,” Mr Brown said.

As he explains, the partnership between AIA and Circular Australia acknowledges and leverages the existing work of multiple stakeholders across agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

“There are many organisations working on circular economy initiatives and activities within our sector, including the RDCs, Cooperative Research Centres, CSIRO and others. It is important that we are able to bring knowledge and tools together and encourage new collaborations to navigate regulatory developments and effectively support producers amidst evolving sustainability pressures.

“By fostering innovation, embracing new technologies and facilitating collaboration across the industry, the agrifood and fibre sector can play a pivotal role in building a more resilient and sustainable future,” Mr Brown said.

* <https://ausveg.com.au/articles/conquering-on-farm-plastic-waste-in-australian-agriculture/>

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About AIA

Agricultural Innovation Australia Ltd (AIA) is a not-for-profit public company established to facilitate joint investment and collaboration in cross-industry agricultural issues of national importance.

AIA identifies, develops and invests in strategies that deliver transformative outcomes to drive sustainability, productivity and profitability across Australian agricultural value chains.

AIA's scope encompasses the agricultural, fisheries and forestry value chains.

aginnovationaustralia.com.au

About Circular Australia

Circular Australia is an independent, national peak not-for-profit body working to transition Australians, governments and businesses to a circular economy by 2030. Its expertise, programs and partnerships drive change, measure impact and accelerate the circular economy transition.

Circular Australia's mission is to lead and inspire others to implement circular actions to accelerate the circular economy in Australia.

circularaustralia.com.au