

# CONFERENCE SUMMARY



## NORTHERN AUSTRALIA FOOD FUTURES CONFERENCE 2016

### "Developing the Future of Agriculture in the North"

#### That's a wrap!



The second Northern Australia Food Futures Conference, held in Darwin from the 11th – 13th of April, was a resounding success on many levels. The conference set out to find out 'what investors want' in agriculture and what Northern Australia has to offer. Hosted by the Northern Territory Farmers Association, the Conference was a truly northern event with strong representation from QLD, NT and WA as well as delegates from Asia and America. Federal Ministers and Ministers from the northern states participated along with senior government agency staff, leading agribusiness representatives and farming associates from across Australia.

Around 300 delegates, sponsors and speakers attended, with 60% of delegates from the private sector and 40% from government. 92% of survey respondents said that the Conference met their expectations and 83% of respondents said they would be likely to attend the next Conference.

#### Key messages:

- The winning formula combines local expertise, foreign expertise, foreign investment and a route to market.
- Land tenure is no longer an impediment to development. There are innovative ways to remove land tenure as an issue.
- Investors need water security into the future over a long time scale. There are concern about the effects of policy and climate on this.

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**DARWIN**

11 - 13 APRIL  
2016

#### Message from NT Farmers, CEO - Mr Shenal Basnayake

Northern Australia Food Futures Conferences brings together our friends in Western Australia and Queensland to discuss development of cropping in northern Australia. Held in Darwin NT, Food Futures is truly a northern event, with farmers from a vast area covering the Top End, the Gulf, the Cape, the Ord, the Centre and the Kimberley. We are all in the same development space, with common issue and common problems. Different regions have different ideas and different solutions, an important part of Food Futures Conferences.



Thank you for supporting and participating in this important industry event and we hope you enjoyed your stay in Darwin.

The event would not have been possible without the support of our sponsors including NT, WA and QLD governments, the Office of Northern Australia, CSIRO, RIRDC, ACIAR, Vanderfield, Rivulis, Prime Super, Water Dynamics, OPUS and ANL.



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## Conference Highlights

- David Williams of Kidder Williams spoke on the need for public and private sectors working together on northern development and the need to focus on business models for development not just resource and infrastructure.
- Chairman Brian Wilson from the Foreign Investment Review Board stressed the need for foreign investment and defended the NT Government port lease decision strongly. He likened Landbridge connections to the Chinese Government as similar to BHP's connections with the Australian Government.
- Dr Geoff Raby (former Ambassador to China, now Non-Executive Director Fortescue MG) spoke about the importance of the media acting responsibly when talking about Chinese investment; it is heard in China and doesn't help Australia's cause. David Williams also spoke on this subject strongly in support of foreign investment.
- Farmers who have succeeded in the north shared their stories. NT examples included Bruce White from Mt Keppler, Paul Mc Laughlin from Ali Curung and Kane Youngusband from Mataranka. Farmers from WA included Jim Engelke of KAI, Phil Hams of GoGo station, Rob Boshammer and David Menzel from the Ord, and from Queensland Paul Ryan of Cape York and David Hassum from the IFED proposal.
- Indigenous participation in agriculture featured Lynette Shaw from the Gooniyandi Assoc in Fitzroy Crossing working with GoGo Station, and Paul McLaughlin, farming Traditional Owners land at Ali Curung. Delegates also heard from Vin Lange from Centrefarm and the WA Government's experience with the Mownajum community.
- Brendon Grylls MLA for Pilbara was an outstanding MC and contributed strongly to the overall success of the event. His 'Royalty for Regions' policy has been a major driver of northern development in WA. Brendon also made it clear it is the role of the agricultural sector to press its case in the media and in politics.
- WA Minister for Water the Hon. Mia Davies and other speakers from WA evidenced the active role the WA government plays in developing the north.
- Asst. Minister for Agriculture, Senator Anne Ruston and Shadow Minister for Agriculture the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP are in agreement in many areas regarding northern development.
- Senator the Hon. Matt Canavan gave the opening keynote address and impressed many with his open style and thinking.
- Private sector needs to lead the way, but government approval processes are still a limitation, especially in WA and QLD. NT performs well in this area.
- The Future Farmer Awards presented at the Gala Dinner recognised the outstanding contribution and leadership of three northern farmers. The recipients were; Michael Quach (NT), Christian Bloecker (WA) and Sara Westaway (QLD).
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*The 2016 Food Futures Conference has been an important forum for discussion around the future of northern Australia agri-business. The event certainly achieved its objective in bringing industry, government and political leaders together to discuss where we have come from, Where are now and where we going. My department was proud to once again sponsor the Food Futures Conference.*

- Alister Trier | NT Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries

## Future Farmer Awards

The Future Farmer Awards presented at the Gala Dinner recognised the outstanding contribution and leadership of three northern farmers. The recipients were; Michael Quach (NT), Christian Bloecker (WA) and Sara Westaway (QLD).



## Contact Us

For further information about Northern Australia Food Futures Conference 2016, please contact the conference organiser at [events@associatedadvertising.com.au](mailto:events@associatedadvertising.com.au).





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*I found the event very worthwhile. You all should be very proud of the event. I will make it a not to be missed event for me in the future. Development of the North will better life for all Australians - especially those who live and work (and are passionate about) Northern Australia. Events like yours are critical to seeing that happen.*

- Brian Healy | K&L Gates

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*It was a really well organised, structured and wonderfully coordinated event - providing the perfect opportunity for everyone to engage and network in a relaxed setting, against the backdrop of the beautiful Darwin harbour.*

- Anne Lynch | CSIRO

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