



Summary Report of Australia's 1st Regional Food & Agribusiness Cluster MeetUp 7&8 September 2015, Moreton Bay, South East Queensland

Background

On 16-17 April 2015, the TCI Network (The Competitiveness Institute) Oceania Chapter in partnership with RDA Brisbane organized the second Australasian Cluster Conference at UTS in Sydney on the theme of "**Linking Cluster Globally: the Heightened Role of Clusters in Global Value Chains**".

The TCI Network is the leading global network of main organizations and practitioners with deep expertise in clusters and competitiveness, who collaborate in a unique open, flexible and practical context to advance in the practice of competitiveness, innovation and cluster development.

Through its activities, TCI reaches out to 9,000 practitioners from development agencies, government departments, cluster organizations, academic institutions, companies and multilateral organizations in over 110 countries. TCI is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization founded in 1998. It has a global scope and is open to members from all continents.

For the past two years TCI Oceania has partnered with RDA Brisbane to offer Australia's pre-eminent cluster conference for cluster practitioners across all industry sectors. RDA Brisbane is part of a national network of 55 committees established by the Australian Government under the Regional Development Australia (RDA) initiative.

RDAs bring together all levels of government, business and the community to identify opportunities, challenges and priorities for action in their regions. They are local people developing local solutions to local issues and are an eminently suitable partner for TCI in Australia.

The internationalisation of regional economies is becoming critical for sustainable economic futures. No matter how small a region, niches in international markets can be found and exploited. Economic developers today must uncover the 'local buzz' in their regional economies and assist companies to plug into global pipelines. In regional Australia this is particularly the case for our food and agribusiness products and related knowledge based services.

At the April conference attendees from Australia's food cluster regions expressed a keen interest in coming together to share and learn from each other and to explore opportunities for cross regional cluster collaboration and opportunity fertilisation.

Tracy Scott-Rimington, SEQ Coordinator at RDA Brisbane undertook to respond to this request and coordinated a gathering of the cluster fraternity from Australia's food regions in the Moreton Bay region of South East Queensland (SEQ) on 7&8 September 2015, to explore opportunities to collaborate, innovate, strengthen regional businesses and contribute to the growth of the Australian food and agribusiness sector. All states were represented bar Tasmania and NT. This opportunity was made possible through funding support provided by FIAL.

The following target outcomes were agreed and met;

- Outcome 1 – Dissemination, collection and analysis of pre-forum survey developed in association with FIAL
- Outcome 2 - Successful organisation of forum
- Outcome 3 - A report on the forum's outcomes to FIAL
- Outcome 4 – Invitation to participants to upload cluster and business details on Austrade and FIAL's catalogue website

Summary of Proceedings

The pre-MeetUp questionnaire established the following facts;

- There were representatives from around the country representing a diverse range of food and agribusiness sectors including;
 - Commodity based – crops, meat, dairy...
 - Restaurants & Hospitality
 - Local producers
 - Distributors and freight forwarders
 - Wine
 - Food & agri tourism
 - Premium /niche products
 - Food innovation
- The majority of food clusters represented had been established for less than 1 - 5 years. Only 3 had been established for more than 5 years.
- There was a spread of membership numbers from under 20 to over 100 with the majority 20-100.
- There was a variety of organisational structures; NFP, Incorporated Associations, Auspicied
- Only 3 charged membership fees (12 responses)
- None had received funding support for the cluster from the federal government. Support was evenly spread between state and local governments and 'other'.
- The 3 Big Ticket Challenges were quite dispersed;
 - Distribution channels and supply chain issues and development ****
 - Red tape and cost of doing business ***
 - Cheap imports
 - Resources for cluster
 - Help to do 'clusters'
 - Food branding
 - Access to markets
 - Innovation and value add
 - Investment attraction

- Land use
- The 3 Big Blockages were more commonly shared;
 - Issues too big for individual companies to tackle – need for collaboration across sector****
 - Government red tape and misguided initiatives
 - Time poor
 - No regional industry voice**
 - No culture of collaboration***
 - Funding for cluster ****
- Finally, what does the cluster manager NEED to thrive?
 - Resources and funding***
 - Knowledge and training
 - Understanding of role (of cluster manager/ facilitator)
 - Leadership skills**
 - Strategic planning
- What are you expecting from Meetup?
 - Networking and new networks***
 - Unity
 - Ideas***
 - Learning from others experiences**
 - Opportunities for funding
 - Opportunities for collaboration

Key Outcomes

Key outcomes are listed as follows;

1. Relationships and trust across the practising food & agribusiness cluster regions of Australia were established.
2. Common challenges for industry growth to increase levels of innovation and export development were identified and discussed.
3. Learnings about successful approaches to the development of food clusters internationally took place.
4. Exploration of what the future could look like if we strengthen collaboration across the clustered food regions took place.
5. Foundations for cross regional collaboration, addressing the key themes of:
 - Regional competitiveness
 - Regional leadership
 - Innovative regions
 - Collaboration and competition
 - Strategic alignment
 - Regional and national food branding
6. ***Agreement was obtained to build a platform for future collaboration across Australia's food cluster regions, working in collaboration with FIAL, TCI Oceania and through the network of RDAs. A foundation steering committee has formed. Work will now commence to scope out the requirements and practicalities of this initiative.***