

MEDIA RELEASE
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Major initiative to ignite new horticulture generation

In the face of an ageing horticultural industry and a fast moving technological landscape, Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) has launched its biggest industry recruitment and leadership initiative in history.

The organisation is soon to fire-off a series of projects with partners – such as research institutions, government agencies and international and commercial enterprises – who have co-invested in a dedicated industry Leadership Fund.*

Hort Innovation Chief Executive John Lloyd said the fund will be used to identify and build future industry leaders at all stages of their career through investment in a host of new initiatives.

“This new Leadership Fund will provide opportunities for horticulture professionals, at all stages of their careers, to propel themselves up on leadership ladder. It will also provide significant resources to spruik to the nation that horticulture is a rewarding and creative industry to join,” he said.

Mr Lloyd said the industry has never been so diverse and exciting. A [study](#) commissioned by Hort Innovation last year suggested the industry outperforms the average business in Australia when it comes to innovation – with almost 80 per cent of horticultural producers reporting some form of innovation, whether it was new to the farm or new to the industry.

“Never before have we seen this level of innovation in the horticulture industry – we are using drones and robotic technology to increase farm efficiencies, we are combating pests with groundbreaking science and we are breeding world-first produce varieties,” Mr Lloyd said.

“Increasingly, Australian growers are also finding ways to think outside of traditional fruit and vegetable offerings – for example a banana farmer in Queensland is operating a booming banana flour business after seeing dust rise from a bunch of bananas he ran over in his car.”

The same study, which was conducted by the University of Queensland, also showed 72 per cent of horticulture growers are aged over 50.

“We want to attract the best and the brightest people from a range of disciplines to careers in horticulture. However with increasing urbanisation, young people do not always view horticulture as a viable career option because they are not exposed to it – and they are missing out,” Mr Lloyd said.

He said this fund aims to turn that around. “There is so much passion and talent among the young people that are currently getting exposure to the industry. For example, a Sydney agricultural school student recently developed biodegradable plastic out of pistachio nut shells,” he said.

“This Leadership Fund will give emerging generations of growers and agriscientists the resources to realise their ideas for the benefit of the industry, and all Australians.”

The first wave of Leadership Fund program announcements will take place in the coming weeks.

Aside from its levy-based investments (Pool 1), Hort Innovation is charged with managing the investment of about \$20 million annually in Australian Government seed funds across various research priorities (Pool 2). These funds are matched with funding from co-investors. All Pool 2 funds are used to address cross-industry challenges and opportunities of strategic, long-term importance to Australia's horticulture industries. **Contact: Kelly Vorst-Parkes, Communications Manager – Media 0447 304 255 or kelly.vorst-parkes@horticulture.com.au*