

Researching the north

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WE hear a lot about the developing Northern Australia agenda, but we often don't hear enough about what this agenda is, or how it's being realised.

How do we action all the talk around infrastructure development, supply chains, new business opportunities and developing emerging industries? What's happening behind the scenes to get the infrastructure built, the policies co-ordinated, supply chains improved and capital flowing into projects which deliver for the north?

It is my intention to answer these questions by introducing you to the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA) and the work we're doing to action a co-ordinated and sustainable plan to grow a prosperous Northern Australia.

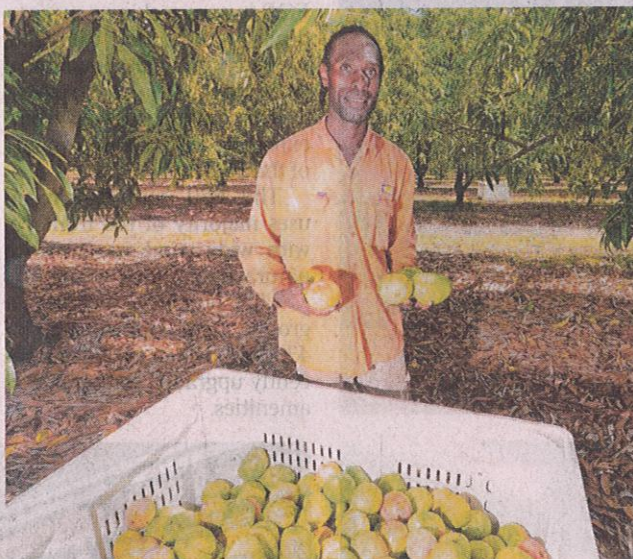
The CRCNA is a non-profit organisation which has been given a mandate to leverage its \$75 million Commonwealth funding over 10 years to support industry-led research in agriculture and food (including aquaculture), northern health service delivery and Tra-

ditional Owner-led business development. The NT Government has committed another \$800,000 over four years to ensure research benefits flow across the Territory.

In addition to funding industry-led research projects, the CRCNA also works with the NT, Qld, WA and Commonwealth governments to identify broader policy challenges and barriers to investment and development.

One way we are doing this is by funding eight industry situational analysis studies across the horticulture, beef, rice, forestry, bush food, health, aquaculture and cropping sectors.

Our work in the broader policy space is being done in collaboration with the Northern Australian Senior Officer Networking Group (NASONG) with recommendations and outcomes expected to support the Northern Development Ministerial Forum and inform future planning and R & D investment priorities. Discussion about the challenges identified by the research and the proposed outcomes will form the basis for our State of the North report due mid-2019.



Projects to transform agricultural supply chains can help the mango industry in the NT

So, what are the challenges the CRCNA is looking to address with our research?

In the NT, we're talking about overcoming the need to truck our produce south before it's turned around and trucked back north or flown out to Asia. Or the need to build processing capacity so our barra farmers can sell whole and filleted product, opening significant market opportunities.

It's these transport, investment, supply chain, logistics and market access issues the CRCNA is wanting to resolve.

But we all know, to get the right investment and long-term planning, governments, business, industry and investors must have proof the solutions are economically sound and sustainable.

This is where the CRCNA can play an important role. By

funding research collaborations with government, industry and business partners, we will provide the evidence about why change is needed, what the change could be and how it could be implemented.

To date, the CRCNA has committed \$12.8 million towards 37 projects which have leveraged project participant cash and in-kind contributions exceeding \$31 million.

These projects include the work we're doing with NASONG and the NT Government, the industry situational analysis studies and successful projects from two open funding calls.

Projects, like the collaborations between Katherine-based mango producer Manbulloo Ltd and blockchain experts, Trust Provenance promise to shake up the way technology is used to transform agricultural supply chains.

Similarly, a collaboration between Darwin's world-class research institute, Menzies, Charles Darwin University, Traditional Homeland Enterprises and pharmaceutical company Integria may well deliver new Traditional Owner-

led agribusiness opportunities based on native medicinal plants growing in the Top End.

Partnering with the Territory's Traditional Owners is crucial to achieving real economic development and prosperity across the north.

This is why CRCNA funded the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance's (NAILSMA) project which will develop a framework for Traditional Owners to lead the discussion about preferred development pathways on Country.

The CRCNA has an important job to do in Northern Australia helping industry, business, research and government partners bring transformative ideas to market and increase the north's competitive advantage.

Our research will help grow the economy by creating more jobs and training opportunities, improve supply chain efficiencies, improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and drive investment across the region.

Tracey Hayes is the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia Director