

## Introducing: Project Bridge

### An Industry Led Farming and Innovation Initiative for Australia

Blue River Group is establishing a fully commercial dairy farm in the Wagga Wagga region which will showcase Israel's leading agricultural technology. In addition, a world-class agricultural and food technology hub will be created around the farm for the testing and commercialisation of Australian ideas and technologies by researchers and entrepreneurs. Greater access to leading Israeli technologies combined with stronger Australian and global industry and research collaboration are key features of Project Bridge. This will deliver farmer focused outcomes and drive a sustainable agricultural sector for the mutual benefit of Australian farmers and our economy. Finally, Project Bridge will focus on enabling the next generation of farming families to remain on the land through hands on experience and direct exposure to the benefits of agricultural technology.

### Key Features of Project Bridge

#### **1. COMMERCIAL FARM SHOWCASING ISRAELI TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

The establishment of a fully commercial farm in the Wagga Wagga region is at the heart of Project Bridge. The farm will act as a showcase of innovation for the dairy sector. A consortium of leading Israeli dairy and agri companies will be invited to become partners and display their existing dairy technologies in Australia. Other potential technologies may include cropping, water, waste, and energy focused solutions. Collectively, these technology providers will work within the Project Bridge ecosystem to bring a positive impact to the agricultural sector.

Access to the farm and the leading technologies will be available to regional dairy farmers. This includes the twenty dairy farming partners that supply Riverina Fresh, a dairy processing plant in Wagga Wagga that was recently acquired by Blue River Group. The farm will be a separate entity to the Riverina Fresh business and will supply milk to Riverina Fresh on the same terms as all other suppliers.

#### **2. COMMERCIALISATION AND OUTCOME-FOCUSED RESEARCH**

A world class agricultural and food technology hub will be created around the farm for the testing and commercialisation of Australian technologies and ideas by researchers and entrepreneurs. Collaboration with Australian and international universities, innovation programs, and corporate partners will drive new opportunities to turn great research and ideas into commercial solutions. Further, the commercial farm will provide researchers and entrepreneurs the ability to test drive their ideas in the field. Project Bridge will focus on bringing together the expertise needed to develop solutions to address farmer needs. All initiatives will have a positive impact on the farm and must have high commercialisation potential.

### Agriculture is Our Global Advantage- We Don't Need to do it Alone

The Agriculture Competitiveness White Paper<sup>1</sup> demonstrates the strong commitment of the Australian Government to the growth of the agriculture sector. To realise the full potential of the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://agwhitepaper.agriculture.gov.au>

sector and to remain competitive on an international scale, industry and research organisations need to embrace leading global innovation, and make these technologies accessible to Australian farmers, researchers, entrepreneurs and investors.

Israel's innovation ecosystem features world-leading agtech and foodtech science and innovation in the areas of irrigation, plant genetics, horticulture, and dairy productivity as well as emerging technologies such as food printing and sensor technology. The Australian Government has already identified Israel as one of the world's most renowned innovation and start up ecosystems with the establishment of a Landing Pad in Tel Aviv as part of the National Innovation and Science Agenda.

Collaborating with Israel in the agriculture sector presents significant opportunities and benefits to both Australia and Israel.

## Industry Led Initiative

Blue River Group is a profit with purpose business. Project Bridge and the Riverina Fresh dairy processing plant, enable Blue River Group to focus on creating a sustainable dairy sector in the Wagga region and improving agricultural outcomes across Australia.

The Riverina Fresh business sits in the middle of the dairy supply chain. It operates in a unique regional ecosystem whereby it has a partnership with twenty local dairy farmers that supply the plant with premium milk. Blue River Group is well placed to use Project Bridge to bring innovation, capital and long-term sustainability to the farm gate through its relationship with the Riverina Fresh farmers as well as other upstream and downstream ecosystem players.

## An Outcome-focused Collaborative Ecosystem

To maximise the likelihood of success, it is fundamental that the commercial farm business sits at the heart of the collaborative ecosystem enabled by Project Bridge. This ensures that all research and commercialisation remains focused on the goal of delivering commercial outcomes for the benefit of farmers and the agricultural sector.

The commercial farm, funded by private investors, will generate commercial returns and will be self-sufficient. The agri/food tech hub will create partnerships with incubators, accelerators, corporates, universities and government to ensure it relies on existing expertise and doesn't reinvent the wheel. The success of Project Bridge is not dependent on Government support; however programs are available in both Australia and Israel that have the potential to enhance the strength of the project.

Wagga Wagga is a natural location for Project Bridge. Wagga is an existing hub of regional innovation, it offers convenient access via a local airport, it has close proximity to major road networks and Blue River Group has already invested in the region. The Riverina region of NSW also has a long established and highly regarded dairy and agriculture sector.

## Next Steps for Project Bridge

- Acquire a commercial farm in Wagga Wagga region
- Identify key farmer needs and commercialisation opportunities
- Assemble consortia of established Israeli dairy and agriculture technology companies
- Establish network of collaborative partnerships with incubators, accelerators, corporates, universities, researchers, and entrepreneurs