

**SE** Business  
**HD** **Sustainable green revolution our key to help feed world**

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**LP**

Australia has the potential to provide for 200 million people

HELPING to feed a hungry world is Australia's greatest humanitarian responsibility and its greatest business opportunity in the 21st century.

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For both to happen we'll need "sustainable intensification". At its core, this is a framework for growing more food on the same or smaller land footprint, while ensuring we care for the environment.

I am convinced that Australian innovation and a new approach to holistic land management can deliver a significant boost in food and fibre production. In fact, our proximity to Asia's burgeoning populations and markets — where many hundreds of millions still live in poverty — places special obligations on us.

Potentially, Australia could produce enough high-quality nutritious food directly to feed 200 million people, most of them within our region. And by exporting our expertise and know-how, we could indirectly help to feed a billion.

I simply don't **buy** the argument that a small population means we can't innovate and excel at high-value food manufacturing. Especially when those new market opportunities are in our neighbourhood.

Just last month, for example, the Economist Intelligence Unit predicted that by 2030, **China** could be importing 59 per cent of all of Australia's food exports. That's up from just 12 per cent in 2007. In the longer term, the value of Australia's agricultural exports, as outlined in the Greener Pastures report in 2012, could rise to \$1.7 trillion by 2050.

But to win this new prize, not just dream about it, we have to create "a new and sustainable green revolution".

How?

In the classic 1960s movie, *The Graduate*, a very young Dustin Hoffman plays Benjamin, a university graduate. And at his celebratory party, a family friend says to him: "I just want to say one word to you ... Just one word. Plastics." That was in 1967. In 2014 the one word I want to say to Australia's universities and their graduates is "innovation". Australia's future depends on how we think about innovation, how we encourage it, and how we invest more heavily in it.

Innovation does not depend on governments, although governments can provide the policy settings within which it flourishes. Nor does it depend on universities, although Australian universities have to become more entrepreneurial about it.

Ultimately, innovation depends on the people with advanced skills who have the ideas, and on the business risk-takers willing to back them.

When it comes to advanced skills, however, Australia lags in attracting students to agricultural science, research in food production and supply chains, new technologies, and productive land management skills.

This is where the unis have to work more closely with government, agribusiness, and the manufacturing sector to make collaborative innovation a reality. And to explain how collaborative innovation might work, I offer six headline ideas.

1. New partnerships across diverse disciplines. Strauss, the Israel-based food and beverage **company**, has developed Alpha Strauss, a methodology for scanning the myriad research interests, findings and reports from unis, companies and government bodies.

Then it maps intersections that can deliver new products and solutions. These range from ways to tackle childhood obesity to enhancing food safety.

2: Link public research and development effort with business entrepreneurship. The New Zealand government has recently reviewed its industry R&D effort through its Crown Research Institutes, with a major refocus on **commercial** development. New Zealand is embedding its science and innovation in a culture of entrepreneurship. This means innovation serves the nation's business objectives.

3: Leverage university intellectual **property** for new business growth. The Hebrew University's Yissum Technology Transfer organisation has revolutionised the translation of technical research findings to business. For example, high-productivity and disease-resistant cherry tomatoes have been a win-win for the university and the growers.

4: Enhance bilateral trade ties in agricultural innovation.

Israeli experts are working in India's agri-foods sector in micro-irrigation, mechanisation of horticulture, plant nursery development and orchard management. They are helping some 20,000 Indian farms to multiply their crop yields, in many cases by a factor of 10. And it's big business. India is now Israel's sixth-largest trade and investment partner for commodities and technology. Food and agriculture feature heavily in the relationship.

5: Commit more resources to making the food sector's case.

Through the Pratt Foundation, we have helped to underwrite Soils for Life, a grassroots land reclamation program, which has researched and produced an impressive array of case studies of sustainable farming across Australia.

And Visy's sponsorship of The Australian's Global Food Forum for the past two years is aimed to encourage more of our national decision-makers and opinion-leaders to catch the vision for "A New Sustainable Green Revolution".

6: A new corporate focus on innovation.

At Visy, our innovation **group**, linked to the Visy Technical Centre, develops new food packaging products, such as our Thermotrac process. This cools fresh produce, especially during the crucial first hours after harvesting, extends product life, reduces spoilage, and maximises food value for the consumer.

These six suggestions are just a few examples. "Collaborative Innovation", not as an occasional spurt, but as a way of life for the food sector, is not beyond our reach, nor is it mission impossible for Australia.

This is an edited extract from the Dean's Lecture that Visy's executive chairman, Anthony Pratt, presented at the University of Melbourne's School of Land and Environment yesterday

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