

Southern Cross University to head \$13.8 million national Centre of Excellence for Agricultural Co-operatives



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SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY TO HEAD \$13.8M NATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES

Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers congratulates Southern Cross University on securing \$13.8m funding to establish the Australian Government's Farm Co-operatives and Collaboration Pilot Program.

Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce, Minister for Regional Development, Fiona Nash, and Member for Page, Kevin Hogan announced today that Southern Cross University will deliver the co-operatives program, delivering on the Government's commitment in its \$4 billion Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper to promote strong but fair competition throughout the agricultural supply chain.

The national pilot program will draw of the expertise of the Northern Rivers Cooperatives Alliance and Regional Development Australia in collaboration with Southern Cross University to deliver expert advise and information of up to 2000 farmers and 100 farmer groups across the nation and will run until 30 June 2018.

Ben Redden, CEO of Regional Development Australia - Northern Rivers said "RDA Northern Rivers recognises the important role that collaborative farming and innovative business models can play in enhancing the financial sustainability of the Australian agricultural sector and it congratulates the Australian Government for funding this

important initiative.”

Minister Joyce said the Lismore based Southern Cross University was perfectly positioned to deliver the program nationally because of the experience, expertise and links through its partnerships with the Northern Rivers Cooperatives Alliance and Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers.

"The Farm Co-operatives and Collaboration program will benefit from the tried and tested business experience of Northern Rivers Cooperatives Alliance members Norco, Northern Cooperative Meat Company, NSW Sugar Milling Cooperative, Summerland Credit Union, Clarence River Fisherman's Cooperative and Ballina Fisherman's Cooperative, as well as utilising the Regional Development Australia network," Minister Joyce said.

The national program has evolved since it was announced in the Agricultural White Paper last year as a result of consultation undertaken by Kevin Hogan with a wide range of stakeholders, including the cooperatives industry.

Mr Hogan said the Northern Rivers is synonymous with collaborative business structure and was pleased the Government would partner with Southern Cross University on this national program.

"As a strong advocate for collaborative models that support small and family businesses, I am confident this initiative will help more businesses succeed and grow the jobs and economies of regional areas like ours on the Northern Rivers." he said.

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Notes to editors:

1. RDA – Northern Rivers, Incorporated is a leadership voice for the Northern Rivers. We support local economies, build dynamic communities and enhance liveability in the region by: improving access to government funding and programs; facilitating partnerships

and linkages with all tiers of government and the community; and managing a diverse range of projects that create economic, social and natural capital. We are a non-profit, community-based organisation.



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