Vegetable Fund Annual Investment Plan

2025/26

September 2025

Hort Innovation VEGETABLE FUND

Proposed investments in 2025/26

A list of proposed R&D investments in the Vegetable Fund in 2025/26 can be found below. Each year, vegetable industry representatives meet as advisory panels to discuss investment recommendations in line with the Vegetable Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). At these meetings, the panels are provided with a financial forecast and an investment analysis of current investments. Based on this information, they provide Hort Innovation with advice on priorities for investment for the upcoming year.

The vegetable R&D advisory panel met in November and September 2024 as well as March, May and June 2025, to discuss, provide advice on, and prioritise recommendations on investments in 2025/26. The R&D investment recommendations are listed in order of priority in Table 1.

Note: Investments will be aligned to form multi-industry projects where possible, and all investments are subject to funding availability. If investments do not occur in this financial year, they will be reconsidered and reprioritised for the Vegetable Annual Investment Plan (AIP) 2026/27. Any investments not endorsed by June 30, 2025, will not be included in this report.

Table 1. Vegetable R&D advisory panel prioritised investment recommendations in 2025/26

Priority	Investment	Outcome	Strategy
1	Addressing herbicide resistance and control failures in ryegrass management for onions, carrots and rotational crops	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.2 Integrated pest and disease management (IPDM)
1	National co-ordination for agrichemical access and risk management for Australian vegetables	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.3 Biosecurity preparedness 1.7 SARP 1.9 Regulatory support
1	Quantium Scan tracking FY25/26: Vegetable and Oonion	4. Business insights	4.1 Consumer insights 4.3 Supply strategies
1	PBRI FAW coordinator	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability 3. Extension and capability	2.1.2 IPDM 1.3 Biosecurity preparedness 3.1 Extension capability
1	Healthy horticulture: Health care education program for edible horticulture	2. Demand creation	2.2 Product differentiation
2	Indian migrant worker pilot program	3. Extension and capability	3.3 Industry leadership
2	Accelerating early access to emerging technology	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability 3. Extension and capability	1.1 Optimise inputs 1.4 Automation technology 1.5 Protected cropping 3.1 Extension capability
2	Fast-tracking autonomous harvesting solutions for vegetables	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability 3. Extension and capability	1.4 Automation technology 3.1 Extension capability
2	Digital architecture for real time analysis of biosecurity genomic data	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.3 Biosecurity preparedness
2	Annual vegetable industry seminars 2025-2027	3. Extension and capability	3.1 Extension capability 3.2 Trusted relationships 3.3 Industry leadership
3	Produce executive program scholarships	3. Extension and capability	3.3 Industry leadership
3	National Bee Pest Surveillance Program	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.2 IPDM 1.3 Biosecurity preparedness
3	Proof of concept and validation of physical weed technologies	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.2 IPDM 1.4 Automation technologies

Table 1. continued

Priority	Investment	Outcome	Strategy
3	Plant-based protein for sustainability and healthy aging	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability 2. Demand creation 3. Extension and capability 4. Business insights	1.8 Waste management 2.2 Product differentiation 2.6 Supply chain efficiency 3.2 Trusted relationships 4.1 Consumer insights
4	Accelerating adoption of AWM-IPDM systems in vegetable, onion and potato growing regions	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.2 IPDM
4	Printing and future-proofing key vegetable, onion, potato and sweet potato industry resources	3. Extension and capability	3.1 Extension capability
4	Post-harvest management of vegetables to extend shelf life	2. Demand creation	
5	Horticulture partnering with the Solving Plastic Waste CRC	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.8 Waste Management
5	Foundational data for farm gate and mobile farm projects	2. Demand creation	1.2 Product differentiation
5	Addressing Hherbicide resistance and control failures in ryegrass management for onions, carrots and rotational crops	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.2 IPDM
6	Across-vegetable risk and crisis management	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.6 Product intergrity
7	Valuing the nutritional density of vegetables: phase one exploratory study	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability 2. Demand creation 3. Extension and capability 4. Business insights	1.8 Waste management 2.2 Product differentiation 2.6 Supply chain efficiency 3.2 Trusted relationships 4.1 Consumer insights
*	Independent mid-term review of MT22004	3. Extension and capability	3.1 Extension capability 3.2 Trusted relationships
	Interim funding for the Western Australian state-funded extension service	3. Extension and capability	3.1 Extension capability 3.2 Trusted relationships 3.3 Industry leadership
*	Consumer usage and attitude tracking 2025/26	2. Demand creation	2.2 Product differentiation
	Maximising carrot packout	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability	1.1 Optimise inputs
	FIRA Oceania – Attracting AgTech manufacturers to Australia	1. Industry supply, productivity and sustainability 3. Extension and capability	1.1 Optimise inputs 1.4 Automation technology 1.5 Protected cropping 3.1 Extension capability

Note:

* This is a foundational investment required to address principle 5 of the Statutory Funding Agreement Guidelines, by conducting an ongoing ex-post evaluation of Hort Innovation's R&D investment program, sampled across all horticulture levy funds to inform the overall impact of the investment program and therefore does not require advice.

Current contracted R&D projects

Current contracted projects in the Vegetable Fund as at July 1, 2025, which are aligned to the respective outcomes and strategies in the Vegetable SIP, can be seen in Table 2. More information about these projects is available on the Hort Innovation website where the projects have a hyperlink.

Table 2. Current contracted vegetable R&D project actuals at 2024/25 and forecast to 2027/28

Project code	Project title	2024/25 Actual $	2025/26 Forecast $	2026/27 Forecast $	2027/28 Forecast $
FF20000	National Fruit Fly Council - Phase 4	8,000	8,000	14,000	-
HN22003	The nutritional advantage of fresh produce: a focus on bioactive nutrients and their role in consumer demand	25,000	75,000	100,000	100,000
HN23002	Food as medicine: produce prescription program	100,800	100,800	134,400	-
MT20007	Regulatory support and coordination (pesticides)	42,817	-	-	-
MT21004	Consumer behavioural data program	434,810	313,934	378,069	
MT21006	Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook	75,835	-	-	-
MT21008	National Bee Pest Surveillance Program: Transition program	50,169	-	-	-
MT21009	Multi-industry export program (Vegetables, Onions and Melons)	1,545,301	1,545,301	3,090,602	
MT21015	Horticulture Impact Assessment Program 2020/21 to 2022/23	34,638	-	-	-
MT22003	Nuffield scholarships	0	40,560	40,560	52,000
MT22004	Soil wealth and integrated crop protection – phase 3	534,756	551,265	533,256	921,078
MT22005	Horticulture trade data	22,279	-	-	-
MT22006	Education and tools for canteen managers to increase vegetables in primary school canteens and vegetable consumption among children.	0	-	-	-
MT22007	Expansion of flies as berry crop pollinators	239,115	202,401	-	-
MT22008	Capturing the real and potential benefits and costs of on-farm biosecurity measures	18,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
MT22009	National vegetable and onion benchmarking program	573,156	573,156	573,156	2,006,047

Table 2. continued

Project code	Project title	2024/25 Actual $	2025/26 Forecast $	2026/27 Forecast $	2027/28 Forecast $
MT22011	Horticulture National Lean Leaders Program	6,277	13,709	-	-
MT22012	Industry Preparedness for exotic root knot nematode (Meloidogyne enterolobii)	18,000	21,000	-	-
MT23005	One Basin CRC – partnering on behalf of horticulture industries	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
MT23006	Independent mid-term review of projects VG21000, MG21002 and BA20002	27,014	-	-	-
MT23201	Consumer usage and attitude tracking 2023/24	58,790	-	-	-
MT24001	Optimising trade in the Australian vegetables industry	160,650	-	-	-
MT24002	Mid-term evaluation of project MT21009	68,000	-	-	-
MT24003	Valuing the sustainability story of the Australian vegetable and onion industries	208,768	49,575	-	-
MT24005	Horticulture Impact Assessment Program 2023/24 to 2025/26	26,526	17,684	22,104	
MT24007	Chemical residue report to support Australia's Country Recognition Arrangement (CRA) with Indonesia (2024-2029)	306	162	169	176
MT24008	Regulatory support and coordination (pesticides)	72,622	48,415	48,415	72,622
MT24012	Accelerating adoption of Area Wide-Integrated Crop Management in vegetable, onion and potato growing regions	39,600	158,400	-	-
MT24013	Accelerating early access to emerging tech for vegetable growers	99,968	274,912	124,961	-
MT24014	Horticulture partnering with the Solving Plastic Waste CRC	16,667	16,667	16,667	16,667
MT24015	One Survey for vegetable, onion and potato levy funded projects	15,461	107,800	14,512	14,512
MT24016	Independent mid-term review of projects MT22004 and VG22006	12,696	50,786	-	-

Table 2. continued

Project code	Project title	2024/25 Actual $	2025/26 Forecast $	2026/27 Forecast $	2027/28 Forecast $
MT24023	National Agrichemical Management Program	-	434,229	217,115	217,115
MT24201	Consumer usage and attitude tracking 2025/26	21,282	42,564	42,564	-
ST21001	Generation of data for pesticide applications in horticulture crops 2022	5,274	5,276	-	-
ST23002	Australian horticulture pest innovation program	100,533	201,067	206,200	211,333
VG14065	Nuffield scholarships	22,800	11,400	-	-
VG16020	Vegetable industry minor use program	18,966	-	-	-
VG17012	Internal fruit rot of capsicum	68,820	-	-	-
VG21000	VegNET 3.0	2,637,974	2,637,974	3,074,986	-
VG21002	Demonstrating the benefits of building capability and capacity in extension delivery in the vegetable industry	45,411	45,511	90,823	-
VG21003	Annual Vegetable Industry Seminar 2022-2024	65,929	119,871	-	-
VG21006	Future Food Systems – Glasshouse Films	320,000	320,000	-	-
VG22000	Vegetable industry communications program	839,656	839,656	839,656	1,049,570
VG22001	Management of foliar bacterial diseases in vegetables	347,929	273,478	-	-
VG22002	Identifying and managing the sources and routes of microbial contamination in leafy vegetables	323,994	212,802	-	-
VG22004	Vegetable industry biosecurity and business continuity strategy	1,234,054	2,098,054	1,516,054	1,516,054
VG22005	Evidence-based education program to support increased vegetable consumption in children	66,284	-	-	-
VG22006	National fall armyworm innovation system for the Australian vegetable industry	262,240	262,240	262,239	-
VG22011	Produce Executive Program Scholarships	31,483	9,079	-	-
VG22012	Revisiting brown etch of pumpkins	18,000	36,000	36,000	31,200

Table 2. continued

Project code	Project title	2024/25 Actual $	2025/26 Forecast $	2026/27 Forecast $	2027/28 Forecast $
VG23000	Finding opportunities to strengthen innovation in the Australian vegetable industry	47,751	20,000	-	-
VG23002	Vegetable industry study tours	643,492	482,479	482,479	402,253
VG23003	Advanced vegetable mechanisation program to maximise labour and cost efficiency	851,219	786,400	1,016,693	-
VG23004	Antimicrobial resistance in the vegetable industry	30,000	60,000	60,000	-
VG23005	National strategy, baseline and value perception study for Plus one serve by 2030 program	-	-	-	-
VG23006	Management options for reducing the reliance on insecticides for fall armyworm in sweet corn	112,000	112,000	-	-
VG23007	Guava root knot nematode identification and management	320,000	424,846	186,212	-
VG23009	Growing Leaders	413,587	186,114	186,114	186,114
VG23010	Vegetable high school education resources	323,250	20,000	-	-
VG23013	Horizon Scholarships	60,000	30,000	-	-
VG23014	Addressing key challenges in Australian baby leaf production	592,836	401,891	401,891	205,945
VG23015	Management of nematodes: A workshop to identify industry needs	39,980	-	-	-
VG23016	Plus one serve of vegetables by 2030: Program Coordinator	1,475,310	983,540	983,540	1,475,310
VG23910	Industry and grower consultation including SIAPs and EAPs	11,817	-	-	-
VG23999	Industry consultation	3,036	-	-	-
VG24001	Management of viral diseases for the Australian vegetable industry	113,872	68,322	68,322	68,322
VG24002	Optimising capsicum and chilli quality	337,329	226,250	193,125	193,125
VG24003	Annual Vegetable Industry Seminars	126,632	151,958	151,958	202,611
VG24004	Plant-based protein for sustainability and healthy aging	337,860	65,000	550,867	735,575

Table 2. continued

Project code	Project title	2024/25 Actual $	2025/26 Forecast $	2026/27 Forecast $	2027/28 Forecast $
VG24006	Evaluating mechanical harvest solutions in Australia	33,434	50,153	83,587	-
VG24008	Exploring AI applications for the vegetable industry	16,400	65,600	-	-
VG24009	Sprouting careers in horticulture	120,000	27,500	-	-
VG24011	Foundational data for farm gate and mobile farm projects	108,772	176,316	258,772	-
VG24800	IP recovery cost	630	-	-	-
VG24910	Industry and grower consultation including SIAPs and EAPs	164,040	-	-	-
VG24999	Industry consultation	2,036	-	-	-
VG24005	Update of legacy project resources	-	50,000	50,000	-
VG24012	Produce Executive Program Scholarships	-	63,300	63,300	63,300
VG21001	Strategic support for the VegNET national coordinator	-	14,127	-	-
Total		17,351,934	16,320,521	16,249,366	9,876,928

Financial statements

Financial statements for the vegetable R&D levy fund can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Vegetable R&D levy fund actuals at 2024/25 and forecast to 2027/28 (as at July 1, 2025)

	2024/25 Actual $	2025/26 Forecast $	2026/27 Forecast $	2027/28 Forecast $
Opening balance	12,319,863	14,719,589	12,180,326	8,770,943
Levies from growers	12,236,904	11,650,000	12,060,000	12,480,000
Commonwealth funds	10,054,578	14,231,401	15,385,134	15,076,218
Other income	576,388	411,895	296,602	202,386
Total income	22,867,870	26,293,296	27,741,736	27,758,604
Project funding[1]	17,351,934	22,060,551	23,051,665	21,018,538
Available for investment	-	2,500,000	3,500,000	5,000,000
Service delivery	2,757,222	3,902,250	4,218,604	4,133,899
Total matched expenditure	20,109,156	28,462,801	30,770,269	30,152,437
Federal Government levy collection costs	358,988	369,758	380,850	392,276
Annual levy cash movement	2,399,727	-2,539,263	-3,409,383	-2,786,109
Closing balance	14,719,589	12,180,326	8,770,943	5,984,835

Note:

1. Project funding includes committed projects and projects supported by the advisory panel and currently in the process of procurement.

Communications Manager
Hort Innovation
Level 7, 141 Walker Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Australia
Email: communications@horticulture.com.au
Phone: 02 8295 2300

Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited
ACN 602 100 149

www.horticulture.com.au