

# REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

## AUSTRALIAN SUGARCANE SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

*SRA Investment Area: Research Mission 4*

**WEALTH GENERATING THROUGH LAND STEWARDSHIP**

*Position the Australian Sugarcane Industry as leaders in the  
profitability, environmental sustainability, and resource use efficiency*

**Closing Date: 5:00pm 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2021**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

Sugar Research Australia (SRA) invests in and manages a portfolio of RD&A projects that drive productivity, profitability, and sustainability for the Australian sugarcane industry. As an industry-owned company, SRA is committed to setting the right targets, managing research investments to maximise the likelihood of success, and ensuring the delivery and adoption of project outcomes and impacts across the Australian sugarcane industry. SRA's [Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#) recognises that the future of the industry will be underpinned by innovation and a focus on impactful investment in research and development, together with an industry motivated to adopt and adapt.

Each year around 3,800 farms produce over 30 million tonnes of cane (SRA, 2021), and 22 mills manufacture 4 -4.5 million tonnes of raw sugar (ASMC, 2021), thus making Australia the second largest raw sugar export in the world. To meet the changing expectations of customers, investors, and other stakeholders (including export markets), the industry needs to prepare for the rising requirement to display certain sustainability credentials for its more sustainable mature partners and consumers such as large sugar consumers like [Coca Cola](#) and [PepsiCo](#) as well as government and communities. Sustainability prioritisation and reporting are increasingly becoming a consideration in assessing trading opportunities with Australia's key global trading partners.

A recent study led by [Agricultures](#) identified several sustainable development goals that are pertinent to industry. The industry has a significant opportunity to position itself as a major player in SDG-aligned industry trade by strategically telling its story through the SDG framework and demonstration of social licence to operate. There may also be some economic opportunities in sustainable environmental initiatives such as the [Bonsucro Credit Trading Platform](#).

The development of a sustainability framework is increasingly becoming the mechanism for the industries and organisations to proactively measure, review and communicate their sustainability credentials on issues of importance and materiality to stakeholders' decisions. Such a framework guides industries and organisations in telling their sustainability story. More specifically, the Australia Sugarcane Sustainability Framework (ASSF) will help the industry tell its story of growing food and compostable products through safe, ethical, and sustainable production & manufacturing practices while strengthening relationships and transparency with stakeholders. This commitment to addressing evolving sustainability issues is essential to improve the industry's resilience. This investment will work with key sugarcane industry value chain stakeholders to develop a sustainability framework for Australian grown sugarcane and related products. The framework will provide a mechanism for the sector to proactively measure, review and communicate its sustainability credentials on issues of importance and materiality to both internal and external stakeholders' decisions.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Through a process of stakeholder consultation and reviews, the Framework will seek to take into consideration all issues along the value chain that could potentially affect the sustainability of the sugarcane industry. To oversee the industry's ongoing commitment to sustainability reporting and implementation, an Industry Sustainability Working Group (SWG) or industry steering committee will normally be required before the development of the framework.

Working with an industry steering committee, set the agreed principles to help identify and prioritise issues, guide the ongoing action and decision-making to include ethical behaviour, transparency and accountability, appreciation of stakeholder interests, competitive neutrality, collective action to deliver mutual benefit.

The proposed Australian Sugarcane Sustainability Framework project has five main objectives:

1. To engage industry in developing the most appropriate sustainability framework for disclosing its contribution to sustainable development and enhancing credibility with stakeholders
2. To aid the industry in selecting and implementing sustainability initiatives by developing and applying a sustainability strategy to achieve, among others, competitive advantage and leverage efficient business operations.
3. To identify the industry's most material (key) economic, environmental, and social aspects, and linking them to its core business operations.
4. To help the industry establish sustainability targets and measurement metrics
5. To provide recommendations to industry on how the sustainability data and information could be used to improve the long-term viability of the industry and inform future R, D & A.

### 3. EOI OUTPUTS

#### STAGE1:

1. A document addressing detailed project scope, objectives, methodology with clear articulation of what sugarcane sustainability is and what the industry needs to do to achieve that.
2. Comprehensive stakeholder engagement and monitoring and evaluations plan.

#### Go/No-go decision by SRA

#### STAGE2:

1. Clearly defined framework with themes, targets, and prioritised goals that reflects the sugarcane industry value chain from farm inputs, through farm production, manufacturing/milling, processing, retail and packaging, export, and consumption.
2. A written interim report, reviewed by SRA before the submission of a final report.
3. Publications and targeted industry reports/communications, including but not limited to, stakeholder engagement and adoption attitudes.

### 4. TIMEFRAME AND PRICING

DATE	ACTION
16 JULY 2021	Expressions of interest sought by SRA
13 AUGUST 2021	Closing date for submission of EOI
15 AUGUST - 30 SEPTEMBER	EOI Assessment Period
1 OCTOBER 2021	Successful applicants notified
4-8 OCTOBER 2021	Pre-contract meeting and negotiation period to discuss and agree on requirements to be met before an offer can be made by SRA
11-29 OCTOBER 2021	SRA project agreement finalised and signed
1 NOVEMBER 2021	Expected project start date
1 DECEMBER 2023	Project completion date
BUDGET	Maximum budget available: \$300K + GST

## 5. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

### 5.1 PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

EOIs must be submitted through the online Application Portal - SugarNet <https://grants.sugarresearch.com.au/omniNet>

Proposal Form and further guidelines are available in SugarNet.

### 5.2 CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

SRA will use its Research Funding Panel to assess all submissions. All proposals will be reviewed for completeness and the extent to which they address the assessment criteria (below). Clarification of issues identified may or may not be undertaken. Non-conforming proposals or those containing insufficient information to accurately assess their ability to satisfy the EOI will not be considered further.

Selection of the successful proposal(s) will be based on the following criteria:

- The applicant or project team has:
  - a sound understanding of the Australian sugarcane industry value chain, and sustainability reporting
  - knowledge and understanding of the triple bottom-line, with proven sustainability framework development and delivery experience, especially agricultural related
  - a demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with a range of industry stakeholders along the sugarcane or other agricultural industries value chain, especially growers and millers
  - extensive connections across private and public sector sustainability experts, researchers, and organisations nationally and internationally
  - a detailed description of the proposed approach and methodology for undertaking the project and addressing all the expected deliverables. A stakeholder engagement plan accompanying the proposal will be an added advantage.
- A demonstrated capacity to effectively communicate project outcomes
- The quoted price for the work, including overall fees, the proposed timeframe and in-kind or other contributions from the research organisation and any other participants in the research.
- The tenderer being a legal entity with which SRA can contract. The tender submission must describe and provide evidence of the legal status of the tenderer, including an Australian Business Number (ABN) if appropriate.
- Tenderers must declare to SRA any matter or issue which may be perceived to be, or may lead to, a conflict of interest regarding their proposal or participation in the supply of the services described. Tenderers must outline a strategy so that any actual conflict of interest will be avoided.

### 5.3 SRA RIGHTS

SRA reserves its rights at law or otherwise to:

- cease to proceed with or suspend the EOI process.
- alter timing of the EOI process.
- vary the EOI structure.
- vary any time or date specified in the EOI.
- require additional information or clarification from the applicant.
- enter into negotiations or discussions with more than one applicant.
- request a new EOI.
- reject any EOI received after the closing date as described in this document.
- reject any EOI that does not comply with the requirements as described in this document, negotiate, and enter final contractual documentation with respect to the project with any counterparty without prior notice.
- not attribute any reasons for actions or decisions taken, including on the exercise of any or all the above-mentioned rights; and
- take such other action as they consider appropriate in relation to this RFP process.

#### 5.4 CONDITIONS OF LODGEMENT

The applicant agrees, by lodging an Expression of Interest, that it is bound by these conditions:

- All Expression of Interest documents become the property of SRA upon lodgement.
- It warrants that all information in the EOI is accurate and complete.
- That it has declared any actual or potential conflict of interest.
- That it will bear all costs for preparing the EOI submission, including any meetings that may be required related to the submission prior to the contracting stage.
- That it will keep confidential any confidential information provided by SRA in connection with the EOI.
- That it will make any inquiries relating to the EOI process only through the contact details provided; and
- That pursuant to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Commonwealth) it will be bound by the Australian Privacy Principles in respect of any act done or practice engaged in by the respondent in connection with this EOI process.

Expressions of Interest are to be submitted to SRA by **5.00pm on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2021** through the online Application Portal - SugarNet <https://grants.sugarresearch.com.au/omniNet>

#### 6. SRA CONTACT

Requests for further information or clarification in relation to this request for Expressions of Interest should be directed to:

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