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1. BACKGROUND

Sugar Research Australia (SRA) invests in and manages a portfolio of Research, Development & Adoption (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 RD&A 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.

Soldier flies are native root-feeding insect pests which have traditionally been localised in distribution, but recent evidence suggests that they represent an emerging issue for the Australian sugarcane industry. Although the published literature indicates that there are only two species (the Sugarcane Soldier Fly, *Inopus rubriceps* and the Yellow Soldier Fly, *I. flavus*), we now believe that there are up to 9 species or subspecies distributed across all cane growing areas.

In some sugarcane-growing regions, soldier fly infestations can cause substantial economic loss to affected cane growers. Larvae feed on the root system and affect shoot growth which can result in substantial yield losses due to poor ratooning, particularly after the third ratoon when larval populations have built up from year to year. Although soldier fly primarily impacts the Central and Southern regions, they can also cause damage to sugarcane locally in NSW, Innisfail, the Burdekin and the Atherton Tablelands.

Other than cultural control, which is not widely practiced by the industry, there is no current recommended control method. Earlier attempts at identifying chemical control agents have failed, partly because the presence and abundance of larvae in the soil is highly variable and difficult to predict and therefore selecting sites for field trials has proved to be difficult. Furthermore, damage peaks in 3rd and 4th ratoon crops, and effective chemical application at this stage is challenging.

Given the difficulties of field testing, a preferred approach would be to first identify the most promising chemicals under lab conditions using an artificial diet, and then only take the most promising products through for evaluation under field conditions.

2. SPECIFIC EOI AIMS

SRA are calling for EOIs to address the following three objectives:

1. To develop an effective artificial diet suitable for rearing *Inopus flavus* (or other sugarcane soldier fly species) for approximately 3 months in the laboratory.
2. To utilise the artificial diet to screen commercially available synthetic insecticides and other relevant control agents to identify products with promising efficacy against the target soldier fly species. This will require agreements with chemical companies to ensure access to chemicals and willingness to proceed to field trials and registration of promising products.
3. To undertake field trials with the most promising product(s) over two seasons and multiple sites to determine efficacy under field conditions. Trial design needs to meet the requirements of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) for efficacy trials.

3. EOI OUTPUTS

1. An artificial diet that can be used to screen potential control agents for soldier fly.
2. A shortlist of potential control agents with demonstrated efficacy against *Inopus flavus* (or other relevant species) under laboratory conditions.
3. Two years of field efficacy data from multiple sites, to support APVMA regulatory requirements (new product registration or label extension, depending on product).

4. EXPECTED TIMEFRAME

DATE	ACTION
9 th July 2026	Expressions of interest sought by SRA
5 th August 2026	Closing date for submission of EOI
August 2026	EOI Assessment Period
September 2026	Successful applicants notified
October 2026	SRA project agreement finalised and project commenced
BUDGET	Maximum budget available: \$1.5M

5. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

5.1 PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The proposal must be submitted through SRA's on-line Grant Management Portal available here: [Home](#)

5.2 SELECTION CRITERIA

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 will be based on the following criteria:

Selection Criterion 1: Addressing industry needs
<i>Clearly outline the industry problem, its impact (quantify if possible), current solutions and their limitations, potential consequences of inaction, and alignment with SRA's R&D Plan.</i>
Selection Criterion 2: Project impact and industry value
<i>Describe how the proposed solution tackles the industry problem innovatively, quantify its potential economic, environmental and social benefits and outline any consultations with industry stakeholders.</i>
Selection Criterion 3: Project quality and team
<i>Clearly describe the research methodology, including any novel approaches, how the proposal builds on existing knowledge, team member qualifications, any multi-disciplinary expertise and capacity building planned</i>
Selection Criterion 4: Project resources and risk
<i>Outline each partner's contribution, funding sources (highlighting leverage and cost-effectiveness), infrastructure and/or intellectual property (IP) required and identify any risks and mitigation strategies.</i>
Selection Criterion 5: Adoption pathway
<i>Describe your research outputs (products, tools, etc.), how you'll advance the technology readiness levels (TRL) of the solution, any potential project Intellectual Property (IP) and a clear dissemination plan for industry to overcome adoption barriers.</i>

6. 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.

7. 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 5th of August 2026** via the Grant Management Portal (<https://investments.sugarresearch.com.au/>)

8. 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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