



Professional Accreditation - A Chartered Agricultural Professional Scheme

Policy Paper

Introduction / Background

Ag Institute Australia (AIA), the body representing agricultural and natural resource management professionals, is sponsoring the development of a national accreditation scheme for professionals working in the Agricultural and the Natural Resource Management Sciences. The scheme under development is voluntary and Chartered Agricultural Professionals (CAPs) will demonstrate that they have the professionalism, commitment, education, expertise and experience to make a difference in a client's business.

Problem Statement

State and Federal government agencies historically employed professional staff to deliver programs aimed at enhancing the productivity and sustainability of agriculture. . Over the last two decades or so, government agencies have reduced their staff numbers and now employ more private sector consultants to deliver programs for agriculture. Though this has meant a reduction in the number of permanently employed professionals, it has also resulted in a demand from government for professionals capable of delivering government programs. In recent years, this has taken the form of tender specifications that necessitate some form of accreditation equivalent recognition. This appears to be leading to an increased demand for professional accreditation by such employers

Private sector consultants have taken on the roles once occupied by government employed specialists and are delivering an excellent service across Australia. Accreditation offers an opportunity for a consultant to define his/herself in the market place and helps mitigate risk to contractors of consultants of receiving appropriate quality advice.

In addition, many of the universities in Australia offering an Agricultural Science degree, now offer a three-year course. This means that further on-the-job training is required for these professionals to be fully competent.

Some examples of current issues facing agriculture which require a high level of expertise to manage are:

1. Managing crop and livestock production systems to minimise adverse impacts on the environment.
2. Minimising the risks associated with pesticide use.
3. Animal welfare is critical to ensure consumer confidence in food from animal

sources.

4. Production of food and fibre in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.
5. Maximised profit margins in modern agricultural systems.
6. Modern farm businesses must be able to use a full range of risk-management tools to ensure long-term viability and resilience against natural disasters.

The accreditation scheme is aimed at protecting the reputation and service delivery capability of those working in the agricultural and resource management sector. The scheme would underpin the confidence of the public and the profession that the advice and services provided by CAPs will promote food security and best practice production standards, agribusiness and natural resource management.

Objectives

AIA supports the development of a national accreditation scheme for professionals working in the agricultural, agribusiness and natural resource management sectors with a focus on three clear areas of professional development: Technical skills, Professional and ethical standards, Continuing professional development. Such a scheme should consist of an initial application process, renewal based on evidence of on-going professional development, and an auditing process.

Related Professional Accreditation Schemes - basis for Australian system

A number of agricultural and natural resource management accreditation schemes are currently available in Australia. For example, Soil Science Australia has a voluntary scheme, as does the Irrigation Australia.

<http://www.soilscienceaustralia.com.au/careers/certified-professional-soil-scientists>
<http://irrigation.org.au/certification/certified-irrigation-professionals>.

Countries around the world have accreditation schemes for professionals in agriculture. In the United States, for example, some 13,000 professionals are either Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) or Certified Professional Agronomists (CPAg). In some US states, there is a mandatory requirement for professionals to be accredited and licensed. For example, in California, an Agricultural pest control adviser (PCA) license is required for anyone offering a recommendation on any agricultural use of pesticides, to sell services as an authority on any agricultural pesticide use, or to solicit services or sales for any agricultural pesticide use.

In Canada, over 10,000 professionals are registered as professional Agrologists. Agrology (the term used for Agricultural and Natural Resource Management Professionals) is provincially regulated as a profession and each province has its own Act to regulate and register professionals. The provincial institute regulates its registered members to ensure that they provide the public with safe, competent and ethical practice.
<http://agrologistscanada.ca/provincial-regulators/>

AIA is pursuing the development of an Australian accreditation system complementary to existing technical accreditation systems, such as those offered by Crop Consultants Australia

and Soil Science Australia, and appreciates commitment from government, agricultural and farm industries, and agricultural professionals.

Recommended Readings

- Nil for this Policy Paper

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