# Science to Practice Forum 2023

Day 1 Welcome Session transcript

(Duration 41 mins 8 secs)

6 June 2023

## Introduction

This is the transcript of one of the Future Drought Fund’s Science to Practice Forum sessions, presented by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. This transcript is for Day 1 of the Forum, the welcome session.

Learn more about the [Science to Practice Forum](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/drought/future-drought-fund/research-adoption-program/science-to-practice-forum).

## Transcript

[Recording begins]

Pip Courtney [00:28]:

Welcome to the Future Drought Fund’s 2023 Science to Practice Forum. I'm Pip Courtney and I'll be your host for this year's event. I'm coming to you from a studio in Canberra and it's great to welcome you from wherever you are joining us from today, from all corners of the country and even overseas. This is the third Science to Practice Forum. So welcome back if you've been here before or if you are joining for the first time, it's great to have you here. Over the next 3 days, you'll hear from the Aussie farmers and communities who are using innovation to build drought resilience and help grow a sustainable agriculture sector. You'll see and hear the work of the Future Drought Fund and the 8 Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs in action, updates from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and meet some of the dynamic people working in agriculture today. I'll go over the ins and outs of the live streaming platform in just a moment so you can engage with presenters and panellists and really be part of the forum too. Firstly though, we'd like to welcome you to Ngunnawal Country and to do that is Traditional Owner Tyronne Bell.

[Video voiceover begins]

Tyronne Bell [01:50]:

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Tyrone Bell. I’m a descendant of the Ngunnawal people and it’s my privilege this morning to welcome you to the Country of the Ngunnawal people. To begin with I would like to let you know that traditional Aboriginal law requires any visitors to the Country being made welcome. This customary tradition has been passed on by all our generations. This ritual forms a part of our belief system. Its purpose is for visitors to acknowledge whose Country it is and then in turn being acknowledged as visitors and made welcome. This welcome custom has happened for thousands of years, and we use it as protection for Country against bad spirits. Being a Ngunnawal Traditional Custodian, it gives me pleasure to invite you onto the Country of my people. [Ngunnawal language].

In the language of my people means: This is Ngunnawal Country. Welcome to our meeting place. Please enjoy. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Elders past and present. We call Country the Mother, because as a mother cares for her children, so does the land cares for us. This is why Aboriginal people have such close ties with the land. On behalf of myself and my people, I send a warm welcome to everyone here. I’m proud to be Aboriginal and one of the traditional carers of this land. I want you to feel welcome while on our Country. We want you to feel welcome while visiting Ngunnawal Country and ask that you respect the land as we have done for 60,000 years plus.

So in keeping with the Ngunnawal tradition and the true spirit of friendship and reconciliation, treat everyone and everything with dignity and respect. And by doing so, it is our belief that your spirit will be harmonised with your stay on Ngunnawal Country. It’s our belief that our ancestors will then in turn, bless your stay on our spiritual land. May the spirit of this land remain with you today, tomorrow, and always. Once again on behalf of the Ngunnawal people, I welcome you to our traditional Country. [Ngunnawal language]. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land. [Ngunnawal language]. Thank you. Goodbye.

[Video voiceover ends]

Pip Courtney [04:09]:

I would also like to acknowledge the First Nation's people joining us from all the lands on which we are meeting today and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I encourage you to hop into the chat and share the Country you are joining from.

There's an action-packed program ahead, and while you won't want to miss any of it, the forum will be recorded and made available online at a later date. A note too that all times listed on the program are an Eastern Standard Time. We encourage you to use the Slido polling function to tell us a bit about yourselves and ensure your voices are heard. On that note, let us know where you are tuning in from this morning. We'll give you a quick minute to get those answers up. To kick us off on this first day of the forum, here’s the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Honourable Senator Murray Watt.

[Video voiceover begins]

Minister Murray Watt [05:13]:

G’day everyone. Murray Watt here, Australia's Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Future Drought Fund’s Science to Practice Forum. I want to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which you are gathered today. And I pay my respects to elders past, present, and emerging. And reiterate the government's commitment to recognize our first peoples in our constitution and consult them through a voice to parliament, recognition and consultation. Nothing more, nothing less. Over the next 3 days we'll hear directly from Australian farmers and communities who are preparing for future drought by utilising innovative tools and practices. I've met so many farmers who want to embrace more sustainable practices but need support and advice on how they can do it. Many producers need a bit of help turning the science and the evidence and data into practice and that's what this forum is all about.

Here farmers and policy makers can learn from other farmers and communities who are building drought resilience. Right now, the reality is drought is an enduring feature of the Australian landscape and through the Future Drought Fund, it's vital that we continue to prepare now for more frequent and severe droughts. We're already seeing the impact of the Future Drought Fund on the ground and through the work of the 8 Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs located around the country. Last year I had the opportunity to visit a field trial run by the South Australian Hub with local producers investigating the drought resilience benefits of mixed species pastures. I loved the enthusiasm of the team and learning more about the great work being done there by strengthening the overall resilience and preparedness of our farmers. Now we can ensure producers, the supply chain and communities are better prepared for climate shocks both wet and dry. I encourage you to attend as many online sessions as you can over the next 3 days and to meet and network with other attendees, presenters, and panel members. Your involvement in this forum and your commitment to sustainable agriculture can only help us be productive into the future while facing inevitable droughts. Thank you all for your contribution. Enjoy the next 3 days.

[Video voiceover ends]

Pip Courtney [07:35]:

That was Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and it's so great to see the distribution of audience members from all around the country. We have Kaurna country, Turbal and Jagera lands, Hobart, my home state there, Tassie, Darwin and Yuggerra, Mingenew WA. So thank you so much for in getting involved with the Slido. Now with me here in the Canberra studio at the desk, are Mel Brown and Laura Smith from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Mel is the First Assistant Secretary of the Farm Business Division and Laura is the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Future Drought Fund.

Mel Brown [08:19]:

Thank you, Minister Watt, for opening the forum. This is his first Science to Practice Forum and mine too. I'm Mel Brown. I'm the First Assistant Secretary of the Farm Resilience Division at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The Future Drought Fund is part of this division and I'm really looking forward to sharing with you some of the great stories from the farmers, researchers, government, industry and regional communities we are investing in. The 5-billion-dollar FDF provides secure, continuous funding for drought resilience initiatives helping Australian farmers and communities prepare for impacts of drought. We know that drought is an enduring feature of the Australian landscape. It has significant economic, social and environmental impacts. I grew up on a sheep and cattle property near Adaminaby in the Snowy Mountains at a place called [Yaryack]. We also had a smaller cattle farm in a little place called Tumblong, near Gundagai in New South Wales. My experience of drought is probably pretty similar to some of you. Our farm in the Snowy’s is on the boundary of the Kosciusko National Park. We often had wild dogs coming down and ripping the backsides out of the sheep like a sport. So we invested and put up what we thought was a dog proof fence, between us and the park.

It worked pretty well. But through drought the dogs were coming down chasing a feed and managed over the months to take out a lot of our stock. So my family made the decision to destock what sheep we had left. It was tough, but we had the cattle and continued to feed them. I know we didn't suffer the drought as badly as many others, but it was bloody tough. After leaving my job in the public service for a while to go home to help rebuild on the farm, I made the decision to move to the Ag Department.

Many parts of Australia have been impacted, some quite severely, by flooding over the past 18 months. And climate change of course means that we'll be seeing more severe and more frequent weather events coming and that includes more regular droughts. The Future Drought Fund’s not about providing government assistance when we're in drought. It's all about putting in the place foundations for farmers and communities to draw upon when the next drought hits so they can better manage through it, survive it, and perhaps even thrive through those conditions. That's why the FDF was created and why the FDF invests 100 million each year on programs building drought preparedness in Australia.

The Science to Practice Forum is one of the Future Drought Fund’s key enabling activities. That means it's an opportunity to see some of the work of the FDF and the 8 Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs in action on the ground this year. With some of the FDF's foundational programs now either completed or reaching maturity, we're able to share with you some of the human impact of the fund, the outcomes.

It might be the apple grower in Western Australia who is saving time and costs on using extra fertiliser as a result of his participation in a soil moisture monitoring program, to the cattle producer in the Barossa whose aging father no longer has to check a tank level thanks to a remote monitoring system trial or even the Queensland farmer whose relationships have improved due to the Farming Family Reboot program. It's so important you hear as much of this information as possible directly from the farmers and producers and partners involved in the FDF programs to hear them talk about their work and their new or adapted ways of working, in their own words. We're so excited to share their stories with you over the next 3 days.

Today we're taking a look at the research and development sector. You'll hear about data driven projects, research trials and outcomes and opportunities under the FDF, innovations at scale, international perspectives and the commercialisation of drought resilience products and services.

Tomorrow we'll put a spotlight on farmers, producers and agricultural advisors. The day 2 program is full of farmer and farm advisor delivered stories of drought preparing for it farm planning for profitability and productivity tools for change lived experiences and lessons learned and opportunities under the FDF for producers and their communities. And on Thursday, the third and final day of the forum we’ll explore what building a sustainable agriculture sector looks like through a community and policy lens. You'll hear about some really important community and social projects, insights from FDF network partners, like the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, the importance of the relationships or resilience, overcoming barriers to change. And we'll hear from some of regional Australia's mental health heroes. You'll see a common theme emerge too, around the importance of working together of collaboration between farmers and natural resource managers and researchers across federal, state and local governments, and sometimes simply among farming families as they navigate intergenerational challenges and that all important work-life balance.

We're all working towards a common goal and the work of the FDF also supports our broader divisional objectives within the department to build a stronger, healthier, and more sustainable agriculture sector. Throughout the forum, you'll hear from some of the recipients of the Australian Government's Agriculture Innovation Hubs program supporting innovation projects delivered through the hubs. In terms of new and novel approaches, these really deliver. Later today you're going to hear about the trial of a new way of detecting pregnancy and cattle using breath testing technology that could have significant implications for how cattle producers manage their stock during drought. Stock rates are of course a big financial consideration for those producers and tomorrow you'll hear a presentation for the from the Rural Financial Counselling Service. Roly Chugg, who is a senior rural financial counsellor, is back this year by popular demand. At last year's forum, Roly's presentation had a very high engagement and this year he's going to share with you the things he wishes he knew when he started out in farming. So please don't miss that.

I'm also really looking forward to Thursday's session looking at engaging First Nations farmers. I spent 20 years working in Australian Fisheries Management Authority and was lucky to work closely with Indigenous fishers in sustainable management of fish stocks. This brought along awesome change in how we interpreted data and measured the impacts of climate change on those stocks. So I can see that we have so much to learn from First Nations farmers on the land. I can't wait to hear from Worimi producer and First Nations farming advocate Joshua Gilbert, who is today's feature speaker. Joshua is a socially and commercially focused Aboriginal man with experience across Indigenous affairs, the environmental sector and sustainable agriculture. As a chair of the Young Farmers Group, Josh was instrumental in a policy change recognizing farmers are the first to feel the impacts of climate change. This was back in 2015, so I can't wait to hear what he's been up to since.

There's so much to connect with on the program here at the Science to Practice Forum. And we welcome you to ask questions of any of our presenters, panel members, and even our feature speakers. Please don't be shy, we're all learning. As Pip said, these sessions are all being recorded and will be made available on our website agriculture.gov.au at a later date. So while we hope you can stay for as long as you can, if you do need to dip in and out, you'll be able to catch up on these sessions. Thanks again for being here. And before we get into the program proper, I want to introduce you to the Future Drought Fund’s, Acting Assistant Secretary Laura Smith, who's next to me here on the desk, and will tell you more about the FDF and some of the new programs we've launched this year.

Laura Smith [17:40]:

Thanks Mel. And what an exciting 3 days we have ahead at this year's Science to Practice Forum. As Mel said, the Future Drought Fund provides a secure continuous funding to help Australian farmers and communities prepare for the impacts of drought. At the FDF, our focus is on 4 major theme areas: better planning, better practices, better prepared communities, and better climate information. Our programs support farmers, communities and regions at different stages of their resilience and preparedness journey. For example, we're helping farmers plan for drought through our Farm Business Resilience Program by building their business skills and helping them plan for future risks. And on a larger scale, we're encouraging community collaboration by helping at-risk regions plan for drought through Regional Drought Resilience Planning. We've invested in these planning programs right across Australia and as Mel mentioned, we're collaborating ourselves too by working with state and territory governments who are involved in their development and delivery. The needs of farmers and communities differ from state to state and territory and it's important these plans at an individual or regional level are self-determining and user led and driven. Tomorrow you'll hear from some of the farmers and communities involved in creating these drought resilience plans and how they've already been put to use even in these current conditions .You might be surprised by some of the outcomes and particularly where some of our communities have recognised they need to place more focus.

Better prepared communities is one of our theme areas and we're committed to building and supporting the leaders networks and organisations that underpin community resilience. On Thursday, you'll hear from those network partners Mel mentioned, the FRRR and the ARLF who the FDF has partnered with to deliver our Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative. You'll also hear from one of our drought resilience leaders, Julia Spicer, who is our feature speaker on day 3 of the program and this year became Queensland's first regional Chief Entrepreneur. A lot of our programs involve influencing behaviour and practice change, so it's exciting to think about how our networks spread beyond the scope of the programs. And you'll see this in action throughout the forum.

Many of the FDF’s programs fall under the better practices theme, which aims to develop and drive adoption of farming and land management practices and technologies that improve resilience to droughts. Across the next 3 days, you'll be hearing a lot about these kinds of programs.

The Science to Practice Forum is also a chance to showcase the great work of the 8 Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs across the country. The hubs support farmers and communities to get ready for drought by helping farmers undertake practical extension and adoption activities and access the latest tools. You'll note on the forum program, a senior climatologist from the Bureau of Meteorology is up next. The FDF is helping deliver better climate information enabling farm farmers, businesses and communities to better understand the climate risk they face. And one of the ways we do that is with the Climate Services for Agriculture or CSA, an online platform developed by the Bureau and CSIRO to help farmers better plan for these climate risks. CSA is unique in that it provides Australian farmers with a glimpse into the future climate for their local area and commodity.

It's hyper-local, containing historical climate data and seasonal forecasts, as well as future climate projections at a 5 km2 resolution across the country. And we'll be giving you a tour of that tool and its capabilities tomorrow.

This year we've launched new programs that look at Long-term Trials and the Extension and Adoption of Drought Resilient Farming Practices. Being new programs, they're not featured on the forum program, so I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit more about them now. Over the next 6 years, the FDF is supporting the Long-term Trials of Drought Resilient Farming Practices Grants program, a number of trials that test new drought resilient farming practices and their effectiveness over several years. The focus of the program is to trial farming practices that improve both farm productivity and the natural capital that underpins it, such as soil health and moisture, which are topics you'll hear about a lot today. Projects in the trial are encouraged to use a combination of sites that include at least one trial location where scientific evaluation occurs. With this program, we're aiming to fill gaps currently that currently exist in research and scientific data relating to farming practices that may prove effective in building drought resilience and is targeted to the grain cropping and livestock grazing sectors. These 2 sectors were chosen because they account for about 60% of all Australian farming businesses and data. And data suggests they are particularly susceptible to productivity losses due to climate change.

Grant recipients will also undertake activities to support the adoption of drought resilience innovation on farms with the aim of reducing exposure to drought risk and improving farmers' economic environmental and social resilience to drought. In other words, the triple bottom line approach. This evidence-based approach will provide farmers with the information and confidence that they need to try the practices themselves. And another program we've launched this year is the Extension and Adoption of Drought Resilient Farm Practices Grants. These projects aim to help farmers adopt proven practices and technologies that will make them more productive and sustainable as conditions dry. Today is all about exploring some of our research and development that's been happening to support farmers. And while we know proven R and D practices are already out there, there's a gap when it comes to getting them on farm across the country. By making these kinds of practices and technologies within reach for more farmers, we can make sure more people are better prepared to manage dry conditions in the future while keeping their businesses afloat. More information about these successful projects can also be found on our website.

We're also set to launch a couple of other programs soon that you'll hear about later today in the Drought Resilience Commercialisation Initiative and our Nuffield Australian Scholarships. And stay tuned at the end of the first day of the forum too for a look at what's ahead for the Future Drought Fund more generally. Thank you so much for being here today. I really hope that you enjoy hearing the stories of how the FDF is enhancing and building the capability of our farmers and regional communities through innovation and climate smart agricultural practices. Back to you Pip.

Pip Courtney [25:03]:

Thank you both for being here and I can't wait maybe to catch up in 5 years to see what's happened and absolutely doing stories for Landline. So thanks for all the story ideas. Caroline Welsh from the Future Drought Fund’s Consultative Committee is also here with an update. Caroline, good morning.

Caroline Welsh [25:22]:

Good morning Pip and thanks very much for the opportunity to speak and thanks very much Mel and Laura. I think you've just given us a really great example of the breadth and diversity of the programs, that are involved in the Future Drought Fund. I'm also really looking forward to the next 3 days. I've been to 2 of these Science to Practice Forums already and they've always just been a wonderful opportunity for people involved in future drought fund programs, be they farmers policy makers, members of hubs, just to collaborate, share stories. I've learned so much from the previous ones that I'm really looking forward to the next couple of days. I was finishing my presentation yesterday as the rain came down and I was thinking to myself, this is exactly the sort of time when you should be thinking about and considering drought when you're not in drought, that's when you should start thinking about how to prepare for the next drought. And of course, that's what the Future Drought Fund and the concept of drought resilience is all about, actually preparing and thinking about drought when you're not in the throes and the pressures of being within the drought itself.

As Pip said, I'm Caroline Welsh. I'm coming to today from the one of the offices of the Birchip Cropping Group who's a node leader for the Victorian Drought Hub. I'm part of a farming family in Northwest Victoria, we are dryland croppers and it's certainly one of the regions of Australia that's most likely to be susceptible to changes in our climate as climate change progresses even further. So, I have a particular personal and, I suppose business, reason for hoping for the success of the Future Drought Fund and many of its programs.

But as Pip mentioned, I'm a member of the Consultative Committee. We were appointed in September 2019 by the then-Minister of Drought, to advise the minister on the development of the Future Drought Fund. The Future Drought Fund began in 2019. It's very much, this is our first 4 years of the program and we're the first Consultative Committee. Um, and we're, due to complete our mission, I suppose, or our term, it's in September this year. And from then on there'll be a new committee appointed for another 4 years and a new funding plan should be hopefully signed off and beginning by July next year. So this has really been, I suppose the starting point for what I think will be a long term, very significant program for Australia, for regional areas, for farmers, for farming communities, and also for our natural environment.

I'm here in place of Brett Finlay, our Chair, who I'm fortunate that I included the word collaboration at least a few times because I know that's something that Brent is really strong on. And it's certainly what we heard during our feedback when we did our first consultation around Australia. So, if Brent ever listens to this, hopefully he'll hear me say that word, collaboration, and it's been a key component of the Future Drought Fund and will be going forward. And I know Brent, Brent has really enjoyed the previous Science to Practice Forums because just that idea of the importance of sharing our stories on drought resilience is just so key. So, as I mentioned, our Consultative Committee was appointed in September 2019. And funnily enough, being a Consultative Committee, the first thing we did was actually consult.

It’s actually part of the Future Drought Fund legislation that there's 6 weeks of consultation process before a funding plan, a 4-year funding plan, is developed. And I was also looking back to that time in October, November of 2019, we did, I think 73 face-to-face discussions in 23 locations around Australia as well, as well as having an online process for people to provide input into the new funding plan. And we asked people who came to talk to us, what would help their farmers and their communities prepare for drought? And the answers to those questions have really been the foundation for the original 4-year funding plan. And what we learned was that rural and regional Australians want to better understand climate risks, how it will affect their farms, their communities, their local environment. They really want access to innovative tools, innovative, exciting new tools to help them adapt, how they can improve and manage their farms and their land.

And they're particularly interested in understanding how changes in the climate and how they can manage that within their, within actually managing their business, to ensure that their businesses can remain profitable, productive, and hopefully they can hand on to the next generation of farmers a really profitable, sustainable farming business. So really there was a lot of interest in farm business, planning and skills. But what also came through really, really strongly was the importance for developing regional capacity for developing strong regional communities, for developing and fostering new leaders in communities, in local communities and local areas. And that was also a really strong push that people wanted activities, they wanted work, they wanted staff, they wanted training, all these opportunities to really happen in regional areas. And that was a really key theme that came through as part of our discussion.

And obviously because drought resilience is such a complicated ongoing challenge, the importance of getting as many minds together, as many different people together, to really help regional farmers and communities prepare for drought. That’s where that this collaboration comes in. And I think from all of the examples that Mel and Laura gave you earlier about the types of programs that have been developed under the Future Drought Fund, I think we've shown that we've really have been able to, at least try to develop a range and diversity of programs to fit the different nuances and demands of different regions because that also came through really strongly, is that one size doesn't fit all. A one size fits all approach will not work when you're trying to achieve change, and improvements in local areas for local communities and for individual farm businesses.

And so, I think that's something that we fed into the plan. So, we came back with all of this information from these many discussions we've had with communities from all over Australia and we channelled that into the first Drought Resilience Funding Plan, which has been rolled out after over the last 3 and a half years. And that's really, I suppose, the programs filtered out of there and they were designed very much about supporting innovative and profitable farming sector, a sustainable natural environment and adaptable communities with increased resilience to drought and climate change. And that's where that triple bottom line that Laura mentioned really came from in terms of understanding the complexity we need to, deliver to try and to tackle this, this huge problem of ongoing drought and the extra challenge that climate change brings on top of that.

And of course, during that consultation, the environment we were in at the time was very different to the one that we're experiencing at the moment. We were very much at the height of the long-term drought in New South Wales and Queensland. We had meetings in Canberra where people were literally dashing out of the room to go and protect their farm, their farms or their houses, from bushfires that were heading down the road towards their properties. So, it was a time of great stress for a lot of people and it's in stark contrast to today, although obviously with the floods and the floods have brought hardship and challenges to a lot of people nationally. We've actually had 3 successive really terrific record-breaking years for agriculture in the last 3 years and with high commodity prices, that's meant that the outlook for agriculture in the short term certainly remains very positive.

And certainly, looking at my window at the moment with the rain that's out there feeling pretty positive for 22/23 as well. And the predictions are that if the seasonal conditions finish favourably and prices remain high, that the agriculture sector in Australia may even reach a gross value production of 90 billion dollars this year, which would be a terrific achievement. But obviously we are here to discuss drought because we know that's always around the corner, and we know that farm incomes are already being affected by climate change and the longer-term trends are towards higher temperatures and lower winter rainfall, which certainly will affect a lot of us and it's already affecting a lot of our farms now. Modelling shows that changes in seasonal conditions over the period from 2001 to 2020 have actually reduced annual average broad acre farm profits on 23% compared to that the time between 1950 and 2000. And that's equivalent to about $20,000 per farm. So that has to come into the conversation more and more that actually climate change is affecting farms and farm productivity and farm profitability right now.

And so that's what makes the Future Drought Fund and the programs that it's delivering even more crucial for Australia. And this is what excites me so much about it, we've got a long-term challenge with drought and climate change and the Future Drought Fund is a long-term response. It provides long-term consistent funding for drought preparedness across the country and it helps us maintain our focus on building resilience no matter what the current climate is outside, the fact that it's raining outside doesn't mean that it's not going to be another drought around the corner anytime soon. I think Laura and Mel did a really good job of highlighting the range of programs that we've developed I think in the foundational 4-year plan of the Future Drought Fund.

We have been able to really set up some structures, set up some foundations, develop a whole range of networks, connections, and relationships between different organizations from universities, grower groups, governments, farmer bodies, a lot of relationships and networks that weren't there previously. A lot of that has been about trying to gather and improve regional capacity to develop to respond to drought resilience. And I suppose it's obvious there, I'm talking about the hubs in particular that have really had that regional focus bringing universities and the research from those, those bodies out to regional areas where they can be implemented on farm is so crucial to drought resilience. So over the last 4 years we have actually, as Mel said, we have 100 million [dollars] each year as part of the Future Drought Fund. Over the last 4 years, we have been able to allocate 420 million [dollars], that's between 2020 and the 27/28 year because even though it's a 4-year funding plan, we have been really excited that we've been able to put forward this Long-term Trials program that Laura mentioned, which actually extends across the 4-year funding plan.

And that's a really exciting initiative and I'm really looking forward to seeing what the results of that will be in a few years’ time. Obviously, we've developed up the regionally based 8 hubs. There's been over 200 different projects looking at drought resilience trials, demonstration and extension and adoption of drought resilience practices that have been funded through the drought fund over the last 4 years. And I think we are really starting to see on the ground action impact change, improved understanding and that will only improve the Future Drought Fund in its next plan gets rolled out. We're going to see more and more action on the ground and changes happening on farms in land management in communities as this Future Drought Fund rolls out even further. We've had over 800 people accessing leadership training opportunities. We've had 47 regions, regions taking part in the regional drought resilience planning program. Almost 13,000 farmers have been involved in activities around farm business and risk management related to drought.

So, there's just a couple of things that have, you know, of the whole range of programs that have occurred through the Future Drought Fund that I've listed there. And you'll hear many more of them today. As I said that this Consultative Committee that I'm on, our term finishes in September.

I would like to say it's been a huge honour and a huge learning experience for me to be involved in this program. It is a very exciting program and I think the Science to Practice Forum over the next 3 days will just offer you a glimpse of huge range of activities and people involved in the Future Drought Fund.

And like I said, I'm really excited to see what happens over the next few years as well. It's been a huge amount of effort over the last 4 years to get these systems in place, projects in place, and I thank everyone very much for their efforts towards making the Future Drought Fund as successful as it has been so far. And likewise, I thank all of those people who are involved in getting the Science to Practice Forum up over the next 3 days and this opportunity for us to showcase all of the actions that have been taking place and the learnings from the last 4 years. The learnings from the next 3 days will be something that we will very much pass on to the next Consultative Committee when they start in September this year. So please have a great time over the next 3 days and I'll pass over to Pip. Thanks very much.

Pip Courtney [40:43]:

Everybody, Slido is there for you to use, practice in, have a crack. Let us know where you are, where you are signing in from, is it raining, where you are, and any questions that you've got for our panellists coming up.

[Recording ends]

**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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