

Eyre Peninsula – Planning Sustainable Growth

Vision 2050

A shared Vision for farming on the Eyre Peninsula in 2050

Stakeholder input summary report

Created September 2023

Led & supported by AIR EP, SARDI and Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board



Imagining a future for farming on the Eyre Peninsula...

Context statement

What might farming look like on the Eyre Peninsula in the year 2050?

What challenges might be present?

What opportunities might be being pursued?

And, in light of these advance estimations, what priorities might be determined with some measure of confidence, that can begin to be factored into plans, decisions and investments, to support and sustain a healthy, prosperous agricultural industry and communities on the Eyre Peninsula some 25 years from now?

Across August and September, a wide range of farming and agricultural research stakeholders were consulted for their views on farming on the EP in 2050. Their perspectives were sought to help shape a draft picture of the features, drivers and enablers of a strong, sustainable farming industry on the Eyre Peninsula well into the future.

This consultation work, driven and supported by AIR EP, SARDI and Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board, has been undertaken, primarily to ensure that Research, Development and Extension priorities and investments on the Eyre Peninsula are being selected to support the realisation of a desirable future for the region and industry. More than that, this advance thinking about the potential pathways to success and likely challenges needing to be navigated, can be employed by other groups seeking to collaborate, align and make a positive impact on living and working on the EP in the decades ahead.

This report – a “roadmap to 2050” - is a summary of the stakeholder input, including electronic surveys and a full-day workshop held in Wudinna with EP farmers, research scientists and representatives from agricultural R&D organisations and peak bodies.

Facilitated and summarised by Troy Forrest, Strategy Road Pty Ltd, September 2023

Imagining agriculture on the Eyre Peninsula in 2050

We can envisage...

- Strong, vibrant farming communities continuing to grow and thrive
- Larger farms with increasing corporate / business-like operations
- Application of automation / technology to offset human labour needs
- Increased valuing of healthy soils
- Integrated pest and weed control
- Subject matter specialists advising and supporting farmers
- Improved production on historically poor ground
- Continuous cropping in some areas and fallow periods in areas with no moisture
- Decreasing levels of livestock being farmed on the EP
- More sophisticated farming financial models that share financial risk
- Evolving sustainable energy systems in region and on farms
- Precision Ag the norm
- Enhanced biodiversity
- A more mature approach to (and understanding of) Carbon
- More plant protein being farmed for a global market
- Managing the opportunities and threats that come from a changing climate and policies to reduce emissions



Envisioning farming on the Eyre Peninsula in 2050

Five critical elements to building and sustaining profitable agriculture and local communities...

GOVERNANCE

Speaks to...

- * Government policy / regulation
- * Support bodies
- * Guided R&D investment
- * Balancing community needs, sustainability considerations and commercial agriculture

SOCIAL

Speaks to...

- * Regional community health & viability
- * Social license
- * Social capital
- * Succession planning
- * Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



PROFITABILITY

Speaks to...

- * Value of farmed products
- * Access to markets
- * Operating costs
- * Farm business models
- * Energy
- * Infrastructure

PRODUCTIVITY

Speaks to...

- * Technology advances & utility
- * Data application
- * Access to labour
- * Crop / input advancements
- * System / practice advancements

ENVIRONMENT

Speaks to...

- * Soil health / Carbon
- * Biodiversity
- * Climate readiness / adaptability
- * Biosecurity



Productivity

In 2050, farming on the Eyre Peninsula embraces technology, RD&E and data use to achieve significant productivity gains as we adapt to the changing climate.

The choices of what we farm, how we farm, and how our industry puts its products into the hands of customers around the world, see our industry benefiting from efficiencies and

economies never before realised.

On healthier soils, through smarter crop choices and farming practices, supported by infrastructure investments, technology advancements and contemporarily skilled people, farming on the EP is a highly productive industry.

When we consider the drivers of increasingly productive farms on the EP in 2050, we envisage...

- Collecting and applying quality data on farm
- Applying technology
- Soil amelioration
- Attracting, developing and utilising specialist skill sets on the EP
- Better business practice / risk management via evolved farm business models
- Improved soil health
- Smarter seasonal practices
- Transformational change opportunities in energy use
- Evolved / enhanced crop types
- Yield enhancements
- Sustained progress with agronomy and genetics driving incremental improvements
- Training and supporting leaders in the region
- MAC as a centre where cutting-edge technology, research and development is on display, relevant and important to informing and guiding the practices of EP farmers
- Blue sky research being considered to explore step-change advancements
- A multi-purpose port facility to reduce grain handling costs and road pressures
- Balancing productivity gains with human sustainability (work-life balance, mental health, community health)
- Retaining families on the EP, and enhancing populations by attracting other sectors / populations into agriculture on the EP

We will need to overcome capital costs of technology, frost, water and temperature changes, labour pressures, and communication infrastructure limitations.

Profitability

In 2050, farms on the Eyre Peninsula are increasingly sophisticated businesses, applying leading practices through well-trained people to deliver sustained profitability.

Cost pressures are expertly managed and negated through initiatives like collective purchasing, sharing of expensive resources and machinery, and employing technology to realise efficiencies and economies, all supported by government investments to reduce costs such as freight.

Financial upsides are realised by value-adding to farmed products (decommoditising), expanding and diversifying revenue streams, finding novel ways to make money from waste, and developing a compelling, widely known brand for EP products that consumers seek out, moving the industry away from price-taking towards price-making.

The profitability of our farming businesses flows into local communities, strengthening the health, vibrancy and offerings available on the EP.



When we consider the drivers of increasingly profitable farming on the EP in 2050, we envisage...

- Increasingly “business-like” farms and farmers with greater financial literacy and improved analytics, planning and budgeting, and corporate governance
- Value-added farming operations, with dimensions of vertical integration (eg WA noodle wheat)
- More nimble farming, adjusting season-by-season and as opportunities and threats present
- Exporting lentils directly from the EP to international markets like India
- Reducing freight costs (road, rail, ports)
- On farm storage (inputs, energy, grain)
- Local processing
- Energy transformation, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, more localised generation and distribution
- Buying well, individually and via groups – more collaborative farming
- Progressively evolving from price-takers to price-makers by de-commoditising our offerings wherever possible (via building brand strength and market appetite for EP grain and value-added agricultural products)
- Benchmarking against and learning from other sectors to drive profitability initiatives
- Enhanced local infrastructure for manufacturing, processing, storage and shipping
- Brand building (that might include low emissions grain / ESG-supporting products as a brand tenet)
- Building and leveraging scale wherever possible
- Specialist advice driving upsides and mitigating against downsides
- Combining productivity trials for an expanded systems approach
- Finding ways to make money from agricultural waste / byproducts
- Low-cost traceability systems to cater to the market that will increasingly value provenance
- Shared investments from multiple groups in an industry / regional “cash cow” – pick a small number of winners we go deep on, together
- Government support to help access new markets

We will need to overcome rising costs (fuel, labour, energy, inputs, rates) and the resource drains associated with regulation and “red tape”.



Environment

In 2050, soil health is a peak priority of all farmers on the Eyre Peninsula, and their practices continue to enhance the environment and land they are responsible custodians of.

In a market where soil Carbon is better understood, measured and responsibly maximised, farming practices and systems employ technology, research and scientifically-proven principles to generate positive commercial, social and environmental outcomes.

Farmers plan and adapt nimbly to emerging and persisting environmental pressures, employ integrated pest management strategies to safeguard biosecurity, prioritise and value biodiversity, and continually assess the impact of their practices as the world moves to and beyond net zero Carbon emissions.

The value of natural capital and native vegetation on farms is recognised, and farmers are adapting and transforming their approaches to successfully navigate the impacts of climate change.

The story of environmentally-responsible farming on the EP is told widely and effectively, and the Eyre Peninsula is a leader in adopting new technology and alternate energy sources to ensure farming and the wider EP community and environs has a bright sustainable future.

When we consider the drivers of environmental health and sustainable farming on the EP in 2050, we envisage...

- Healthy soils are an absolute priority – benchmarking, maintaining and enhancing soil health, which supports both environmental ambitions and productivity / profitability ambitions
- Responsibly balancing soil strengthening with water reserves
- Continual improvements on soil carbon baselines
- Improved predictions, reactions and planning relating to climate – forecasts, use of local data / mesonets, regional and per farm plans
- Environmental sustainability an R&D focus of the grains industry
- Successfully tackling the challenge of wind erosion
- Valuing natural capital and biodiversity, incorporating revegetation on less productive land
- Enhanced approaches to biosecurity, including integrated pest management (diagnostics, tools, monitoring, regulation)
- Owning and adapting to the challenge of net zero emissions targets locally through diverse initiatives (eg H powered tractors, slow release fertilisers, decreased livestock, increased legumes)
- Branding – strengthening the perceptions and value of EP produce by telling the story of our environmental commitments & initiatives better
- Bringing scientific rigour to conceptually-sound-but-scientifically-unproven environmental health supporting initiatives (eg regenerative ag, biological enhancers, companion cropping)
- Developing biodiversity banks
- Developing and applying better measures of what a healthy environment looks like and requires
- Enlisting support / partnerships to effectively manage extreme weather events

We will need to balance the costs of environmental sustaining and enhancement initiatives (not all / easily commercially-recoverable in the shorter term), and navigate regulatory and societal pressures.

Social

A group of people, including men and women, are standing in a field of yellow rapeseed flowers. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or a tour. The background shows rolling hills and a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

In 2050, living on, working in and being an active part of the Eyre Peninsula community is increasingly attractive to more people from more places, within and beyond agriculture.

As farm sizes increase and sophisticated technology application grows, new specialist roles are emerging, bringing new people with diverse skills to the region, and creating more opportunities for local people to stay.

Secondary industries complementary to primary production, in value-adding and waste repurposing, are proliferating, and smart partnerships between agriculture and other diverse sectors committed to regional community strength, are nurturing vibrant, well-serviced, attractive towns, areas and networks.

More females are visibly active and supported to participate in farming businesses, and more doors are warmly opened for more and diverse people to join and be part of the EP agriculture community. Healthy people, through support mechanisms, flexible work options and destigmatising concepts like prioritising mental health, are a clear and normalised feature of EP communities.

Better work-life balance is being achieved by farmers, to sustain their endeavours, support wellbeing, and a smoother transition of farming businesses across generations is being realised.

Effectively telling the story of agriculture, of regional life, of our practices, and of the importance of the industry to feed and clothe the world, has more people engaged with and supportive of the farming industry on the EP.

When we consider the drivers of social health and societal engagement with / support of farming on the EP in 2050, we envisage...

- Retaining and attracting people to the EP, for research, to farm and to live and work in local communities – thinking beyond traditional agricultural people
- Larger farms adopting hub and spoke business models, creating and sustaining distributed local roles even if ownership is centralised
- Shared costs and risks – machinery, investments, specialist services
- A push for greater work: life balance / flexibility in how people work – balancing the need for greater productivity and profitability gains with greater lifestyles
- Supporting families and females on farms / in agriculture / regional communities with greater childcare and related support services
- Developing secondary industries (and jobs) – manufacturing, recycling, new industries (eg straw bale housing)
- Gaining greater government support at local level as commercial services decline due to rationalisation / technology adoption
- Bolstering mental health support services and recognition / awareness of its importance
- Safeguarding / enhancing social license through better storytelling and demystifying agriculture, particularly for those in non-regional areas
- Actively engaging with complementary industries / groups with a shared interest in long-term viable and healthy communities (eg in health – working with partners to get 2 GPs per hospital; aged care providers; schools)
- Addressing the gender imbalance (or perceptions of) in farming – more women able to participate without historical constraints
- Being welcoming to outsiders coming in to join our industry and community – diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives built and sustained
- Improvements in succession planning through training and supporting the next generations

We will need to overcome the challenge of reduced services in regional communities and the realities of the appeal of farming / working life on the EP to a restricted pool of people.



Governance

In 2050, the agriculture industry on the Eyre Peninsula is led and governed by highly capable, committed and collaborative people that understand the nuances and practicalities of farming and farming business.

Farming community consultation and farmer input into all major decisions and investments pertaining to farming and regional community health ensures the right priorities get the right level of attention, and that the actions are ground truthed.

A competitive funding environment and regulatory pressures are effectively navigated by representative groups that band together, plan together, work in alignment, deliver and demonstrate impact, and balance competing interests for the sake of realising a clear, shared picture of greater good.

Good governance in all facets of the industry is an enabler of sustainable progress, of attracting and retaining support, and of delivering outcomes that benefit more people on the EP.

When we consider the drivers of good governance of farming businesses and practices on the EP in 2050, we envisage...

- A clear imperative to have farmers engaged and involved at all levels when it comes to decision-making, future planning and critically assessing outcomes of relevant initiatives
- A better understanding of the RD&E ecosystem and evolving investment opportunities, with farmers more actively engaged in all major RD&E investments / priorities to ground-truth and “BS-proof” projects
- Grower groups playing an important role in informing good practices locally, and in shaping government policy (state-wide and nationally)
- The need to clearly articulate compelling shared visions for farming on the EP, guiding the development of clear and collaborative plans formulated by many groups, and developing compelling business cases pointing at a successful, sustainable future for more
- Navigating an increasingly prescriptive regulatory environment, and the need to be compliant at many levels
- Navigating an increasingly competitive funding environment
- Demonstrating clear positive outcomes from the targeted application of any government investments, to catalyse further investments
- Adopting a balanced approach to all collective activities and requests for support / funding, ensuring profitability and productivity are weighted with environmental and social matters
- Associations and support groups committing to working collaboratively, playing to one another's strengths, being prepared to give and take for a greater long-term good, being as open and transparent as possible, avoiding duplication, and continually communicating with one another
- Good governance is an enabler of all the productivity, profitability, environmental and social priorities and ambitions

We will need to ensure positive, inclusive, frequent communication happens between growers and key leadership and support bodies in the sector, to ensure genuine alignment and that agreed priorities are planned for, worked together upon and effectively governed.



Eyre Peninsula Planning Sustainable Growth

Towards 2050, farmers, researchers and an aligned network of support organisations will work together to plan and realise sustainable growth for the Eyre Peninsula under the auspices of a shared Vision.

**This is the
EPPSG Roadmap to 2050.**

APPENDIX

Pre-workshop input summary

FACILITATED WORKSHOP
PERSPECTIVES 01

SURVEY MONKEY
RESPONSES 02

PHONE INTERVIEW
SUMMARY 03

01

FACILITATED WORKSHOP PERSPECTIVES

An interactive full-day workshop was held in the Wudinna Community Centre on Tuesday 12th September, attended by a mix of farmers, researchers and representatives from relevant agricultural associations and peak bodies.

Summary of responses

Agriculture on the EP in 2023 – Strengths

More and more young farmers are taking the reins

More money in the system due to a few good years combined with better farming practices

Farming systems are helping better decision making

Some good farming systems projects happening at MAC

Farmers seemingly more amenable to change

Farming is less physical than in the past

Support groups and specialist advisors a key part of our ecosystem

Ease of access to information for farmers

Genetics driven by R&D being applied for more resilient crops

Cheap imported farm imports have helped keep a lid on production costs

Low interest rates have helped ease financial burdens (but that's about to change)

RD&E funding has been supportive

Global opportunities have presented – war in Russia etc – favourable to our market

Agriculture on the EP in 2023 – Weaknesses

Higher risk levels / practices are being undertaken by more farmers, chasing higher returns

Debt loadings are higher

Some have forgotten difficult times after a few good years

We are still mining soil

Small workforce and regional pressures on attracting more, both in research and on farm

Telecommunications are still weak in the regions

An overt export focus means we've been content to be price takers – at the mercy of the market / global forces / policy

R&D we're applying isn't always custom fit for our region, climate, soils and crops

The current funding model of Minnipa Agricultural Centre is challenging the ability to invest and demonstrate innovative R&D

Agriculture on the EP in 2023 – Threats



Declining funding support



Perceptions that there is a lot of money in the sector (so it doesn't need more)



Zero net emission push impacting existing practices and costs



Increasing cost of production



External forces beyond our control – weather, international relationships, government policy and intervention



Carbon farming / calculations – an immature concept not yet right



Climate variability

Agriculture on the EP in 2023 – **Opportunities**



Global population growth – more people to feed and clothe



Money – identifying and securing diverse sources, and applying them wisely and economically



Collection and application of quality on-farm data for productivity and profitability gains / sustainable practice improvements



Farming systems continuing to improve



Diversified cropping – Lentils, Canola etc



Soil amelioration to improve productivity and land use



Enhancing our understanding of soil water



Genetics



Market development and diversification



Better use of Nitrogen to bolster yields

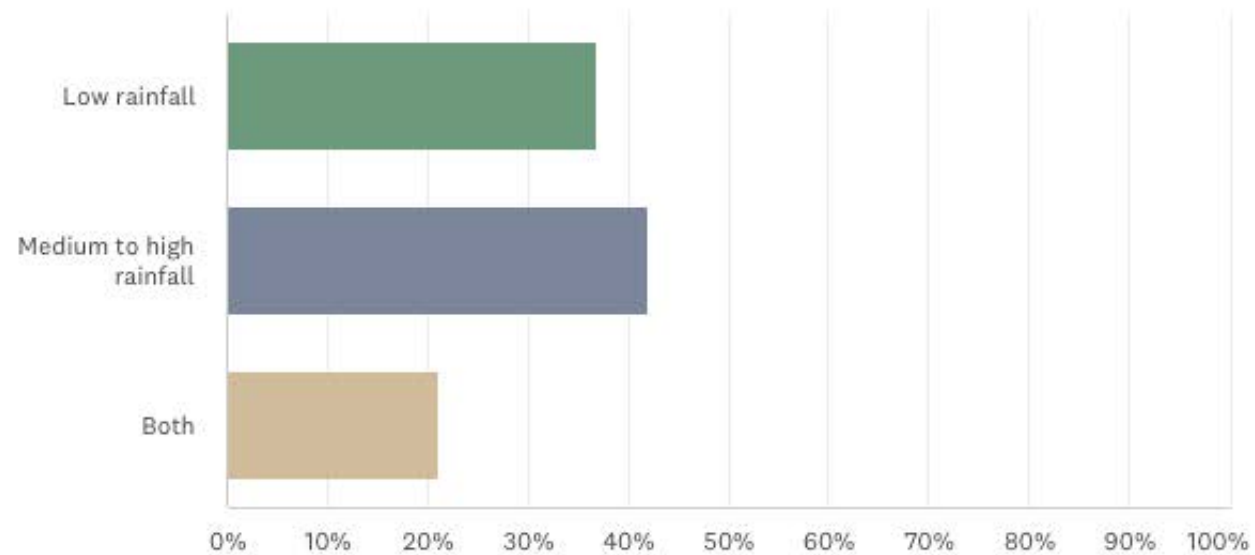
02 SURVEY MONKEY RESPONSES

19 x Survey Monkey survey responses were collected from farmers around the Eyre Peninsula (de-identified)

Summary of responses

What rainfall zone(s) on the Eyre Peninsula do you farm in?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0





Dominant themes **Opportunities**

- Technology – applied for productivity, environmental and sustainability gains
- Soils (enhanced health)
- Farming businesses – bigger, corporate, collaborative
- Carbon farming *
- Decreased reliance on traditional inputs
- Community
- Diversification
- Scientific advancements in crops
- On-farm – input & energy production / storage

* need to understand it better though



Dominant themes **Challenges**

- Labour – shortage for current and future roles
- Social license – perceptions / understanding
- Climate change
- Rising costs
- Regional community services / viability
- Government intervention / red tape
- Regional infrastructure – roads, internet, Ports

Consider these features of a positive future Vision for farming on the EP in 2050...

Improved long-term farm viability

Preparedness for & prevention of weed, pest & disease incursion

Improved value of farmed products

Access to existing and new markets

Evolving farm business models

Data use at farm level

New & emerging technology use at farm level

New ways to sustain and support thriving rural communities

Returning significant landscape to wild areas

Enhancing biodiversity on farm

Maintain or enhance farm soil quality

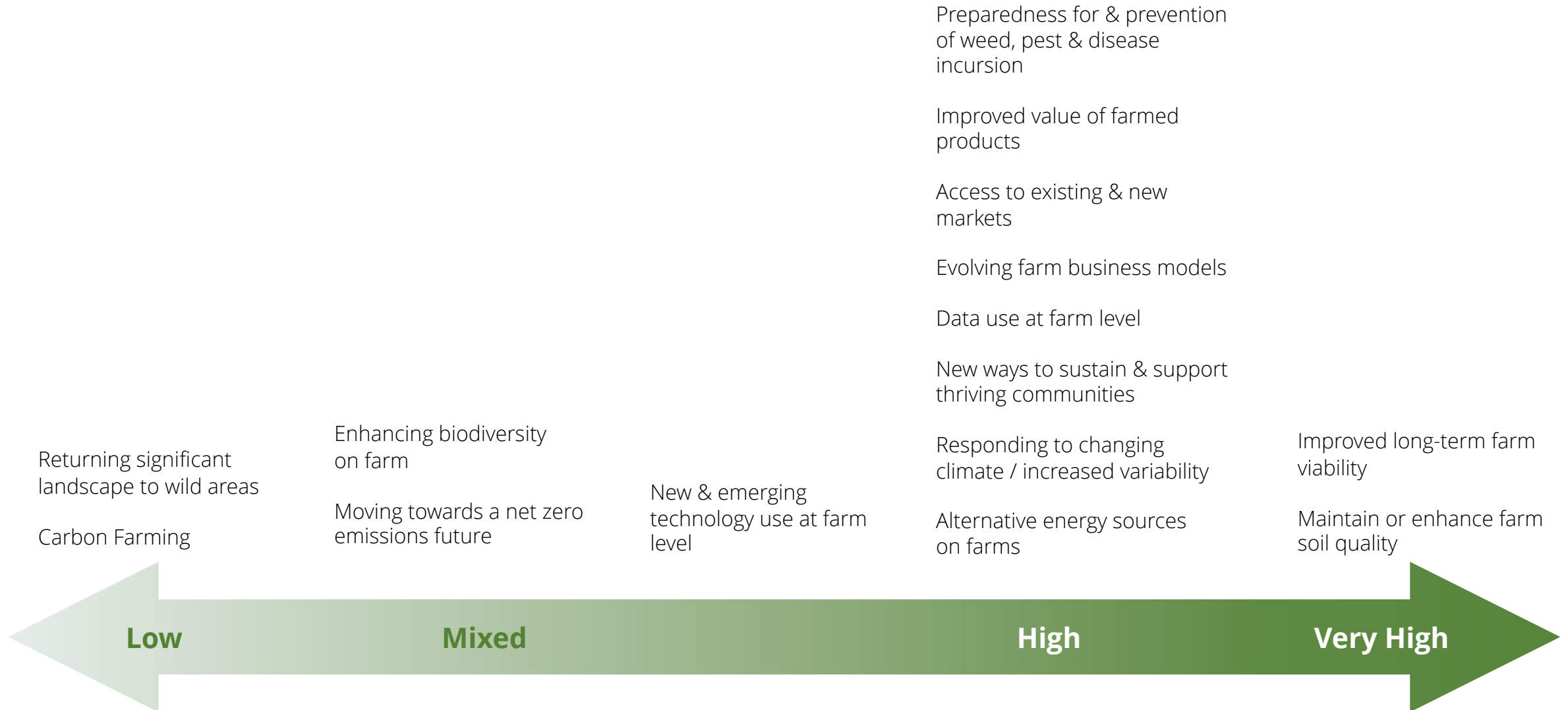
Moving towards a net zero emissions future

Carbon farming

Responding to changing climate / increased climate variability

Alternative energy sources on farms

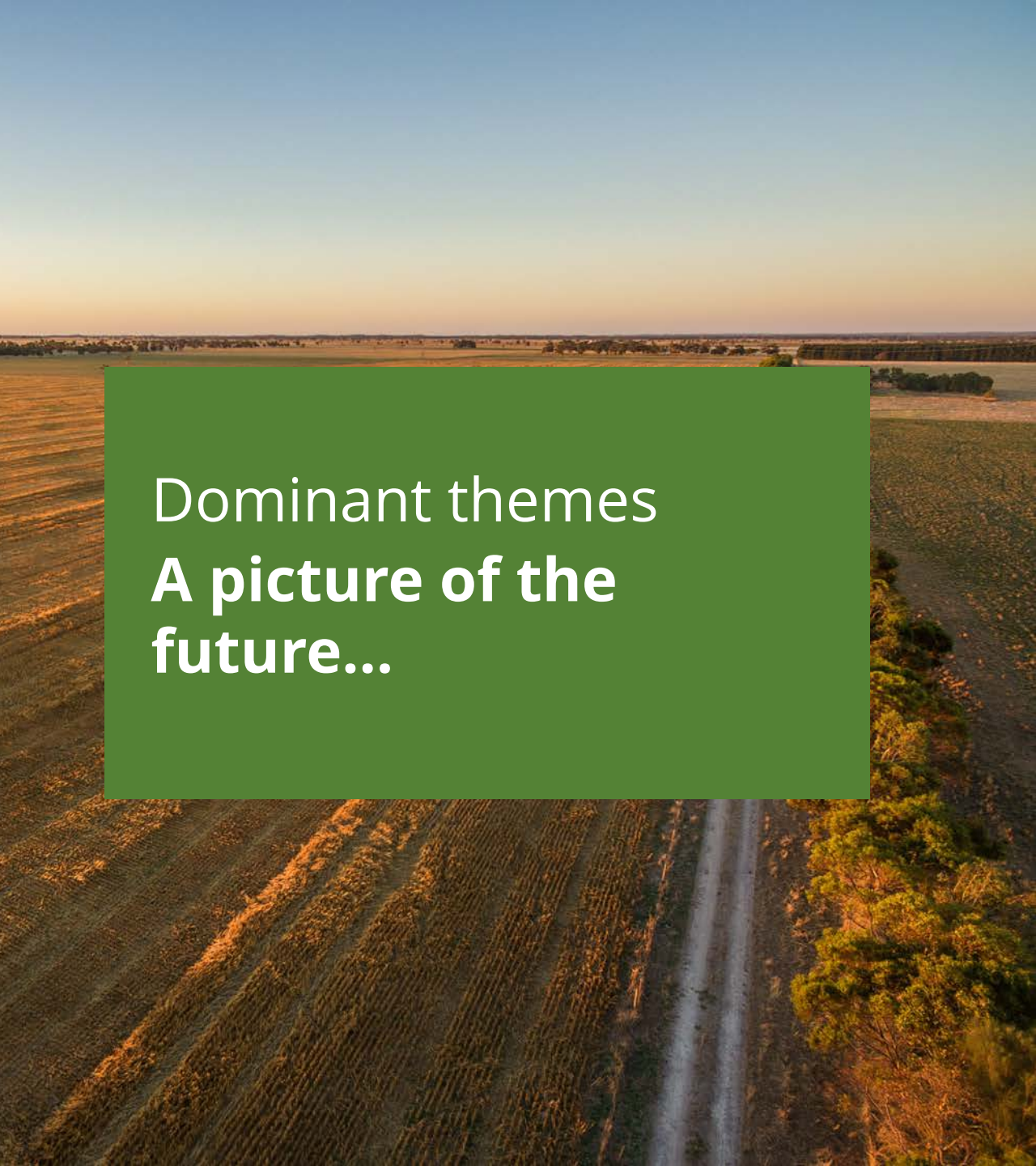
General perceptions – relative importance of features of a positive Vision for EP ag in 2050



03 PHONE INTERVIEW SUMMARY


11 x long-form discussions (10 –
30 minutes ea)
conducted with a select group of
key farmers
around the Eyre Peninsula

Collated summarised themes




Dominant themes A picture of the future...

- Technology enhancement & application
- Advanced cropping varieties (suited to changing conditions)
- Enhanced productivity through better farming systems
- Farming business model shifts – specialisation vs generalisation
- Enhanced export facilities
- Better regional infrastructure
- Fewer, bigger farms
- Alternate energy sources
- Labour – reduced reliance
- Rationalisation of regional communities
- Continued adaptation
- Focus on risk management and spread



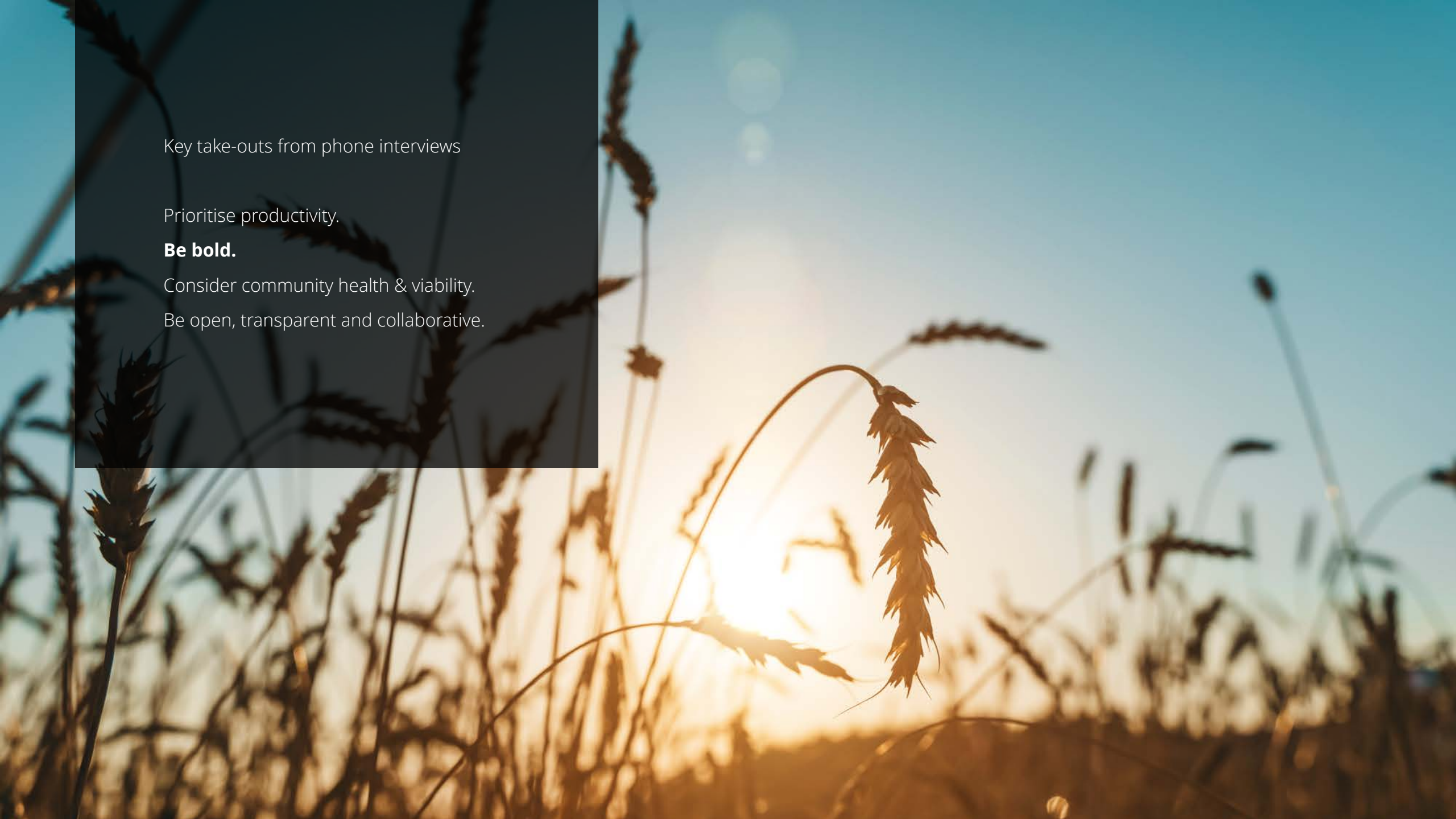
Dominant themes Opportunities to strengthen the sector

- Growing global need for our products – investing in / supporting export potential
- Technology – application for efficiency gains, overcome labour shortage, drive profitability
- Alternatives to traditional farmed produce - aligned with climate challenges and changing consumer preferences
- Fertiliser – developing local alternatives
- Telling the story of agriculture better – engaging hearts and minds to underpin social license
- Education – based on facts vs opinions
- Continuing to prioritise and invest in soil health – unlocking soil constraints
- Investing in and applying science to improving what we farm and how we farm it
- A port will help on lots of fronts



Dominant themes Challenges to overcome

- Adapting to climate change / variability / heat and water pressures
- Regional community health – adequate populations, services and resources
- Cost of production – systems, machinery, parts – increasingly prohibitive
- Loss of key inputs (alternatives?)
- Carbon farming – currently an immature, poorly understood or accepted concept
- Livestock – sustaining a declining sector
- Disease, frost and pest pressures
- Government (over) regulation dissuading / reducing profitability of farmers
- Community perceptions / social licence
- Labour scarcity – on farm and in research
- Inadequate infrastructure (roads, ports, connectivity)
- Mental health / burnout

A photograph of a wheat field at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The wheat stalks are silhouetted against the bright sky. A dark, semi-transparent rectangular overlay covers the left side of the image, containing white text.

Key take-outs from phone interviews

Prioritise productivity.

Be bold.

Consider community health & viability.

Be open, transparent and collaborative.

Eyre Peninsula – Planning Sustainable Growth

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