

# Project Overview

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## Enhanced extension for the Australian tea tree oil industry

April 2021 – April 2024

### Project background

A gap in extension and communication activities for tea tree growers and their advisors, has previously hindered the adoption and associated benefits of industry research and development outcomes. The *Enhanced Extension for the Australian Tea Tree Industry (PRJ-013114)* project seeks to address this gap by developing and delivering a collaborative extension program, tailored to target industry priorities.

The project is designed to provide an industry-driven extension service to tea tree growers, oil producers and service providers, which will accelerate the adoption of improved production techniques based on recent and current industry funded research. It also seeks to develop an enduring extension service platform for long-term industry benefit.

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### Project Objectives

With a focus on tea tree crop nutrition, pest, weed and disease management, the three-year project will:

- Establish two commercial-scale participatory action research (PAR) demonstration sites each year.
- Hold a minimum of four field days and orchard walks at the PAR demonstration sites each year.
- Facilitate two technical skills workshops.
- Develop a minimum of four hard-copy extension publications and four electronic extension materials (i.e. videos or podcasts) each year.
- The specific number and location for interactive group activities will be determined in conjunction with industry stakeholders during the project planning phase.

### Research approach

Tea Tree Oil Extension Officer, Alice Moore, and the Farmacist team will work alongside tea tree growers, oil producers and service providers across northern NSW and northern QLD to deliver the project objectives.

Utilising a participatory action research (PAR) model, across a number of commercial-scale demonstration sites, a series of field days, orchard walks and technical demonstrations that draw upon local grower and service provider experience will extend both production system and management strategy knowledge and understanding. This 'seeing-is-believing' extension model will create vital connections between research and commercial production systems, boosting grower understanding and developing in growers the confidence to adopt new practices. The ultimate outcome will be a reduction in the lag time between research and adoption.

Findings from recent and current Australian research will be delivered through plain-English and practical extension materials, in both hard-copy and electronic formats, with a focus on helping growers improve production, profitability and efficiency. Extension materials will be developed and extended through existing networks, in partnership with AgriFutures and with input from industry stakeholders, such as the Australian Tea Tree Industry Association (ATTIA).



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## Expected outcomes and implications

The expected outcomes of the project include:

- The development of an enduring extension model for the Australian tea tree industry.
- Enhanced technical knowledge and skills for Australian tea tree service providers.
- Engagement with more than 50 per cent of Australia's tea tree growers through participation in project activities.
- Adoption of improved management practices by more than 50 per cent of participating growers.
- A range of high-quality, practical and relevant extension materials, which highlight key industry research outcomes with regards to tea tree crop nutrition, pest, weed and disease management.
- Delivery of extension materials through the AgriFutures and ATTIA websites.



## Industry implications

This project will provide economic, social and environmental benefits to the Australian tea tree industry, through the increased adoption of recent and current industry funded research. The project is specifically focussing on improving farm management practices relating to: tea tree crop nutrition, pest, weed and disease management. Techniques that reduce labour cost or improve farm efficiencies also will be investigated.

Increased adoption of improved farm management practices will:

- Increase tea tree oil production and improve on-farm efficiencies.
- Reduce any adverse environmental impacts of pesticide, fertiliser and water application.
- Increase grower and industry knowledge, capacity and resilience through the establishment of information sharing and support networks.
- Develop farming systems that are more resilient to climate and production variability, leading to increased and more sustainable business profits.

These combined industry benefits will ultimately result in a more consistent and reliable supply of product to market and a more stable and resilient industry, with enhanced employment opportunities.



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The Tea Tree Extension Project (*Enhanced extension for the Australian tea tree oil industry* PRJ-013114) is funded through the AgriFutures Tea Tree Oil Program with the support of ATTIA Ltd and Farmacist Pty Ltd. This project supports the adoption of innovation and research and development outcomes for the Australian tea tree oil industry.



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