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news

'Agri-ed' standards for review

ANATIONAL project based in Tasmania is set to shape the future of higher education in Australian agriculture.

Led by Dr Tina Acuna from the University of Tasmania, the project, known as AgLTAS, aims to answer the question: "What should a graduate in agriculture and related disciplines know, understand and be able to do?"

Workshops are currently being held across Australia to engage with industry members, students and academics to develop a national Learning and Teaching Academic Standards for Agriculture - AgLTAS - statement.

The project, which includes collaboration from Charles Sturt University, the University of Adelaide and the University of Western Sydney, builds on the previously published Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Statement for Science, but with a focus on agriculture.

Agriculture and related disciplines, which includes areas such as agricultural science, horticulture, wine science, agricultural economics and agribusiness, are taught at 14 universities across Australia.

The project was launched in August this year and is funded for two years by the Australian government's Office for Learning and Teaching.

Dr Acuna said the project has gotten off to a great start, with more than 17 workshops already held across the country in Tasmania, South Australia, NSW, Victoria, ACT and Queensland.

"The workshops are generating some valuable discussions. There are diverse opinions and we are also finding common themes," Dr Acuna said.

"The learning outcomes expected in a graduate are so far broadly similar to

that for science, but in the context of agriculture.

"For example, we have identified themes around knowledge and understanding, along with skills in inquiry and problem solving to critically analyse and address problems in agriculture."

Dr Acuna said the AgLTAS project came at a time of university education in agriculture being at a "cross-road".

"We know that tertiary skills in agriculture are essential so that we can meet the future need for food, fibre and medicinal purposes but there are currently more jobs than there are agriculture graduates," Dr Acuna said.

"There are also a lot of changes in university regulations about the design of courses and learning outcomes that can lead to tensions between universities and employers if we don't align our expectations."

More workshops are scheduled for early February and an online survey is also available. Dr Acuna said they were encouraging as many people as possible take part.

He said diverse opinions were needed so that the national statement reflected the views of the broader agricultural community.

After the consultation, the AgLTAS statement will be drafted by the project's reference group and first and second drafts will be published in the AgLTAS newsletter in December and February. A submission will go to the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture in March 2014.

The AgLTAS statement will then be trialled to benchmark standards achieved in four universities that teach agriculture and related disciplines and published as case studies.

● www.agltas.edu.au



Case IH's small range released

TRACTOR manufacturer Case IH is targeting smaller farmers with its range of new Farmall tractor models.

While the brand is well-known for its large tractors, Case IH also has an extensive range of small to mid-size tractors and encourages customers to contact local dealers to find out more.

"It's no secret that in recent years the Australian small tractor market in particular, has seen an influx of various tractor brands," said Case IH Australia brand director Bruce Healy.

"But Case IH has a long history of providing small tractors to Australia.

"In fact the Farmall name is one of the most famous in the industry - and range just gets better and better."

The new Farmall B compact tractor range features six models from 17kW (23hp) to 42kW (57hp).

The range offers dependable power, fuel efficiency and comfort and is suitable for many types of applications from hobby farming to groundskeeping, to utility work in larger operations.

The new Farmall JX range also features six models, from 49kW (66hp) to 81kW (110hp) and is described as an easy to handle, no-fuss utility workhorse.

Rounding out Case IH's small to mid-size tractor range is the Quantum C 63kW-71kW (86hp-97hp), a powerful general purpose tractor which is



Case IH's small-to-mid size tractor range is rugged, powerful and driver-friendly, according to Case IH Australia brand director, Bruce Healy.

particularly suited to council and specially horticultural applications; the JXU 56kW-84kW (76hp-113hp), with its proven record of performing in demanding applications; and the Maxxum 82kW-104kW (112hp-141hp), which has the power and versatility for livestock, row crop farming and roadside mowing.

"Our tractors are engineered to increase customers' productivity, whatever their application," Mr Healy said.

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