

Data sovereignty and use

Policy position statement

Introduction

The use of business data in the national horticulture sector, as with any other industry, is pivotal for enhancing operational efficiency, increasing productivity, and ensuring regulatory compliance. Data can provide valuable insights that help businesses optimize processes, improve decision-making, and meet both government regulations and market-driven compliance requirements.

The primary advantage of utilizing business data should be enhanced decision-making, as accurate and timely data supports better strategic decisions. This can lead to more effective resource allocation, improved operational efficiency, and ultimately, greater profitability.

Outwardly, data-driven insights of markets can significantly boost competitiveness. Businesses that leverage data to understand market trends and consumer preferences can innovate more effectively and improve customer satisfaction, giving them a competitive edge.

Additionally, data can play an important role in regulatory compliance. By systematically collecting and analysing data, businesses can ensure they adhere to legal requirements, thereby minimising administrative burden and enhancing public trust.

Despite its benefits, the use of business data also presents several challenges. Data privacy and security are paramount concerns, as businesses must protect sensitive information from breaches and unauthorized access. This requires robust security measures and constant vigilance.

Closed software ecosystems belonging to those servicing the horticulture industry, where data and services are controlled by a single entity, limiting interoperability and transparency, commonly referred to as “walled gardens”, can lead to increased costs, reduced innovation, and dependency on specific platforms. For businesses, this means less control over their data and higher barriers to entry for new technologies and services.

Regulatory complexity adds another layer of difficulty, as businesses must navigate diverse and evolving regulations across different regions. This can be particularly challenging for companies operating in multiple jurisdictions.

Additionally, the costs associated with data management can be significant. Implementing and maintaining robust data management systems requires substantial investment in technology and personnel, which can be a burden, especially for smaller enterprises.

Principles

To effectively and equitably administer and extract value from business data, the NFF Horticulture Council advocates for the following principles to be applied by all parties engaged storing, controlling and processing data for the national horticulture industry:

1. **Sovereignty:** Businesses must retain ownership and active control over their data, including their permission being required when it is used for any purpose other than that for which it was originally collected, protecting proprietary information and maintaining privacy.
2. **Value:** As the owners of data, businesses must receive a fair return wherever it is used to create value and wealth.
3. **Portability:** Businesses should have the ability to move their data between different platforms and service providers easily. This promotes competition and innovation by reducing vendor lock-in.
3. **Privacy and Security:** Robust privacy and security measures should be in place to protect business data from unauthorized access and breaches. This includes encryption, access controls, and regular security audits.
4. **Transparency:** Businesses should be informed about how their data is being used, who has access to it, and for what purposes. Clear and accessible information about data practices builds trust and ensures compliance with regulations.
5. **Data Accuracy and Correction:** Businesses should have the right to correct any inaccuracies in their data. Ensuring data accuracy is crucial for making informed decisions and maintaining regulatory compliance.
6. **Minimization and De-identification:** Data should only be collected and retained only as long as necessary for the intended purpose. When data is no longer needed, it should be de-identified or destroyed to protect privacy.
7. **Interoperability:** Promoting data interoperability ensures that data can be seamlessly integrated and used across different systems and platforms. This reduces duplication and enhances the efficiency of data use.

Actions

To support and give life to these principles, the NFF Horticulture Council recommends the following actions are taken by all parties engaged storing, controlling and processing data for the national horticulture industry:

1. **Develop Clear Data Policies:** Establish comprehensive data management policies that outline data collection, usage, and protection practices,

including especially those practices that enable the data sovereignty of business.

- a. Prioritize the agriculture industry for coverage by the Consumer Data Right.
2. **Data standardisation:** Immediately start work towards a set of consistent, practical and beneficial data standards by engaging in open dialogue between industry groups, regulators, service and product providers, and other relevant industry stakeholders.
3. **Infrastructure investment:** Invest in developing and implementing interoperable systems that facilitate seamless data transfers between different platforms and agencies.
 - a. Fund an industry-led data management initiative that enables a “tell us once” approach, empowering the grower with ability to permission data sharing, minimising the need for businesses to submit the same information multiple times, reducing regulatory burdens and promoting consistent supply chain procedures.
4. **Security:** Implement advanced security measures to protect data from breaches and unauthorized access.
5. **Support SMEs:** Provide resources and assistance to help small and medium enterprises meet data management and compliance requirements, including sharing knowledge and tools that help businesses adopt effective data management practices.
6. **Monitor and Adapt:** Regularly review and update data management practices to keep pace with technological advancements and regulatory changes.
 - a. Adopt the Australian Farm Data Code as a mechanism for maintaining adherence with industry best practices.

Conclusion

By adhering to these principles and adopting these actions, the horticulture sector, and those that service and regulate it, can effectively manage business data, ensuring compliance, protecting privacy, and driving innovation for a sustainable and prosperous future.

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