



Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program - Hort Innovation 2026 Progress Report and Pledge

Hort Innovation is committed to helping build an Australian horticulture industry in which leadership reflects the diversity, capability and experience of the people who contribute to it.

We recognise that diverse and inclusive organisations make better decisions, foster innovation and are better equipped to respond to the opportunities and challenges facing Australian agriculture. We also recognise that achieving meaningful and sustained change requires deliberate action, shared accountability and a long-term commitment.

Our progress

Since making our previous pledge, we have continued to strengthen gender diversity, equity and inclusion across our organisation and support opportunities for women in the broader horticulture industry.

Women now represent **68% of our workforce and 66% of leadership roles**, compared with 64% and 53% respectively in September 2025. Female representation on the Board is currently 33%, compared with 44.5% in September 2025.

Over this period, we have:

- **Strengthened our approach to pay equity and transparency.** Our reported gender pay gap reduced from **12.0% to 11.3% in favour of males**, while our median pay gap was **-2.8% in favour of females**. We will continue to analyse the remaining gap and use this evidence to guide remuneration and workforce decisions.
- **Embedded gender equity within our DE&I framework.** Our DE&I Plan includes objectives and initiatives relating to pay equity, inclusive recruitment, leadership development, flexible work and employee participation. Our employee-led Gender DE&I Working Group helps translate these commitments into practical initiatives and partnerships.
- **Elevated the voices of women in agriculture.** In March 2025, our International Women's Day panel featured women leaders from across agriculture, welcomed guests from other research and development corporations and raised **\$1,062 for Share the Dignity**.
- **Established a partnership with Country to Canberra.** Launched in conjunction with International Women's Day 2026, the partnership supports young women in regional and

rural Australia. It has included participation by Country to Canberra's CEO in our March Team Forum, development of a 2026 competition and opportunities for Hort Innovation employees to participate in its Powerful Women's Breakfast and Pitch Night.

- **Invested in women's leadership and career development.** Women have participated in internal and industry development opportunities, including the Hort Innovation Leadership Development Program, the International Fresh Produce Association Produce Executive Program and external scholarships. One female employee received a scholarship to participate in the Australian Rural Leadership course, and women represented four of our eight participants in the 2026 Produce Executive Program.
- **Supported participation through different life and career stages.** Flexible work remains part of our commitment to gender equity, supported by employee-led initiatives that raise awareness of issues affecting women's workplace participation, including menopause support and resources.
- **Used employee feedback to guide further action.** A diversity measure introduced into our June 2026 Employee Engagement Survey achieved an **80% favourable score**, providing a strong foundation for continued action.

Our employee-led DE&I working groups continue to translate our commitments into practical initiatives, workplace conversations and greater awareness. This work is being carried forward through our People Plan 2031, endorsed by the Board in June 2026, which provides a longer-term framework for strengthening leadership, capability, culture and employee experience.

We are proud of this progress while recognising that representation alone is not the end goal. Our focus remains on creating the conditions in which women from different backgrounds can participate fully, build meaningful careers, influence decisions and progress into senior leadership.

Our 2026 pledge

Hort Innovation pledges to create greater opportunity for women to lead, influence and shape the future of Australian horticulture.

Over the coming years, we will:

1. **Strengthen pathways into leadership**
Build clearer and more accessible pathways for women to develop their capabilities, gain leadership experience and progress into senior, executive, governance and industry leadership roles.
2. **Embed equity in our people practices**
Continue to review recruitment, remuneration, development, performance, succession and

promotion practices to identify and address barriers to equitable participation and career progression.

3. Support an inclusive and flexible workplace

Maintain workplace practices that enable people with different responsibilities, circumstances and lived experiences to contribute and thrive.

4. Improve representation in industry decision-making

Work with industry partners to encourage broader representation across advisory panels, leadership programs, events and other forums that influence the future of Australian horticulture.

5. Invest in capability, connection and visibility

Support mentoring, professional development, networking and opportunities that strengthen the confidence, skills and visibility of current and emerging women leaders.

6. Use evidence to guide action

Strengthen how we measure diversity and inclusion, monitor progress and use insights to focus our efforts where they can make the greatest difference.

7. Share responsibility for progress

Continue to engage our leaders, employees and industry partners in building an inclusive culture, recognising that lasting change depends on collective action and accountability.

These commitments will be advanced through our DE&I Plan and five-year People Plan, which supports Hort Innovation's Strategy 2031 and focuses on leadership and performance, digital capability, team member experience, and talent and the future workforce.

Hort Innovation is proud to continue supporting the National Farmers' Federation's Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program and its ambition to double the number of women in agriculture's leadership ranks by 2030. The program supports women through leadership development, mentoring and professional networks. We will continue to learn, measure our progress and work with our people and industry partners to ensure Australian horticulture benefits from the skills, perspectives and leadership of women across our sector.

Brett Fifield

Chief Executive Officer

Hort Innovation