

Regional Communications Branch
Department of Infrastructure, Trade, Regional
Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601

9 March 2023

Dear Secretariat

RE: Response to the On Farm Connectivity Program Discussion Paper

Boehringer Ingelheim welcomes the opportunity to respond to the discussion paper on the On Farm Connectivity Program (OFCP) and commends the Department for consulting on its design.

The program, which represents the delivery of a key Albanese Government election commitment, will significantly improve digital connectivity in Australian farms. Supporting farmers' investment in sensor technology and connected machinery will increase productivity, export competitiveness, and can improve the health and welfare of Australian livestock.

Boehringer Ingelheim is a global leader in the animal health industry and one of the largest providers of vaccines, parasiticides, and therapeutics, complemented by diagnostics and monitoring platforms. It is a leading supplier of animal health products to Australia's farmers, and proudly plays a vital role in protecting Australia's vital agriculture industry as the supplier of Australia's national Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) antigen bank.

Given the above, Boehringer Ingelheim is pleased to contribute to the questions raised in the discussion paper.

Scope: Which option is most appropriate?

Boehringer Ingelheim is agnostic with respect to the two options for scope presented, and recommends the Department select that which is supported by a plurality of animal product producers.

Is there equipment that should be added to this list [of products in scope]?

Boehringer Ingelheim, noting that the list is non-exhaustive, recommends the inclusion of 'monitors' to the list to appropriately capture audio-based sensing equipment.

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(Q1) Would you be interested in applying to be an eligible service provider?

Yes, Boehringer Ingelheim will apply to be a service provider.

(Q2) Do you have any comments or questions about proposed eligibility requirements for equipment service providers?

The draft proposal requirement for equipment service providers (ESP) to ‘demonstrate a track record of delivering workable solutions to Australian primary solutions’ should be carefully considered. If this requirement is written and/or interpreted too narrowly, it could unintentionally exclude producers’ access to the latest on-farm connectivity innovations.

Specifically, if evidence of a track-record of delivery in overseas markets is not accepted, then Australian producers would be locked-out of access to technologies that their overseas competitors are using; unintentionally entrenching a competitive disadvantage that the OFCP is intended to overcome.

This requirement should therefore be redrafted to include a ‘track record of delivering workable solutions in Australia or comparable markets.’ The requirement for an ABN is appropriate.

(Q3) What would hinder you from participating as a service provider?

An unintentionally narrow wording and interpretation of the requirement to demonstrate a record of service delivery in Australia may hinder our eligibility. This would limit Boehringer Ingelheim’s ability to provide Australian pork producers access to a precision on-farm connectivity technology deployed by global competitors in the United States, Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark and 11 other markets across the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

This requirement should therefore be redrafted to include a ‘track record of delivering workable solutions in Australia or comparable markets.’ The requirement for an ABN is appropriate.

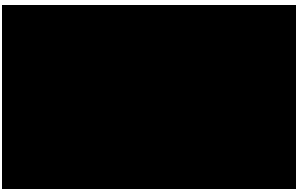
(Q4) What is the most popular and relevant connectivity product your business providers to farming, fisheries, or forestry businesses?

In 2023, Boehringer Ingelheim will introduce a precision farming surveillance platform for swine production to the Australian market called ‘SoundTalks®’. The SoundTalks platform works by using connected audio sensors (monitors) placed strategically throughout a piggery to monitor pig noises 24/7. The data is processed in the cloud using advanced AI algorithms to give producers the real-time status of their animals’ respiratory health.

This technology is capable of detecting pigs coughing 3-5 days earlier than humans are capable of. This enables advanced detection of respiratory illness, allowing producers and their veterinary health providers to make interventions earlier, leading to faster recovery times from respiratory disease outbreaks. Critically, the faster restoration of pigs' health increases productivity and reduces the amount of antibiotics needed to control an outbreak; supporting better anti-microbial stewardship. Today, SoundTalks monitors over 500,000 pigs annually across 15 countries. More information can be found at www.soundtalks.com.

We hope that that our contribution above is helpful in designing the program such that it can better meet its objectives. Having deployed a precision on-farm connectivity platform in 15 countries across four countries, Boehringer Ingelheim has significant experience in, and a deep understanding of, the barriers producers face in adopting on-farm connectivity technologies. We would be pleased to offer further advice based on our unique global experience upon request.

Sincerely,



Daniel Watkins
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Boehringer Ingelheim

Delivered electronically to ofcp@communications.gov.au