Comments on RCP #2 draft guidelines

CONNECTED FARMS

Who are Connected Farms?

We focus only on the Agricultural Sector

Leadership team have farming backgrounds

We have strong experience in Rural Communications

We enable digital agriculture (the adoption of AgTech)

Properly designed solutions for individual farms or major corporate farming portfolios

Farm Connectivity improves safety, community connection and mental health

Connected Farms solutions

Connected Farms are an Australian licenced telecommunications carrier and recipient of government regional communication funding. We deliver customised connectivity solutions to farms across rural/remote Australia

We work with regional partners to access telco infrastructure (such as towers) and build new Connected Farms tower assets, rural fibre networks and regional (edge) datacentres. We are technology vendor agnostic.

Specialise in technology designed for 'place-based' geographic coverage and farm applications. Enabling connectivity across farm produce lifecycle (see slide below)
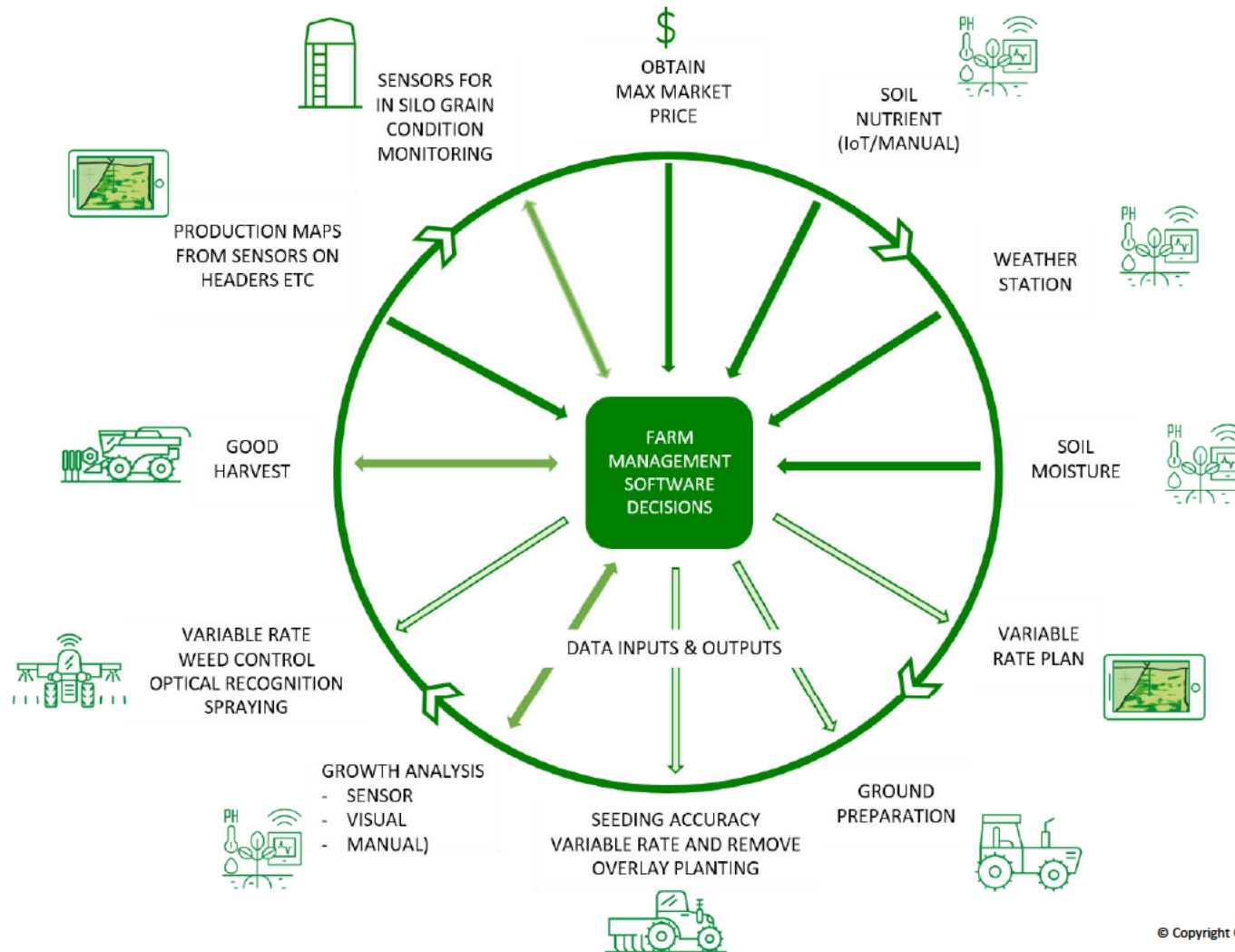
Our connectivity solutions include - Over the farm PrivateLTE (voice and data), currently trialing private mobile network, Over the Farm WiFi (voice and data), fixed wireless internet, satellite connected 'on the move' hotspots, over Farm IoT coverage, satellite business internet, edge data centres.

Rapid deployment of interim communications solutions allowing customers to be connected quickly while their permanent over the farm network is provisioned.
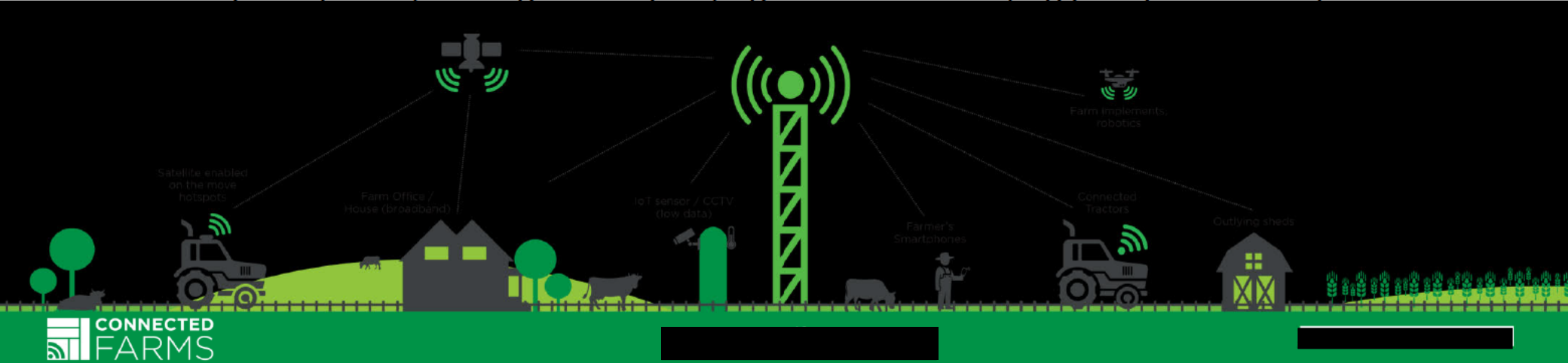
CONNECTED FARMS
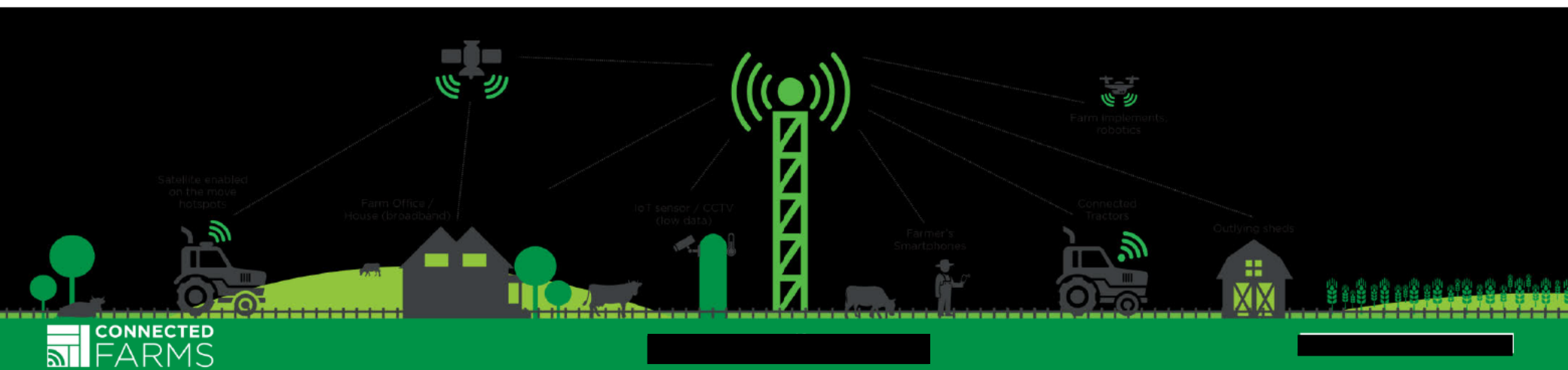
Connected agtech minimises inputs and maximises outputs

Summary comments on RCP#2 draft guidelines

1) Greater articulation needed in the guidelines on the role of innovation in place-based service delivery

2) Agriculture not specified as a 'priority' area or as an 'opportunity for growth' area under merit criteria

3) Does RCP#2 intend to align with Mobile Blackspots program and specify infrastructure sharing or neutral host model requirements? This would better facilitate innovation and service delivery in rural/remote areas on a commercial basis

4) Interaction between RCP #2 and findings/recommendations of other government reviews and reports (RTIRC, BAC Ag Tech report, Ag 2030 statement, Ag policy statement) is unclear.
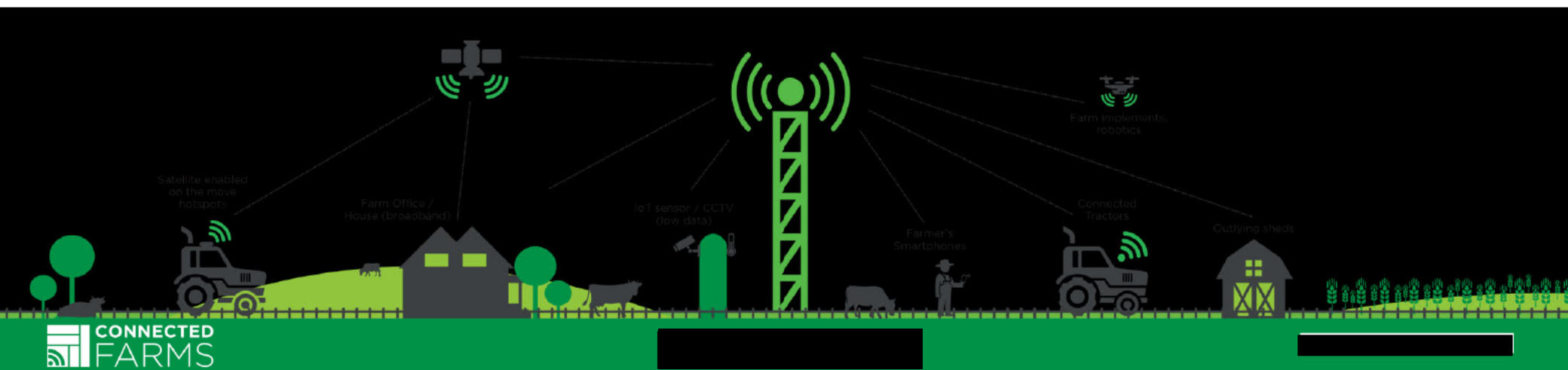

CONNECTED FARMS

Role of innovation and focus on Agriculture as a priority

➢ While the draft Guidelines set out as an intended outcome to "promote an innovative and competitive communications sector" and "place-based solutions to connectivity through mobile and/or broadband services", the detail contained in the Guidelines does not explicitly call out innovation in terms of technologies, devices or service delivery that may address these aims.

➢ A focus on innovation is critical to ensure that multi-tiered and alternative market solutions are considered in delivering place-based solutions, thereby encouraging a more nuanced and innovative approach to connectivity.

➢ While the draft Guidelines specify a range of priority areas and identify opportunities for growth under the merit criteria, Agriculture and farming are not specified in this list. In light of Ag2030 and the recently released BAC AgTech Report, this would seem to be a critical sector to include in the funding of
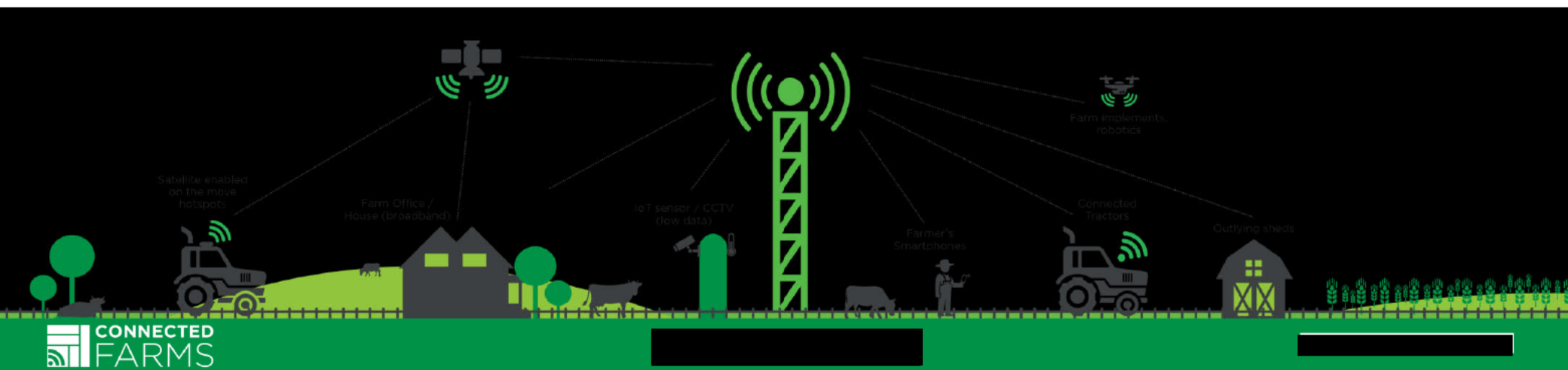
Infrastructure sharing requirements

➢ The draft Guidelines detail that RCP#2 is intended to complement nbn, mobile blackspots and commercial investment.

➢ The updated Mobile Blackspots program now specifies a neutral host model and infrastructure sharing requirements. Given that RCP#2 will likely fund infrastructure such as tower and antennas, will the guidelines also specify a requirement for infrastructure sharing? A consistent policy approach infrastructure build, funding and sharing is critical to encouraging innovation and connectivity.

➢ Mandating infrastructure sharing or access would remove significant barriers to entry to service delivery on a commercial basis in regional/remote Australia. Small regional telcos have place-based business models that, by their nature, rely on element of infrastructure sharing to deliver cost effective and needs based connectivity solutions.

CONNECTED
FARMS

Alignment with other government reviews

➢ It is unclear from the draft Guidelines how RCP #2 will interact with (or intends to take forward) a range of other findings and recommendations from Government sponsored reviews and reports on regional connectivity and Agriculture connectivity, such as the Regional Telecommunications Inquiry, the Broadband Advisory Committee's AgTech Report, the Ag2030 goal and statement, and the Ag Policy Statement.

➢ While we understand these reviews, reports and statements are in various stages of operation and delivery, an over-arching strategic approach to identifying and delivering on place-based connectivity needs across various levels of government is critical

Contact Connected Farms

Connected Farms Pty Ltd