

Roma Research Forum

Agriculture and Coal Seam Gas

A range of research projects is being conducted by The University of Queensland and the Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance on the interactions between agriculture and the coal seam gas industry. This research is investigating on-farm effects including farm logistics, operations, soil erosion, business management and profitability.

On August 26 2015, about 60 people attended a research forum in Roma that included presentations and discussion on recent research results. Participants included landholders, government agency staff, gas company staff and representatives of the Gasfields Commission Queensland. Presentations were made on groundwater research, impacts on agricultural production and profitability, the meaning of co-existence, the positioning of gas infrastructure on agricultural land, erosion impacts of access tracks, computer modelling of CSG effects on agricultural production, on landholder communication.

The forum was jointly conducted by The University of Queensland Centre for Coal Seam Gas, The Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance, AgForce and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland.

The following is a summary of feedback from participants after group discussion of the research.

Landholder time – how much time it takes to deal with CSG operations

- Surprised at how much time - 1 day per week - that landholders say they spent after construction on CSG related issues; there were discussions about how accurate this figure was; the fact that time reported was on top of other farming activities; and a recognition that concerning activities ('worry load') tend to be more draining than routine activities ('work load').

Water – really interested in results

- UQ Water Chemistry Atlas – great to see bore levels on an interactive map and have access to water quality data. Good to visualise OGIA data.
- There is an expense in taking samples to monitor water quality and other agriculture impacts even if no follow through/reporting occurs at that time.

Impacts on agriculture – some good, some bad

- Surprised at number of 'neutral' responses from interview/survey about impacts of CSG development on agriculture.
- Neutral responses about impacts of CSG on agriculture does not surprise

- One can infer that people see pros and cons of CSG impacts, but perhaps they hear about more of the negatives.

Access to Information – make it simple and easy to access

- Need a checklist and data capturing tools for landholders to gather information in a consistent way to enable comparing.
- Need a website/listings where people can find information and data readily
- A website is being put together for easy access to information, i.e., it will be an index for what study to go to for information about “x”
- Need simple info, i.e., study of water with clearly presented findings that people can relate to bores in their area
- How do people access UQ and GISERA information and reports?
- Where do landholders go to source information, i.e., do they go to AgForce, company web sites, etc.?
- What will be the follow up – the information provided - in relation to research projects?
- Use lay language in reporting, not fancy scientific language
- There is not enough information out there about quantifiable measures.

Compensation – are impacts fully compensated and in a useful way?

- Companies should be compensating further costs for landholders
- Effects on farm valuation, and the effects of lump sum versus regular (compensation) payments.

Engagement – respectful, accountable relationships

- Relationships in the future are very important
- A “farm gate” relationship (between landholders and CSG company reps) is probably the most important factor in co-existence
- Companies need to have a ‘business to business’ approach toward landholders
- Need an Ombudsman for landholders to go to – need an independent source of information.

Other – make research accurate, timely, useful

- Landholders have a lot of interview fatigue
- Issues presented, but not solutions
- Research projects are a snapshot in time
- No surprises from information presented
- A lot of people were locked out of the study because of them being very ‘pro’ or very ‘against’ CSG – don’t agree that that should have happened

- Size of enterprise information is needed in research studies.

Suggestions for future research were:

1. Better communication of research – where people can go to access research results, need to collate and get research information out to people.
2. Dust impacts and weeds; valuations, banks and finance.
3. Reinforces the value of speaking to neighbours - talking to each other
4. Need baseline studies without CSG on the whole region
5. How to manage boom and bust,
6. Gaps between research and practicality – how to get the research to work.
7. Exploring avenues for future research - How to share best practices? How CSG impacts lifestyle.