



NATIONAL INDIGENOUS  
LAND AND SEA STRATEGY

# Agribusiness Factsheet

*This factsheet was informed by the ILSC's activities and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations relating to agribusiness.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia have been caring for Australia's lands and waters and engaging in agricultural practices for millennia. More recently Indigenous Australians have played a vital role in the development of modern agriculture particularly across cattle, native foods and the botanicals sectors. Traditional wisdom, customary practice and knowledge of land and water management is being seen as increasingly important to maintain resilience and productivity of Australian agriculture and to develop new opportunities in the sector.

Growth in Australia's agriculture sector has occurred in parallel to large portions of country being returned to Indigenous Australians. However Indigenous Australians have not enjoyed significant benefits or been well positioned to establish a leadership or driving role within the industry, despite the extent of land under the care and control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

In 2020, the ILSC commissioned a study that showed the total economic contribution of the Indigenous agribusiness sector to Australia's economy in 2018-19 was estimated at \$85.4 million with 653 Indigenous people being employed full time. This is a tiny fraction of Australian \$70 billion agriculture sector.

Indigenous landholders in the agriculture sector are hindered by a range of factors including a lack of access to finance, business skillsets, markets and resources. Despite this, Indigenous control of significant landholdings, changing climatic conditions and growing consumer interest in food origin and production creates significant opportunity for Indigenous Australians in agriculture.

## Challenges

- Access to finance can be limited with land tenures unable to be used as collateral.
- Business management skills may be lacking and/or difficult to access.
- Access to and knowledge of markets may be inadequate particularly in remote locations.
- Lack of scale of operations and challenges in aggregating land, to focus effort on highest value and best use.
- Finding value aligned partners who can support business development.
- There may be insufficient knowledge of the production potential of certain landholdings.
- There may be resource constraints, particularly around land productivity and insufficient access and/or ownership of water.
- Difficulty in sourcing the skills and expertise to build business cases or feasibility studies to secure funding or investment.
- Regulatory and policy barriers can inhibit the ability to establish commercial operations and leverage land to secure financial supports.



Station life,  
Northern Australia.



Kakadu plum or  
Gubinge from  
Northern Australia.



Mustering at Roebuck  
Plains Station on Yawuru  
country, near Broome.

## Opportunities

There is potential to improve the agricultural production of significant Indigenous land holdings with the right support.

The creation of new investment and lending models would support Indigenous landholders to access new forms of capital.

There is potential to develop mixed-use business models e.g. combining cattle with carbon projects

There is potential to explore regenerative agriculture and regenerative landscape opportunities, redefining agriculture to include traditional practices and culture.

There is potential to build collaboration between Indigenous groups; opportunities to grow businesses beyond the farm gate; and to develop partnerships with other non-Indigenous operators.

Changing consumer trends and behaviours on food production are driving increased interest in new Indigenous food products e.g. bushfoods and aquaculture bringing with it the opportunity for Indigenous branding and certification.

## Tell Us What You Need

**Which of these is most needed from the ILSC to better support Indigenous people's participation in the Agribusiness sector:**

1. Provide information on where sector/industry opportunities exist and how to take advantage of those opportunities?
2. Help to build your business planning and capabilities? We can provide business planning support such as feasibility studies, capacity building, link you to technical advisors and networks.
3. Link you with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and groups to learn from each other? eg. Sharing ideas, lessons and business models that work, supporting conferences etc.
4. Actively support Indigenous-led organisations, networks, alliance, and initiatives to have a greater voice in industry development and government?
5. Provide funding support for projects?
6. Other suggestions?

## Projects supported by the ILSC

The ILSC has a long history of supporting Indigenous agribusiness. It previously focussed on owning and operating agricultural business to provide economic and capability development opportunities to Indigenous landholders. Under this previous model the ILSC operated 14 stations and managed over 100,000 head of cattle and 20,000 head of sheep.

The ILSC is now transitioning away from being owner/operators, instead focusing on supporting and enabling Indigenous people's participation in agribusiness. This includes handing back ownership of key agribusiness assets. For example, in February 2022, the ILSC handed back the lease of Roebuck Plains Station and Export Depot (near Broome, WA) to Nyamba Buru Yawuru. This enabled full ownership and management of the pastoral operations by Yawuru Traditional Owners.

To find out more about what we do please go to [www.ilsc.gov.au](http://www.ilsc.gov.au) and check out our Project Profiles.



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The ILSC GROUP

## Join The Conversation



**Come along** to one of our face-to-face sessions or join an online session. Visit our website to book in.



**Complete the on line survey.**



**Phone us on** 1800 818 490 for a confidential chat.



**Email** your submissions to [NILSS@ilsc.gov.au](mailto:NILSS@ilsc.gov.au) to share your thoughts.



**Get your full Information Pack:** visit [www.ilsc.gov.au](http://www.ilsc.gov.au), or email [NILSS@ilsc.gov.au](mailto:NILSS@ilsc.gov.au).



A feedback report summarising what we have heard from you and how we will use this important information will be available on the website.



[www.ilsc.gov.au](http://www.ilsc.gov.au)