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Improving Australia's Food Security: Lessons learned from the ARDC's Food Security Data Challenges program

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Australia is one of the most food secure countries in the world. However, long-term strategies are needed to ensure Australia has a resilient and sustainable food industry that maintains its ability and reputation for delivering high-quality food nationally and internationally.

The Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) established its Food Security Data Challenges program to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified by the United Nations by creating innovative digital infrastructure solutions to enable, support and improve research into Australia's production, consumption and distribution of safe and high-quality food. As part of Australia's National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS), the program has been developing national scale data and digital infrastructure capability aligned with national priority research areas and the UN Sustainable Development Goals through its portfolio of 10 mission driven projects (https://ardc.edu.au/multiproject/food-security-data-challenges-projects/). The projects aimed at providing data solutions in areas including agriculture, aquaculture, antimicrobial resistance, traceability and food provenance, biosecurity, nutrition, food equity, and food relief. Nine out of the 10 projects ran from March 2023 until June 2025, while the tenth project is running from May 2024 until June 2026.

Following on from our presentation at SciDataCon 2022, where we provided an overview and initial lessons learned at the early stages of the ARDC's Food Security Data Challenges program, this poster will report on the program's key outcomes and lessons learned during the program. Examples of our learnings included the definition and evaluation of our co-design process, opportunities and challenges we encountered when establishing and working on projects with different types of partner organisations (e.g. universities, NGOs, government agencies, etc), and how specific activities that we set up to create synergies between the projects were received by the projects.

We expect that our experiences will be useful to a variety of key parties in the data and research infrastructure ecosystem, including project managers, program designers and organisations investing in data projects.

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