About the fellow and the focus on food, beverage, and fibre traceability

Growing up on a mixed farm near Crookwell in NSW, Australia, Peter Carter has always been involved in agriculture and food production. Descendant of a long line of farmers and shepherds that migrated to Australia in the 1870s, his generation was fortunate to have the opportunity to attend University, where he studied agricultural economics and later environmental management and international development.

Using a spectral (light) scanner to compare the molecular composition (fat, protein, carbs) with label and content description.

Having worked extensively in pacific regional development and with a technical inclination and natural curiosity, Peter eventually found his way to the CSIRO. At CSIRO/Data61, he helped orchestrate a national research challenge focused on food and agricultural supply chains – now a major Australian government market access mission.

Since being accepted as a Churchill Fellow, Peter joined the global supply chain standards body GS1, where he leads cross-sectoral issues focusing on traceability, sustainability, and cross-border trade.

Why the focus on traceability?

Food traceability is not a new problem. As outlined in the report, knowing where food comes from, who produced it and how, has been a question asked throughout human civilisation. Poor quality or poorly managed food is a threat to human health. Not having enough food is a major source of social instability and conflict. What we eat, drink and wear is intrinsic to our cultural identity. Businesses and individual farmers throughout the world go to great lengths to produce what consumers want and in ways that respect the values, beliefs, and cultural norms. Throughout history, others have sought to take advantage of weak traceability to capture this value using inferior or counterfeit goods.

This study explores different approaches being adopted by countries and industries to understand international best practices and capabilities of relevance to Australian national food traceability. It is not exhaustive and does not aim to turn over every stone. As far as possible, the research involves in-person engagement and direct observations – while also synthesising relevant and current policy and other information of relevance to industrial systems.

While wanting to be concise and practical, some context is provided for readers not familiar with the subject matter. Also, a summary of what might be considered a standardised model for supply chain traceability such that there is a consistent approach to the evaluation of country initiatives. While not a specific objective, the approach has lent itself towards developing a maturity model or framework for comparison and multi-country or industry assessment.

Peters's mission has always been about making traceability concepts easy to understand – with emphasis on supporting primary producers (esp. smaller family farms) to participate in important discussions and policy developments that are changing the shape of international markets.