QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION

SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL FOOD PLAN
SEPTEMPER 2011

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Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the peak body representing and uniting 16 of Queensland's rural industry organisations who work on behalf of primary producers across the state. QFF's mission is to secure a sustainable future for Queensland primary producers within a favourable social, economic and political environment by representing the common interests of its member organisations'. QFF's core business centres on resource security; water resources; environment and natural resources; industry development; economics; quarantine and trade.

Our goal is to secure a sustainable and profitable future for our members, as a core growth sector of the economy. Our members include:

- Australian Prawn Farmers' Association,
- CANEGROWERS,
- Cotton Australia,
- Growcom,
- Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland,
- Queensland Chicken Growers Association,
- Queensland Dairyfarmer's Organisation,
- Queensland Chicken Meat Council,
- Flower Association of Queensland Inc.,
- Pork Queensland Inc.,
- Queensland Aquaculture Industries Federation,
- Biological Farmers of Australia,
- Fitzroy Food and Fibre Association,
- Pioneer Valley Water Co-operative Limited,
- Central Downs Irrigators Limited, and
- Burdekin River Irrigators Association.

General comments:

QFF welcomes the opportunity to be a part of process of developing a national food plan by providing this submission in response to the Issues paper.

1. What is the most important thing a national food plan should try to achieve?

Primarily QFF is of the opinion that a national food plan should be encapsulated by <u>a whole of Government referrable policy.</u>
There should be a requirement for all new government policy to be checked against the food policy to establish what impacts are likely on food production and the supply chains.
Collateral damage and unintended impacts to food production have occurred in the past and are likely to continue to occur unless there is a much more integrated approach to policy development at both a Federal and State level. It would be imperative that the states also develop complementary policies (For example, Queensland currently has a state food policy which is in the public consultation phase).
The list of departments that collaborated to deliver this issues paper on the National Food Plan is fitting of the broad importance of this plan, and how it must be considered. Food and

agriculture is an industry that has interactions across almost all government portfolios, and a truly visionary food policy will take this into account.

In a number of sections of the issues paper there are references to the importance of being able to import food to meet shortages in local products as a result of natural disasters or seasonality. There is also discussion about the need to import food to reduce prices for both fresh and processed foods.

While this may meet a purist economic doctrine it does have significant implications for the future of food supplies in Australia. One of the significant issues being faced around the world is dwindling supplies of quality natural resources, particularly water. This often arises as a result of over use, climate variability or climate change. Australia needs to be extremely careful that it does not put itself in a position that it becomes reliant on imports of either fresh or process products from countries that are themselves facing resource shortages or degradation. As an example, the area in Northern China from which much of our imported vegetables originate is currently facing a dwindling ground water supply with the predictions being that it will be exhausted in ten years.

QFF does support the contention in the paper that a food policy should do more than address food security through protecting supply chains.

It is imperative that farmers can compete on an equitable playing field. QFF understands the important context of global trade and as a trading industry we support free trade. However it appears that in recent years that the pendulum has swung away from Australian farmers and our terms of trade are becoming increasing difficult to manage. Many markets including our international competitors seem to dominate exports at the expensive of the Australian product to extent that the Australian businesses cannot compete and become unprofitable. Priming a market to remain competitive should be a critical part of any future food plan. This can be done by supporting our great exporting industries, providing adequate infrastructure and easing capacity constraints at each stage only the supply chain.

2. What do you think the vision and objectives for a national food plans be?

QFF believes that the vision for a National Food Plan should be one that delivers on the whole of Government referable policy outlined in response to Question 1. With respect o objectives a food plan should provide a platform that recognises the importance the food industry and Australia, provides for sensible safeguards around any erosion to our ability to produce food and provides enabling strategies to grow the sector over time.

1. Promoting the importance of the food and agriculture sector for example;
    a. School based education systems around healthy eating
    b. School, vocational and tertiary based support mechanism that promote careers in the food industry (including primary production)
2. Safeguarding our ability produce food for example for example;
    a. Planning policies to secure the future land and water resources that are scarce and fundamental to food and fibre production

b. Biosecurity and quarantine systems that are well funded for the entire communities benefit and work proactively to prevent incursions and infestations by affective collaboration across state boarders
c. Effective and targeted programs to assist farmers adapt to climate change and develop low emissions farming systems
3. Strategies to enable growth across the sector for example;
    a. Priming domestic markets for growth by delivering supply chain efficiencies that increase the economic returns to primary producers
    b. Increasing the independent powers of the commonwealth regulators to investigate marketing mechanisms that are not only anti-competitive but also cannibalistic to other elements of their own supply chain by enforcing market dominance
    c. Increasing the investment in research and development in order to increase productivity and accompanying that with a ration based investment in extension and outreach services
    d. Working with food industry groups to promote and encourage investment in the sector
    e. Recognise and implement market based systems to incentivise proactive management of our natural resources by land managers through the adoption of voluntary industry lead, verifiable farm management systems.
4. We must reduce waste!
    a. In the drive to deliver consumer expectations on food supply (see response 5 e) there is simply too much waste in the supply chain. A priority in a food plan for Australia must be to reduce waste in the supply chain. This would have ancillary benefits for every other objective in the plan.

3. What do you see as the major risks to Australia's food supply in the coming years and decades? How could they be avoided or managed more effectively?

QFF believes that the major risks to Australia's food supply for the future:

1. Competition for and or depletion of the natural resources required to produce food, fibre and foliage.

   It is often contended by politicians that we should "market forces decide" what is the best and most valuable use of our land. This statement appears quiet ridiculous when we look at the way successive governments have actively and aggressively encouraged the development of some industries at the expense of others. This can be seen in absolute stark reality when we observe the threat that is being placed over soil water resources that are currently used for primary production but are now also being put under stress for mining and gas exploration. Government do provide planning mechanisms, legislative controls coordination resources for some industries to a greater extent than to others. The bottom line is, food and agricultural production has slipped down the agenda when it comes to economic and strategic resource planning. The lack of planning certainty destroys confidence which in turn erodes investment security from all players in the supply chain.

A comprehensive but targeted food plan should work to highlight the strategies that with appropriate effort could address this inequity.

2. Loss of farm profitability, declining productivity and minimal market power.

Unprofitable farms are also farms that put the most amount of stress on natural resources and public welfare assistance. Public policy should move towards a proactive footing for agriculture.

Government should work with industry to develop public / private investment partnerships that encouraging innovation by underwriting the initial risk to adopting new farm management practices that have low emission signatures and high productivity / environmental benefits.

Government should work with industry to test the fairness and transparency of some of the market structures within our food production and processing supply chains. This can be done by looking across commodities at those that are working well, particularly in the way in which different sections of the supply chain inform and collaborate with each other.

All levels of Government need to work with farmer and industry organisations to assist them to meet the challenges understood by climate change science. At this point in time this work is polarised in to belief systems and farmers are put into boxes by opinion leaders. Government needs to encourage scientists to work hand in hand with farmers who, more than most, understands the hazards of scientific uncertainty and making decisions based on risk assessments. So some level of maturity and recognition of this needs to be brought into this discussion so that farmers are given the credit for understanding the future increases in climate variability, the need for low emissions farming systems and how these challenges are relevant to their type of business.

4. What does food security mean to you? How would this be achieved? How would we know if/when we are food secure?

Food security means that from a production point of view:

a) The resources both natural and human / intellectual are available to produce a variety of food and fibre products that allow for profitability and diversity in the farming system. This means that resistance the investigation and adoption of new technology such and biotechnology and nanotechnology should not become a political concern, but remain a scientific endeavour. Likewise the development of new chemicals and the appropriate science and risk based transition for old chemistry should be considered within the Australian context, cognisant of our pattern of use of farm chemicals and the size of the agricultural chemical market in Australia.

b) Fundamental requirements to maintain food production should be protected from inappropriate development
c) Development that encourages sustainable increases in our ability to produce food is considered on their merits – for example on farm water storages
d) The elements that secure the quality of our food produced in Australia and sold domestically or exports need to be safeguarded. This means we must maintain the Acceptable Level of Protection policy which underpins the current protocols for developing Import Risk Assessments

Food security means that from a consumer point of view:

e) There is access to healthy, safe food of a sufficient variety and quantity to maintain a healthy diet. From a public policy perspective this means we should encourage consumers to buy produce that is domestically grown and sourced within season as far as is practicable. We should also educate the consumer on what are acceptable level of imperfections and inconsistencies in fresh produce. This is best done through adequate labelling and education / demonstration of the challenges of producing fresh.
f) Consumers are driven by price. In our opinion they want this high quality product at the cheapest possible price. This often delivers a perverse market outcome and an unsustainable supply chain. Government can inform this debate by not misconstruing the politics of food grocery prices with an obsession with CPI based economic indicators. If consumers want to cheap produce they should understand the trade-offs that this will bring in either sustainability of quality.

5. What are the most important benefits that Australian consumer's get or should get from our food supply? Why?

See response to Question 4 e), 4 f).

6. What two or three actions:

- ***by the government sector would most benefit food consumers?***

QFF would point to a number places within this submission where we have highlighted specific actions that need to be undertaken. Specifically we would pin point:

- Looking into the lesson learnt in the milk price war of 2011 to determine what additional powers can be given to the ACCC to monitor the market place to ensure it supports a sustainable, fair and transparent supply chain;
- Look into Government policy that can stimulate investment in the sector by improving resource security (eg Murray Darling Basin plan, Cal Seam Gas threats to underground aquifers); inject intellectual innovation (private / public partnerships that underwrite initial risk to adoption); modernise extension / outreach services via partnership agreements with industry groups and private sector beneficiaries in order to quarantine and build the R & D investment bucket but value add its spend through better adoption.

- ***by the non-government sector would most benefit food consumers?***

  QFF makes no further comment.

7. What do you see as the major opportunities for Australia's food industry in the coming years and decades? How could they be realised?

As Japan, India and China struggles to ensure food security for their nations, more reliance of food products will be required by Australia. Traditional markets such as USA, Canada and Europe will require more farm production capacity to serve their own growing internal markets; leaving less available for world markets. Also the shrinking availability of world fish and seafood stocks through over-fishing will tend to have importers of seafood from overseas countries looking to our seafood industry for their supplies. Inevitably; this will increase pressure on Australian producers to make up the shortfalls.

The reverse is also the case whereby countries that are leading the third–world revolution in food production and manufacturing are sending top quality food products (i.e. China, India) at ridiculously cheap prices, to be snapped by bargain hunting Australian consumers. The dilemma for Australia will be that if these countries increase their prices or worse still, redraw Australia's access to them, then we may not have the food production capacity to fill this void.

There is also much that can still be achieved through research and development of Australia products for consumption both at home and abroad. The Commonwealth Scientific Investigation and Research Organisation (CSIRO) is researching many ways of developing better varieties of seed that produce more crops per hectare farmed, conserving water and soil nutrient availability, reducing pest attack and disease and reducing the cost of production for farmers. This is being done for both plant and animal farm industries. However, there is the potential to do much more and Australian Governments and departments (at all levels) must support and fund these essential CSIRO (and similar projects by other organisations) projects and activities.

There is too much waste within the supply chain. Reducing the amount of waste along the supply chain will go a long way to securing a more profitable and sustainable for every business within the chain as well as reducing prices for the consumer..

8. What two or three actions:

- ***by the government sector would most benefit businesses that make distribute and sell food?***

  QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

- ***by the non-government sector would most benefit businesses that make distribute and sell food?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

9. What specific food policy and regulatory functions within or between governments:

- ***overlap?***

There is always an overlap of regulatory responsibilities between Federal, State and local jurisdictions, due to the complex nature that surrounds environmental protection, water resources and land-use management. This is particularly true on issues that cut across state borders, such as water and they therefore lend themselves to be dealt with at a national level. The current debate and political point-scoring that has evolved around the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is testament to this. It is hoped that the National Food Plan could resolve any overlapping issues so that the objectives (as stated in paragraph 2) can be achieved.

- ***are at cross-purposed?***

QFF acknowledges that there are some issues involving food policy are crossed-purposed in trying to satisfy the needs of one group or organisation at the expense or as a disruption to the farm communities of Australia. Nothing illustrates this point more clearly than the recent events over live cattle exports from Australia to Indonesia and the current rapid expansion of Coal Seam Gas development into currently un-protected farming land and water resources.

The scenarios are similar in the picture they paint of the complexity of co-existence.

One is the blending of economic drivers and community values for animal welfare.

The other is an economic driver at the expense of the resource security required by another industry.

Government influences both outcomes and cannot therefore divorce itself from resolving the conflict on the bases of past decisions must now be respected.

- ***have gaps?***

  QFF submits that has just one example Having a federal body such as FSANZ develop standards in consultation with the stakeholder including both industry and the relevant state regulators should be a process which is efficient in both terms of time and output. In reality it can be a very time consuming and tortuous process especially when one or two states have agendas which are likely to impose significant costs and regulatory burden which far outweighs the actual risks involved. This often forces FSANZ to develop a standard with no real guidelines to assist in implementation. This is in no way intended to be a criticism of FSANZ but points out the need for greater uniformity in the way state jurisdictions deal with these matters and hence the need for more involvement by the Federal Government.

10. Which regulation or regulatory regime poses the greatest burden on the food industry along the food chain (production, processing/manufacturing, transport and logistics, wholesale, retail)? What could be done to reduce this burden?

There are several regulations and regulatory regimes that QFF believes pose the greatest burden on the food industry along the food:

1. **Land use planning.** Although land use planning is not normally the responsibility of Federal Government there is an ever increasing problem associated with farming in and around capital and regional centres in reference to rural zoning of these areas. While there are planning schemes which designate rural zones; there seems to be less understanding by Local Government and local community of what this rural zoning actually means (i.e. agricultural businesses/production). The inconsistency between the States via their relevant environmental legislation creates significant impediments to production and compliance, particularly for national companies.

2. **Compliance with water, vegetation and other environmental and development Acts and regulations.** Farmers are issued with a plethora of compliance regulations and Acts that they sometimes find that they are overwhelmed by the amount of legislation that need to comply with from Federal, State and Local Governments. Particularly when these regulations often result in costing them in time, money and ultimately lost production.

   The Queensland Government has been stream–lining these requirements through a number of programs but we commend them on an overarching objective of looking for alternative compliance mechanisms through accrediting / recognising industry based voluntary approaches.

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3. **Supermarket specifications.** Consumer expectations are often driven by market information, communication and advertising. Given the majority of produce is bought through supermarkets, the standards and specification these supermarkets

set for supplying to them is critical to the livelihoods of many producers. IN many circumstances it is these high specifications that generate a significant amount of waste at the production end of the supply chain. Although most retailers will say that this is driven by the wishes and requirements of the end consumer the reality is that even those who may be fussy and selective with their product purchase, if they were told of the extra costs to the consumer associated with this policy and the substantial wastage that could result; most Australians would accept a broader specification of product line. Often these specifications are used as a mechanism to reduce the number of product lines that need to be carried on the shelves.

4. **Waste and recycling.** This waste can be attributed to three major reasons. Part of this waste is a resultant of the supermarket and retailers' response of selection of product mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is partly due to oversupply of commodities within the market and partly through the importation of cheaper products from overseas that under-cut the Australian Minimising these three impacts would greatly assist the viability of farms within Australia.

5. **Biosecurity issues.** It is essential that the current, 'Acceptable Level of Protection Policy', which underpins the current protocols for developing the import risk assessments, is maintained. If this is compromised the current animal and plant health status of this country will limit the future productivity capacity of agriculture in Australia. Disease incursions are likely to severely impact on both mortalities and morbidity of our animal industries (i.e. Foot and Mouth Disease) with a resultant decrease in production to the affected industries.

   Likewise with plant diseases and environmental pests effective border controls must be maintained to minimise or prevent the incursion of pest and disease. The cost to industry and the public is enormous where controls fail such has been seen with the introduction of the Red Imported Fire Ant, the Asian Honey Bee Myrtle Rust and Citrus Canker to name a few.

6. **Carbon Tax, Carbon Farming Initiative and carbon sequestration.**
   Carbon Tax will impact on intensive agricultural production as it will be exposed to higher input costs with no way of mitigating the costs. The Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) may benefit the extensive animal industries and maybe some cropping systems but it is impossible to see where it will benefit the intensive industries. If famers or investors decide that the carbon price is more attractive than food production arable land may well end up being planted to trees.

   The whole supply chain will be impacted in 2014 when fuel for transport is included which will continue to put upward pressure on prices.

   The (CFI) and any offsetting or reforestation projects need to consider the value of the land as a food production asset first. At the present, the indications are that the carbon price ($23 per tonne) is not sufficient to enable this to happen, however this may not be the case if the price per tonne rises or continues to rise.

7. **Registering of animal health products including vaccines and pesticides and herbicides.** Australia is seen as a small market by a range of overseas manufactures including those which produce animal health products including vaccines and pesticides and herbicides. Regulatory barriers to registering these products can be a disincentive to a company making products available in Australia. It is therefore very important that whatever is required of the company to register a product is both flexible and timely. Food production is again likely to suffer unless the policy setting under which the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) operates, allow the policy to be flexible and hence timely in the registration process.

   The registration of both pesticides and herbicides are constantly being reviewed with the result that after a lengthy review period a decision is made to deregister often with little time for an industry to respond and more importantly there is often no suitable alternative registered in Australia. New generation chemicals are usually not available simply because the chemical company can see no benefit in attempting to register a product in Australia because of the size of the market. The cost of registration would simply make the product too expensive for the end user.

   Off label and minor use registrations need to involve a process which ensures that they are assessed and a decision made in the shortest time possible that is commensurate with the risk.

8. **Genetically Modified (GM) Crops and livestock.** There has been much conjecture recently over the use and importation of GM technology into Australia's food production chain. While the morality over the use of GM product will be continued to be argued in the media and amongst Australians generally; the QFF view is that there is much to be gained in the long term through researching appropriate GM projects that prove (after rigorous research and testing) to be suitable for inclusion in products of in Australia's food production system. That is not say that QFF agrees with every GM product, but if gains by GM technology can be substantiated that result in proven medical health, environmental or water saving benefits; then QFF supports their inclusion into the National Food Plan.

   Federal and State Governments should support and ensure that funding is continued into the research and testing of appropriate GM production items to be included in Australia's food-production-chain.

11. What two or three actions:

- ***by the government sector would most benefit communities that are highly dependent on food production, processing, distribution or sale?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

- ***by the non-government sector would most benefit communities that are highly dependent on food production, processing, distribution or sale?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

12. Do you think that the development and implementation of government policies related to food are adequately coordinated? If not, please explain why and provide examples. What mechanisms could the government consider that might address your concerns?

QFF submits that coordination is limited, at best. QFF recommends that COAG take a position on food policy and that appropriate mechanisms are put in place to drive a broad set of reforms to deliver better coordination in this area. This coordination should first provide a mechanism to recognise where work has already been done to ensure the focus is placed on constraints identified within this submission.

13. Have all the possible risks to Australia's food security been identified in this paper? If not, what other risks are you aware of?

QFF believes the issues paper was comprehensive.

14. What specific additional actions by:
the government sector would most benefit our food security status?
the non-government sector would assist in maintaining our food security status?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

15. Are current arrangements adequate to ensure continuity of Australia's food supply during significant national emergencies? If not, what further action is needed to prepare for food supply emergencies and improve our ability to manage emergencies if they occur?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

16. ***What specific actions would help improve food security in remote Indigenous and low socioeconomic populations?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

17. ***Do you see a role for the food industry in supporting population health and nutrition outcomes? If so, what do you believe that role is and what support might industry need in fulfilling this role?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

18. ***Some food industry sectors have developed tools to demonstrate desirable product attributes to consumers, for example through organic or environmental certification. Do you know of any examples of food supply markets that are not adjusting to evolving consumer demands (that is, potential market failures)? What are they and how could they be encouraged to adjust (that is, not fail)?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

19. ***How do consumer perceptions of food production (across the food supply chain) affect food-related businesses and regional communities? What research has been done on this?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue*.*

20. ***Are you confident in the food you eat? If not, what aspects concern you? Do you believe food in Australia is safe? If not, please outline which aspects of food in Australia you believe are not safe and what needs to be done to ensure all food in Australia is safe?***

QFF believes the food that we consume in Australia is safe*.*

21. ***What are the main drivers of, and barriers to, domestic and foreign investment in Australia's food industry?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue*.*

22. ***What would encourage more investment in the food industry?***

QFF makes no further submission on this issue*.*

23. For each part of the food industry, where can new or additional investment contribute to a more competitive food industry and to economic growth? Where do gaps currently exist:
along the food supply chain?
in technology or in skills?
in infrastructure to support the food industry?
other (please explain)?
Could these be addressed by productive foreign direct investment?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue.

24. What are the key issues relating to infrastructure that positively or negatively affect the food businesses along the food supply chain? Is there a role for governments in addressing those issues?

Infrastructure constraints exist in many areas of the food supply chain and Government does play a role in addressing. QFF submits that it would be wise for the Government to (or require the States to) assess as part of this food plan the suitability and constraints of the supply chain.

25. What barriers to integrating new and emerging technology into Australian infrastructure hinder improvements to the efficiency of the food supply chain?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

26. What regulatory conflicts in the passage of food or livestock on Australian infrastructure significantly impair the food supply chain?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

27. How could the food industry develop more value-adding and product diversification opportunities? What stops businesses from doing this now?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

28. What are the main drivers of and barriers to innovation in Australia's food industry as a whole, and also the sub-sectors and with the different business models that comprise the industry?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

29. What would encourage more innovation in the food industry?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

30. What are the top consumer priorities in product innovation over the next 5, 10 or 20 years?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue***.***

31. What could government do, consistent with a market-based policy approach, to help the Australian food industry take a long-term strategic view to exploit growth opportunities?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

32. How could the food industry make the most of emerging market opportunities, including niche markets such as food tourism? Could the Australian Government play a role in this area?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

33. How could the food industry research and development agenda be improved to ensure more involvement from industry and more effective identification of its needs and the needs of consumers?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

34. What should a successful, innovative Australian processed food industry look like in the short, medium and longer term?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

35. What are the key areas for research and development investment that would produce the necessary productivity gains for the food industry?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

36. How could the tension between new technology adoption (such as biotechnology or nanotechnology) and public concerns about possible associated risks best be managed?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

37. What could government do to accelerate food and nutrition research and development to successful commercialisation outcomes?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

38. What measures or alternative approaches could the government introduce or encourage that would facilitate greater use of public research facilities by small to medium enterprises in the food industry?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

39. Are there labour supply issues with skilled and professional workers in the food industry? If so, what are they, and what causes them? What particular skills or professions are in short supply and why? Is there a role for government in improving the supply of skilled and professional staff?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

40. What aspect of workforce development for the food industry should take priority? Why? Possible choices may include (but are not limited to) building an evidence base, initiatives to attract and retain appropriately skilled people, training to upskill existing people, labour mobility, migration.

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

41. Could the Australian Government's current range of initiatives designed to meet the current and future skills needs of employers be used to develop a skills strategy or plan for the food industry? How?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

42. Are you aware of programs to attract and retain new entrants to the field of agriculture working? If yes, how could these programs be improved?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

43. What could be done to use growing student interest in environmental issues to meet the skills needs of the food industry? (For example, the decline in supply of agricultural science graduates has corresponded with growth in environmental science graduates—there are crossovers and shared interests for these study pathways).

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

44. What could food businesses do that would enable them to function effectively with a less abundant supply of labour? Are there any barriers to making these changes?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

45. What else could governments or non-government groups do to promote economic and social sustainability of food production, processing, or distribution (including resilience to economic or other shocks)?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

46. What region-specific issues should be taken into account in a national food plan?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

47. Who will be farming in 2030 (and 2050)? What will farmers' relationship to the land be (ownership, management, leasing) and what

are the implications of this for social sustainability of farming communities?

There has been a steady trend in some areas of agriculture to aggregate the ownership of properties by family/corporate structures often in different climatic zones to spread the risks associated with variable weather patterns eg droughts and floods. This is by no means a new trend as there has been a history of such investment throughout our history. This has been evident particularly in the extensive agricultural industries but also it is also being seen more in the intensive industries such as horticulture where there is aggregation of properties to try and improve efficiencies in management, plant and infrastructure as well as diversification for climatic reasons both in terms of rainfall and the availability of irrigation water. If the current climate predictions are reasonably accurate then we may see this trend continue for climatic reasons. However there is also a growing body of data to indicate that from an economic perspective there is a tipping point at which the economies of scale do not deliver a benefit via consolidation and expansion. In essence some large enterprises are becoming financially unviable while some small / family sized operations continue to operate on modest but stable income. However, there is little doubt that there will be further reductions in the number of farms and one assumes the land may be included in a new aggregation or may be turned over to some other use.

While leasing has been a major component of extensive industries involving state owned land it has not played a major part in the more intensive industries. There has been some increasing evidence of leasing in some intensive industries eg meat chicken farms where there are significant capital costs involved. This often represents a better option for investors as opposed to the management option.

Given the significant entry barriers, particularly in relation to finance for younger people, leasing co-management and share farming may offer entry opportunities.

Whether rural communities are impacted or not by such changes is difficult to answer generally,

Where there is a change in land use eg sheep to cattle then there is likely to be an impact as the number of people required to work on and provide services for a cattle operation would be less than an equivalent sheep/wool operation. On the other hand the development of operations such as Cubby Station and other cotton properties in the region has seen corresponding improvements in the viability of towns such as Dirranbandi.

48. What (if any) contribution could action on food waste make to improving the sustainability of Australian food supply chains? What are the best opportunities to reduce Australia's generation and landfill disposal of food? Are these subject to market failures (that is, the private sector does not have commercial incentives to better manage food waste)?

QFF makes no further submission on this issue

Conclusion

QFF supports in principle the aims and objectives of the National Food Plan and we acknowledge the opportunity to express our views and opinions as part of the consultation and development of this document.

There are numerous challenges and opportunities that can be seen and attributed to the introduction of such a scheme as, 'The National Food Plan' and it is hoped that this QFF submission will be taken as a positive contribution to the discussion. QFF would be happy to provide further contribution to the development of this policy in any future process.