

QFF ELECTION PRIORITIES 2024



The united voice of agriculture in Queensland.



QUEENSLAND FRUIT
& VEGETABLE GROWERS



COTTON
AUSTRALIA



CANEGROWERS



Nursery & Garden Industry
Queensland



eastAUSmilk
ADVOCACY · UNITY · SERVICE



Turf
Queensland
Grow Green



pork
QUEENSLAND INC.



Queensland United
Egg Producers



Australian
Cane
Farmers



BUNDABERG
REGIONAL
IRRIGATORS
GROUP



BRIA
Bundaberg River Irrigation Area
BUNDABERG REGIONAL



CENTRAL DOWNS IRRIGATORS
LIMITED

CENTRAL DOWNS IRRIGATORS
LIMITED



Water



Mallawa
IRRIGATION



THEODORE
WATERS



Eton IRRIGATION



Fairbairn
Irrigation Network



LWUF
lockyer water users forum

What we're calling for

1

Investment in a 'spine of resources' for natural hazard mitigation to support the needs of farm businesses through the cycle of natural disasters and drought.

2

\$24 million over 4 years to deliver on-farm water efficiency support for farmers, and extension of the irrigation discount.

3

\$10 million over 4 years for the SmartAg Queensland program to increase skills and capacity across the agriculture sector through industry-led initiatives.

4

\$8 million over 4 years to enable farmers to access energy innovation and tariff efficiencies including smart metering, and switchboard, data use and data security upgrades.

5

Development of a strategic plan as a priority for food and agriculture to ensure the future viability of farmers so that consumers can continue to access high quality, affordable Australian food, fibre and foliage.

6

Elevation of biosecurity including a whole of government commitment to work with industry to review Queensland's current biosecurity funding model and build the capacity to manage the increased risks ahead.

7

Removal of stamp duty on crop insurance to assist farmers to manage climate risk which currently costs the government between \$3 million – \$5 million in lost revenue.

8

An effective approach to land use planning to ensure the protection of prime agricultural land and management of the impacts of increased demand for land such as urban development, environmental requirements and developer offsets, the renewable energy rollout, carbon farming, mining and gas.

9

Investment in vital road and transport networks including the Bruce Highway and Bremer Bridge, and improvement in planning and management of the transport of renewable infrastructure on road networks.



About QFF

The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of agriculture in Queensland.



Our members are agricultural peak bodies who collectively represent more than 13,000 farmers who produce food, fibre and foliage across the state.

QFF's peak body members come together to develop policy and lead projects on the key issues that are important to their farmer members and the Queensland agriculture sector.

Together, we form a strong, unified voice leveraging our effectiveness by working together to drive policy and initiatives that support a strong future for Queensland agriculture.

Our members

QFF's membership is made up of agricultural peak bodies who represent more than 13,000 primary producers across Queensland.



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CANEGROWERS



ADVOCACY · UNITY · SERVICE



Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland



Grow Green



QUEENSLAND INC.



Queensland United Egg Producers



Australian Cane Farmers



BUNDEBERG REGIONAL IRRIGATORS GROUP



BURDEKIN RIVER IRRIGATION AREA QUEENSLAND



CENTRAL DOWNS IRRIGATORS LIMITED



Water



Mallawa IRRIGATION



THEODORE WATERS



EATON IRRIGATION



Fairbairn Irrigation Network

About agriculture in Queensland



The total value of food and agriculture production in QLD = **\$23.67 billion**



Approximately **88.4%** of the state's land is used for agricultural production



QLD is a horticulture powerhouse producing **94%** of the nation's bananas, **99%** of pineapples and **48%** of avocados



QLD accounts for **~ 49%** of Australia's beef cattle herd



Agriculture contributes **363,000 jobs** across the supply chain in QLD



48% less water is needed to produce Australian cotton than in 1992



Queensland accounts for **95% of Australia's** sugarcane with raw sugar being QLD's 2nd largest agricultural export



QLD has about **70,000** milking cows producing **280+ million litres** of milk per year



The state holds the nation's largest pig herd with **607,000+ head**



1/3 of Australia's eggs are produced in QLD



QLD is the **2nd largest** poultry meat producing state in Australia



Nursery production **ranks 3rd** behind fruit, vegetables and sugar in QLD

Priority area | Energy

Overview

The energy system in Queensland continues to evolve with the transition to renewable energy, new technologies, electrification, and changing tariff structures. At the same time, the policy landscape at a local, state, and national level continues to change.

Queensland's transition to renewable energy and aspirations for net zero should be underpinned by improved energy productivity and an energy system that encourages efficient investment by energy producers, consumers, and networks.

There are opportunities at the distribution level to achieve increased productivity, affordability and reliability through on-farm efficiency, the adoption of renewables and storage technologies, and the ability for farms to share energy locally through the modernisation of grid networks.

QFF's position

QFF is calling for a clear plan to ensure the agriculture sector and regional communities have access to secure, optimised, affordable and reliable energy throughout the development of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan.

To support this, QFF advocates for the amendment of regulations to enable farm businesses to better understand their energy options and improve their on-farm efficiency, while exploring opportunities for on-farm renewables and storage, and local microgrids.

This can only be achieved through comprehensive consultation with the agriculture sector and rural and regional communities.

Policy actions

- Provide funding and support for smart metering, switchboard upgrades, data use and data security.
- Remove the solar bonus scheme from tariff charges and fund it through consolidated revenue.
- Increase the thresholds for large customers from 100 megawatt hours of electricity per annum (MWh/a) to a minimum 160MWh/a. Large customers should be granted access to a consumption-based tariff (similar to the now obsolete inclining block tariff, T43). A consumption-based tariff structure would be more equitable for occasional or seasonal users, when compared to the current suite of demand-based tariffs.
- Remove the non-reversion policy for large customers to align with small customers and households.
- Eliminate export limits to the grid, which currently prevent farmers from exporting more renewable energy to the grid.
- Set the prices for Queensland networks at efficient levels.
- Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer energy sharing and microgrids to improve the cost effectiveness and utilisation of on-farm energy assets and the Ergon electricity network.
- Improve the visibility of retail opportunities in regional Queensland through:
 - Maintaining the security of tariff equalisation via the community service obligation (CSO) for regional Queensland customers via the Queensland Competition Authority and regulated networks where clear visibility of payments is legislated through publishing the annual CSO payment figures.
 - Ensuring the CSO is paid to Ergon network and not to Ergon Retail so that other retailers may be able to offer regional services.
- Provide opportunities for on-farm batteries through a funded subsidy arrangement that enables farm businesses to remain financially viable throughout the reduced payback period.

Priority area | Water

Overview

The Queensland agriculture sector has some of the highest input costs in the world without receiving the protections and subsidies that are seen in other countries.

This has led Queensland farmers to be some of the most efficient and productive in the world. However, to remain internationally competitive in the export market and to maintain access to affordable fresh food for all Queenslanders, these costs must be addressed - particularly when it comes to water.

Inputs such as water and electricity are imperative to the efficiency and profitability of a farming enterprise. At the same time, excessive costs and a lack of long-term price certainty in these areas is also eroding investment and investment confidence in Queensland, and in the agriculture sector.

QFF's position

QFF is calling for a coordinated and consultative approach for water planning and policy and regulation development to ensure water efficiency, affordability and reliability is stabilised for the agriculture sector.

The sustainability of the sector is reliant on this being achieved while we also work to find solutions that benefit the economy while respecting the needs of the environment.

Policy actions

- \$24 million over 4 years to deliver on-farm water efficiency support for farmers.
- Commit to affordable bulk and distribution water prices for SunWater and Seqwater schemes and provide funding for QFF to ensure irrigated agriculture can meaningfully respond to the pending price investigations.
- Commit to dam safety being recognised and regulated in perpetuity as a public benefit with government to fund the cost.
- Continue lower bound water prices, including zero rate of return and only pay economically prudent and efficient costs of operation, maintenance, and refurbishment.
- Examine strategic challenges facing existing bulk and supply schemes, including greater protection of irrigation infrastructure and scheme modernisation.
- Utilise a whole of government approach for the development and implementation of policy on the reuse of water from sewage treatment plants as a sustainable option for agricultural water.
- Facilitate temporary water trading.
- Develop a regulatory mechanism to facilitate future access to reserves and unused allocations in existing water plans which have set strategic targets for future planning projects.
- Extend irrigator discounts due to cost-of-living pressures to help ease farm costs and ensure ongoing farm viability.
- Minimise further water recovery in the Murray-Darling Basin and optimise investment in complimentary measures for environmental outcomes.
- Maintain existing long-term water rights and prioritise these rights before other uses are considered.
- Prioritise the finalisation of the business case for the restoration of Paradise Dam and announce a fully funded and committed timeline for the build commencement, and work with the Bundaberg community and irrigators to ensure water security is maintained during the planning and construction of the new dam wall.

Priority area | Environment

Overview

There is increasing demand for food and agricultural products to be produced using environmentally responsible practices with increasing economic significance placed on natural capital.

Farmers and the agriculture sector need to be supported to maintain productivity and profitability while also preserving Queensland's natural environment and exploring natural capital opportunities.

QFF's position

QFF recognises that improved sustainability results are more effectively attained through innovative and voluntary on-farm practices, as opposed to relying on imposed regulations.

QFF calls for the equal prioritisation of support for Queensland farmers to maintain productivity and efficiency and work toward environmental outcomes on their farms.

We celebrate the achievements of farmers and growers who are utilising innovative approaches and best management practices (BMP's) and provide support through a range of projects. We recognise that:

- Agriculture decarbonisation must be achieved with the sector, not imposed on the sector.
- Action on climate change is necessary to ensure food security, and action on climate change must not come at the expense of food security.
- It must not be taken for granted that the agriculture sector will do the heavy lifting to offset emissions from other sectors that carry on with business as usual.

Policy actions

Agriculture represents agriculture

- Develop environmental policies through genuine consultation and collaboration with industry to support and advance the agriculture sector.
- Provide clear strategic direction and increased collaboration to strengthen ecosystem leadership, cohesion and culture.

Great Barrier Reef

- Recognise agriculture's vital contribution to improving the Great Barrier Reef's water quality and support farmers to continue to innovate.
- Continue investment at or above current levels in voluntary-led Best Management Practice (BMP) programs.
- Commit to a full review of the reef protection regulations.

Environmental offsets and emissions reductions

- Review existing state-based guidelines to increase transparency of Queensland's aggregated offset requirements and put in place frameworks and requirements that will support agricultural production, strong regional communities and meaningful environmental outcomes to avoid unintended consequences of poor climate policy.
- Ensure all emission reduction strategies form part of an overarching climate adaptation strategy and are not developed in isolation.
- Support the agriculture sector to be financially and operationally prepared for a carbon-constrained future.

Carbon and biodiversity

- Support farmers to undertake carbon and biodiversity baselining for their enterprises.
- Drive greater alignment and collaboration across all portfolios in government to ensure a holistic approach to maximising these emerging opportunities and minimise risk.
- Provide incentives for farmers to manage protected areas on their properties that enhance their agricultural operations while also achieving environmental outcomes.

Priority area | Biosecurity

Overview

Biosecurity risks in Queensland are expected to increase four-fold in the years ahead. Current funding and partnership models are no longer sufficient to manage the complex and multifaceted biosecurity threats the state faces.

Safeguarding Queenslanders from the impacts of these biosecurity risks, including destructive and harmful pest animals, diseases and weeds, is integral to protecting the Queensland way of life, our communities and our economy.

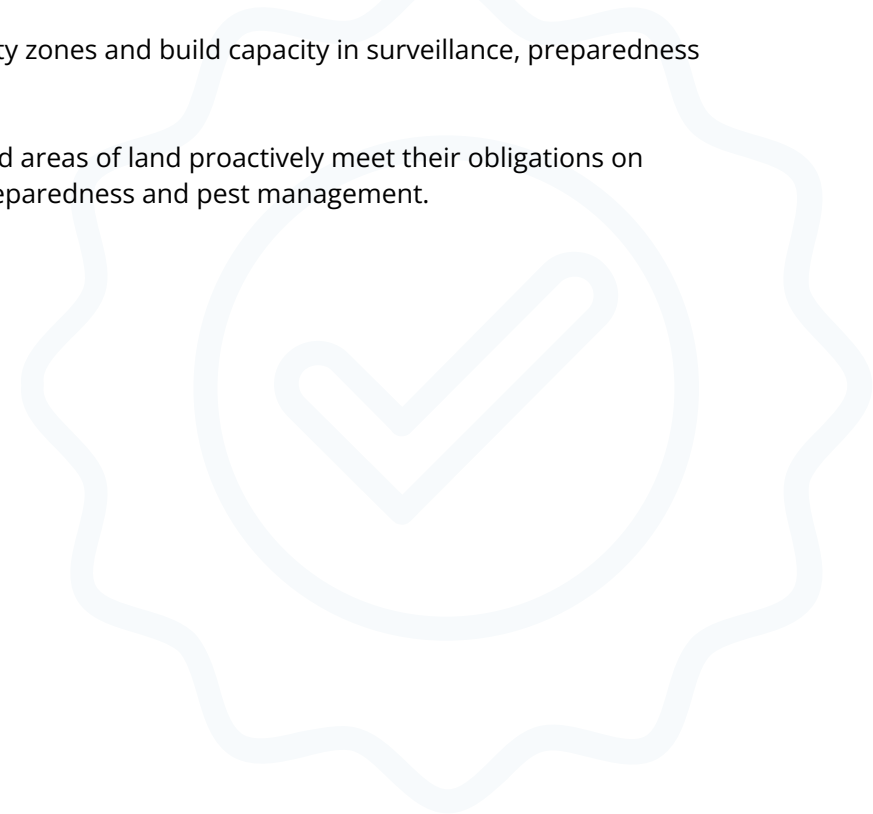
QFF's position

QFF is calling for a commitment from government to invest in building biosecurity capability at a regional level, the development of stronger co-designed partnership models, increased transparency, and a strategic approach to skill development in preparedness and response.

QFF is also advocating for a shared responsibility and investment model that positions Queensland to effectively manage increased biosecurity risks into the future.

Policy actions

- Commit to elevating biosecurity across all government portfolios and working with industry and community to review the current Queensland funding model to ensure we develop the capacity to prepare for and manage the expected increases in biosecurity risks.
- Invest in building the biosecurity capacity in the regions including funding certainty for the continuation of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative at \$10 million over four years that focuses on delivering priorities that are identified in regional plans.
- Extend the fire ant eradication program and invest an additional \$4 million over four years for local government to manage the threat of red imported fire ant and yellow crazy ant in affected local government areas.
- Establish biosecurity zones and build capacity in surveillance, preparedness and response.
- Ensure all protected areas of land proactively meet their obligations on biosecurity, fire preparedness and pest management.



Priority area | Land use and water planning

Overview

Demand for land across Queensland is increasing. This is driven by population and urban development growth, renewable energy and infrastructure developments and their associated offset requirements, and environmental projects including carbon and biodiversity schemes.

While this does present opportunities for many landholders, the scale and pace of growth in Queensland is placing additional pressure on agricultural production and creating a range of challenges for existing farming enterprises. The way land use planning is managed into the future will significantly impact on food and fibre production with the impacts, both negative and positive, ultimately flowing through to consumers.

We must remember that providing food and fibre for an increasing global population is an important land use in its own right and that loss of agricultural land for any other purpose potentially impacts this.

QFF's position

QFF advocates for support and/or establishment of coexistence institutions that are appropriately resourced and operating in an effective manner to provide information and education to farmers and regional communities.

Further reform is urgently needed to address existing legislative barriers and inconsistencies that make it difficult for an effective coexistence framework to operate.

Policy actions

- Work with industry and community to develop a strategic plan for food and agriculture to ensure the future viability of farmers so that consumers can continue to access high quality, affordable Australian food, fibre and foliage. This should be underpinned by appropriate land and water use planning.
- Implement proposed regulatory and legislative changes as a matter of urgency to protect the Great Artesian Basin from carbon capture and storage developments.
- Strengthen protections for priority and highly productive agricultural land and develop reasonable use guidelines to protect existing use agricultural enterprises.
- Work directly with and support industry to develop a strategic approach to the development of sustainable aviation and future fuel opportunities for farmers.
- Ensure frameworks for the review of statutory regional plans prioritise agricultural resources, include meaningful engagement with industry, and the completion of priority agricultural area mapping.
- Require renewable energy projects to be considered an environmentally relevant activity and therefore subject to the impact assessment process.
- Support the development of agritourism opportunities in Queensland through:
 - planning reform that removes roadblocks for farmers to diversify into agritourism, and
 - support the development of peak body Agritourism Queensland.

Priority area |

Risk mitigation, climate and disaster response

Overview

Queensland's agriculture sector and the supply chain are increasingly being exposed to natural hazards and weather events that impact their productivity, efficiency and farm business viability.

These events impact farming enterprises through the loss of livestock, crops and produce; damage to infrastructure, equipment and buildings; damage to standing crops; and erosion of carefully managed land assets such as soils and waterways. These events also have significant impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of farmers, and more broadly the viability of regional communities in which they operate.

QFF's position

QFF is calling for a review of the current framework that supports farm businesses vulnerable to natural hazard impacts. The framework needs to better enable farm businesses to return to business-as-usual activities in a timely manner, minimising their downtime and restoring production as soon as possible.

QFF believes the best opportunity to embed resilience building is in the recovery phase. There is a need for long term funding to ensure support resources are available on ground, in the immediate aftermath of a weather event. These resources need to be already embedded in local communities to be able to effectively assist in recovery and pivot to a resilience building role. This would also ensure the skills and capacity of these professionals remain in regional areas where they're needed most.

Policy actions

- Work with agriculture industries to review the scope of assistance activities under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) and the Queensland Drought assistance measures to ensure farm viability and sustainability of agriculture assets.
- In the interim to achieving the above, make the following changes to the guidelines for Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants and Queensland Drought Assistance Program administered by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA):
 - Review the definition of a primary producer and appropriate consideration of farm related 'off farm income' to reflect the changing nature of farming enterprises.
 - Include normal wages of employees as eligible costs for essential clean-up and repairs for immediate resumption of the farm business to be covered by the Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants.
 - Include replanting of in ground and tree crops as an eligible recovery activity under the DRFA in line with the replacement of livestock.
 - Review the requirement for assistance programs administered under QRIDA to be administered via regulation that requires parliamentary approval.
- Commit to long term investment in a 'spine of resources' for the agriculture sector in collaboration with industry to support farmers across the cycle of weather events. QFF calls for an allocation to industry of \$8 million over four years to establish this resource as part of a broader climate mitigation strategy. QFF also calls for a long-term commitment by the Queensland Government to co-funding with the Australian Government for the Farm Business Resilience Program.
- Make preparedness grant funding available for all natural disasters equivalent to that provided by the Drought Assistance Program. Farm businesses should be supported to build resilience and prepare for all natural disasters not just drought.
- Remove stamp duty on crop and parametric insurance to support farmers in managing their own business risk. The 9% stamp duty on these insurance products is a barrier to primary producers managing their own risk, increasing reliance on government support, and is a significant deterrent to primary producers in the adoption of these products.

Priority area | Farm viability

Overview

Food security in Australia continues to face threats due to market forces impacting farm viability at both ends of the supply chain.

Many farmers are receiving the same supermarket price for their product as they were nine years ago, and they are also facing increased pressure from escalating input costs and a growing number of government policies making it harder and harder to do business.

QFF's position

QFF is calling for strengthened support mechanisms to enable long-term growth, viability, competitiveness, and profitability of farm enterprises.

This is not only important for a strong future for Queensland agriculture and the economy, it also will protect food and fibre production for consumers and future generations.

Policy actions

- Invest \$10 million over four years in the industry-led SmartAg Queensland Program to increase skills and capacity within the agriculture sector.
- Invest in farm safety initiatives at a level equivalent to that of other states with an amplified focus on education, prevention, and capacity building, not just compliance.
- Instigate a rebate program to support farmers to transition to side-by-side vehicles and install rollover protection on farm vehicles.
- Review of market transparency across the agriculture supply chain for companies providing input products such as chemicals, similar to what has been undertaken for supermarkets.
- Invest \$300,000 of seed funding to support the continued implementation of the FutureFields Horticulture Strategy and provide continued support to the 'Geared up Growers' initiative.
- Mandate the Guideline on Equity and Fairness in Rating for Queensland Local Governments to assist in establishing consistency and best practice of rating principles across the state.
- Commit \$6 million over 4 years to facilitate the development of an AgTech efficiency and adoption program to assist farm enterprises to achieve efficiency and productivity gains through well informed adoption of technology.
- Commit to assisting industry to implement the Queensland Dairy Plan.

Priority area | Transport and infrastructure

Overview

Transport and infrastructure are critical not only to the future viability of the Queensland agriculture sector, but also to all sectors and industries that contribute to the Queensland economy.

It is vital to support agricultural supply chains through maintaining and enhancing transport and freight infrastructure. This also ensures the safety of regional Queenslanders reliant on these roads.

QFF's position

QFF calls for a long term, strategic approach to investing in vital transport and logistics infrastructure to enable a strong future for agriculture and regional communities.

Failure to plan, prioritise and invest to support the growing and changing freight task will compromise the future efficiency of agriculture supply chains and negatively impact the sector's economic outcomes.

Policy actions

- Commit to delivering a long-term solution to reinstate the Bremer Bridge to ensure this freight corridor for agriculture is open at full capacity.
- Commit to funding to repair and upgrade the Bruce Highway - a highway of state significance which provides an important conduit for many agricultural industries and supporting economic development throughout the state.
- Commit to climate proof Queensland roads through addressing the state's road maintenance backlog and embedding resilience in upgrades.
- Prioritise key state transport routes that are critical in connecting significant agricultural production regions onto national highways.
- Commit to effective funding support to upgrade key council roads within the Queensland road network including flood proofing where practical.
- Support the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Queensland Transport and Logistics Council's *'Supporting QEJP Windfarm Transportation'* report to plan for, mitigate, and manage the increased demands that will be seen on the Queensland road network during the renewable energy construction phase ensuring other existing industries are not adversely impacted.
- Prioritise the development of a business case to progress Queensland's Inland Highway initiative developing a resilient inland freight route connecting South East Queensland to Northern Australia and to key nodal infrastructure that supports major supply chains.



QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION

Thank you for reading the Queensland Farmers' Federation's (QFF) Election Priorities.

If you would like to talk to the QFF team about these priorities, please contact:

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