

Drought Assistance for Farmers

Australian Agriculture is looking for the long term commitment from Governments, we need to have Drought Assistance and Climate Change and World Trade strategies linked together to help Australian farmers into the next century and beyond.

Food production and our self sufficiency is one of our biggest assets, we are the envy of the world, and surely we should make every possible effort to preserve this. We do not want to be at the mercy of other countries in years to come.

Australians are the most efficient and productive farmers in the world. However we cannot compete with other subsidised countries. It would appear that the World Trade Agreement will not be signed in my life time and therefore support needs to be directed towards agriculture with this in mind.

The following points are relevant areas in which the Government can assist and preserve our Rural Industries.

1. Tax Incentives for storages for stock feeds and grain. Up to 120 percent rights offs. Also tax incentives and funding to assist irrigators to become more efficient with water. Promoting the establishment of drip or spray irrigation rather than the inefficient flood irrigation that has been established in the past.
2. HECS SCHEME .Incentives to assist the younger generation to stay on the land (our average age of farmers is approximately 60 years). A HECS type scheme, based on perhaps a dollar for dollar commitment, with up to one million dollars from the government. A strict criteria would need to be set. Eight to ten years experience on the land prior to an application would ensure the commitment of the applicant. The HECS Debt could then be paid back whenever the income reaches set levels. This would assist the 26 to 40 year age group.
3. Superphosphate Rebate, similar to the Diesel Rebate. This would assist all producers, farmers and graziers, vegetable and fruit growers etc. With MAP from \$1200 to \$1,600 per tonne this season, agriculture is not sustainable. Throughout the last 8 years of drought most farms have declined, i.e. pastures etc, as well as their productivity. Assistance by way of a phosphate subsidy is a long term solution, without phosphorous we do not have productivity.
4. Increase animal health and agronomy funding. Particularly by way of animal health as this would assist the whole community as well as the cities. This could be done through the Department of Primary Industries.
5. Overseas Aid should be directed by way of grain or other produce rather than cash.
6. Redevelopment of our rail infrastructure is imperative. This would assist in more efficient and less costly freight on grains and produce of all types. The Government

would benefit from huge savings on road developments and the Australian community would benefit from less deaths and prolonged safety on all our roads. Australia is in need of a National Freight System, with major distribution centres strategically placed throughout the states.

7. Long term low interest loans. This is an avenue to repay the government and sustain long term viability, rather than handouts. This would give the rural community confidence and restore some pride.

8. If the current Exceptional Circumstances Scheme is to exist consideration needs to be extended to the larger growers. Twenty percent of the growers produce eighty percent of our product. The Interest Rate Subsidy needs to be extended to eighty percent of all farm debt without the \$100,000 per year annual cap.

9. Exemption from an Emissions Trading Scheme. Agriculture needs to be exempt from any taxes or costs from an emissions trading scheme and incentives need to be put in place to promote tree plantings and conservation farming.

It has been suggested that Long term Low Interest Loans will create a false floor in the property market. This surely cannot be any worse than the present governments commitment to purchase land at water at whatever cost to save the water systems. If the Government insists on purchasing farms and water it will have a negative effect on all the rural communities. Businesses within the rural areas will suffer substantially. Without these iconic farms, employment and the population will continue to decline. This has already taken place because of the continuous drought and the lack of foresight from previous governments, There has been a lack of commitment to development and community services within the rural areas. We already have substandard , hospitals, schooling, transport, roads and community facilities.

It is time to make a commitment to agriculture, to benefit all of Australia for the long term.

Submission from

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