

As an Australian citizen and a concerned citizen for the future of Australia, I would like to offer my input on the issue of agriculture and its management.

The issue before Australian is not only how to safeguard and continue our primary industry, but how to capitalise on the world growing problem of food shortage.

It is no secret that overseas companies – US and Chinese based - have invested heavily in purchasing grazing and farming land in Australia. This was a question that Prime Minister Tony Abbot was queried on during the last election – “*What do you intend to do to limit or restrict foreign ownership of the farming and grazing land in Australia*”. His response was quite vague and inadequate, and none of attendees was impressed with his reply.

I see this challenge of Future Agriculture Management as a goal akin to previous challenges faced by Australia with respect to;

- Population growth - “populate or perish”
- Hydro-electricity - Snowy Mountain Hydro-electricity Dam
- Internet Connectivity - National Broadband Network (NBN)

All of these required forward think, and the adoption of bold and ambitious goals that not only caters for current needs but the needs of future generations.

Issues

1. Lack of water in south and central Australia is contributing to;
 - Crop failure and lost farming yields
 - Live stock loss.
 - Low interest in business and factories moving way from the coastal areas.
 - Low interest in population shift – due to lack of infrastructure and jobs.
 - Population drainage from country Australia due to lack of opportunities.
 - This causes further pressure on coastal cities and employment opportunities.
 - The Water allocation system being restrictive to some users, and the annual bidding & allocation is contentious (at least).

The absence of water is regarded as the key issue to address. Solving this problem would provide the basis not only for the immediate issues but for future initiatives to grow (agriculture and livestock industry for local and overseas), develop (agri-businesses and secondary industry in both rural and metropolitan areas), and enhance the population growth for rural and central Australia.

Proposed Concept

In short, not having water in central and South Australia can be argued as costing the Australian government more than just the aid packages it provides for Australian farmers and ranchers.

The proposed concept is comprised of 3 large infrastructure projects.

1. In Northern Territory and Queensland

- a. The collection and distribution of monsoonal rains from the Northern Territory and Queensland.
2. In South Australia
 - a. The creation of water desalination plants in South Australia, and the utilization of these waters to;
 - i. Be used for existing primary industry.
 - ii. Creation of new farming and livestock land from the coastal SA region to in-land.
3. In New South Wales
 - a. The creation of a “Water Relay” systems utilising the current water desalination plant in Sydney to feed into the Warragamba dam.
 - b. The creation of water infrastructure (pipes) to distribute the collected waters in the Warragamba dam to country NSW.

Funding Options

Addressing the funding requirements for these 3 initiatives would be well addressed by the relevant treasury departments. However, it is not unreasonable to expect one or a combination of the following options;

- Increased taxation.
- A joint venture between government and private enterprise/equities.
- Providing taxation exemption/reduction to private enterprise/equities.

Conclusion

The above options are proposed as concepts only, and it is hoped that it can be of benefit to the White Paper on Agriculture Competiveness.

It is important to re-iterate that the task before Australia is a monumental and pivotal task that requires setting bold and far-reaching goals to truly address the immediate issues facing the world and for future generations of Australia.