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- 1.Ensuring food security in Australia and Globally –
- Opportunities exist if water, road and rail infrastructure exist in the Northern half of Australia will benefit the nation. Any tax encouragement, (tax deduction for building rural towns and on farm water storage), lower taxes during establishment of industry, security of tenure for 100 years leases), national disaster insurance plan, a shifting of people north in the country to counteract the present loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector in the south. To drought proof country is a govt. Responsibility- who funds can be private or public.
- Response to domestic and global demand is always happening through communications (internet and phone, rural programmes and rural industry organisation). Australia should copy NZ's Fonterra Milk supply chain and place processing factories around the world and value add and even get in the retail sector overseas.
- Farmers are able to avail themselves to up to the minute information
- There are heaps of opportunity to export agricultural technology, marketing skills and expertise to improve world food security. I worked on private university opportunities on the Pacific Rim and there would be up to 350,000 students from the Pacific Rim prepared to obtain qualifications in Australia and at \$100,000/ student per year (tuition, food, accommodation) plus do part time practical work on farms to gain experience will earn Australia up to \$35 billion
- 2.farmer decisions for improving farm gate returns.
- Drivers and constraints to alternative business, innovations and practices are mainly economic e .g .not enough workforce – more automation; not enough time to do the work – larger machinery and implements; 24/7 operations when weather permits – need to look at work week not have overtime rates for working then stand down when weather is opposing you. We need partnerships with capital(super funds, trust funds or overseas investors) to avoid need for farm debt. Tax encouragement for youth to start to be involved in running businesses. Education to emphasise rural work is equal in remuneration to city work- because of risk / reward. For youth start share farming.
- Skills and tools to respond to risk they face. Too much water – increase on farm storage; drought – use on farm storage to grow silage in good times for bad times to keep stock and crops going. World prices – understanding how systems work and how to maximize returns by using future prices- many developmental workshops to overcome limitations in farmers/ grazier's knowledge – with tax incentive
- Alternate govt actions to improve farm gate returns. Implement USA Anti Trust laws which prevents any retailer from owning more than 30 % of the market. Therefore at least 4 competitive buyers for farm produce (not like 2 at present). Less interference and record keeping so bureaucrats don't need to shuffle more papers. Less green and red tape- costly interference which reduces our global competitiveness.

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- **Drought preparedness. More community dams, from Future Fund, on farm storage dams – fill when excess rain then use when dry. Last 2 decades, very few dams built for water security. Continue farm term deposits to put away capital in good years and draw down during drought – avoid govt. Bail outs (don't work). Use more appropriate animals including Australian native fauna as meat production animals for our dry climates. Humane culling of native animals if they destroy too much pastures or grazing animals.**
- **During drought. Grants only e.g. food on table; moratoriums on debt to lending institutions. More debt on debt does not work you have to pay it back. Use excess green pastures on tropical coast, including near roadways with fencing to fill food gaps – bring grazing animals to where the grass is by truck.**
- **Farmers to Agriculture will happen when it gives economic returns for risk / reward. When wine was paying well , millions of hectares were planted. Farmers chase and diversify crops/ animals to maximise profits. Adopt minimum till options to reduce costs. Better use water/ fertilizer & chemicals and organic to reduce costs- harvest crop and animals at most beneficial times.**
- **3.Enhance access to finance. The Aust. Govt. would do well to open and Agricultural Bank that will assist young primary producers start in the game. Some overseas countries offer 20 years tax free and grants for start up capital (machinery , implements, accommodation) eg Brazil. Farmers should be shown how to structure paying off debt e.g. budgeting so they are not always on the debt roundabout. Govt guarantees are the capital value of the project. Some smaller farmers have the ability to work off farm in the resources sector to speed up debt pay off quicker and then expand. More financial counsellors.**
- **How to better attract off farm capital investment. Investors must be informed that agricultural project take a 5 -10 year establishment phase then to become profitable not overnight success. Investors must also be aware of capital appreciation as well as cash profits. Legislation should force Aust super funds and trust to have at least 10% farm investment as part of their portfolio.**
- **Innovating finance models can only be done after talking to financial counsellors- which the govt should provide before starting a project –(look at success to make it pay for itself)- money making not emotions from the heart. Lenders should do 10 year planning to reduce debt models and see if project is likely to succeed. Not lend anyway and if it fails , we sell them up- destroys any future confidence to try again.**
- **What alternative business structures could be developed to retain ownership with farming families. 49% Capital from business angels, would reduce exposure to debt but require farmer to perform and pay dividends. 2 or 3 family partnerships (same family or different families) would allow rostering of work during heavy periods, holidays or cover any sickness. Share farming until on your feet- this is the way the migrants did it post WW2**
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- Foreign investment – can be used to develop agriculture and infrastructure and increase food production. Proviso's use of 99 year leases, if foreign companies export 100% food to their own country using foreign labour, then there must be a way to assess a tax system to help pay our 3 tiers of govt. (fed, state, local) maintain services and infrastructures. At present only payroll, company tax and royalties paid – is it their fair share. We do not want as in the tourist industry-foreign bookings of tickets, food and accommodation, to foreign owned tourist companies- all Aust. gets is the airport taxes and our Aust. Owned businesses suffer with little tourist trade. So too all food grown and processed in Aust. must be assessed for its market value and taxed to pay also for medical, fire and rescue services used by foreigners in this country. The advantage of foreign investment is the large scale projects can proceed e.g. sugar farms and sugar mills including refineries, cogeneration. Cattle and all animal properties, with abattoirs food chilled meat. Aquaculture projects to reduce pressure on wild catch.
- 4. Increase the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and its value chain.
- Anti- trust laws (similar to USA) which prohibit over 30% ownership of the retail chain- not like Aust where 88% is owned by 2 companies which destroy primary producers. This way at least 4 competitive buyers will increase gate prices to primary producers. There must be no disadvantage to living in rural communities with retail price maintenance for fuel (set the maximum across Australia and then fuel companies can give discounts if they wish – 1 cent more in capital cities will drop fuel prices in country between 20 and 90 cents/ litre – therefore reduce freight costs to rural areas .GST should be across all areas including food thereby reducing the pressure to increase rate above 10%. State taxes payroll, stamp duty and fuel taxes should be abolished for sharing of GST distributions from the Australian govt. Too many Aust. Manufacturing companies become uneconomical when they have to pay these taxes. Mining companies should be export \$ valued and pay tax to Aust. not overseas parent companies. Foreign companies must pay taxes for use of our resources even if they own both to help Aust. meet its ageing population %, maintain defence, with a good health and education system commitments and reduce tax burden on Aust. owned businesses. Aust. Govt must declare organisations WWF, PETA as illegal for primary producers on overseas use of live product e.g. cattle trade with Indonesia, also the fishing industry continually attacked and reduced.
- To achieve improved competitiveness, the agricultural sector must improve profitability. Price of product must be above cost of production- danger from free trade – price of product is kept similar to 3rd world prices with 3rd world costs- so retail chains buy from overseas. How much loss of food production because of free trade- how many Aust. Businesses are lost and its effect on rural communities –govt.'s and bureaucracy look only at net gain rather than gain less loss and its impacts. Productivity increases must occur across research , costs structures including industrial awards(maybe base wage plus productivity bonus- no holiday and weekend leave loading or penalty rates. Force the unemployed to assist at harvest time to remove product from fields rather than leave it rot. Use imported Pacific Rim labour as is done now where there are shortfalls in people as well as back packers. Get rid of our antiquated wholesale vegetable sale system- trucking product sometimes 3.000 klms each way before it gets to consumer. City wholesale centres should only be for city consumers each country town should have its

own sale system- cuts down freight and fuel costs. Get rid of any legislation which requires limitations on selling 2nd's from farm gate prices direct to road consumers. Country of origin labelling would also assist aussie consumers choose what to buy.

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- Relevance of overseas approaches to improve agricultural competitiveness. E.g. Fonterra overseas processing of milk and retail sharing returns their milk producers over \$4.00 / litre of milk whereas most Aust. Producers only get 50-70 cents a litre of milk. Farmer owned retail outlets and by pass the middle men and increase profitability. Stop retail chains doing discount food prices at the expense of primary producers.
- 5. Enhancing agriculture's contribution to regional communities
- Effect of growth of regional centres allows more services-medical, educational, retirement villages. Closing of more remote towns reduces social and services close to production centres The worse thing is if foreign ownership of primary production uses FIFO with labour then no regional town development.
- Agriculture can best invest in jobs and regional communities, including indigenous communities if the Aust Govt. must reintroduce town building tax deductions to encourage more towns so as services are closer to user eg mechanics, tractor companies, car dealers, banks etc. There must be greater tax incentives to build water storage structures (community and on farms) and road and rail infrastructure to encourage private investment. Education to indigenous people could be encouraged so that work was guaranteed at the end of upgrade to skills. Also many eco-tourism projects would assist indigenous communities near agricultural development
- Community and policy response would be great with less red and green tape interfering with projects trying to start up. It is so costly that people quit before starting- govt. Costs at the 3 tiers of govt. make it economically unviable.
- We attract the next generation of farmers by start up capital seeding of project which must be paid back over 30 years. Full investigations of projects by financial counsellors with young generation before starting to see if project will self fund. Destroy duopoly of retail sector to get more competition into purchasing to raise farm gate prices.
- 6. Improving the competitive of inputs to the supply chain
- Farm inputs can be more effectively deployed if essentials are available. Water is available (community or on farm dams – in different forms); land is suitable; road ,rail and air freight infrastructure is built; bulk purchasing of fuel, fertilizer, electricity, insurance; culling feral animals would also help. Regional communities must be also viewed as front line defence against feral animals and illegal migration from overseas.

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- We don't know what skills will be required in the future – but agriculture needs the basics of knowledge of crop or animals, soils and water, nutrition, transport and finally markets- including future pricing. Understanding taxation. Rest of skill base will be learnt “on job” training. More emphasis on farm education from secondary to tertiary e.g. Aust. Turns out about 25 agricultural Scientists per year while Brazil turns out over 3,000 per year. Must be a Govt. Policy priority.
- To attract workers to agriculture especially to remote areas provision of accommodation with basic amenities , pre remote vocational educational induction, and some measure of what social life is explained- only hunting and fishing and swimming or how far to hotels, resorts, picture theatres and dances and how often. Good communication both on farm and with the world (many less black spots to mobile phones and internet or cable TV) to keep in contact with outside world.
- To gain broader experience for young people, they should do 1 year apprentices at different agricultural pursuits. 1 to gain skills and 2. To see which area of agriculture suits their temperament e.g. 6 X 2 month exposure to different agriculture – will therefore offer workforce to primary producers as well.
- To better fund research priorities is done by more communication with end user of that research on advisory boards coming from relevant industry
- Funding of all infrastructure for food and fibre production should maximize private investment and minimize public funding. Public funding should do more to educate and strengthen the “work ethic” in farming.
- 7. Reducing ineffective regulations
- Regulations do little to improve profitability, productivity of agriculture but are a costly imposition on our farmers ability to be world's best practice competitive.
- All regulations should be reviewed and any regulation not contributing to productivity and profitability should be deleted “ keep it simple stupid” less record keeping, less legal requirements (WHS, industrial- workers would do better if they shared in profitability rather than wages – less incentive to be innovative)
- Regulations over the top are WHS where all responsibility is foisted on the employer and none on employee.- using personal protection –clothes, footwear, glasses, head gear, ear protection, spraying masks. However first aid and fire knowledge is required as people are far from city help.
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- Policy makers must listen to Industry organisations and remove any laws or regulations that make agriculture unworkable, unproductive and unprofitable. In other words get bureaucracy “ out of primary producers pockets”
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- **8. Enhancing agricultural exports**
- Ensure that all infrastructure road, rail, air and ports assist the efficient delivery of food and fibre to market. Aus Trade should also be assisting a lot more in overseas market development. More overseas advertising to encourage world consumers to buy Australian product. More joint value adding projects with overseas retail chains.
- FTA’S are probably the best avenue but look at losses and how they effect rural communities survival. Country of origin labelling would be a big help.
- Continue to work with the affected industry organisation to get the best outcome.” NO knowledge is seated with politicians and bureaucracy alone.”
- Bio security is very important to prevent incursions from overseas but also to stop a disease spread across the domestic environment e.g. Invasive weeds destroyed; and feral animals should be exported to reduce competition between feral and domestic food and fibre production. Bio security must be staffed and resourced to do the job – could be better used if part time rural employees were made “honorary bio security officers” to make up staffing shortfalls
- Bio security at minimum cost would happen if workload was shared between govt. Employees and “on ground- front line rural workforce”
- **9 Assessing the effectiveness of incentives for investment and job creation.**
- At present govt programs are ineffective and provide little incentive to investment and job creation.
- Govt visa arrangements must continue relocation assistance, seasonal worker program, harvest labour program and use of backpackers to make up labour shortfall when aussie born people do not wish to work.
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- Other countries make food security a priority e.g. EU ensures incomes on farm commensurate with city folk; USA Food Bill does the same; China makes agriculture profitable because of less regulations than Aust.; Asia food security a priority; middle east – e.g. Egypt -rioting is the result of food security concerns- inability to feed family. Since 1930's depression, Australians have never been without food – therefore “ we alright jack”
- In the past , Aust Agricultural Bank, have provided cheap seeding capital to start projects. Tax structures also assisted on farm water storage. Farm Term Deposits are good to even out income. Off road fuel rebate , not fuel subsidy, is greatly assisting Aust. Food and fibre producers be more profitable however unless retail fuel price maintenance across the country is implemented ,- and without it, the supply chain implications e.g. freight – living in remote areas necessary to Australia overall total food and fibre production will limit our competitiveness with the world.