

Agricultural Competitiveness Paper – Greenwood & Grogan Produce.

We are two people in our mid-twenties running a market garden in North-East Victoria. We only harvest what we have sold **to a customer** (ie not to a warehouse, a distributor or supermarket). This minimizes waste, and excess transport costs. Our aim is simply to provide good food to locals. Human relationships are paramount in our business model. They aid our investment opportunities because our farming risk profile is shared amongst our customers. Our customers trust what we are doing, and are happy to pay for the real value of the food.

Although we understand the limitations on policy reviews such as this, we would like to express our deep concern that human nutritional health and ecological health have been left out of the terms of reference for this issues paper. What is food for?

We think that agriculture is about providing nourishment for human health in a way that works within our natural ecosystems. We think that soil health is the most important element in any discussion about agricultural practices, especially considering the challenges associated with drought. Further, we think that any discussion about the future of agriculture in this country should be undertaken with a view towards 100% renewable energy consumption.

With this in mind, we think that agriculture needs a fundamental, broad-scale rethink. The UK's Institution of Mechanical Engineers has estimated that **30-50%** of the world's food is wasted. And yet we consistently hear that food security is one of the biggest threats that we face globally. If food is produced first at a local scale, and only then with a view to trade more broadly, food waste can be reduced, and spin-off benefits will arise. For example consumers will be more connected to their produce, and will demand ethical, ecological production.

The export trade market can then be used as a well-managed tool. At present, farmers are often servants to the variables associated with the market.

Young people like us want to get into farming, and we will bring passion and innovation to the industry and the challenges it faces. One of the attractions of a career in farming is the autonomy that farming provides. However, the cost associated with access to land is very prohibitive. An alternative is to go and work for a farming corporation, but this reduces the autonomy that was an attraction. We can do more to allow young people to access the flexibility and autonomy associated with farming. Innovation will follow.

What can the government do to assist in a re-think of agriculture?

- Provide incentives to improve soil health on farms;
- Provide funding for human networks and idea sharing for farmers at a regional scale;
- Assist in facilitating innovation that works towards 100% renewable farming practices; and
- Provide cross-government programs aimed at making farming accessible for young people, including legislating to protect the interests of retiring landowners and aspiring farmers in share-farming arrangements.