

Sally Conway



Mr Hon Barnaby Joyce  
Minister of Agriculture  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Barnaby,

Australian farmers are currently experiencing the devastating effects of drought, which is influencing the financial sustainability of our whole nation. Your means to take action by outsourcing is greatly commended and appreciated as such overwhelming effects can be reduced and prevented. Currently, Australia intends to significantly reduce our agricultural trading industry to make room for the exploration of coal. It is such intention that will in effect ruin Australia's ability to feed the growing population and develop into a domineering and key player in the global economy, as well as cause grave consequences for the future generation. Therefore, to effectively drought proof Australia, a law must be established which restricts the quality and quantity of land that can be mined.

The importance of Australian agriculture for the growing world population and the future of our economy cannot be overlooked. Australian agriculture alone produces 93% of the total food consumed by 22.68 million Australians before feeding 40 million people globally every day after that. Therefore 62 million people rely on Australian agriculture worldwide. If it wasn't for Australian agriculture, the 12 million people who are already starving every year will significantly increase. Furthermore, the world population is growing by at least 9% every year, while the amount of agriculture produced is already decreasing by 1% annually due to mining exploration. Therefore, it is obvious that the demand for Australian agriculture is and will continue to rapidly increase as the world looks to us to feed their various nations. Australia will soon be a dominating and one of the few key players in the global economy provided we have high quality and quantity agriculture to offer.

Secondly, in order to effectively drought proof Australia, it must be recognised that the current mining boom is not the most effective or sustainable way to ease the deficit. Currently Australian agriculture makes up 31.5% of the international trade. Admittedly, exporting coal would earn the country billions and take over a large percentage of our international trade; but for how long. It is no secret that the coal will run out. Once the land is mined for 20 years, it is then useless for 30 years rehabilitation, which still does not restore it to its original production capabilities. Even given the example that coal exports took over 70% of our international trade for 20 years, we are then left without a substantial international trade for 30 years; which calculates to be 1400% of international trade over the whole 50 years. If we were to maintain our 31.5% of international trade with agriculture for 50 years, we would have produced 1575% of our international trade over 50 years. Therefore, given the example that favours coal; exporting agriculture at a consistent rate will still be more beneficial for our country, let alone if the agriculture exports were to increase.

In addition, Australia must begin to invest in sustainable resources such as renewable energy. There are many forms of energy such as wind, hydro, solar, biomass and geothermal, however, there is no other form of food and clothing. Both the world and the Australian economy rely on the agriculture we produce; for without it, 62 million people in addition to the current 12 million people would starve every day worldwide. In order to achieve this, Australia must be proactive with its investments. For example, \$36 million was simply granted to the Banana Shire Council Queensland to be spent on the improvements on the 'Roma-Taroom' road, however, the money was simply spent planting grass on the cuttings. This is simply one example, if we invested this type of money into sustainable energy, Australia could have both a thriving agriculture and renewable energy trade, thus securing our dominating position in the future of the global economy.

Finally, mining Australian agriculture inflicts grave ripple effects upon rural areas and small businesses. Already in mining areas small business are struggling and closing as they do not reap the benefits of the miners and cannot compete with the mining wages paid by large companies. Secondly, there are currently 159,642 Australian farmers who, unless the quality and quantity of land to be mined is restricted significantly by law, can expect to be unemployed for 50 years. Australia will then face a major issue when the coal inevitably runs out as all miners will simultaneously lose their jobs. Australia will be struck by the mass unemployment of predominantly men who lack degrees and must feed families. With no small business left in rural areas to offer employment, it will be a near repeat of the great depression. It is not in the capabilities of our country or our economy to support millions of miners without substantial international trade for 30 years while the land is in rehabilitation. Furthermore, when the demand for agriculture in the international market hits record heights, Australia will not have the land or the farmers to produce it; causing us to miss an amazing financial opportunity.

Therefore, in order to effectively drought proof Australia while easing the deficit, Australia must enforce by law a restriction on the quality and the quantity of the land that can be mined. Mining large quantities of Australia's quality agricultural land will be disastrous. Not only will it result in the starvation of at least an additional 62 million people worldwide, it will cause Australia to miss the growing opportunity to become dominating in the global economy as the demand for our agricultural produce rapidly increases. Furthermore, when the mining concludes, we will be left with millions of unemployed miners and no form of substantial trade whether it is energy or agriculture. These issues are prevalent and inevitable if no preventative action is taken. Australia is now faced with a choice; to drought proof Australia or to face inevitable disaster.

Therefore, I propose that the Australian government enforces restrictions by law to significantly reduce the quality and quantity of land that is able to be mined. This could be accomplished by establishing a standard percentage of the amount of land that can be mined either per state or per shire. In addition, a set standard of the quality of land also needs to be enforced to ensure that highly productive land is not destroyed by the exploration of mining. By enforcing such restrictions, Australia will be effectively drought proofed.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Conway.