

Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper Submission - IP440
Wollondilly Shire Council
Submitted 17 April 2014

Our Reference: TRIM No. 1150 GR

Agricultural Competitiveness Taskforce
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
CANBERRA ACT 2600

17 April 2014

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMPETITIVENESS DISCUSSION PAPER

Dear Sir or Madam,

Council convenes a Rural Industry Liaison Committee (RILC) to enhance communication and collaboration between Council, residents and local agriculture in the Wollondilly Shire. This committee met on 9 April 2014 to discuss the Agricultural Competitiveness Discussion Paper. The committee raised a number of matters which are documented below for your consideration.

Loss of Agricultural Land

Agriculture in Australia is under threat from competing development in the mining and housing sectors. For agriculture in Australia to be able to deliver food security in the long term governments at all levels need to recognise the importance of retaining agricultural land and activity.

We also submit that the government should implement a strategy to ensure some of the financial benefit from developing agricultural land for residential and/or mining purposes is fed back into the agriculture sector. We submit that a scheme of agriculture enterprise credits (similar to the systems already present in Europe) should be implemented in Australia.

Further, the government should regulate to ensure that former mining sites are rehabilitated with regard to agricultural uses of the land as well as for human health and environmental conservation.

A Subsidised Insurance Scheme

We recommend the government implement a subsidised all risks insurance scheme for agriculture in Australia similar to the scheme operating in the United States of America. Such a scheme would have the benefit of:

- Securing fresh food affordability in Australia;
- Spreading the risk and financial burden of extreme weather conditions on agriculture and on the government budget;
- Allow for stimulus into the agriculture sector without contravening international free trade treaties and laws;
- Allow for stimulus into rural communities and economies;
- Promote agriculture as a less risky career path; and
- Improving the mental health of farmers, reducing the burden on the medical system.

Regulation of the Supermarkets

The major supermarket corporations and their supplying wholesalers wield great power over Australian agriculture. In our submission, the lack of regulation of the supermarkets and wholesalers is dangerous. Supermarkets in particular need to be called to account for their advertising practices that create false understandings of food and agricultural practices.

There should also be regulation to prevent the supermarkets and wholesalers importing inferior quality food and fibre instead of using an Australian produced product.

Education and Research

Government at all levels needs to invest in agricultural research and education. We need to ensure that every child knows that beetroot does not grow in cans and that cotton grows on a plant. We need to ensure that our agricultural workforce is well trained and suitably equipped to produce the food and fibre that our population needs. We also need to ensure that research into food production is publically so that it is carried out to create public benefit for health outcomes over and above corporate interests.

Regularising Regulations within the Nation

The regulations concerning quarantine, planning and environmental protection are different between states and territories. In our submission, the Commonwealth Government should embark on a program to work collaboratively with the states and territories to bring a consistent, equitable and simple set of agricultural regulations across the nation.

Council requested an extension to the submission period for this exhibition and this request was denied. Consequently, this submission is made on behalf of the Rural Industry Liaison Committee and has not been endorsed by Council as its corporate position.

Yours faithfully



Grant Rokobauer
**Team Leader Strategic Planning and
Rural Industry Liaison Committee Convenor
WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL**