

To: The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
Agricultural Competitiveness Taskforce
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Australia

By email: agricultural.competitiveness@pmc.gov.au

April 17, 2014

Dear Mr Joyce

Please accept this submission by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance on the Agricultural Competitiveness Issues Paper (April 2014).

Who we are:

The Sydney Food Fairness Alliance was formed in 2005 to coordinate the efforts of rural producers, health professionals, community workers and community-based advocates active in promoting food security and developing a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable food system in the Sydney region and broader NSW.

Our response to the Issues Paper:

In a land with the oldest soil in the world, extreme weather conditions, little topsoil, limited water and arable land, we need to protect ourselves from a number of potentially serious threats to our agriculture, our farmers, and our food supply. These threats to Australian agricultural production have been recognized by the IPCC and the CSIRO, and must be addressed before rapid expansion of agriculture and agricultural exports can be considered.

There needs to be more clarity in the relationship and more structural support across the tiers of government to ensure a secure agricultural sector. A national approach to the fair and just use of our land is required, and also one that sits outside of any one government sector.

ISSUES

- ***Food security at the individual, household and local level is vitally important to Australia and levels of insecurity are currently underestimated in Australia***
 - SFFA recognizes the need for Australia to responsibly contribute to global food security. Nevertheless there is an imperative to address currently high levels of domestic (individual, household, and local) food insecurity. A focus on exports at the expense of domestic supply will not ensure the long-term viability of ensuring nutritious food is readily available and accessible to all Australians.
 - The Government needs to undertake a comprehensive and detailed survey of issues around affordability and accessibility to determine the real extent of the problem and identify the key issues which impact on it. This work must be undertaken at all levels of Government to provide effective and integrated solutions.

- A more holistic, interdisciplinary approach needs to be taken to address food security, rather than being pigeon-holed into sectors as it leads to a sharper policy insight and greater potential for political success. A number of frameworks around food security exist which can be used by government to underpin effective policy and planning in this area.
- ***A particular focus on peri-urban agriculture is required***
 - Peri-urban agriculture provides substantially to the economy across jurisdictions (for example over \$1.5 billion in NSW) and provides substantial numbers of jobs in primary production and food processing (in NSW almost 22,000 local jobs in primary production and food processing).
 - The arguments about the need to retain high quality food producing land around major cities are persuasive in environmental, sustainability and long term economic terms.
 - There needs to be increased recognition of the growing importance of urban and peri-urban horticulture and agriculture in contributing to the food supply of Australia's growing cities as there are substantial social, health and economic benefits.
 - Consumer support for locally grown and processed food is evident in the rapid expansion of farmers' markets and support for SPC Ardmona.
 - It is considered that "In many cities [in Australia] thousands of positions of paid employment could be created through the establishment of sustainable and self-sufficient local food systems, including urban agriculture and food processing initiatives, food distribution centres, healthy food market services, and urban planning that provides for multiple modes of transport to food outlets" Dixon et al (2007)
 - Support for peri-urban agriculture and enhancement of the local food supply does not mean that exports are forgotten in the mix towards food security. For example 90 per cent of NSW's supply of Asian vegetables is grown in the Sydney basin, which could have export potential to China and other areas.
- ***SFFA is concerned about the loss of agricultural land to other activities such as mining, coal seam gas extraction or, as is particularly relevant on the urban fringes, to housing and other urban developments.***
 - There is a lack of overall planning which considers future food needs, both domestic and global, and how Australia will meet these in the context of climate change, depleted soil, drought and other challenges. It is essential to identify productive agricultural land and establish protection systems in perpetuity, in place of the current piecemeal approach in which short-term economic benefits predominate.
 - There is an urgent need to examine the competing land use demands, especially from housing, mining, and CSG extraction, before the arable land runs out. For example, CSG mining exploration is now being considered for much of the Western Sydney basin and catchment areas, which has the potential to impact not only on Western Sydney's \$1.5 billion peri-urban agriculture industry, the \$2.5 million aquaculture industry of the Lower Hawkesbury River, and critically, on the drinking water supply to Sydney.
 - CSG and coal mining are not sustainable in the long-term and may have grave impacts on vital groundwater systems. Both deliver profits to a handful of overseas companies with little to no return to Australia; gas and coal are increasingly being rejected in the global market. In addition, neither industry delivers on jobs, especially compared to the renewable energy sector.
- ***SFFA does not support the uptake of GM foods/biotechnology to improve the agricultural productivity of farmers and instead supports the development of ecological and sustainable farming techniques through investment in research and development***
 - Claims about increased yield with GM crops are not being upheld in practice. The rush to embrace GM crops as a solution, without sufficient information to deem them safe for human consumption and safe to the environment, is contrary to the ethos of evidence-based decision-making and is potentially highly hazardous.
 - Research has shown that GM crop production in the US is lowering yields and increasing pesticide use, and weeds are developing resistance to pesticides, notably Glyphosate.
 - Over the past few years a substantial number of countries have completely banned GMOs and the associated pesticides.

- Minimum and No-Till farming is an economically viable and environmentally stable cropping system.
 - CSIRO research has shown that it is possible to produce algal biodiesel at a lower cost and with fewer greenhouse gas emissions than fossil fuels.
 - Ozone systems are a safe, environmentally-sustainable way to control fruit and vegetable spoilage and maintain quality post-harvest. The use of this chemical-free tool can boost consumer confidence that they're getting chemical-free fruit and vegetables, for domestic and export markets. The use of a portable ozone management system such as 'Freshpallet' (www.bio-fresh.com///?page_id=112) could be considered for the transport (and storage) of fruit from the peri-urban regions to areas where fruit supply is low, for example to rural and remote stores in Australia.
- ***There is a need to support alternative food systems and pathways as an economically viable solution for rural farmers, including community-supported agriculture, to circumvent the market concentration/market power imbalances***
- The dominance of the major supermarkets and fast food chains is a serious problem for genuine competition and alternate channels (such as local) of food supply.
 - The sale of 'less than perfect' fruit and vegetables needs to be encouraged through pricing and availability mechanisms.
- ***Mechanisms are needed to enhance food enterprise development and increase value-added agriculture***
- Multifunctional agriculture, including value-added agriculture, can assist in maximising the potential of farming operations and strengthening rural communities.
 - Enhanced competitiveness of specialty crops (fruit and vegetables, nuts, nursery crops) to increase the marketability of specialty crop farmers, including disadvantaged and culturally-and-linguistically diverse (CALD) farmers.
 - The Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Center provides training and technical assistance for such initiatives in the United States; the US Federal-State marketing improvement program and the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants – all support these types of initiatives.
- ***The dwindling workforce in agriculture and horticulture could be stimulated by building relevant skills among long-term unemployed people***
- ***FSANZ needs to be an independent body that scrutinizes research and errs on the side of caution***
- FSANZ needs to be broader in its remit to include analysis of dangers to the long-term sustainability of a nutritious food supply and the health and environmental impact of food production, retail and big business.
 - FSANZ could be included as part of a wider ombudsman body which considers the impact of food production and retail on environmental health and long-term sustainability of our food system.
 - FSANZ could be placed within a wider body that has an ombudsman function to oversee the nutritional, land and water sustainability issues associated with food production and supply in Australia.
- ***There is a lack of communication and disconnect between producers, retail, and consumers which needs addressing so that the demand for healthy food is supported by Australians AND there is a dearth of data/information to inform decision making, strategic planning, to monitor changes and to increase knowledge, growth and innovation.***
- Collection of data (see above) and transparency and availability of information will be necessary to inform farmers, retail and consumers.

SUGGESTED ACTIONS

- **Create national supportive infrastructure to ensure coordination and consistency of efforts across jurisdictions:**
 - Create an overarching national food and agriculture body external to any one particular sector, to ensure cross-sectoral dialogue and collaboration (including health, transport, agriculture, environment, transport, education, social services) and to ensure integrated policy and planning on sustainable food production in Australia with a focus on local and domestic food supply and access, as well as on export markets.
 - Devise a national legislative framework for planning for sustainable land use, food production and agriculture across jurisdictions.
 - Create a national 'Observatory of Food and Agriculture' for the monitoring and surveillance of agricultural and horticultural industries, and on food availability, prices, access, quality, pesticide residues, etc. Some examples in the US are the ERS Food Environment Atlas and Economic research and analysis of food access; and the Food Observatory in France.
 - Review the remit of FSANZ and enact processes to ensure that it conducts rigorous independent research and proof of safety before any food is allowed onto the Australian market.
- **Support and enhance peri-urban and urban horticulture and agriculture:**
 - Implement a range of state and Federal Government policies including flexibility in planning provisions, taxation, competition policy, marketing, zoning, land tenure, water sharing and infrastructure. This should be done at the COAG level to ensure workable and effective coordination between state and federal policies. The planning and zoning issues should also include Local Government input.
 - Improve the financial viability of peri-urban farmers and food producers and at the same time increase accessibility to and affordability of fresh food by supporting:
 - implementation of Community Supported Agriculture programs
 - creation of links between peri-urban agriculture and food banks and food rescue strategies
 - ensure adoption of local food procurement policies by hospitals, government, schools and other institutions
 - support for farmers markets and farm stalls (tailored to the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged communities)
 - promotion of local fresh food trails, buy local campaigns and agritourism initiatives
 - being flexible in the application of regulations regarding signage and road side sales to facilitate farm trails and road side sales, including value-added products such as jams and juices from fruit farms
 - partnerships or co-operatives and marketing these strategies.
- **Support and enhance ecologically and economically sustainable methods of food production in Australia**
 - Investigate the application of globally innovative techniques for more sustainable food production and distribution in Australia.
 - Consider the establishment of specific technical support and training centres to encourage and support urban food enterprises.
 - Re-establish grants and loans programs for local and regional food systems to help support Australia to produce enough F&V to meet the national requirements for a healthy diet for all.
 - Implement grant programs to support the development of specialty crops and marketing improvement programs.
 - Ban GE in Australia and commit to GE free; and place a 'never to be used' ban on Agent Orange
 - Reward organic farmers.
 - Review taxation and pricing structures to make food grown in Australia more affordable than imported food.
- **Identify and protect land for horticultural and agricultural use**
 - Conduct land audits to determine which lands need to be retained for horticulture and agriculture and implement strategies to ensure their retention for this purpose.

- Make the identification and protection of agricultural land a priority and ban CSG and mining on these lands and near our water supplies, In addition, ensure that there is a robust, independent system for environmental impact assessment, particularly on groundwater, of any other land being considered for CSG and mining.
- **Improve food literacy**
 - Incorporate teaching of the food system into the school curriculum including the importance of farming, growing and eating Australian and the value of chemical-free products; and connect schools with farmers.

REFERENCES

<http://reconnectingamerica.org/resource-center/federal-grant-opportunities/>
<http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-community/grants-and-loans-farmers>
<http://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/urban-ag/index.html>

- James S W (2014) "Protecting Sydney's Peri-Urban Agriculture: Moving beyond a Housing/Farming Dichotomy." Geographical Research
- Beer C (2013) "Planning against hunger in a time of abundance: Scarcity, affluence, and food security within contemporary Australian urban planning." Australian Planner 50(1): 35-43.
- Hattersley L (2013) "Agri-food system transformations and diet-related chronic disease in Australia: a nutrition-oriented value chain approach. (Special Section: Symposium on the changing role of supermarkets in global supply chains)." Agriculture and Human Values 30(2): 299-309.
- Rockson G, et al. (2013) "Land administration for food security: A research synthesis." Land Use Policy 32: 337-342.
- Harris P, et al. (2012) "Influencing land use planning: making the most of opportunities to work upstream." Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health 36(1): 5-7.
- Kent J, et al. (2011). Healthy built environments: a review of the literature. Healthy Built Environments Program, University of New South Wales, City Futures Research Centre.
- Mason D, et al. (2011) "Briefing Paper: The dynamic situation of urban agriculture in the Sydney Basin." Urbanism, climate and health (Project 5: Identifying and characterising resilient urban food systems to promote population health in a changing environment March, 73 pp.
- Montague Meg (2011). Local government and food security: An evidence review. What we know about what works and what might work. Victoria, Social Policy, Research and Evaluation Services: 124 pp.
- Ramsey R and Gallegos D (2011) "What are the implications of peri-urban agriculture on food security in Australian cities?" 2nd National Food Futures Conference.
- Reap JK (2011). Tools and techniques for preserving agricultural landscapes in the United States. ICOMOS 17th General Assembly. Paris, France: 203-206.
- White H and Natelson S (2011). Good planning for good food: How the planning system in England can support healthy and sustainable food. UK, online, Sustain: The Alliance for better food and farming.
- Carey R, et al. (2010) "Integrating agriculture and food policy to achieve sustainable peri-urban fruit and vegetable production in Victoria, Australia." Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development 1(3).
- Curran D and Stobbe T (2010). Local government policy options to protect agricultural land and improve the viability of farming in Metro Vancouver.
www.metrovancouver.org/.../Local_Government_Policy_Options_to_Protect.....
- Browne J, et al. (2009). Acting on food insecurity in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Policy and practice interventions to improve local access and supply of nutritious food: 38 pp.
- Budge T and Slade C (2009). Integrating land use planning & community food security: A new agenda for government to deliver on sustainability, economic growth & social justice. La Trobe University, Prepared for the Victorian Local Governance Association by the Community Planning & Development Program.
- Stones R (2009). Effectiveness of agricultural zoning: South Middleton Township, PA. April: 29 pp.
- Dixon J, et al. (2007) "The health equity dimensions of urban food systems." Journal of Urban Health 84(Sppl 1): 118-129.

Richardson JJ (2007) "Beyond fairness: what really works to protect farmland." *Drake Journal of Agricultural Law* 12: 163-183.

Houston P (2005) "Re-valuing the Fringe: Some Findings on the Value of Agricultural Production in Australia's Peri-Urban Regions." *Geographical Research* 43(2): 209-223.

Paster E (2004) "Preservation of agricultural lands through land use planning tools." *Natural Resources Journal* 44: 283-318.

Sinclair I, et al. (2004). From the outside looking in: the future of Sydney's rural land: Background issues and workshop outcomes. Sydney, University of Western Sydney Regional and Community Grant: 110.

Dillespie PD and Mason D (2003). The value of agriculture on the Sydney Region: February 2003. NSW Agriculture Environmental Planning and Management Subprogram. Sydney, NSW Agriculture: 25.

Parker F and Jarecki S (2003). Peri-urban agriculture and public policy: Sydney's forgotten farmers. *Social Inequality and the Knowledge Society*. Sydney, Macquarie University.

Pearson et al. (2014) "Obtaining fruit and vegetables for the lowest prices: pricing survey of different outlets and geographical analysis of competition effects." *PLOS One* 9(3): e89775.

Barthel et al. (2013) "Food and Green Space in Cities: A Resilience Lens on Gardens and Urban Environmental Movements." *Urban Studies*.

Beer (2013) "Planning against hunger in a time of abundance: Scarcity, affluence, and food security within contemporary Australian urban planning." *Australian Planner* 50(1): 35-43.

Davis (2013) "Food at home production and consumption: implications for nutrition quality and policy." *Review of Economics of the Household*: 1-24.

Hume, et al. (2013) "A survey of remote Aboriginal horticulture and community gardens in the Northern Territory." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 37(4): 394-395.

Hume et al. (2013) "'We need our own food, to grow our own veggies...'" Remote Aboriginal food gardens in the Top End of Australia's Northern Territory." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 37(5): 434-441.

Zick et al. (2013) "Harvesting more than vegetables: The potential weight control benefits of community gardening." *American Journal of Public Health* 103(6): 1110-1115.

Loopstra & Tarasuk (2013) "Perspectives on community gardens, community kitchens and the good food box program in a community-based sample of low-income families." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 104(1): e55-e59.

Pearson (2013) Health benefits from urban agriculture using organic methods. Proceedings of the III International conference on landscape and urban horticulture; 2011. Zhou Wuzhong et al. Eds. Nanjing, China: 181-188.

Keatinge et al. (2012) "Vegetable gardens and their impact on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals." *Biological Agriculture and Horticulture* 28(2): 71-85.

McCormack et al. (2010) "Review of the Nutritional Implications of Farmers' Markets and Community Gardens: A Call for Evaluation and Research Efforts." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 110(3): 399-408.

Evers & Hodgson (2011) "Food choices and local food access among Perth's community gardeners." *Local Environment* 16(6): 585-602.

Litt et al. (2011). "The influence of social involvement, neighborhood aesthetics, and community garden participation on fruit and vegetable consumption." *American Journal of Public Health* 101(8): 1466-1473.

Watson & Moore (2011) "Community gardening and obesity." *Perspectives in Public Health* 131(4): 163-164.

White & Natelson (2011) Good planning for good food: How the planning system in England can support healthy and sustainable food. UK, online, Sustain: The Alliance for better food and farming.

Browne et al. (2009) Acting on food insecurity in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: policy and practice interventions to improve local access and supply of nutritious food.

Knowd et al. (2006) Urban agriculture: the new frontier. Planning for Food Seminar. Vancouver: 22.