

Dear Agricultural Competitiveness Taskforce Person,

Following a round table discussion on this topic in Devonport, I would like to submit the following issues that we would like to be considered as a part of the “white paper” process.

1. Bumble Bees. While bumble bees have been present in Tasmania for more than 20 years (could now be considered endemic?), due to their classification / status, they cannot be reared for the purpose of pollination of crops. During their 20 year inhabitation, there has been no effort to control / eradicate them (unlike the program put in place to eradicate supposed foxes). This is simply because their impact to the Tasmanian environment has been far less than originally suggested. Furthermore, there should be work done, to establish suitability (and effect) on mainland states fauna and flora, to establish impact. The reasons for this are 2 fold. Firstly, bumblebees provide an efficient pollination service, providing a yield increase at a cost reduction. This would put Australia on a competitive level playing field with other countries (as every other westernised country enjoy the benefits and efficiencies of bumble bees). Secondly, as Dr. Denis Anderson (CSIRO) has stated, it’s not a matter of if, but when, Australia will be subjected to Voroa Mite in honey bee hives. This will threaten our food security, as honey bees will struggle to pollinate food crops. We need to be proactive, and develop a “plan B”. If we don’t, we are jepordising our food security.
2. Chemical registration / off label permits. We need a simpler system to allow new chemical technologies to be adopted, enabling a smoother process to allow use of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) friendly chemicals. IPM must be seen as the future of pest control, and facilitation of relevant chemicals will ensure safe food, with minimal chemical.
3. Greenhouse depreciation schedules. The current schedules are too long to be practical, and often are longer than what would be efficient for a grower to consider still growing in a structure of that age. Greenhouse growing has shown to generate cropping efficiencies and surety, far in excess of conventional “outdoor” growing systems, and needs to be encouraged. Furthermore, the grower needs to readily adopt new technologies as they come to hand, in order to remain competitive. A depreciation schedule that reflects this should be adopted.
4. Relevant council guidelines for greenhouse construction. The classification of greenhouses is currently that of a warehouse, or factory. This means some of the imposed guidelines are simply not relevant. We need a national approach that has provision for greenhouse structures.

I realise the above might be a little “sketchy”; however, I can be contacted for more detail / information as needed.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute,  
Regards, Marcus Brandsema  
Chairman Protected Cropping Australia.