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Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper submission by Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important initiative.

Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd (Cape York NRM) supports and works with the landholders of the Cape York NRM Region toward achieving the ideal of a productive and profitable agriculture sector and subscribes to a quadruple bottom line approach which value the economy of the region equally on with its natural resources and its social and cultural heritage values.

The Cape's natural resources (referred to by some as its natural assets) are just like other assets in agriculture. They like human and financial capital are essential to production, are not infinite and need to be maintained.

Much of our work as a Regional NRM body involves keeping our agricultural producers informed in best management practices for their land and industry sector, and contributing to their ability to adopt those best natural resource management practices. Whilst Cape York NRM is able to invest in supporting change where there is a public benefit, where there is an element of private benefit or where the benefit is totally private, farmers and graziers are only able to invest in improving their practices if they are profitable. By investing in these practices farmers not only secure their natural resource base (e.g. soil, water, vegetation, biodiversity) for future generations but they create an opportunity to enhance the marketability of their produce in a market place that is becoming more sophisticated with consumers seeking "clean and green" produce.

The increased recognition given to natural resource management in the Green Paper is welcomed however it is our contention that more that can done in that regard, for example:

- While soil management was discussed in the Green Paper there was no associated "Policy Idea";
- Climate change remains a significant risk to agriculture and the Government's *Direct Action* policy recognises the contribution the land sector can make to our national targets. The Green Paper could consider how to take advantage of this in order to both support the targets and also develop a new income stream for farmers;
- Soils, water and our biodiversity are the asset base for farmers. Maintaining these assets requires long term investment. There are no indications as to how the required investment could be funded? It is suggested that consideration could be given to reviewing the different funding models used by the States and Territories, and to exploring opportunities for further development of the market for ecosystem services. The goal should be to put in place a dedicated source of funds for

maintaining the assets on which Australia's agriculture is based to ensure its sustainability for the long-term;

- It is suggested that the Government's existing investment in research, development and extension, rural financial counselling and natural resources management could be better co-ordinated and leveraged.

The Green Paper highlights the complexity of the operating environment for farmers, with all levels of government involved across a number of agencies and at a range of scales. Regional NRM organisations have been established to deal with this complexity in relation to natural resource management. Cape York NRM's business role and model is based on relationships and partnerships with and between farmers, community groups, governments, research and extension agencies. We have the potential to greatly assist the government in implementing its final White Paper policies, particularly in the areas of linking research and development efforts to community needs and in the coordination of extension and other knowledge transfer approaches.

The following document summarises Cape York NRM's response to a number of the policy ideas presented in the Green Paper, each of which relates to areas for which we have been given a mandate by our community, and/or which are closely linked to our day to day work.

Yours sincerely



Bob Frazer
CEO

