

Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper Submission

Date submitted

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Name of Organisation/Individual

University of Sydney

What are the top policies from the Green Paper that the Government should focus on in the White Paper and why?

What policies from the Green Paper don't you support and why?

General Comment

With reference to policy ideas 6 (strengthening farm businesses) & 7 (improving market competition) in the Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper, the Livestock in Landscapes Group within the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment at the University of Sydney has put a considerable amount of thought and effort into exploring the cooperatives business structure amongst livestock businesses. A project concept has been formulated (refer attached document) and has the support of a number of prominent individuals and organisations within the livestock industry.

The project aims to contribute to improving the livelihood and wellbeing of farmers, and the cohesion and resilience of their communities. The project will bring together groups of beef producers aged 30-45 who are at the critical stage of assuming increased responsibility for beef enterprise planning and management. Over 3 days, they will share information on how alliances, co-operatives and other partnerships can operate in the beef industry. Emphasis will be placed on the need to have a sound knowledge of markets, and supply chains associated with targeted markets, before moving to a consideration of alliances. The forums will highlight the principles of being part of a shared cause including commitment, ethics, loyalty, responsibility, trust, and social inclusion. Case studies will be used to illustrate the features of successful and unsuccessful alliances.

Beef producers in Australia receive the smallest relative percentage of product retail value compared with other major beef producers elsewhere in the world. This situation is not sustainable, it should not be accepted, and needs urgently to be fixed. There is no single reason why beef producers are not sufficiently rewarded but contributing factors are the structure and operation of beef enterprises and the often disjointed and adversarial relationships in beef supply chains. This has resulted in an industry where many producers are in financial difficulty and there are high levels of personal, family and community stress and distress. The particularly difficult circumstance across much of the northern beef industry has led the Federal Minister for Agriculture to convene a beef industry rural debt roundtable in Canberra on 23 September 2014.