

A letter to the Agricultural Taskforce.

I do not work within the agricultural industry. However, I am a professional who has dealt within the ups and downs of fortune that it produces for over thirty years. The agricultural sector of the economy affects every Australian in varying degrees and very few people realise its significance in their daily lives.

It is very frustrating for me to stand back and watch our farmers suffer from the uneven playing field produced by the free trade agreements that are trumpeted by our Government departments as being so good for us.

If our farmers only had to contend with the weather, that being difficult enough, they would prosper I'm sure.

For instance, fruit is being imported from country's with much lower production costs including wages and government subsidies. Regardless of anti dumping measures by our government we are finding fruit from all over the world on supermarket shelves for much cheaper prices than our local produce.

Regardless of the quality and dubious growing practices the public will buy the cheap alternative because that, unfortunately, is human nature.

I propose that a government department be created within the tax department to measure the degree of uneven playing field for agricultural imports and apply an import duty, not to give our producers an advantage but to give them a chance to make a respectable profit on their product.

If the wage content of their costs to produce a ton of product is double that of a competitor then they should be taxed accordingly. The country would have another source of revenue and our farmers could see some hope into the future.

Our government seems to have an inflated perspective of the importance of our market. We have a very small market place and a diminished agriculture sector. If the rate of decline continues we will soon have to import all our food.

I know with absolute certainty when the agriculture industry is doing it tough in the South West because the whole economy slows accordingly, just as it prospers when the farmers are doing well. Farmers always spend their profits in good years and stop spending in lean years.

I realise your call for submissions is to the agriculture industry, but the rest of the community shares their pain in hard times.