Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper – Submission IP103
Rick Hutton
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The Honorable Barnaby Joyce MP

Minister for Agriculture and Federal Member for New England

Dear Barnaby,

I congratulate you and the Coalition Government for your swift and decisive support for drought ravaged farms. This action provides real and emotional support for the farmers suffering from the prolonged drought conditions.

It is my understanding that the financial support component of the programs are five year repayment low interest loans. The responses, shown on media reports, of some of the people targeted by these loans include concerns that they may not have current circumstances to target this money, given the ongoing nature of the drought, and their disappointment that the loans are for just a five year term.

I would like to suggest to your White Paper on Agriculture and Food Security, an option that would provide wins all round.

Droughts (prolonged dry periods) always end, BUT often the farm enterprise is greatly weakened by the event and may lack the resilience to seize upon the financial opportunity provided by drought support measures and even the drought breaking rains.

The key issue is water, its security and management. How do we gain more security to enable quick recovery and the regeneration of the land, its soils and pastures.

A solution, which can be undertaken even during drought, involves earthworks to prepare the land for water capture and rehydration. The system is based on the Keyline principles first designed by P A Yeomans.

The opportunity today with Keyline is to add an extra layer to the system, that of carbon sequestration. The sequestration of carbon into our soils is, I believe, the ONLY effective way of reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide and thus positively impacting on Global Warming within a short term.

My suggestion is simple. Extend the loan repayment terms for farmers to ten years BUT make that extension provisional upon real and verifiable increases in carbon in the soils of the property.

There are systems available now which can measure and audit the carbon sequestration, and provide a “base level” and an “accumulated level” record of achievement.

The average carbon content in the soils of Australia’s arable lands is now less than 2%. This is a considerable decline from the nearly 5% estimates of those same soils at the time of European colonisation.

The return of the carbon content of these soils to 5% would absorb most of the excess carbon dioxide currently in the Earth’s atmosphere. The increased carbon will result in more fertile soils with a much higher nutrient mix and water holding ability.

Barnaby, this action will result in wins all round.

Please consider it.

Regards,

Rick Hutton, [redacted] 5/03/2014