

I would like to suggest some avenues pertaining to 'food security' and 'regulation' listed in your terms of reference. The potential of small farmers to contribute to the food supply is substantial but hampered, almost to the extent of prevention, through massive over-regulation. The proliferation of permits concerning food safety, animal welfare, environmental restrictions and the like are usually costed at the same rate as for major operators who can absorb the costs. As an example; the situation where small abattoirs are disappearing and large abattoirs are concentrating on the export market. Small producers are being forced to transport their cattle long distances to fewer existing facilities.

This is exacerbated by abattoirs providing Halal meat which closes off their operations to pig farmers, as well as their reluctance to handle smaller shipments of cattle from small farmers. Your White Paper will no doubt consider the dominance of the major supermarkets and some competition could be provided by small farmers located adjacent to the cities, as well as those located around regional towns, where current regulation dictates that the beef bred and consumed locally must be shipped live to a distant abattoir and returned frozen for consumption.

Not only does it make commercial sense to produce and consume locally, the over regulation of small farming is preventing the utilization of tens of thousands of 'lifestyle' farms which become unproductive as larger productive farms nearer the cities are developed into smaller properties, which are unsustainable under the current rules.

Consideration might be given to the Australia wide introduction of a small farm's 'one permit covers all' category, where all the approvals needed for a particular operation (animal welfare, food handling, health requirements, and the myriad others required for most value adding operations) could be rolled into one annual inspection by one Government inspector at a level less intense than might be applied to a large abattoir or fruit packing shed.

This ability of meat producers to supply straight into the adjacent market would be enhanced by on farm slaughter approvals, which would not only open the market for non profitable or non productive farms but would satisfy animal welfare concerns about the shipment of live cattle to far distant abattoirs. Add to this the expense and fuel needs of the number of refrigerated trucks which return the meat to that district. It would also satisfy a strong desire amongst the public to know where their food is coming from and to deal more directly with the farmers themselves rather than the large corporations which dominate the availability of food.

It is improbable that small farmers would have the ability, the time, or the facilities to make a formal submission of the same quality as the major food suppliers so in the first instance, I ask that you consider these aspects in your terms of reference, and leave open, or even invite, the opportunity for small farmers to make a more detailed submission toward your white paper.

*Provided via website's contact us form*