



**Agricultural Competitiveness Issues Paper**

**April 2014**

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 5500 members, and branches in each state and territory. DAA is a leader in nutrition and advocates for better food, better health, and wellbeing for all. DAA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Agricultural Competitiveness Issues Paper.

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## **Discussion against the Terms of Reference - Ensuring food security in Australia and globally**

DAA understands the imperative for sustainable and profitable farm businesses and food manufacturing. However it is not in the national interest for these aims to be realised at the expense of domestic food and nutrition security.

Calculations might suggest that Australia is able to produce sufficient food energy for domestic needs and profitable export. A market based system gives no guarantee that sufficient nutrient dense food consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines will be produced. Nor is there a guarantee that the Australian population will be able to afford what nutrient dense food is produced, particularly if a premium price can be realised overseas resulting in domestic shortages and high prices.

Rural communities are already disadvantaged by a burden of chronic disease in which poor diet is a leading contributor. This burden of disease is impacting on productivity of the agricultural sector. Revitalising rural communities requires the design of strategies based on more than economic and quantitative production considerations. Rural communities must be healthy to be productive, and good health depends on the ability to buy nutritious foods in local stores at affordable prices. There is ample evidence that the range of fresh, healthy foods decreases and the price increases the further a population is away from major urban centres.

DAA maintains that research and development investment is needed to support farm businesses and food manufacturers to produce high yield low input nutrient rich foods for Australian and international markets at affordable prices.

Our international marketing should be based on technology around nutrient dense foods, not just energy dense foods which are at odds with the nutrition goals of Australia's trading partners.

There is more than one 'inconvenient truth'. In the context of agricultural production food cannot be divorced from nutrition, particularly nutrition security. Access to safe nutritious food is a basic human right which must be protected by governments. Markets cannot be relied on to achieve this.