

Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper Submission - IP589
Macarthur Future Food Forum
Submitted 17 April 2014

MFFF Submission to Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper

This document forms the Macarthur Future Food Forum (MFFF) submission to the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper consultation process.

We are a group based in the local government areas of Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly focused on the goal: "**To work in partnership on the issues of food access, production, education, urban planning and development**" and objectives:

- **To raise the level of awareness of food insecurity**
- **To connect with services that provide healthy food in the Macarthur area**
- **To encourage an understanding of the importance of a range of food, in particular fruit and vegetables, to good health and barriers to access**
- **To advocate for measured urban planning and development that encourages healthy communities**

We are an alliance of community members, local agencies, educators, researchers, farmers and gardeners, who are passionate about promoting access to healthy food and the right to an affordable, sustainable food supply for everyone.

We believe that adequate nutrition is a fundamental human right — that is, all of us should have guaranteed access to enough good quality food so that we can care for ourselves and our families.

We take a three-pronged approach to achieving our objectives:

1. **Working on food projects directly:** Working with communities to identify and create solutions
2. **Building the capacity of community organisations:** Developing partnerships project, facilitating community engagement, providing training and increasing resources
3. **Linking action to policy:** Providing lobbying and advocacy around policy surrounding food systems, planning decisions, housing, employment and health promotion

Please find below our specific answers to the questions asked in the white paper. Please note we have not provided a response to all of the listed questions.

1. Ensuring food security in Australia and globally

We believe we need to consider food security in Australia with up to 10% of people identifying with food insecurity.

The need for many strategies in which to support food security, which includes large scale agriculture, family farms, peri urban agriculture and urban agriculture.

Things that will impinge on this include the loss of agricultural land adjoining cities as they grow and subsume agricultural land, and also how agricultural land co-exists with urban planning.

A major issue as most cities are on the seaboard which has a more reliable rainfall, and of major concern will be the affect of climate change on the reliability of supply and ability to grow in more inland areas.

Also the impact of large companies on what is grown for example, increase in GMOs, which are yet proven to be safe for human or animal use.

2. Farmer decisions for improving farm gate returns

The lack of certainty for farmers affects their livelihood and thought should be given to an insurance scheme, but one which rewards good strategies and not bad farmers.

Increased diversification which is good for the soil, but also hedges the farmer in times of climate and market uncertainty.

Consideration for the husbandry methods, which must be ethical and consider the welfare of the animal as part of farm gate returns

Concern that larger scale operations should not be at the exclusion of smaller or family production systems.

Livestock are an important part of a carbon sequestration system, and reduces some of the needs for external inputs into the farm production system.

3. Enabling access to finance

Greater encouragement of potential young farmers through a farm cadet scheme, and reduced interest rate loans.

Providing further industry levy funded grants to support farming as a venture.

Encouraging investment in farming enterprises by superannuation funds and other private equity providers through business matching programs run by the Department of Industry and Department of Primary Industries.

A greater link between the city and country for investment opportunity.

Promoting carbon abatement investment in carbon sequestering farms by both local and international carbon offset funds.

4. Increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and its value chains

We have concerns over the regulation by supermarkets and their monopoly of the internal supply chains.

Greater diversification of processors and distributors would reduce cost, but should not reduce the quality of the product or the ethics of the treatment of farmers in the supplier/customer relationship.

Additional competitiveness in our food wholesale and food retail space would help alleviate these issues.

Further investment into RIRDC programs to incubate new agricultural industries would be very beneficial on this front – this is a proven strategy to improve diversification and competitiveness of a national agricultural industry.

Comprehensive value chain mapping and analysis of Australia and other competitive agricultural economies to identify clear areas for improvement.

5. Enhancing agriculture's contribution to regional communities

The government should support agriculture to ensure long term food security, it is not in the best interests of Australia to be relying on food from other countries which will directly affect our regional communities.

One example of this phenomenon in action is Heinz, moving to New Zealand, affecting the rural and regional community and importing chinese tomatoes to process into sauces etc, which are then imported back to Australia

More has to be considered than simply economics.

9. Assessing the effectiveness of incentives for investment and job creation

We need to attract the next generation of farmers by putting more emphasis on farming to be considered a career of choice, through school programs, TAFE, University with work experience and cadetships/internships.

Education should be subsidised to encourage more participation, even for small farmers, not only large scale operations.

There would be significant benefit from providing mentoring and social networks. Improvement of rural social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals would also provide an incentive to new farmers.

For further comment or clarification contact:

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