

Climate Change Inquiry
Submission S125
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Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry: Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

Victorian Farmers Federation

2 September 2019

INTRODUCTION

Addressing the Terms of Reference

An inquiry into what urban, rural and regional communities in Victoria are doing to tackle climate change and how the Victorian Government could support these communities to the Environment and Planning Committee for consideration and report no later than 30 June 2020.

The VFF welcomes the opportunity to make submission to the Committee in relation to how Government can support community in tackling climate change.

Farmers have long been at the front line of feeling the impact of changing climate and weather events. Farmers are keen to not only have Government recognise the significant investment the industry has made into research and practice to reduce emissions and increase food security, but to discuss with Government the provision of information, regulatory support and incentives to ensure Australian agriculture continues to be global leaders in sustainable agriculture at scale.

Since the inquiry was established in May this year the IPCC has released its recommendations on Climate Change and Land use. The VFF is still working through the policy content, the key emerging themes we see for community, government and agriculture are:

- What to the IPCC pathways mean for land use in Victoria
- Soil health (opportunities to assist / regulatory challenges)
- Food waste (consumer education)
- Co-ordinated programs / regulation (ensuring regulatory systems are achieving a balanced outcome – eg: no-till agriculture being seen as a “convenience issue”)
- Pest management
- Competition for land use

The IPCC Report on Climate Change and Land Use identified the global challenges to be achieved in relation to reduction and sequestration of greenhouse gases. It identifies agriculture as a key element in achieving this aim. It is critical that what Australian agriculture through industry funded Research and Development, is supported by the wider community and by government through regulatory frameworks that recognise and support the role of agriculture.

One of the key roles for agriculture is sequestration. Carbon storage on agricultural land is the main way to deal with existing greenhouse gases emissions since the industrial revolution. This is clearly an example of community benefit at private costs and therefore there must be an income stream to agriculture.

What can the government do to support agricultural industries and communities?

- Investigate the current situation in Victoria in relation to IPCC recommendations.
- Strengthen policy support for agriculture’s role in emissions reduction, food security and the economy.
- Work with industry to understand where the regulatory barriers to utilising technology to lower emissions are.
- Work with industry to support R&D on application of IPCC recommendations in local conditions.
- Identify ways to turn climate change adaption from a threat to an opportunity through income streams with simplified reporting.
- Support agricultural industries in undertaking targeted research and development.

- Provide extension programs for soil carbon programs.
- Appropriately fund Catchment Management Authorities in relation to soil health and pest plant and animal management.
- Reinvigorate community action programs, such as Landcare, in relation to 'agriculture' related funding streams.
- Educate the community on the high standards within Victorian agriculture – environment, chemical use, animal welfare etc.
- Educate the community on food waste.

What can the community do to support agricultural industries?

- Understand and support the role that agriculture plays in emissions requirements and the research and development efforts the industry has implemented
- Demand the reduction of food waste in the supply chain by purchasing 'ugly' food (food with shape distortions / blemishes)
- Reduce food waste in their consumption
- Purchase Australian food – support regulatory compliance through purchasing power.

OUR POSITION

The VFF is willing to work with Government to:

- Identify how the Government can ensure Victorian laws support agricultural production and sequestration;
- Identify knowledge gaps to be addressed;
- Utilise the National Farmers' Federation position entitled *Roadmap 2030*, to ensure incomes streams / programs to support sequestration on agricultural land;
- Discuss the relevant elements of VFF policy and funding requests relevant to the issues raised in the IPCC report, including:
 - Right to farm policy position
 - Renewable Energy Policy Position
 - Suite of changes to planning policy to recognise sustainable agriculture
 - Funding of soil and pest management programs.

David Jochinke

President

Victorian Farmers Federation

The Victorian Farmers Federation

Victoria's agricultural production accounts for over \$13 billion of Victoria's economy and over 25 per cent of the State's exports per annum. Victoria's farmers produce high quality food and fibre, produced to high standards of safety, with little taxpayer support, and to some of the strictest environmental and highest animal welfare controls in the world.

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) represents a farming community which creates a profitable, sustainable and socially responsible agriculture sector connecting with consumers. We have a proud history representing Victoria's farm businesses since 1979 – primarily family farms that produce the eggs, grain, fruit and vegetables, meat, and milk that help to feed Victoria's six million people, and the bigger global community, every day.

The VFF consists of commodity groups: dairy (United Dairyfarmers of Victoria), grains, horticulture (including Flowers Victoria), intensives (chicken meat, eggs and pigs), and livestock – and expert committees representing; water, land management, agricultural and veterinarian chemicals, farm business and rural development, and workplace relations.

Our purpose is to make Victorian farmer's lives better; enhancing Victoria's future.
Our mission is to ensure a community of farmers creating a profitable, sustainable and socially responsible agricultural industry connecting with all Victorians.



Our place in Victoria

What we do



- Victoria's **20,775 farms** cover **10.6 million** hectares
- We are **24.2%** of Australian farmers
- **91%** family operated, with only **2%** foreign owned



- We employ **87,800** people mostly in regional areas
- **\$4739** of food consumed each year by every Australian
- As a net exporter we have long term food surity







- Our annual production is **\$13.16 billion**, **3.5%** of Victoria's economy
- **27.8%** of Victoria's exports are agricultural product valued at **\$11.9 billion**

How we do it



-  Farmers invest **\$80 million** in R&D
-  Every R&D **\$1** converts to **\$12** in farmer generated impact
-  **2.7%** productivity growth through innovative efficiency gains
-  Farmers receive less than **1.5%** in government support



-  **63%** reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 1996-2016
-  Water consumption reduced by **7%** from 2014-2015
-  Land conservation has increased to **18%** of total land mass.
-  Farmers spend **\$20,000** annually on feral animals and pest weeds



-  **3.5 million** beef cattle
-  **140 million** chickens
-  **1.1 million** dairy cows producing **6.186 billion** litres of milk
-  **65,992** sows
-  **13.1 million** breeding ewes and a fleece clip of **66,100 tonnes**
-  **6.5 million** tonnes of grain
-  **\$2.35 billion** in horticultural production