

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Communiqué

PIMC 16

6 NOVEMBER 2009

Primary Industries Ministers from around Australia met in Perth on Friday 6 November 2009 to consider issues affecting Australia's primary production sectors. This was the sixteenth meeting of the Ministerial Council and followed the sixteenth meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. Specific issues considered by Council are detailed below.

Productivity Growth Trends in Agriculture

Council received an update from ABARE on its research into agricultural productivity growth and its determinants. Council discussed the need for improved integration across industry and governments of research to identify opportunities for promoting productivity growth across the agriculture and food sector.

Progress on National Agreement on Biosecurity and Implementing other Recommendations of the Beale Review

Council reconfirmed its commitment to establish a formal agreement on a national biosecurity system. Council gave direction on priority commitments and reform areas for officials to complete a final draft Agreement for ministerial consideration by early 2010. Council requested officials to provide a report on interstate quarantine restrictions impacting on trade, including an assessment of costs. Council also agreed to finalise the Intergovernmental Agreement on Emergency Responses to Nationally Significant Biosecurity Incidents as soon as possible and to include the Intergovernmental Agreement as a schedule to the National Agreement on Biosecurity.

Overarching Policy Framework for Ongoing Eradication Programs

Council agreed to measures to improve consistency in the management of existing and future eradication programs. These will include formalising and strengthening governance arrangements so that eradication programs are managed under either the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed, the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement or under an Intergovernmental Agreement on Emergency Responses to Nationally Significant Biosecurity Incidents (under development).

Drought Policy Improvement

Council noted that the Australian Government's consideration of its response to the national drought policy review is making progress and supported continuing efforts for reform. Council reiterated its support for the continuation of existing drought support including the transition through to any new arrangements, to assist farmers who are affected by the current severe drought, and support for the National Rural Advisory Council's ongoing Exceptional Circumstances assessments.

National Primary Industries Research Development and Extension Framework

Council noted that the Statement of Intent to develop and implement the National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension Framework had been signed by 25 parties, including the states, the Northern Territory, CSIRO, the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture and the rural research and development corporations. This paves the way for greater collaboration, coordinated investment and a more strategic national approach to rural research and development between agencies and funders, and will help to generate new knowledge and technology for Australia's primary industries. Council endorsed the pork, wine and dairy industry research, development and extension strategies, which are now ready to be implemented.

National Meat Labelling System for Processors, Retailers and Consumers

Council discussed a report from its Meat Marketing Working Group on a possible national meat labelling system for processors, retailers and consumers. It also noted developments on possible legislative approaches being considered in NSW. Council tasked officials to report to its next meeting on options to change current arrangements, including advice on possible use of the National Livestock Identification System. Council also noted the need for further consideration of country of origin labelling of red meat.

Workforce and Skills in Primary Industries

Council noted the final report of the Industries Development Committee Workforce, Skills and Training Working Group, and agreed to implement the working group's recommendations to improve government and industry coordination and collaboration in addressing agricultural labour and skills needs. Council agreed to invite Agrifood Skills Australia to present to its next meeting on priority actions to enhance agriculture's workforce and skills.

Review of the Risks to Animal Welfare during Ritual Slaughter without prior Stunning

Council noted the findings of recent scientific reviews of ritual slaughter of animals under Australian law and agreed to make the reports public. Council agreed that jurisdictions would use compatible risk management measures to reduce adverse animal welfare outcomes and requested the Primary Industries Standing Committee to consult all stakeholders on issues associated with ritual slaughter.

Equine Influenza – Expert Review Panel Report

Council received a presentation on the conclusions of the Equine Influenza Expert Review Panel report. Council also agreed that consultation on the report be undertaken with national horse industry bodies, accompanied by an invitation to provide comment to council. Ministers agreed to consider future response policy options in April 2010, informed by officials and industry comment.

Recommendations for Consistent Regulation of Animal Welfare Outcomes

Council noted progress on implementing changes to jurisdictions' animal welfare legislation to deliver consistent animal welfare outcomes.

Managing the Impact of the Withdrawal of Dimethoate and Fenthion

Council discussed the review of the insecticides dimethoate and fenthion being undertaken by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. It resolved to act cooperatively to secure ongoing trade in commodities that may be affected by the outcomes of the review. To support this action, Council commissioned the development and implementation of pest management measures that deliver an equivalent level of pest risk mitigation as that achieved by the two chemicals as they are currently used.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in Agriculture in New Zealand

Council heard a presentation from the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on pending amendments to New Zealand's Emissions Trading Scheme and the roles of the forestry and agricultural industries in the scheme. Ministers were advised of the cooperation with New Zealand in the development of Australia's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

Climate Change and Commercial Forestry Action Plan

Council endorsed the National Climate Change and Commercial Forestry Action Plan, also acting on behalf of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. The action plan is to guide action by the forestry industry, with the support of governments, to respond to climate change through adaptation and mitigation, underpinned by research and development and communication. The plan identifies knowledge gaps and proposes actions to assist forest industries to respond to climate change. The Primary Industries Standing Committee will monitor its implementation.

Climate Change Adaptation Policy for Agriculture

Council endorsed a work program for its High Level Officials Group on Mitigation and Adaptation that will complement the work of the Australian Government's Technical Options Development Group. This will enable greater collaboration between the states and the Australian Government on issues concerning agriculture's involvement in achieving emissions reductions. Council also agreed that the High Level Officials Group should monitor relevant policy developments in the context of improving the adaptability of agriculture to climate change.

Forest Certification – Wood Product Market Access

Council supported Victoria's policy principle that government procurement policies, guides and tools, and recognition of third party forest certification, should align with and be consistent with each government's sustainable forest management policies. It also agreed that governments should not adopt, endorse or fund policies or guides that are inconsistent with their own sustainable forest management policies. It called on the Green Building Council of Australia to accredit the Australian Forest Certification Scheme as a Forest Management Scheme for Green Star Certification.

Advancing Indigenous Reconciliation in PI and NRM – Annual Report

Council endorsed the *Indigenous Reconciliation in Primary Industries and Natural Resource Management: Annual Report 2008-09*. Council recognised the importance of opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities to participate in natural resource management initiatives and agreed to promote critical success factors for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Ministers agreed all natural resource management bodies would be written to, to provide a copy of the critical success factors, encouraging them to engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities.

Year of the Farmer 2012

Council supported the concept of an Australian Year of the Farmer to be held in 2012. The year long event will be a national celebration of farming, recognising the contribution farmers provide to Australia through food and fibre production, as well as their contribution to natural resource management, innovation and technology and the broader economy. Council encouraged communities, businesses and primary industries to show their support.

Food Regulations Issues – Update

Council noted key food regulatory issues that have progressed since PIMC 15, including the COAG deregulation agenda with respect to food, the comprehensive national review of food labelling law and policy, front of pack labelling and the review of ministerial policy guidelines on food safety management in Australia.

Wine Industry Update

Council received an update on the economic difficulties currently facing Australia's wine grape growers and wine producers and an acknowledgement by industry that structural change was necessary.