

# PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

## Communiqué

**PIMC 5**

**19 May 2004**

Primary Industries Ministers from across Australia met in Adelaide on Wednesday 19 May 2004 to consider progress on issues impacting on Australia's primary production sector. This was the fifth meeting of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. Specific issues dealt with by the Council are detailed below.

### **Drought Policy**

Ministers considered the outcomes from the National Drought Roundtable held in Canberra on 14 April 2004. They noted the widespread support for the fundamental principles of self-reliance and risk management underpinning the 1992 National Drought Policy.

Council agreed that the issues identified at the Roundtable should be taken into account in developing future drought policy and support measures and agreed to further consider options in July 2004. These options will be developed by Standing Committee in close consultation with key stakeholders and will be costed (including options within the present intergovernmental funding arrangements) to assist in addressing appropriate cost-sharing arrangements between the States/Territories and the Australian Government.

Council noted that the Australian Government is prepared to consider options for streamlining the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) declaration process in areas that remain in drought beyond the EC two year duration period.

### **Export of Livestock**

Ministers noted the Australian Government's response and action on the Keniry Inquiry into the live animal export industry. Council noted in particular the development of a draft Interim Australian Code for the Export of Livestock as recommended in the Keniry Livestock Export Review. Ministers endorsed in principle the draft *Interim Australian Code for the Export of Livestock* as a basis for the development of national standards for each stage of the export chain, noting that only essential elements of the interim Code will be referenced in legislation by the Australian Government. Council requested Standing Committee to report progress on the draft Interim Code at its next meeting in October 2004.

### **Agricultural Trade Issues**

Ministers noted recent achievements in the trade area, including the successful conclusion of Free Trade Agreements with the United States and Thailand. Ministers also welcomed the Government's pursuit of new agricultural trade opportunities in other markets, particularly China. Ministers also noted the re-engagement of the WTO Doha Round of agriculture negotiations following the breakdown in Cancun last September.

### **National Biosecurity System**

Ministers noted that a high level working group will be established to engage primary industry and other stakeholders, including the Health, Natural Resource Management and Environment Protection Ministerial Councils, in the process of developing and implementing a National Biosecurity Strategy for Australia. The Strategy would address the broader, longer-term biosecurity issues in relation to the management of animal, plant and marine pest and disease incursions. Standing Committee will report back to Council later this year.

### **Import Risk Analyses**

The Primary Industries Ministerial Council reaffirmed its endorsement of Australia's science based Import Risk Assessment (IRA) process. Ministers supported the independence and professionalism of scientists involved in the IRA process. Ministers reaffirmed the importance of this scientific independence in the biosecurity process. Ministers noted that scientists involved in the IRA process are independent and are not representing their jurisdictions. Council also agreed that scientists, in preparing their draft and final reports, should have the opportunity to incorporate their various views. Ministers also noted that under WTO guidelines only scientific aspects are to be considered in the IRA process. Ministers stated however that Australia must sustain its strong appropriate level of protection. Ministers also noted the importance of protecting regional pest and disease freedom.

### **Plantations for Australia: 2020 Vision**

Ministers noted that there had been a decline in the establishment rate of new forest plantations from an average of 87,000 ha/year in the five years to 2002 to 82,000 ha/year in the five years to 2003. Ministers also noted that planting rates in both 2002 (54,000 ha) and 2003 (42,000 ha) were below the notional target of 80,000 ha per year required to achieve the Plantations 2020 Vision. Council agreed that Standing Committee report back to Council at its next meeting on any additional actions it might take at the national and state levels to maintain progress towards the Plantations 2020 Vision target of 3 million ha.

### **Australian Dairy Industry – Current Situation**

Ministers noted that the Australian dairy industry is facing difficult economic circumstances due largely to the combined impact of drought and the higher Australian dollar. Ministers also noted that the long-term outlook for the dairy industry remains positive. Council agreed to refer the state of the industry to Standing Committee for further analysis and report back to Council later in 2004.

### **Assessing Environmental Regulatory Arrangements for Aquaculture**

Ministers reviewed the Productivity Commission report on existing planning and environmental regulatory arrangements for aquaculture in Australia. Ministers noted that significant differences exist in the way aquaculture is regulated and administered across States and that aquaculture production would benefit from improvements to the current complex legislative and regulatory arrangements.

The Productivity Commission report identified the key features of efficient and effective environmental arrangements for aquaculture. Council requested the Marine and Coastal Committee of the NRM Standing Committee develop a “Best Practice” model for aquaculture regulatory arrangements based on these features by the end of 2004.

### **Livestock Identification and Tracing**

Ministers endorsed National Performance Standards for the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) and their application to cattle and sheep. The Performance Standards set time frames within which it must be possible to locate a specified animal and other animals with which it has resided. The Standards are critical for ensuring that the various identification mechanisms comprising the NLIS will achieve a nationally consistent outcome. Ministers also endorsed a national communication strategy which is needed to increase understanding of the NLIS.

### **International Developments in Animal Health Issues**

Council considered recent international developments regarding foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), and avian influenza (AI) and Australia's response to these events. Council agreed on the need to immediately progress through SAFEMEAT/Animal Health Australia a range of measures to strengthen Australia's ability to respond to market demands regarding BSE, including animal identification and traceability, nationally consistent labelling requirements to support the ruminant feed ban, and a review of the national audit policy for the ruminant feed ban.

### **Truth in Labelling of Domestic and Imported Seafood**

Council considered the issue of incorrect labelling of both domestic and imported seafood products in Australia and the work to date of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) on this issue. The Australian Government Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation has written to members of the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council encouraging them to ensure that the country of origin labelling requirements of the *Food Standards Code* are enforced in their jurisdictions. Council agreed to encourage Ministers responsible for seafood labelling to closely monitor and adequately resource compliance with and enforcement of legal requirements for truth in labelling in their respective jurisdictions.

### **The National Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Business Plan**

Ministers noted progress towards the development of a structured national business plan for prevention and preparedness activities related to foot and mouth disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy and emergency animal diseases more broadly. A final plan will be provided to Standing Committee by the end of June 2004. Ministers also agreed that a second national simulation exercise to test national emergency animal disease response frameworks will be held during 2005.

Ministers noted the outcomes of a national workshop titled ‘Protecting the Food Chain’, held in Sydney in February 2004 and agreed that further workshops of this nature be held that would incorporate broader industry participation.

#### **National Communication Arrangements for Pest and Disease Emergencies**

Ministers agreed that accurate and coordinated management of information during a national pest and disease emergency is critical to achieving a successful outcome. Ministers agreed to the ongoing work of a National Communication Network as a highly effective communications tool across all jurisdictions and industry to support responses to pest and disease emergencies. Ministers also agreed to the establishment of a national website for use in emergencies as a major public and media source of information and to consider later this year a model for staffing arrangements in a foot and mouth disease outbreak.

#### **Ensuring a Reliable Supply of Anthrax Vaccine**

Ministers noted advice that market access for meat, dairy products and other animal products can be disrupted in major outbreaks of anthrax and in sporadic cases that are not well managed. Although anthrax vaccine is readily available from commercial sources, it is desirable to ensure a reliable supply of anthrax vaccine to manage the risks of a major outbreak or interruption to the supply. Council requested Animal Health Australia to develop a proposal on possible arrangements between relevant industry and government parties to fund an interim anthrax vaccine reserve in conjunction with the commercial supplier.

#### **Australian Animal Welfare Strategy**

Ministers endorsed an Australian Animal Welfare Strategy that was developed under the auspices of the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare. The Strategy includes animals used in research and teaching, animals used for the production of food and fibre and other products, companion and guide animals, animals used for recreation, entertainment and display, native and introduced wildlife and feral animals. Council requested Standing Committee to co-ordinate development of an implementation plan for the AAWS in consultation with key stakeholders and to provide advice on how best to address the issue of economic impacts that might arise from implementation of the Strategy.

#### **Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Cattle**

Ministers endorsed the *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Cattle*. The objective of the Cattle Code is to promote agreed animal welfare standards for the husbandry of cattle, and to provide guidance to people responsible for the care and welfare of cattle in all types of cattle farming enterprises. It will replace the existing Model Code that was endorsed by the Australian Agricultural Council in 1991.

#### **Layer Hen Welfare**

Ministers considered the impact of Council’s earlier decision to implement the layer hen welfare reforms agreed at ARMCANZ 18 (August 2000). Council requested Standing Committee to consider options for a national levy to provide structural adjustment assistance to egg producers whose cages did not or do not meet the 1995 Code of Practice by means of a national levy implemented under Australian Government legislation. Ministers will reconsider this matter at the next meeting of

Council taking account of the advice provided by Standing Committee. The Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry indicated that he would only be prepared to consider a national levy if there was broad bipartisan support at the Federal level.

### **Genetically Modified Crops – Update**

Council noted a report outlining action in States and Territories in relation to GM canola trial sites and monitoring current and former trial sites.

### **Investment in Primary Industries Research**

Ministers noted the work of the Standing Committee's on R&D and agreed that R&D policy will be a major item for discussion at the next Council meeting. Papers will be prepared on demonstrating the return on investment from agricultural R&D, mapping current agricultural R&D across the jurisdictions and compiling information on models for R&D and adoption across the jurisdictions. Ministers also noted that these papers will provide them with a stocktake of agricultural activity and identify opportunities for ongoing work to improve agricultural R&D.

### **Review of the AAA Package**

Ministers noted the findings of the 2003 Review of the *Agriculture – Advancing Australia* (AAA) Package, which have underpinned the Australian Government's decision in the 2004 Budget to continue funding of key elements of the Package in 2004-08. The Review found that the Package had promoted a significant improvement in strategic planning, information gathering and analysis together with the adoption of a more "business oriented" approach to farming.

### **Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan**

Council endorsed its first annual report on implementation of actions to address Indigenous reconciliation by primary industry agencies across Australia. The report recommends that jurisdictions undertake further review of products and services already being delivered in partnership with Indigenous communities. In addition, improved opportunities for employment and training in natural resource management and agriculture are also identified as areas for attention.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Council has been scheduled for Melbourne in October 2004.