

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Communiqué

PIMC 17

23 April 2010

Primary industries ministers from around Australia met in Darwin on Friday, 23 April 2010, to consider issues affecting Australia's primary production sectors. This was the seventeenth meeting of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council and followed the seventeenth meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. Specific issues considered by the council are detailed below.

Murray-Darling Basin plan

The council received a briefing on the processes around the development of the Murray-Darling Basin plan ahead of the release of a draft plan on 1 July 2010.

Progress report on the Australian Year of the Farmer 2012

The 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. The council encouraged communities, businesses and primary industries to show their support.

Update on policies and research aimed at reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions

The council has decided to establish a new Primary Industries Standing Committee technical working group to provide advice on carbon offset markets for the agricultural sector. A key task of this group will be to assist in the development of abatement methodologies for the carbon offset markets.

Drought policy improvement

Council noted that the Australian Government's consideration of its response to the national drought policy review is being finalised and supported continuing efforts for reform. Council reiterated its support for the continuation of existing drought support to assist farmers who continue to be affected by the current severe drought.

Productivity growth trends in agriculture

The council endorsed the development of a priority-setting framework and a future agricultural productivity work plan. The council also noted the progress made by its Industries Development Committee on agricultural productivity research, including ongoing assessment of data collection requirements.

Workforce and skills in primary industries

The council noted the AgriFood 2010 *Environmental Scan* and agreed to support the development of a *Regional Agrifood Skills and Workforce Development Strategy* to extend the National Training System so that it better caters for the needs of the agrifood industries.

National primary industries research, development and extension framework

The council endorsed a further five sectoral strategies for the beef, sheepmeat, poultry, fishing and aquaculture, and forest and wood products industries that have been developed within the National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension Framework. The council also noted the progress of other sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies and the future work program to implement the framework and strategies.

Agreement on biosecurity and a national environmental biosecurity response plan

The council endorsed the draft Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity for consideration by COAG and noted it provides a blueprint for governments to collectively use their resources to ensure that Australia maintains its favourable biosecurity status. The council also endorsed the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement as the first deliverable under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity.

Future operation and cost-sharing arrangements for the ad hoc, long-term eradication programs

The council endorsed the recommendations of the National Management Groups established for the oversight of the ad-hoc, long term eradication programs for branched broomrape, and Asian honey bees, determining the future operation and cost sharing arrangements for these programs. Consideration of a transitional program for European house borer will be conducted out of session.

Interstate quarantine dispute resolution

Council endorsed a package of material to support the effective resolution of interstate quarantine trade disputes. Included in the package was a *Process for domestic sanitary and phytosanitary measures dispute resolution* and *Principles underpinning domestic quarantine and cross-border movement controls for animals, plants and their products*. This outcome provides governments with a framework within which to define, assess and resolve interstate quarantine trade disputes and thereby facilitate trade.

Equine influenza vaccination

Council agreed that maintenance of Australia's strong cooperative approach to biosecurity was vital to effective responses to any future incursions of exotic pests and diseases.

Ministers agreed to the need to establish by 1 December 2010 horse industry commitment to a national levy and to inclusion of the industry under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement.

In the absence of any funding agreement, Ministers agreed that there would be no nationally cost shared response to any exotic horse disease incursion and steps would be

put in place to enable voluntary vaccination of horses against Equine Influenza as a disease impact mitigation strategy.

Should the horse industry come forward with the necessary agreements, the Commonwealth Government will commit to introduce legislation accordingly. Council members agreed to work with horse industry organisations in all jurisdictions and members of the Australian Parliaments to ensure broad support for timely progression of the funding legislation.

Mulesing: Trade implications for Australian wool exports

The Australian and state and territory governments continue to encourage the wool industry to better coordinate and communicate its approaches to mulesing issues throughout the wool supply chain, from grower to retailers. All governments agreed to use their international representatives to support the industry in communicating the availability of non-mulesed wool and progress in phasing out mulesing.

Managing the impact of the potential withdrawal of dimethoate and fenthion

The council discussed the review of the insecticides dimethoate and fenthion being undertaken by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). It noted the actions taken to implement a national response plan. Council resolved to continue to receive updates until the outcomes of the APVMA reviews are known.

Implementation of the COAG recommendations for a new, single, national regulatory framework for agvet chemicals

Ministers endorsed a national policy framework for the assessment, registration and control of use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals which is part of the Council of Australian Government's broad regulatory reform agenda. The framework represents the first of several steps in regulatory reform which, while protecting public health and the environment, will deliver efficiency and effectiveness improvements to the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

Forest certification—wood product market access

The council noted that the Green Building Council has revised their Green Star Timber credit and that one Green Star point is available to any timber certified, by any scheme, which applies for and can meet five 'essential' criteria. A second point will be available for 'significant' criteria, which will be available following a further round of stakeholder consultation.

Developing sustainable forest management principles

The council has requested the Primary Industries Standing Committee, through the Forestry and Forest Products Committee, to develop a discussion paper on sustainable forest management principles for Australia. These principles will enable stakeholders to better understand Australia's sustainable forests management credentials. The paper will be based on the National Forest Policy Statement and other relevant policies. The paper will be considered at PIMC's next meeting.

Advancing Indigenous reconciliation in PI and NRM—annual report

The council confirmed its commitment to increasing the participation and employment of Indigenous people in the primary industries and natural resource management sectors, with the potential to assist in addressing ‘Closing the Gap’ priorities. Jurisdictions will continue to consider the range of strategies that can be best progressed within their state or territory, including joint strategies and partnerships with the Australian Government.

Food regulations issues—update

The council noted key food regulatory issues that have progressed since its last meeting, including the COAG deregulation agenda with respect to food, the comprehensive national review of food labelling law and policy, front-of-pack labelling, country-of-origin labelling for red meat, the review of ministerial policy guidelines on food safety management in Australia and the organic standard.

Agriculture trade—review of developments

The council noted recent developments in agricultural trade issues and new initiatives to improve the coordination of market access issues across jurisdictions.

Implementation of COAG early harvest reforms regarding on-farm dairy cleansers

The council agreed to a simplified regulatory approach for dairy cleansers used on-farm whereby reduced data requirements would apply to new cleansers that have similar chemistries and use patterns to existing registered products. This is one of a number of regulatory reforms being progressed to deliver effectiveness and efficiency improvements to the way in which agricultural and veterinary chemicals are regulated.