

# PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

## Communiqué

**PIMC 21**

**28 October 2011**

Primary industries ministers from around Australia met in Melbourne on Friday, 28 October 2011, to consider issues affecting Australia's primary production sectors. This was the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. Minister Ludwig announced that the Standing Council on Primary Industries has now been officially launched by the Prime Minister. Accordingly, this will be the last meeting of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. Specific issues considered by the council are detailed below.

Council noted the contribution of the late Peter Kenny for his work on developing a national approach to biosecurity, drought policy reform and agriculture more generally.

### **Implementing the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity**

Council noted the activities undertaken by the National Biosecurity Committee and the Primary Industries Standing Committee and reaffirmed its commitment to progress the implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity. Council acknowledged the recent completion of the Matthews Review – “A Review of Australia's preparedness for the threat of Foot-and-Mouth disease” – and the need to develop and implement a national action plan.

### **National drought policy reform**

Council considered progress with the Pilot of Drought Reform Measures in Western Australia and the report of the review panel which had examined the pilot during 2011.

Council noted the panel's conclusion on measures which would represent a robust future drought policy platform:

- temporary income support safety net for farm families in hardship that is available based on demonstrated individual need
- social support services including those delivered via outreach to people in rural communities
- continuing opportunities to engage in and implement strategic farm business planning, following an audit of similar programs
- ongoing access to the Farm Management Deposit Scheme and existing tax incentives for primary producers.

Council agreed on the importance of national drought policy reform and reconfirmed commitment to a new policy framework.

Council requested the Primary Industries Standing Committee undertake further work to finalise details of proposed possible elements of a new drought policy for consideration by council as soon as possible, for development of recommendations to the Council of Australian Governments.

**Reform of agricultural and veterinary chemical regulation: process and timing**

Council noted information regarding the development of a decision regulatory impact statement (RIS) for the development of a single national framework for the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. Council agreed to propose a deadline for the reform of December 2012 to the Business Regulation and Competition Working Group. This will provide time for jurisdictions to better develop a policy proposal that achieves the overall intent of the reform.

Council requested officers to examine the adequacy of the Intergovernmental Agreement that governs the operation of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and provide options for the increased involvement of the states and territories in the governance of the APVMA.

**Implementation of the National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension Framework**

Council commended the progress of the implementation program for the National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension Framework. Council endorsed the national strategies for cotton and wool, and the cross-sectoral strategies for biofuels and bioenergy and water use in agriculture. Council also welcomed the decision of the Australian Government to maintain the current the cap on government matching funding for the rural Research and Development Corporations.

**Better understanding of, and contribution to, agricultural, fisheries, forestry and aquaculture productivity growth**

Council reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing productivity, profitability and competitiveness in the agricultural sector. Council endorsed the direction for an agricultural productivity work plan being implemented under the Primary Industries Standing Committee. Council noted the productivity work plan would be expanded to encompass fisheries, forestry and aquaculture productivity growth driver and opportunities.

**Bobby calf time-off-feed standard**

Council discussed the time-off-feed standard but could not reach agreement on the maximum period of time for time-off-feed for bobby calves prior to their slaughter.

**Advice on the development and implementation of a national food plan**

Council discussed the ongoing development of a national food plan and noted the results of recent stakeholder consultation. The Australian Government has committed to develop a national food plan and a green paper is planned to be released in the first half of 2012.

**Australian Year of the Farmer 2012**

Council remains supportive of the Australian Year of the Farmer 2012 initiative and highlighted the importance of promoting the essential role played by Australian farmers.

### **National standardisation of microchipping in horses**

Council noted representations from the Australian Veterinary Association on nationally consistent approaches to horse identification, registration and Hendra virus vaccination. Council agreed to ask the Primary Industries Standing Committee to provide advice on these matters.

### **Update on a supply chain assurance system for livestock exports**

Council agreed that the Australian Government consult and work with states and territories through the Council to implement the recommendations of the *Independent Review of Australia's Livestock Export Trade* (Farmer Review). These recommendations will be addressed by the Primary Industries Standing Committee working with industry out-of-session for a report back to the next council meeting.

Council noted the current status of the Australian Government's supply chain assurance systems for livestock exports, including re-establishment of trade to Indonesia under the new regulatory framework in Indonesia and the number of cattle exports since the lifting of the trade suspension.

### **Ritual slaughter without prior stunning**

Council reviewed the results from consultation with all stakeholders in light of the science involved and the accepted views of religious groups. Officials have been asked to continue discussions with the religious groups in order to settle an applicable risk management framework.

### **NLIS (cattle) exemptions**

Council agreed to cease exemptions from the requirement to tag cattle with electronic tags by the end of 2012 in line with the recommendations of the NLIS (Cattle) Advisory Committee, SAFEMEAT and the Farmer Review to enhance the traceability of cattle.

### **Northern Australia Beef Industry Strategy update**

Council noted the progress being made on the Northern Australia Beef Industry Strategy.

### **Future operation and cost sharing arrangements for eradication and transitional management programs**

Council considered the progress for current eradication programs for Branched broomrape, Chestnut blight, Cocoa Pod Borer, Electric ants, the Four Tropical Weeds, red imported fire ants and Siam weed. Council also considered progress on programs that are transitioning from eradication to longer term management for Asian honeybees, European house borer and Myrtle rust.

Council noted funding arrangements for the Cocoa Pod Borer eradication program, and additional funding for the Asian honeybee, Electric ant and Four Tropical Weeds eradication programs. The Asian honeybee related funding was for residual eradication activities completed between January and March 2011.

**Announcement by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority on future use of dimethoate**

Council noted that the APVMA has suspended many uses of the chemical dimethoate in response to findings arising from its review of the chemical. Council members will strengthen their cooperative efforts to minimise the effects on the trade and production of horticultural crops and encourage similarly intensified efforts from industry.

**Intergovernmental Hendra virus taskforce**

Council noted the actions being taken by the Intergovernmental Hendra virus taskforce to work collaboratively to minimise adverse impacts of Hendra virus on human and animal health.

**National BioSIRT program ongoing funding**

Council re-affirmed its commitment to a nationally consistent approach to information management for use in biosecurity emergency responses and as part of national surveillance programs. A review of the National BioSIRT Program would be completed early in 2012.

**Strategic land protection policy**

Council noted the current policy approaches to managing prime agricultural land use across jurisdictions, and that there will be further discussion through the Primary Industries Standing Committee on the benefits of a more coordinated approach to protecting Australia's strategic agricultural lands.

Council requested the Primary Industries Standing Committee to actively monitor and evaluate the adequacy of initiatives to deal with threats.

**Blewett Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy**

Council noted the report on progress and timelines for developing a government response to the independent Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy (the Blewett Review) and discussed the possible implications of the review for food production and processing industries.

**Council of Australian Governments reform of ministerial councils**

Council noted that the Council of Australian Governments has endorsed the terms of reference for the new council. The Standing Council on Primary Industries has been formally launched and the remit of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council has been withdrawn. Council noted that the Primary Industries Standing Committee is reviewing the committee structure supporting the work of the council to better align with the priorities of the new standing council. Council also agreed future meeting arrangements for the new council. The first meeting of the new council is scheduled to be held in April 2012.