

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Communiqué

PIMC 11

24 NOVEMBER 2006

Primary Industries Ministers from across Australia met in Christchurch, New Zealand on Friday 24 November 2006 to consider progress on issues impacting on Australia's primary production sector. This was the Eleventh meeting of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. Specific issues dealt with by the Council are detailed below.

Drought Policy Reform

Council received a presentation from the Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology on current climatic conditions in Australia.

Council noted the severe difficulties continuing to face farmers and rural communities and many small businesses due to the prolonged drought. Council also noted the additional assistance measures being provided by the Australian, State and Territory Governments in response to these worsening conditions, and encouraged all jurisdictions to continue to provide appropriate support.

Council requested that a report on the use of these latest measures be provided to Council in October 2007.

Council also considered a report on longer-term options for improving farmers' drought preparedness and for more consistent drought declaration processes prepared by a reference group of key government and industry stakeholders. Council acknowledged the importance of this work and the valuable contributions by stakeholders. However, in recognising the current situation facing farmers and rural communities, Council agreed that longer-term options for improving drought preparedness should be considered further at a more appropriate time.

European House Borer

Council noted work by the Western Australian Government in seeking to control and eradicate an incursion of European House Borer (EHB).

Council agreed, subject to Treasury approvals, to a two year EHB eradication and containment programme that includes national cost sharing arrangements by governments and industry. Council also agreed that continued support for the programme in year two would be subject to a

review in 2007 that demonstrates that eradication is feasible and industry funding a 20 percent share of the costs.

Taxation Treatment of Structural Adjustment Payments

Council noted a paper from NSW on the tax treatment of structural adjustment payment schemes and agreed that these matters be referred to Treasurers for consideration.

Australian Biosecurity System for Primary Production and the Environment (AusBIOSEC)

Council noted that continual improvement in Australia's biosecurity arrangements is vital and noted progress in the enhancement of the Australian Biosecurity System for Primary Production and the Environment ('AusBIOSEC'). This will include provision of an InterGovernmental Agreement (IGA) for Council consideration in April 2007. The IGA will define clearly the responsibilities of the Australian and state and territory governments in improving Australia's biosecurity system.

Council discussed national cost sharing arrangements for the public good component of a national emergency response to an incursion and agreed that a national response would first require agreement that:

- the incursion is of a nationally significant invasive species;
- the response would be feasible and cost-effective; and,
- the incursion is not eligible for funding under other emergency response arrangements which involve industry cost-sharing.

Council gave in-principle agreement to a cost sharing formula which would be based on the potential of an invasive species to affect a jurisdiction and the principle that beneficiaries contribute to a response.

Promotion of Primary Industries to the Education Sector

Council noted a paper prepared by NSW and Queensland outlining an approach for improved national co-ordination of the promotion of primary industries to the education sector. Council agreed that the primary objective of the initiative was to increase awareness of the role, responsibility and value of primary industries through schools.

Council agreed that the National Network for the Promotion of Primary Industries to Schools would report to Council in 2007 on the progress of the national network. Council also agreed that New South Wales and Queensland would prepare a discussion paper on education and trading framework for the primary industries sector for reporting back to Council within twelve months.

Wine Industry Issues

Council discussed the difficult conditions being experienced by growers and winemakers and the key issues facing the industry. These issues include managing the impact of the current drought and, in the medium term, reducing stocks to acceptable levels and improving competitiveness.

Council noted the work being done by the Australian and State Governments to support the wine industry to maintain and improve its competitiveness and agreed to maintain a high level of cooperation to ensure that policies and programme resources of governments continue to assist the industry in responding to current conditions.

Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan

Council endorsed for public release a biennial report on programmes contributing to the Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan. The report details the skills and training initiatives being undertaken through NRM and Primary Industry programmes to improve long term employment opportunities for Indigenous communities and to improve natural resource management. The Council also considered a paper on water management for Indigenous communities and long term employment in natural resource management and primary industries. Council agreed that governments would work together to improve water management, including the reliability of supply and long term employment in Indigenous communities.

Policy Direction for Development of Laws to Protect Animal Industries from Disruptive Activities

Council endorsed a National Policy Framework for development of Laws to Protect Animal Industries from Disruptive Activities in order to address the need for a unified and nationally harmonised approach across Australia. Council also agreed that its Standing Committee should assess existing and proposed new state and territory laws against the National Policy Framework and report back to the next meeting of Council.

Australian Position Statement on the Export of Livestock

Council endorsed the Australian Position Statement on the Export of Livestock which will be published and used in the development of the Version 2 Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock. The Position Statement will promote Australia's continued excellent progress in improving animal welfare outcomes in the live export trade, by providing stakeholders with a clear outline of their roles and responsibilities.

UN Declaration on the Welfare of Animals

Council notes the work being undertaken by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) to persuade the United Nations to adopt a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare. Council agreed that the Australian Government continue to work to ensure that the eventual non-binding Declaration includes language which Australia has agreed and cannot be misconstrued to, restrict trade in live animals and animal products.

Food Regulation Issues – Update

Council noted key food regulation issues that are of relevance to primary production and food industries currently being progressed by the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (ANZFRMC) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

Council welcomed the approval by ANZFRMC of the *Ministerial Policy Guideline on the Regulation of Residues of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals in Food*. The

policy guideline will provide a framework for FSANZ to address issues surrounding the current zero tolerance approach to residues of agvet chemicals in food.

Agricultural Trade – Review of Developments

Council received an overview of recent developments in agricultural trade. Council noted the lack of progress in the WTO Doha Round of agriculture negotiations. Council further noted progress on existing Free Trade Agreements with China, Malaysia, and ASEAN (with New Zealand).

Council welcomed outcomes on technical market access for live animal exports into Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt and noted the need for ongoing work on technical market access issues, particularly in response to changed access requirements for horticulture products in some Asian countries.

BSE Developments and Activities

Council noted significant developments in regard to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), including an Australian request for an updated BSE risk assessment by the World Organisation for Animal Health and assessments of Australia's BSE preventative measures.

National Recognition of Veterinary Registration

Council endorsed a proposed model for national registration of veterinarians, where a veterinarian registered by a state or territory to practise in that state or territory, would be entitled to practise in all other states or territories. Council noted the very strong support in the veterinary profession and within industry groups for this change. Council also requested completion of the national recognition arrangements for endorsement by PIMC in November 2007.