

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Communiqué

PIMC 15

21 MAY 2009

Primary Industries Ministers from around Australia met in Hobart on Thursday 21 May 2009 to consider issues affecting Australia's primary production sectors. This was the fifteenth meeting of the Ministerial Council and preceded the fifteenth meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. Specific issues considered by Council are detailed below.

National Meat Labelling System for Processors, Retailers and Consumers

Council referred the issue of a national meat labelling system for processors, retailers and consumers to a working group of officials currently focusing on harmonising lamb description standards for domestic meat processors. Following calls for a standardised retail meat labelling system for the benefit of consumers, Council agreed to broaden the scope of the working group to also examine this issue, and report back to Council in November 2009.

European House Borer

Council agreed to continue the European House Borer eradication program in 2009-10 at a cost of \$4.9 million and to consider the longer term future of the program as part of reviews of several cost-shared eradication programs during 2009-10.

Pet Food

Council agreed to the establishment of a working group of officials to examine the need for additional mechanisms to manage the safety of imported and domestically produced pet food.

Update on H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)

Council received an update on the H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) situation, including the impact on primary industries and the need for continuing action on planning and preparedness to respond to disease outbreaks, as well as increased vigilance on emerging animal diseases that can impact human health.

Productivity Growth Trends in Broadacre Agriculture

Council noted analysis undertaken by ABARE to measure recent trends in agricultural productivity growth. Council emphasised that ABARE's analysis demonstrated the importance of current and future government and industry initiatives to enhance agricultural productivity.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Council discussed strategic issues for the sector relating to the possible inclusion of agriculture under the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). Council agreed the need to consider farm productivity and global food security as part of a comprehensive approach to managing emissions. Research, development and demonstration work will be necessary to achieve this goal.

Drought Policy Improvement

Council reaffirmed that the current Exceptional Circumstances (EC) arrangements are no longer appropriate in the context of climate change and that an improved drought policy is needed to ensure farmers are better prepared for climate change. Ministers noted the drought review is making progress and agreed to continue work to finalise the details of proposed reforms. Council remains committed to continuing existing EC arrangements and programs to assist farmers still suffering from the current drought. Ministers noted the final report of the Productivity Commission inquiry into government drought support programs was released on 12 May 2009. This report will be taken into account in finalising drought reform.

National Primary Industries RD&E Framework

Council endorsed the draft National Primary Industries Research Development and Extension Framework (National RD&E Framework) *Statement of Intent* and acknowledged the significant contribution and progress that had been made by primary industries agencies, rural Research and Development Corporations and industry in developing the fourteen sector and seven cross sector strategies. Council instructed officials to continue to progress the framework, with the parties to validate their commitment to the National RD&E Framework by signing the final *Statement of Intent* for Council's endorsement at its next meeting, and work towards finalising the sectoral and cross sectoral plans in accordance with the agreed schedule.

The draft National Beef RD&E Strategy was tabled at Council as an indication of Council's commitment to progress the National Framework.

Australian Biosecurity System Reform – Beale Review Implementation

Council noted that a working group established under the Primary Industries Standing Committee is developing a new national agreement on biosecurity in close consultation with the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee and Ministerial Council. The proposed agreement will include the development of a strategy for enhancing Australia's biosecurity system.

BioSIRT Progress and Ongoing Funding

Council noted the significant progress made by the BioSIRT (Biosecurity, Surveillance, Incident Response and Tracing) Program, with the development of the BioSIRT software now complete and implementation commenced across Australia. Council agreed to support the continuation of the national coordination team for a further three years to oversee the realisation of the national outcomes for the program.

PIMC Equine Influenza Expert Review Panel

Council noted progress by the independent Equine Influenza (EI) Expert Review Panel and that it is on-track to report in June 2009 on the costs and benefits of possible strategies for managing the risks associated with a future equine influenza outbreak.

Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock

Council endorsed the Australian Animal Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Livestock, which replace seven Model Codes of Practice for the land transport of livestock. Further industry consultation will occur before the standards are given legislative effect.

Mulesing

Council noted a presentation from the industry's research body, Australian Wool Innovation Limited, on research to develop alternatives to mulesing. Council noted that jurisdictions support industry extension activities that assist implementation and adoption of effective alternatives to protect sheep from flystrike.

Recommendations for Consistent Regulation of Animal Welfare Outcomes

Council agreed on key regulatory elements, for implementation across jurisdictions, to ensure consistency in animal welfare outcomes across Australia. Ministers also agreed to the implementation of an action plan in each jurisdiction to support national consistency.

Advancing Indigenous Reconciliation in PI and NRM – Employment: Key Actions and Partnerships

Council agreed that more Indigenous people should be employed in the natural resource management and primary industries sectors, more so perhaps than other sectors, with the potential to assist in addressing the Closing the Gap strategy. Jurisdictions will consider the range of strategies that can be best progressed within their state or territory to act on this, including joint strategies with the Australian Government.

A National Audit of On-Line Service Delivery

Council agreed to a national audit of on-line services by states and territories to identify opportunities for improved on-line services and cost savings through better interstate cooperation.

Wood Product Market Access

Council noted the forest industry's concerns over the transparency and objectivity of some building sustainability schemes and procurement policies with respect to their treatment of sustainable and certified Australian wood products. Council agreed that Victoria would provide the Council with a report on its proposal to require government-endorsed procurement and sustainability guides to recognise the Forest Stewardship Council and Australian Forestry Standard as international third-party forest certification systems.