

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Communiqué

PIMC 12

20 APRIL 2007

Primary Industries Ministers from across Australia met in Brisbane on Friday 20 April 2007 to consider issues impacting on Australia's primary production sectors. This was the twelfth meeting of the Ministerial Council and followed the twelfth meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and the first joint Ministerial Council meeting. Specific issues dealt with by the Council are detailed below.

Australian National Standards for Organic and Biodynamic Produce –

Council noted that the development of an Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce by Standards Australia will provide greater certainty and credibility for the industry and consumers and will help the industry maintain its recent strong rate of growth. Council agreed to consider the need for a regulatory framework once the Australian Standard is developed and agreed to consult the organic sector as part of this process.

Avian Influenza Developments

Council noted the continued progress in Australia on preparedness for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), but recognised the need for continued vigilance. In recognition of the significance of wild birds in the spread of AI, Council endorsed a policy for handling responses to detections of HPAI in wild birds.

Endorsement and Consistent Implementation of the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Pigs

Council endorsed a major revision of the Model Code for Pigs, which was developed through an extensive process managed by the Victorian Government. The process involved industry, State and Territory Governments, Animal Health Australia, the CSIRO and animal welfare groups. The revised Model Code provides for consistent and improved animal welfare outcomes in a way that will allow the industry to efficiently meet public expectations for the welfare of pigs in all States and Territories. Council agreed to develop a plan for the timely and consistent implementation of the Model Code.

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

Council reviewed the laws that provide protection from disruptive activities to Australia's animal industries. At this time Council members have advised that no further change to current and proposed laws is seen as necessary. Ministers will continue to work with their Attorneys-General on these matters and will be further reviewing the need for provisions that recognise on-farm biosecurity.

Agricultural Trade – Review of Developments

Council noted recent developments in agricultural trade including the resumption of the WTO Doha Round of agriculture negotiations. Council also noted progress in negotiations for free trade agreements with China, Malaysia and ASEAN (in conjunction with New Zealand), and welcomed the forthcoming FTA negotiations with Japan.

Food Regulation Issues

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), including progress on the independent public review of the food regulatory system (the Bethwaite Review), progress on the development of primary production standards for the dairy, poultry meat and eggs and egg products, and proposals for mandatory fortification of foods with folic acid and iodine. Council also noted the formation of a Front of Pack Labelling Working Group to examine the effectiveness of a front of pack labelling scheme in assisting consumers to make food choices.