



NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION INC.

Member - National Farmers' Federation & Cattle Council of Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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CLIMATE CHANGE: OPPORTUNITY OR THREAT

Overreacting to climate change could lead to an exodus from the bush, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association warned today.

"The cattle industry contributes \$400 million directly and more than \$880 million indirectly to the Territory's economy," President of the Cattlemen's Association Roy Chisholm said.

"However, we are facing huge hikes in our transport and power bills, massive cost increases for fertilisers, freight and getting cattle to market, competition for good staff and, in Central Australia, the drought has hit hard," he said.

"We can't pass these costs on to the consumer, so they have to be absorbed. And there will be a tipping point where people simply cannot afford to operate commercially," he said.

"Australians might like to think where their steaks and sausages will come from when Aussie pastoralists are no longer competitive against countries such as China and India that don't have to play by the same Kyoto rules," he said.

"It would be ironic to see Australia become a beef importer, especially at a time of growing international demand for food," he said.

"We all recognise that action is needed on climate change, but that action shouldn't be stacked against pastoralists and agriculture," Mr Chisholm said.

"Pastoralists are essentially conservationists who want to work with Government on measures such as renewable energy to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels," he said.

"However, we need to ensure that climate change responses are equitable, thoughtful, well-researched and lead to meaningful greenhouse gas reductions, rather than panicked responses that sweep up the cattle industry in a net that strangles their livelihoods," he said.

Mr Chisholm said the cattle industry was pleased to see that agriculture remains excluded from the Federal Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme until 2013, so further research can be done to better quantify the industry's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

"It will be important to ensure this research actually gets done - because you can't tax something you can't quantify. And, at the moment, there is no way to measure how farmers positively contribute to capturing carbon.

Mr Chisholm also welcomed the Northern Territory Government's recent policy paper on climate change and urged the Territory and Federal Governments to work together to find constructive solutions to climate change in the bush.

The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association has prepared a submission in response to the Northern Territory Government's paper. Its key concerns are:

- The pastoral industry overall is a low emitter of greenhouse gases, but could be disproportionately penalised by some of the measures proposed in the Federal Government's Garnaut paper;
- Proposed emissions accounting rules are unfair, for example much of the research on carbon sequestration in soils has been done overseas;
- Equally, there is an undue focus on methane emissions from cattle, but little detailed science and few alternatives for reducing them;
- The science and rules surrounding sequestration through pastures and soil carbon are embryonic;
- Accounting measures of savannah burning are "practically unworkable" and need to allow for fire management needs and cultural practices by Aboriginal groups;
- The proposed 2010 carbon tax on fuel would unfairly penalise pastoralists, who rely on long-distance transport to bring in supplies and take livestock to market;
- Because many properties have to generate their own power, renewable energies offered important alternatives to diesel, so greater incentives for solar power should be reinstated;
- Lower fuel excises could help offset increased costs;
- The cattle industry would collaborate with government on research into technologies that use less fuel, genetically modified crops that use less fertiliser, and alternative burning techniques.

We look forward to working with government to find solutions to these complex issues," Mr Chisholm said.

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