

# NORTHERN TERRITORY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION INC.

Member - National Farmers' Federation & Cattle Council of Australia



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry  
National Landcare Programme

## Media Release



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### ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Fighting 100 years of weeds is one of the key challenges facing farmers in the Douglas Daly.

"Weeds reduce the productivity of the land, increase the fire risk, choke out natural species, and cost Territory farmers and government millions of dollars a year to keep under control," says Stuart Kenny, Executive Director of the NT Cattlemen's Association.

The answer to the weed problem is good land management, Stuart says.

In a unique approach to conservation farming, scientists and farmers in the Douglas Daly have joined forces to research the most cost-effective controls for weeds. They are trialling new, intensive methods of cattle grazing that help improved pastures out-compete the weeds as well as seeking funding for research into the impact of herbicides and pesticides on the environment.

A weed management plan is just one component of a unique project in the Douglas Daly Region that will revolutionise farming practices in the Northern Territory.

Led by the NT Cattlemen's Association and funded by Landcare, the project has led to a comprehensive adaptive management plan that covers all impacts of farming in the Douglas Daly.

"The beauty of adaptive management is that it uses science as a tool to make properties more productive, while lessening any impact on the environment," says Stuart.

"This Adaptive Management Plan will ensure sensible clearing plans, a better understanding of weeds, sustainable water extraction from bores and good conservation management," he said.

Adaptive management is a precautionary approach to conservation farming, where farming practices are constantly modified in response to scientific research and advice, says Stuart.

"It establishes priorities and targets, evaluates methods and results, and uses the information for better management and decision-making," he said.

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**'Advancing and protecting the interests of the cattle producers in the Northern Territory'**

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"The farmers of the Douglas Daly recognize that their land is a valuable asset," Mr Kenny said. "Their aim is to pass that land on to the next generation in a better condition than they found it. They are farming for their kids."

Dr Bill Freeland, a consultant with Darwin environmental consulting firm GHD who prepared the Adaptive Management Plan, said good farming means good conservation.

"There are three elements of good conservation: well-managed pastoral land, management of special conservation places on pastoral properties and well-managed conservation reserves.

"Good land management includes finding the right mix between conservation, irrigation, grazing cattle, rural lifestyles and activities such as fishing and camping," Dr Freeland said.

Dr Freeland said Douglas Daly farmers have worked closely with the Northern Territory Government and independent scientists on the adaptive management plan, which was a key recommendation of the former Daly River Community Reference Group.

"The extensive research that has been done in the past year has found no significant negative impacts of farming, land clearing and water extraction on the environment," he said.

"We believe we have demonstrated that modern farming cares for the environment and Douglas Daly farmers are now calling on the Government to provide certainty by lifting the current moratorium on land clearing.

Mr Kenny said cattle grazing is a major contributor to the Territory economy, with the Douglas Daly region alone producing export cattle and crops worth \$27 million last year.

"This area has enormous potential for development. It has good soils, access to good roads, and it is a good place to live.

"Private money will develop the area, however farmers need certainty to make the significant investment needed to improve their pastures," he said.

## **Landcare**

The adaptive management plan was funded by the National Landcare Programme. Landcare strives to achieve more profitable, competitive and sustainable primary production by working with people on the ground to maintain the condition of our natural resources for future generations."

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