



National Food Plan Submissions
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Australian Landcare Council submission

National Food Plan Green paper

The Australian Landcare Council (the council) congratulates the Australian Government on its initiative in developing the National Food Plan which will help shape sustainable agriculture over the coming decade.

The council also commends the Australian Government on consulting widely to develop the National Food Plan, including regional forums and the online blog. The council builds on their submission to the Issues paper and has used the questions provided to focus their response.

The development of a National Food Plan offers the opportunity to provide leadership and to develop the partnerships required to charter the common vision and innovation required to achieve a sustainable and viable future for Australian agriculture.

The council notes that a number of States and Territories are preparing similar policies and strategies and the council identifies the need for a framework that is nationally consistent.

Australia is already a challenging environment in which to produce food. However, our natural resource base is likely to be even more challenged in the future due to growing domestic and global populations and their demand for food, climate change, competition for land from the resources sector and urban development and the reduced availability of fossil fuels on which many of our production systems are currently dependant for transport, irrigation, fertiliser and herbicides. At the same time we will need to maintain our broader environmental assets and biodiversity.

These challenges are significant and the financial, technical and human resources at our disposal are finite. Therefore the council urges the Australian Government to give greater consideration to resourcing those approaches which can deliver multiple benefits for the same investment. Landcare has numerous examples where it has advanced approaches that can help deal with increased food production, adaptation to climate change and improved environmental outcomes. An example of this is minimum tillage.

The council considers the *Australian Framework for Landcare* and its companion document the *Community Call for Action* provide the framework and strategies to encourage support for Landcare across government and all sectors of the community to help achieve sustainable landscapes and food security.

The council acknowledges the positive contributions already made by the agricultural sector in relation to sustainable farming and grazing practices. There have been many positive changes already with a range of conservation agriculture practices and farmers adopting a 'Landcare' approach. It encourages the Australian Government to build on that good work by recognising and promoting sustainable farm practices through the underpinning of and supporting the approach with the ethics and principles of Landcare and NRM. Landcare is a community-based approach to improve sustainability of agricultural production systems, address environmental issues and protect the future of our natural resources. The Landcare approach comprises:

- a philosophy, influencing the way people live in the landscape while caring for the land
- a movement of local community action putting the philosophy into practice
- a movement that builds community cohesion and resilience particularly in regional Australia

- a range of knowledge generation, sharing and support mechanisms including groups, networks (from district to national levels), facilitators and coordinators, government and non-government programs and partnerships.

The council considers that the National Food Plan should make strong reference to the interrelated nature of our food systems, environment and climate, as these issues cannot be considered in isolation. Consideration should be given to Australian agriculture in a whole of farm and whole of environment context.

The council has chosen to respond to the green paper by providing input and feedback on the focus questions provided. The council supports the need for strong leadership at the national level and has sought in its input to highlight the importance of the sustainable management of our natural resources and Landcare's continuing role in supporting Australia's agricultural and environmental sustainability into the future.

Yours sincerely



Kim Chance
Chair

4 October 2012

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Australian Landcare Council submission

National Food Plan Green paper

Chapter 5 – Safe and nutritious food

5.1. The Australian Government has strategies, policies and programs in place to:

- ensure all Australians have access to a safe and nutritious food supply
- support healthy lifestyles
- reformulate foods, improve food labelling and educate consumers
- improve nutritional outcomes for Indigenous Australians
- provide a comprehensive and effective food safety regulatory environment
- build capacity to control known and emerging food safety risks.

Are there additional issues the government should focus on in its future policy directions? What factors should the government consider in developing new, and reviewing existing, policies and programs?

- The council recommends that the National Food Plan places an increased emphasis on the importance of providing encouragement and incentives for farmers to protect natural systems and natural resources, including the native vegetation, soil and water resources. Protecting these systems not only protects their intrinsic environmental values but the ecosystem services necessary for sustaining food security and healthy communities.
- The Landcare ethic, sustainability, climate variability, farm and drought management are interdependent and should not be considered in isolation when developing new policies. Future policy should focus on protecting regions' agricultural asset base during and after drought as well as maintaining environmental assets. This should include increased focus on education and training to build community resilience; supporting new and young entrants into the sector; and supporting extension and outreach services.
- The 2012 Outlook conference highlighted the growth of private label products that put pressure on farmers to compete with cheaper imported products pushing Australian farmers out of the market. Consumers need to be better educated on the consequences of buying cheaper imported label products.
- Identified at the 2012 National Landcare Conference held in September, healthy soils are required for ensuring quality and nutritionally rich food. The sustainable management of our soil resource is critical to maintaining our agricultural productivity which is so vital for the livelihood of our farmers and rural communities, and contributes substantially to our economy. An integrated approach to natural resources management planning and delivery is needed to ensure the health of regional ecosystems and support sustainable agricultural production.
- The council recommends that there is an increased focus on educating consumers on the potential consequences for Australian agriculture and food processing sectors of buying cheaper imported often private label products. The council recommends that this includes enhanced acknowledgement of the stringent guidelines and legislation that Australian farmers adhere to in order to protect food production (for example, chemical use and chemical residues in food) compared to some imported products. Whole food (and ingredients) produced overseas may not meet the same levels of sustainability, quality and nutrition as products grown and produced in Australia and thus products should be identified as such.
- Consumers are generally aware of products labeled fair trade that are supporting better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. There are also other similar systems of certification that are being used internationally but there is nothing specifically focused upon Australian production. The council would encourage an informed discussion with key members of the food supply chain to determine whether a similar system for Australian sustainably produced food which supports the local industry would be appropriate. However, the council does recognise the increased complexity of information being provided to consumers and the need to be very clear with such a system.

- The National Food Plan should examine the future of food manufacturing in Australia. The strength of the local food manufacturing industry is likely to have a significant impact on the sustainability of local producers and the price, quality, safety and availability of products to consumers.
- The council raises concerns over the adequacy of existing biosecurity arrangements in Australia. With the potential to impact on food production and sustainability and the declining investment (by National and State governments), there is a need to investigate other models to improve a coordinated response. It is concerned that, at least one state has indicated that the 2011 Hendra Virus has stretched their capacity to the limit. If Hendra can overstretch a jurisdiction's resources what would happen to food security in the event of a Foot and Mouth disease outbreak or other serious pest/disease outbreak?
- The Food Plan must identify mechanisms for ensuring that food security is not threatened by responsible governments having reduced capacity. The threat from weeds, pests and diseases is real and increasing.

Chapter 6 – A competitive and productive food industry

6.1 This green paper sets out the government's proposed approach for supporting productivity growth and global competitiveness in the food industry, which includes: a market-based policy approach; ongoing reforms to improve biosecurity and help industry adapt to climate change and drought; fostering and investing in innovation; building human capability and a skilled workforce; better regulation along the supply chain; effective competition laws; and broader infrastructure investments and regulatory reforms.

Are there gaps or deficiencies in this proposed approach?

- The connection between country and urban people is 'food' – being such a basic necessity can be the future conduit that creates greater cohesion and understanding between Australia's rural and urban populations. The concept of back to basics and the wider community being reconnected to farmers - because we are the producers of their food should be recognised, enhanced and supported through leveraging media opportunities and existing organisations and structures.
- The agricultural sector is an important source of income in rural Australia and the continued depopulation of farming regions is a growing concern for the long term sustainability of the industry and the land. Support and encouragement for pathways for people to get into agriculture is needed. Governments need to encourage these pathways including policy for easy succession on the family farm and providing pathways such as share farming in dairy industry. Opportunities to encourage these pathways in the whole food supply chain should be investigated.
- The council believes that the National Food Plan should address the level of commitment that will be needed to monitor the impacts on farmers and food security resulting from the government's agenda under a clean energy future. Unless carefully managed, the Carbon Farming Initiative may have perverse impacts on farm sustainability and on our natural resources base such as water quality and quantity.
- The council considers that the National Food Plan should be the motivation for a collaborative and complementary approach between agencies and departments within the spheres of government and to fully explore options on how the Australian Government could provide leadership in identifying and resolving issues arising from competing policy and regulations between the spheres of government. Food security and sustainable production require an integrated rather than a siloed approach to resolve competing and conflicting government policies.
- The council would like to see discussion about the future of farm ownership in Australia. Current trends suggest that by 2040 there will be less farming undertaken by owner operators. It is possible that increasing the amount of land farmed by short term tenants, share farmers or paid managers will have impacts on commitment to stewardship principles and access to information about sustainable farming practices, the viability of rural and regional communities and Landcare membership. The move from owner/manager dominance may have a long term impact on the attitudes to sustainability.
- Maintaining the viability of small, medium and large size farms and enabling on-farm diversity to maintain viable farms and preserve agricultural land (for example, through value adding of primary

products and on farm tourism) need to be considered when developing government policy. The next generation of farmers will only occur in small, medium and large farms if all these sectors are able to achieve profitability. The National Food Plan should examine the role of cooperatives and cooperating models in the farming sector. Overseas these models have provided stability and profitability in a volatile market place. For some reason this concept of cooperation is not prominent in the Australian farming landscape. This needs to change.

- The National Food Plan should emphasise the importance of the condition of Australia's food supply chain, including food manufacturing. It is important to maintain diversity in our supply chain and retail sector. The current supply chain is considered to pose an increasing risk to food security and farm viability and this will increase over time.
- The council is of the view that the National Food Plan should consider issues around the prioritisation of land use. State and local governments are currently able to make decisions about the re-zoning of agricultural land for other purposes that may not be in the national interests of sustainable agriculture and food security. Once made, such re-zoning decisions are difficult to reverse. Productive agricultural lands are currently under threat, usually as a result of urbanisation and alternate resource use, an example being the current conflict over mining and gas exploration in areas of productive agricultural land and water resources. If good land is taken out of production then agriculture is forced onto a lesser class of land and requires increased inputs (such as water and fertiliser) to generate similar productive output. This may also be a perverse outcome of the Carbon Farming Initiative.
- The council is concerned that the image of the agricultural industry as a rewarding career with a future is suffering. Enrolments in most industry training courses are declining, young people are leaving regional areas for the city and those that remain suffer from a higher rate of health issues. The National Food Plan should identify strategies to reverse these trends.
- There is a need for a better and transparent review of the economic power of the two big supermarkets on the food chain. The council believes that the lower members of the supply chain (farmers and processors) are wary of commenting frankly on how the monopoly of 'the big 2' does impact on them for fear of retribution. The review needs to look at the effect of the dominance of the big 2 in terms of farm viability, industry viability and the ability of farmers to be agriculturally sustainable on their farms when margins are driven down by the negotiating power of the big 2. The ACCC always looks at pricing but does not take into account the effect of the dominance of the big 2 on the triple bottom line of profit, environmental sustainability and social viability. All three are crucial if agriculture is to survive and thrive in Australia
- The council recognises that environmental costs of food production are not currently being met through market pricing (except through niche markets, for example farmers markets). To improve this situation the government could consider intervening through payments for ecosystem services which could apply to domestic food which have been produced in a sustainable manner.
- There is a need to promote innovations in productive Landcare such as agroforestry that can facilitate the establishment and management of multi-purpose trees and other vegetation on farms in ways that help develop a robust biological infrastructure to underpin the economic, environmental and social values of agricultural landscapes. Such an integrated system not only enhances agricultural production and environmental management but can also produce a variety of tree products.

6.2 The government is seeking to increase the value of Australia's food exports from across the supply chain, including the value-added component.

a) Do you think that a target of doubling the value of our food exports by 2030 is achievable? If not, what target would be?

Challenges to meeting the target include:

- The promotion of Landcare principles to larger corporations (who own land and in the processing sector) including triple bottom line farm sustainability.
- Empowering the farming community to take responsibility for its natural assets and develop sustainable farming systems. This will require a holistic approach in how these farming systems

will develop in the future. Research and development into holistic farming systems needs to be supported. Farmers are general practitioners and require support to apply research findings into the complexities of an integrated farming system.

- There is also an increasing and significant risk of Australia losing its food manufacturing industry with many finding it increasingly hard to justify their level of investment in Australia.
- Currently most mainstream processing is done offshore. The absence of a strong domestic manufacturing or value-adding industry limits the avenues available to producers to secure markets for their produce. A robust food processing sector should include small, medium and large operations, and local and niche processing as well as mainstream processing.
- Australia is heading towards being an exporter of raw food commodities only. This is a significant risk to food security as there is no guarantee that processed or value-added products will be imported back to us in times of shortage. The council encourages the government to work with the food processing sector to reduce the impediments to the future development of this sector.
- Given the critical role that research and development plays in supporting innovation, the council believes that greater support needs to be provided to Research and Development. Advances in biotechnology add value to food products (applied R&D – research and extension). A greater focus and investment on Research and Development and its application at the farm gate and beyond to processing is required.

b) How could this be achieved in a market-driven economy like Australia? What would government and business need to do?

- The concept of innovation needs to be brought to the fore through the National Food Plan. Those ideas that challenge convention need to be encouraged. We need thinking that is outside the box. Farmers have been good at coming up with the practical inventions that solve the physical problems, for example the stump jump plough. This same practicality and innovation needs to be encouraged and embraced by whole industry and government.
- The council also recognises the importance of investment in blue-sky research which provides opportunities to discover solutions to some big challenges including peak fertiliser, peak oil, peak water, integrated farm design to promote landscape connectivity, climate variability and change.
- The council recognises the importance of innovation and of looking at new and different ways of doing business in particular as part of strategic investment identified in the National Food Plan. Future challenges posed by climate and other trade factors will require an innovative and well resourced education sector able to respond to changing industry needs and consideration of new technology that can improve the dissemination of information in ways that are convenient and effective to those in the agricultural industry.
- The role of Research and Development needs to be given prominence and consideration within the National Food Plan. Investment now is important to secure the future. The role that the Landcare movement and regional Natural Resource Management has played in extending research to on-farm applications should also be recognised and further used.

c) What would be the costs and benefits of these actions?

- A robust environmentally sustainable agricultural system is vital for national security. Governments should use limited resources in the most effective and efficient manner by supporting priority areas that can provide multiple outcomes. For example, research has shown that up to 10% of most farms can be revegetated in a way that does not reduce agricultural production. Such revegetation can occur along riparian zones, drainage lines and include fencing out remnant areas and addressing erosion, salinity and waterlogging. Connecting such areas with vegetation along landclass boundaries can result in a connected web of trees and shrubs providing multiple values such as crop, livestock and soil protection, integrated pest management and provision of pollinators. Other values include carbon sequestration, nutrient recycling, improved aesthetics and eco-health for humans. From this approach wildlife corridors evolve, which can be enhanced by a catchment approach to landscape restoration and connecting neighboring farms. An integrated biological infrastructure supports farm production, enhances environmental management and can provide

sustainably produce tree and shrub products such as saw logs, seeds, honey, native foods, cut flowers and foliage. To support this approach, research into holistic landscape development is required and innovative extension techniques need to be supported such as peer group mentoring within the farming community.

- Challenges exist in food production, climate change, water availability, and environmental protection to name just a few. Governments have historically tended to respond to these through a single focus and may not take into account negative impacts in other areas or give due recognition to those approaches which may deliver multiple benefits. Due to limited resources it is suggested that government give greater resourcing priority to those actions which can demonstrate multiple benefits i.e. delivers food security, climate change and environmental outcomes.
- The Productivity Commission review into the rural research and development corporations identified that there is no research and development corporation that provides a holistic approach to research, development and extension. Given that many farms are mixed farms and do not focus on a single commodity or an approach that brings environment and production issues together for a whole of farm approach as was previously undertaken by Land and Water Australia, this is a continuing major gap that needs to be addressed. The approach of having a series of cross sectoral strategies and requirements for the 15 rural R&D corporations to report performance in these areas and collaborative research more broadly will support a culture of ensuring programs get adequately resourced and communicated.
- In the past, State and Territory agricultural departments largely provided landholders and managers with extension support, communication and transfer of information and technology and mechanisms for adoption. Reduction in these departments has created significant gaps. In many industries and regions Landcare, farming system groups and regional NRM provide the framework for information delivery, practice testing and adaptive learning. This should be recognised and included in any framework developed around extension of information to farmers and land managers.
- Many effective projects have helped create awareness of good NRM practices while simultaneously demonstrating sustainable agricultural practices.
- The council recognises the role played by previous on-ground investment through Caring for our Country and its predecessors to restore farmland's natural values and investment in repairing environmental degradation

6.3 The use of new technology in food products is likely to be increasingly important in Australia and around the world, helping to meet evolving desires and needs of sophisticated consumers and ensuring an adequate global supply of food for a growing population. However, some people are concerned about new technology despite substantial regulatory arrangements to manage any potential risks.

What should governments, businesses, peak associations and consumers be doing in response to this trend?

- Farming today is not a single benefit industry. In order to deliver profitable and sustainable production and management outcomes decisions about the farm business must deliver multiple benefits.
- Community engagement around food related issues also provides an ideal platform to engage on related issues such as climate and the environment as they are intrinsically linked. Food is an easier touch point for many people than climate or the environment as it is a 'here and now' for everyone. Issues associated with drought and natural disasters have increased consumer and media attention to this area.
- Landcare could play an important role in establishing a proactive community engagement process. Finding solutions to the various factors that contribute to agricultural sustainability and food security requires community engagement and support. Landcare could provide governments with an avenue to have proactive discussions with the community on topics such as new technologies (for example, Landcare could provide a framework for dialogue with the community on issues relating to our natural resources and new challenges such as climate change, genetically modified

foods, competition for land use, alternative energy sources or other emerging policy or technological changes. This does not mean that Landcare would or should become an advocate for or against government policy in these areas, but help convene informed dialogue and discussion within the comments for them to form their own opinions..

- When communicating with consumers it needs to be undertaken in a way that is clear and easily understood. The Landcare model offers opportunities for how information could be provided such that it is relevant and presented within a local context because it operates across our society in a way that local communities want it too.
- The outcomes of a National Food Plan should include specific activities that increase community awareness of the national and international issues that impact on food security and community participation in and support for various solutions.

6.4 One option to increase agricultural productivity to help the sector meet future export growth opportunities and challenges, such as increasing productivity growth in a changing climate, is to increase rural R&D investments over a number of years. This would be in addition to continually seeking better ways to increase the overall benefits of this investment.

a) Is this the best way to help the agricultural sector meet the challenges and opportunities of the coming decades? Why/why not?

- The role of research and development (R&D) needs to be given much more prominence and consideration within a National Food Plan. Investment now is important to secure the future. The role that the Landcare movement has played in extending research to on-farm applications should also be recognised and further utilised.
- The council encourages all initiatives that advance the quest to continue to build the nations' environmental and social capital and to continue to support the enhancement of the agricultural sector's environmental credentials.
- Investment on R&D and its application at the farm gate and beyond to processing is required – which will enable agricultural productivity and food production to increase in the face of the many challenges. This investment needs to be serious and long-term to get productivity gain. The council notes that in general, R&D delivers at least a 1 to 4 return on investment and in some cases as high as 1 to 25.
- Research and development into extension methodologies is critical for the application of new technologies and techniques for farming systems. Thus, there needs to be an appropriate balance between research, development and extension.

c) How could any additional investment be targeted to achieve the greatest overall benefit to Australia?

- The National Food Plan does not address that R&D needs to increase the competitiveness of value-adding industries.
- Following the abolition of Land and Water Australia, our food industry has lost one of the few institutions that did take a landscape approach to R&D. Research funding is biased to production, often at the expense of public good research. It would be useful for the National Food Plan to focus on ensuring that government programs can adequately fund public good research that is relevant to the sustainability needs of producers. One of the ways to do this is to increase the emphasis on public good research in the RDC that has a significant mandate in this area, the Rural Industries R&D Corporation (RIRDC). Significant work is done now in this space but it does need to be lifted further and with appropriate funding, public good research into practice can be done efficiently and delivered on ground
- Research needs to be coordinated and accessible across farm systems. The current focus of aligning research to industry commodities (for example, wheat, wool, meat and livestock etc) needs to be broadened as this is not how most farming systems operate: most farmers produce more than one commodity, but research is still siloed. The National Food Plan should identify strategies to address this gap.

6.5 The Australian Government is interested in identifying and evaluating future regulatory reform opportunities. How could food industry stakeholders best help to achieve this?

- The council suggests that supply chain models in other countries are investigated and a comparative analysis of the positives and negatives undertaken. Can we learn from the mistakes from other countries?

6.6 One way for food businesses to add value is through increased quality, such as high product standards, new traits or nutritional attributes. Governments in Australia generally adopt little or no role in regulating quality, except where required for public health reasons.

a) What opportunities are there for businesses to add value through quality attributes?

- The Landcare ethos acknowledges that we have only one environment and it is essential that the agricultural sector continues to create an awareness of the important responsibility and duty of care for this fragile environment. There needs to be a focus on locally grown, environmentally responsible and diverse food products.

b) Is there a role for government to encourage this or remove barriers such as regulation? (please explain/elaborate).

- As noted previously Australia is leading in the development and use of best management practices. To encourage the ongoing innovation and take up, producers should be rewarded rather than regulated. Greater emphasis could be used through the taxation scheme and other incentives to provide positive reinforcement to those making investments that benefit that national interest in maintaining our resource base. Instead of investing in regulation and compliance the council considers that a more effective investment is through the promotion of Landcare and NRM and the support and encouragement of the use of best practice and sustainable farm practices.
- The National Food Plan should recognise the contribution that Landcare and NRM provides to ensuring food security and environmental sustainability and the need to adequately resource the capacity of the Landcare movement. The council has a strong commitment to fostering the capacity of farmers to address and adapt to sustainable land management challenges, including the impacts of climate variability and change.

6.7 The Australian Government welcomes further specific feedback about particular regulations that significantly affect food businesses, by imposing direct and/or indirect costs and by limiting commercial opportunities.

a) Where possible, information would be appreciated about: the specific regulations of concern; the nature and size of the impost (time, cost and lost business opportunities); possible ways to improve the regulation and the likely benefits and beneficiaries; and the most important benefits of those regulations.

- The CFI provides an opportunity to Australia's farming communities who are potentially some of the most vulnerable in the world to the impacts of climate change. Critical to the successful adaptation to climate change is partnerships between primary producers and Landcare. This partnership needs to be refreshed and consider new frameworks and organisations that exist to support farmers in productivity aims.
- The CFI must allow multiple benefits to provide cumulative positive impacts to the business, industry and community. If CFI is outside the farm business, farmers/land managers will not engage in it.
- Unless addressed, there is a risk that the initiative will achieve perverse outcomes including taking prime agricultural land out of production for plantations and these plantations also changing drainage and water availability on a local and regional scale.
- In the past State/Territory agricultural departments largely provided landholders/land managers with extension support, communication and information/technology transfer and mechanisms for adoption however, reduction in these departments has created significant gaps. In many industries

and regions, Landcare and farming system groups provide the framework for information delivery, practice testing and adaptive learning, with little to no core funding.

- Landcare and NRM can also have a role to play with farmers in adapting and extending the early outcomes of the Research & Development programs addressing carbon farming and climate adaptation and adapting them to various regions and production systems through community science.

b) Are there any areas in which stakeholders feel improved regulation is needed to help the market function properly?

- Greater promotion of sustainable farming practices through the use of stewardship payments and taxation would improve the resilience of managed land to climate variability and drought. The National Food Plan should indicate changes to regulation, such as taxation and stewardship payments, that enable this to occur.
- Rather than investing in regulation, greater investment in relevant and timely outreach support services and the extension of research and development can improve the capacity of the farming sector to be adaptable, innovative and self-reliant. Farmers should not be rewarded for being ‘in drought’ – that is, those farmers who have taken the necessary steps to manage risk should be rewarded.
- There needs to be an acknowledgement by Governments and consumers of the environmental (and sustainable) standards that our farmers are already required to adhere to, prior to imposing any further regulation which may disadvantage Australian farmers and food processors compared to our overseas competitors.

Chapter 7 – A strong natural resource base

7.1 Pressure to increase food production in coming years, in response to increased demand from a growing global population, could place additional stress on Australia’s natural resource base. What further initiatives could the government consider to encourage sustainable farming and fishing practices that balance economic, social and environmental benefits?

- When we consider the multiple benefits of natural resource management (NRM) and Landcare we might initially consider the environmental and production benefits that we learnt about from those wonderful old posters ‘why plant a tree shelter belt’. When you talk to anyone involved in Landcare, people quickly move on to the wider benefits; some are unintended, such as the social benefits of building a community of interest, and some intangible, such as the sense of well-being or improved health that individuals obtain from this community. The recent floods and fires in Australia have shown that Landcare and NRM also create more resilient communities, ones which can survive and rebuild.
- Why is demonstrating these multiple benefits important? Because it shows just how important Landcare and NRM are. It makes a case for securing funding of this work to agencies outside of agriculture or the environment and promotes the value of our work.
- The Australian Landcare Council has funded a research project to demonstrate the multiple benefits or co-benefits of Landcare and NRM, beyond production and environmental, including social, cultural, health, education and community resilience.
- The Landcare approach is based on the philosophy that people from all communities and cultures can actively take responsibility for the health of Australia’s environmental assets. Local networks involve people and give people the feeling of being in charge of their own destiny. Landcare networks, to function to their potential, must be supported with the appropriate information.
- Farmers and land managers need to be motivated to be involved and will engage if: 1. it makes good business sense, i.e. has commercial reality; or 2. there is seed funding as an incentive to get started.
- Encouraging the sustainable development of regional and rural industries/businesses and communities—natural assets and people are key. Emphasis and investment in “people” is the central asset that provides resilience—it is all about people and community.

- The council understands that perceptions of Landcare, NRM and sustainable agriculture incorporate the concepts of stewardship and balancing environmental with production outcomes, as well as the view that both agricultural and natural landscapes are fundamental to sustainable agriculture.
- The council suggests that the National Food Plan could more strongly acknowledge the contribution and interactions currently made by sustainable productive land use to landscape connectivity, either as habitat or to aid movement. Recognition of work that is already being undertaken by farmers, pastoralists and land managers and the promotion of multiple benefits including social and economic will increase participation.
- The council would like to see all levels of government supporting the Landcare movement more effectively to ensure that the production increases needed in the future to support a larger global population are not undertaken at the expense of the environment or the natural resource base that supports productive agricultural systems.
- Biosecurity has the potential to impact on sustainability and food production and with the declining investment, the need to investigate other models to improve a coordinated response is paramount.
- Through investment in education, training and social services, governments can encourage and support new and young entrants to the sector to live and work on the land and prepare for future challenges such as climate variability and drought.
- Education and training services for individuals and communities can improve the skills necessary to consider business risks in the face of a changing climate.
- A collective learning environment allows for increased social interaction and network building, which in turn can lead to improved resilience and knowledge to productively and sustainably manage businesses and the land. More resilient farm businesses generally have a better return in productivity while maintaining the environment.
- Investing in relevant and timely outreach support services and the extension of research and development can improve the capacity of the farming sector to be adaptable, innovative and self-reliant.
- The council believes it is important to encourage Indigenous access to land and to learning on country through agreements with pastoral leaseholders as well as Indigenous ownership of pastoral land, and to recognise the value of Indigenous ecological knowledge and Indigenous land management.

7.2 Australian society places high expectations on the environmental and social responsibility of Australia's food industry, although this is not always reflected in purchasing behaviour. What is preventing markets from encouraging (via price signals) the food industry's responsible management of the production base?

- The broader community needs to understand the nation's food production systems and what is involved to produce food. In recent times there has been a growing interest on food related issues within the Landcare movement in line with growing community interest. This has included a wide range of activity, but one of the most successful has been junior Landcare which has focused on primary schools and involving students in growing vegetable gardens as a way of increasing their interest and participation in appreciating where their food comes from, how it is produced and how to do this in a sustainable way. The Landcare movement is well established, well supported by food and fibre producers and held in high regard by the public
- Farm viability, including managing the condition of environmental assets, depends on producers receiving a fair price for the food they produce. Profitable farms will underpin food security (see section on Food processing industry). There is a need to maintain diversity in our farming sector for sound risk management.

7.3 This green paper outlines a number of initiatives aimed at reducing food waste across the food supply chain in Australia. What specific further waste management measures could the government consider that would meet the multiple objectives of increasing food security, providing healthier diets, improving environmental performance and addressing climate effects?

- The council considers that the high level of food waste in Australia should receive attention in the National Food Plan. While consumers complain about the cost of purchasing food the equivalent of several hundreds of dollars per person per year is thrown out as waste. Consumer education, combined with research into better food storage options should be development and communicated.
- The ‘landcare ethic’ not only applies to the production of food but equally to the food supply chain including consumption. It focuses on the role that everyone has to play not just the people directly involved with food production and distribution. The council believes that if more people pick up the landcare ethic, they will live more sustainably and understand the concept that everyone has a responsibility not to waste food. Landcare could play a role in communicating and educating the broader community on the issue and opportunities of food wastage.

Chapter 9 – Global food security

9.1 It is in Australia’s national interest to promote global food security. The Australian Government considers Australia can make the most effective contribution to global food security by focusing on: technology and expertise transfers to developing countries; trade-related development assistance; advocacy and support for appropriate policies at the global, regional and national level; and short-term emergency food assistance. Do you support the Australian Government’s analysis? If not, what are the key gaps? Please be specific and provide evidence to justify your response.

- Since Landcare originated in Victoria in around 1986, it has been successfully mobilising farmers and volunteers to look after land, water and environmental assets for over 25 years. Australia has had a significant influence on the development of International Landcare. Landcare has been adopted and adapted in over fifteen countries including: Australia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Fiji, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand, Philippines, Rawanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and the United States of America.
- Australia, providing support for community capacity development in other countries based on the Landcare approach is an effective form of foreign aid.
- Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Indonesia each have emerging Landcare programs and Pakistan has been doing substantial Landcare work but not under a Landcare banner. All want to learn more about how Landcare can help improve livelihoods and environmental sustainability in their countries. Recent interest from Bangladesh and Pakistan now affords the opportunity to establish a South and South East Asian Landcare Network to increase inter-country dialogue and support and raise awareness at government levels.
- Australia could play a greater leadership role through helping to champion the Landcare approach internationally along with those countries which already have strong programs in place such as Germany, South Africa and New Zealand. Programs such as Landcare can help to deliver tangible and cost affective gains in key international challenges such as food security, climate change and the environment which are priority issues for developed and developing economies. Australia would also benefit from greater international linkages through sharing of information and knowledge, particularly from those developing and developed economies that have similar environmental and production systems.
- The National Food Plan can stimulate an increased emphasis on the importance of providing encouragement and incentives for farmers to protect natural systems and natural resources, including soil, water and native vegetation resources that provide the ecosystem services necessary for sustaining food security, healthy ecosystems and community.
- Landcare is a community-based approach that has played a major role in raising awareness, influencing farming and land management practices and delivering environmental outcomes across Australian landscapes.
- While a key element of Landcare is the voluntary network of more than 6,000 groups across Australia, there are many farmers and landholders that undertake this important work and may not be formally affiliated with any particular Landcare group but see themselves as part of the wider Landcare movement.

- According to a recent survey by the National Landcare Facilitator, over 70 percent of farmers identified as being part of Landcare, over 90 percent identified that they practice Landcare on their farms and 30 percent of farmers identified as being part of a Landcare group.
- Landcare is one of the most enduring and recognisable community movements in Australia and is a great example of communities working together and is an important part of the social fabric that makes up many communities. The role of Landcare utilising the Landcare ethic 'everyone is responsible for their patch' can be used to raise awareness of food security, food health and safety in urban Australia.
- The *Community Call for Action* acts as a guide to stakeholders and prospective partners, including industry, corporations, governments at all levels and regional and catchment organisations, as to how they can engage with Landcarers and support Landcare into the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the council would reiterate the following comments in support of the National Food Plan:

- 1) All levels of government and all sectors of the community are encouraged to support the *Community Call for Action* to help achieve sustainable landscapes and food security.
- 2) Productive Landcare is sound risk management and is a key component to underpinning the National Food Plan.
- 3) Innovative farmer to farmer extension techniques are required to ensure the application of research and development that supports productivity and sustainability. The Landcare and NRM model is able to support such a process.
- 4) The National Food Plan provides a good opportunity for collaboration on long term solutions for creating a market/framework, food production and ensuring the management of the natural resource base.
- 5) Food produced overseas may not meet the same levels of sustainability, quality and nutrition as products grown and produced in Australia and needs to be addressed.

The council thanks the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for the opportunity to comment on the Green paper which can reinforce and extend the principles of Landcare and NRM, build community knowledge and understanding, support participation and partnerships, build on existing work, enhance and extend existing programs, and deliver multiple benefits to a broad range of stakeholders.