The Australian Farm Institute

Australia’s independent farm policy research institute

www.farminstitute.org.au
Executive Director’s Welcome

Welcome to the Australian Farm Institute. The Institute has been set up to conduct research into strategic issues facing Australian agriculture, and to promote the outcomes to policy-makers and the wider community.

It is the strong belief of the Institute’s founders that the agriculture sector must seize the opportunity to better determine the sector’s future. With the increasing challenges and obligations foisted on agriculture including environmental policies, natural resource management pressures, planning legislation and both domestic and global marketing challenges agriculture has to take charge of its destiny through the development of robust, objective and credible policy research so it can engage effectively with governments and the community to achieve better outcomes for agriculture and rural Australia. The Institute’s goal is to make a real difference.

Each year the Institute’s Advisory Committee identifies a number of critically important strategic issues. The Institute then utilises funds contributed by members, leveraged with funds from other organisations, to commission or carry out research into these issues.

Despite its relatively short history, Institute research outcomes have been influential in developing new approaches on a range of agricultural issues by governments. Institute staff members are regularly called on to deliver presentations to government and industry conferences, and government departments figure prominently amongst Institute publication subscribes.

Australian agribusiness organisations are also strong supporters of the Institute, seeing long-term value in getting the right policy settings for the sector. These outcomes are confirming the founder’s perceptions of the need for the Australian Farm Institute, and the aim is to expand its operations in the future.

The Institute is now recognised by the Australian Government as an accredited research institute, which means that contributions made to the Institute are fully tax deductible.

The Institute aims to produce material and information that is stimulating, and which promotes thinking and debate about some of the major issues facing Australian agriculture. Ultimately, objective information and informed debate are key tools in ensuring that policies are implemented that maximise the future profitability and sustainability of the sector.

Brief History

The Australian Farm Institute (AFI) was established in 2003 to conduct research into public policy issues impacting on the Australian agricultural sector, and to promote solutions that maximise the profitability and sustainability of the sector. While similar organisations exist at a more general level in Australia and in other developed economies, the Farm Institute is the first stand-alone Institute of this nature established to focus solely on agricultural issues.

Today the Institute employs six staff members, and has almost 30 corporate members and over 200 individual members. In the past seven years the Australian Farm Institute has released 26 editions of the Farm Policy Journal, completed and published approximately 20 Research Reports, and in addition publishes a quarterly Newsletter and discussion papers on a wide range of different agricultural issues. Institute staff members also regularly deliver presentations to forums in regional centers and capital cities. The Institute also convenes
an annual Agriculture Roundtable Conference which provides leaders in Australian agriculture with an opportunity to consider and discuss the strategic issues that are likely to shape the future of the sector over the next decade.

Vision
The AFI vision is agricultural policies that maximise the opportunity for Australian farmers and agribusiness operators to operate their business in a profitable and sustainable manner.

Objective
To achieve its vision, the Institute’s objective is to conduct high-quality, objective research into strategic issues of significance to Australian agriculture, to publish the results of that research, and to promote the results to policy-makers, the agriculture sector and the wider community.

The Need for the Institute
As Australia becomes more and more urbanised and regional populations and farmer numbers decline, the risk increases of public policy decisions being made that are contrary to, or ignore the interests of agriculture. Farmers, agribusiness and regional Australians need to counter this risk by adopting a more strategic approach to issues that impact upon them. They need to be actively involved in setting policy agendas, rather than just responding to agendas set by other groups in the community. To do this requires a sound strategic understanding of agriculture, dedicated resources, and a commitment to researching, developing and promoting credible policy ideas to enhance the growth of the sector. The Australian Farm Institute has been established for this purpose, and it is something that all those involved in Australian agriculture should be part of.

Independence
The Australian Farm Institute is independent of government, is non-party-political, and does not engage in lobbying. The Institute is committed to ensuring research findings are the conclusion of high quality, rigorous and objective analysis. Contributors to the Institute are not able to influence the outcomes of research activities. Institute research reports are subject to rigorous peer review by the Australian Farm Institute’s Research Advisory Committee prior to publication. The Institute also uses recognised industry experts as reviewers for reports that include specific technical issues. The Institute is truly independent; its strength lies in its capacity to lead public debate and influence policy through transparent, quality research.

Why Support the Institute?
The Institute’s founders hold the view that the agriculture sector needs to take responsibility for its own future directions by engaging in objective and credible policy research, rather than relying on governments and policy-makers to come up with the best solutions. The Institute utilises funds contributed by members, leveraged with funds from other organisations, to commission or carry out research. The Institute encourages agribusiness organisations, farmers, individuals and regional communities to become contributors, and in doing so, invest in the long-term future of the sector. By providing financial support for the work of the Institute, contributors can ensure that policies and ideas to advance their industry are being developed and promoted to policy-makers.
How Your Support Will Help

Contributions from organisations and individuals are used to support research into strategic issues of critical importance to Australian agriculture and regional communities. To do this requires dedicated resources and staff who are committed to delivering research and information on issues that have critical influence on the future direction of farming and agriculture in Australia. Contributions to the Institute are used solely for these purposes, and the Institute maintains a high degree of transparency in its reporting to give confidence to contributors.

The Australian Farm Institute is a company limited by guarantee, governed by a Board of Directors and financially accountable under normal Australian corporate regulations, including a requirement for external audit on an annual basis. Copies of Institute Annual Reports which include full financial disclosure can be found on the Institute’s website.

Each research project undertaken by the Institute is given the full attention of staff and delivered in an ethical, transparent and accountable manner.

How Can I Support the Institute?

You can choose to become a Member of the Institute, subscribe to specific publications and the latest information on research in the farm sector; or make a donation. There are a number of subscription and membership opportunities to select from:

- **Corporate Membership** – Available to organisations seeking to make a significant financial contribution to the work of the Institute and who desire access to Institute publications and events for a number of their staff. Such organisations receive recognition for their contribution through branding on Farm Institute publications, the AFI website, and at events which AFI staff address. Tailored options are available to organisations upon application.
- **Individual Membership** – Benefits include access to publications and free attendance at Institute research seminars. Contributions to the Institute are fully tax deductible.
- **Student Membership** – Available to full-time tertiary students. Student Members receive the same benefits as Individual Members.
- **Co-funders & Sponsors** – Individuals or organisations with an interest in a specific Institute research project may elect to become co-funders or sponsors of that project. In return, they are acknowledged in research reports and other publications arising from the research.
- **Journal Subscription** – For those who only wish to receive the *Farm Policy Journal*. The Journal is available in hard copy and/or electronic format.
- **Institutional Subscription** – Available to organisations seeking multiple access to Institute publications. The subscription is available for the Journal only or for all Institute publications.
Institute Research

The Australian Farm Institute commissions or carries out up to five major research projects each year, the results of which are released as Institute reports and are often the subject of industry seminars. Research Reports released to date by the Institute include the following:

- Opportunities to Improve the Effectiveness of Australian Farmers’ Advocacy Groups
- Is Counting Farmers Harder than Counting Sheep? A Comparison of the Agricultural Statistical Systems of Australia, the United States and France
- Assessing the Opportunities for Achieving Future Productivity Growth in Australian Agriculture
- Does Australia Need a National Policy to Preserve Agricultural Land?
- Transport Costs for Australian Agriculture
- Farm Level Modelling of Greenhouse Emission Mitigation and Sequestration Options for the Australian Wool Industry
- Alternative Greenhouse Emission Policies for the Australian Beef Cattle Industry
- The Implications of the Australian Government’s Carbon Farming Initiative for Beef Producers
- Growing Regional NSW: Policies to Revitalise the Non-Metropolitan Regions of NSW
- The Current and Future Human Resource Needs of the Australian Agriculture Sector
- Towards a Better Understanding of Current and Future Human Resource Needs of Australian Agriculture
- Private Sector Investment in Agricultural R&D in Australia
- Industry Response to the Productivity Commission Rural R&D Issues Paper
- Making Decisions About Environmental Water
- The Implications of Greenhouse Mitigation Policies on the Demand for Agricultural Land
- Essential Services in Urban and Regional Australia – A Quantitative Comparison
- An Introduction to the CPRS for Farmers and Agribusiness
- Some Impacts on Agriculture of an Australian Emissions Trading Scheme
- Preliminary Modelling of the Farm-level Impacts of the Australian Emissions Trading Scheme
- Research and Information Needs of Primary Industries in Response to an Emissions Trading Scheme
- Value in Value Chains: Collaborative Business Models and Farm Accreditation Systems Examined
- Estimating the Value of Environmental Services Provided by Australian Farmers
- The Implications for Australian Agriculture of Changing Demand for Animal Protein in Asia
- Developing a Good Regulatory Practice Model for Environmental Regulations Impacting on Farmers
- Productivity Growth in Australian Agriculture: Trends, Sources, Performance
- Enhancing the Customer Focus of Australian Agriculture
- Enhancing the Customer Focus of Australian Agriculture Phase 2: Practical Implications for Australian Farmers and Customer Requirements for Accreditation of Farm Produce
- Vertical Contracting and Australian Agriculture: Implications for Farmers and Policy-Makers
- Agricultural Development in Argentina and Brazil: Emerging trends and implications for Australia
- Australian Farm Sector Demography: Analysis of Current Trends and Future Farm Policy Implications
- Australia’s Farm-Dependent Economy: Analysis of the Role of Agriculture in the Australian Economy
Contribute to the Institute’s Capital Fund

The Australian Farm Institute has established a capital fund, the aim of which is to secure the long-term future of the Institute, and to ensure that the resources are available to carry out valuable agricultural policy research projects in the future.

The Australian Farm Institute is recognised by the Australian Tax Office as an accredited research institute, which means that contributions to the Institute’s Capital Fund are fully tax-deductible. The Capital Fund is invested securely, and will grow over time and secure the future of the Institute. The investment returns arising from the Capital Fund are used solely to fund Institute research projects, as directed by the Institute’s Research Advisory Committee.

Contributors to the Capital Fund are permanently recognised in all Institute publications, presentations and on the Institute’s website. Contributors to the Capital Fund in excess of specific thresholds also gain permanent access to other benefits, including complimentary copies of Institute reports and publications, and complimentary attendance at Institute conferences and events.

For further information about contributions to the Institute’s Capital Fund, please contact the Executive Director on 02 9690 1388.

AFI in the Media

Investments in ag more than stack up
MICK KEOGH, Beef Central, 10 June 2014

The just-concluded Australian Farm Institute’s ‘Funding Agriculture’s Future’ conference held in Canberra provided some fascinating insights into the reality of investment in Australian agriculture.

The conference brought together bankers, investors, farmers, financial sector advisors, farm consultants and agricultural economists to discuss the whether the agriculture sector will be able to attract sufficient future capital in order to be able to respond to burgeoning Asian food demand. The overall conclusion seemed to be that the sector will be able to attract sufficient capital in the future, but it is likely there will be a more diverse array of business structures operating farms than the predominant current model of families owning and operating farms, funded by debt.

Why farm advocacy is failing
MATTHEW CAWOOD, The Land, 6 March 2014

Some Australian farm advocacy groups are in a slow decline towards irrelevance, the Australian Farm Institute (AFI) has found, and drastic changes will be needed if they are to keep afloat.

The Institute also highlighted a paradox in farmers’ relationship with advocacy groups: most farmers regard advocacy on their behalf as of increasing importance, but fewer and fewer are staying members of the groups who might do the advocating.

Ultimately, the AFI found, it may be that advocacy alone cannot keep farm groups afloat, and they will have to reinvent themselves around a different purpose in order to survive.
Drop support for old industries and get behind agriculture, report says

**GLenda Kwek, The Sydney Morning Herald, 11 March 2014**

For Australian farmers to get a better foothold in the regional market, agricultural advocates such as the Australian Farm Institute have called on the government to push for more openness in what is one of the most trade-protected sectors in the world.

‘While there are, undoubtedly, trade-offs between domestic considerations and regional trade, Australia should consider the implications of these policies on Australia’s chances of securing greater access to agricultural markets via its prospective trade deals,’ the report’s authors said.

‘By opening its own markets to foreign manufacturers, Australia may create a more positive outlook for the export of its agricultural products.’

Animal welfare debate needs rethink

**SBS News, 8 April 2014**

Hysteria over animal cruelty could actually compromise animal welfare standards while raising the risk of exposure to diseases such as bird flu, an industry think tank says.

The Australian Farm Institute says subjectivity and anthropomorphism is clouding judgment on animal welfare policy, which could lead to poorer welfare outcomes for animals in the long-term.

Farmers are often presented in the media as ruthless businessman who mistreat their animals, but in reality it’s in their best interests to care for their livestock.

Animal activists are in constant campaign mode to improve welfare conditions but some of the knee-jerk reactions to their concerns, such as the suspension of live exports in 2011, often does not lead to good outcomes for either farmers or activists, it says.

The result is the animal welfare debate is purely emotion-driven and subjective.

Budget cuts strike at environment protection

**Kate Dowler, The Weekly Times, 21 May 2014**

The Federal Budget puts Australian farmers and environments they manage on behalf of everyone in a more vulnerable position.

Cuts totalling more than half a billion dollars to Landcare and environmental stewardship programs won’t encourage farmers – already competing against heavily government-assisted competitors – to spend more preserving natural resources.

Of course, most farmers already make huge efforts to look after their environment, benefiting them and the public. But this Budget further reduces public recognition of this.

Australian Farm Institute Executive Director Mick Keogh says the cuts put us further out of step with competitors.

Accurate statistics can help farmers to be more profitable

**NAB Business Research and Insights, 15 July 2014**

Objective, robust and accurate statistics can help farmers make informed decisions and run more profitable businesses. Here’s how.

‘For beef farmers, issues like prices, trends in livestock numbers and stock slaughter numbers can help them to develop future breeding plans, and the US beef cycle is also a very big determinant of what happens here in Australia,’ says Mick Keogh, Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute (AFI). ‘If you’re in the feedlot industry, you need to know about trends in grain prices, and supply chain information including farmgate milk prices would be extremely helpful to dairy farmers.’

AFI’s research report, *Is counting farmers harder than counting sheep?*, found that Australia lags behind other countries in the quality of information that’s readily available.
Institute Governance

The Australian Farm Institute is a company limited by guarantee, owned by the members of the Institute. It is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of persons with extensive experience in Australian agriculture and farming. Board members are elected by eligible Institute members at the Annual General Meeting held in June each year.

The Institute’s research agenda is governed by the AFI Research Advisory Committee, which includes some of the most senior and experienced researchers and academics involved in agriculture in Australia and New Zealand. This group has two roles – the first being to identify strategic issues of significance to the agriculture sector that merit detailed research, and the second being to act as a peer review group for research prior to its release.

Board of Directors

David Anthony, Chairman – Chairman and former CEO of Auscott Limited; Chairman of Cotton Catchment Communities CRC; Chairman of Career Harvests Inc; Council member NSW Minister for Primary Industries Ministerial Advisory Council.


Jane Bennett – Non-Executive Director, Australian Broadcasting Corporation and CSIRO. Chairs the Tasmanian Food Industry Advisory Council Member of the Brand Tasmania Council. Previously, Managing Director Ashgrove Cheese Pty Ltd. 2010 Tasmanian Telstra Business Woman of the Year and 1997 Australian ABC Rural Woman of the Year.

Andrew Spencer – Chief Executive Officer, Australian Pork Ltd. Director, Pork CRC Ltd. Twenty-five year career in agribusiness, both in Australia and internationally. Worked in France, in the agricultural biotechnology and seeds markets.

Mick Keogh – Executive Director, Australian Farm Institute. Mick holds Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Agricultural Science (UNSW) and has previously had roles as a research scientist, agribusiness consultant, industry lobbyist and farm manager. He is involved in family farming interests in southern NSW.

Research Advisory Committee

Professor Snow Barlow – Head, School of Agriculture and Food Systems, The University of Melbourne

Dr Peter Carberry – Deputy Director, Sustainable Agriculture Flagship, CSIRO

Professor Les Copeland – Professor of Agriculture, Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, The University of Sydney

Wayne Dunford – Board member of NSW Farmers’ Association. Operates a mixed farming business west of Parkes, and a beef cattle enterprise north of Brewarrina

Professor Ross Kingwell, Chairman – Professor, School of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of WA; Chief Economist, AEGIC, Department of Agriculture and Food WA

Professor Jim Pratley – Professor of Agriculture, School of Agriculture and Wine Sciences, Charles Sturt University

David Sackett – Managing Director, Growth Farms Australia; Board member of Future Farm Industries CRC

Dr Mal Wegener – Honorary Research Fellow, School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, The University of Queensland

Mick Keogh – Executive Director, Australian Farm Institute

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