Improved Environmental Regulation

In recent decades governments internationally and in Australia have become increasingly aware of the need to ensure that environmental legislation or regulations they enact are developed and implemented in a manner that achieves optimal community benefits. Despite this awareness and the development of best-practice procedures, Australian Governments at both a Commonwealth and State level are guilty of failing to apply these regulatory processes to the management of on-farm natural resources.

The research project aims to compare and contrast relevant regulatory processes that are used in differing jurisdictions internationally, with the purpose of developing a preferred set of guidelines for use in Australia and specifically for regulatory measures that deal with on-farm management of natural resources. The overall objective of the research project is the development of a model set of regulatory processes that assist in ensuring governments implement well-designed, robust regulations that are effective, efficient and equitable.

Gender Imbalance in Regional Australia

Several studies have investigated the decline of rural populations and regional communities with significant research efforts focused on policies that might be utilised to redress the economic decline observed in many regions of Australia. Several of these studies have noted an emerging gender imbalance in regional communities and the potential long-term impact this might have on the ability of those communities to survive and prosper.

The key focus of the research project will be to conduct a preliminary analysis of the apparent growing gender imbalance in regional Australia. Initially the research will clarify the available data in order to develop a clearer understanding of trends in gender ratios in human populations in areas of regional Australia. Depending on the research outcomes it is likely that subsequent research may be commissioned to develop a better understanding of the underlying causes and to begin to develop policies that may address some of the issues arising from the trend.

2005/06 Research Program Update

The research program for 2005/06 has now been finalised by the Institute’s Research Advisory Committee. Four research projects were endorsed:

Customer-Focused Australian Agriculture

An increase in global per capita food production over the last decade has resulted in the emergence of a number of low-cost agricultural exporting nations such as Brazil, India and China which are potential competitors for Australian farmers in many international markets. To compete with these emerging agricultural exporters Australian farmers will need to reduce production costs or shift to a customer-focused strategy targeting higher-priced markets in developed and emerging countries.

This research project proposes to improve the understanding of global markets for farm produce by providing a broad overview of global markets, and the market developments that require a response by Australian agriculture.

Seminar: Australian Farm Sector Demography

The Australian Farm Institute is hosting a seminar to launch the ‘Australian Farm Sector Demography’ Research Report on Monday, 22 August 2005 from 2 to 4 pm at The Menzies Hotel, Sydney.

The two-phase research project examines the changing demography of the Australian farm sector, and compares changes within Australia with the farm sectors of other developed countries. The research goes on to consider the policy implications of these changes.

Tony Gleeson of Synapse Research Consulting, who conducted the research, will highlight the key findings and conclusions of the report. Attendance at the seminar will cost $150 per person (incl. GST) which will include a copy of the final research report. Australian Farm Institute Members and Corporate Members are entitled to attend the seminar for free as part of their membership. Copies of the research report can be purchased by non members for $66 (incl. GST) after the report is released.
Productivity Growth in Australian Agriculture

Research and Development and subsequent adoption of innovations and productivity growth are seen as a key element in ensuring Australian agriculture remains globally competitive. The degree to which current agricultural Research and Development structures and policies are optimally contributing to productivity growth in Australian agriculture is difficult to measure. Australian rural Research and Development policies need to be compared with the same commodity sectors in comparable overseas countries in order to evaluate their effectiveness.

This research project will compare relative rates of productivity growth in specific sectors of agriculture in Australia with rates of productivity growth observed in comparable sectors of agriculture in other countries, as a first step in considering future rural Research and Development policy.

2005 Strategic Roundtable Conference

The Australian Farm Institute’s Annual Strategic Roundtable Conference will be held at the Sofitel Wentworth Hotel, Sydney on 21 and 22 November 2005. The theme of the 2005 conference will be ‘Keeping Australian Agriculture Globally Competitive’. The conference will commence with a dinner on the evening of the 21 November and followed by a full day programme on 22 November.

The Australian Farm Institute has secured several prominent speakers who will provide their perspective on the key issues that will challenge Australian agriculture in the next 5 to 10 years. Speakers include: Nigel Garrard, Managing Director, SPC Ardmona; Don Mackay, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Australian Agricultural Company Limited; Ken Matthews, Chairman, National Water Commission; Professor Margaret Alston, Director of the Centre of Rural Social Research, Charles Sturt University; and Dr Ross Kingwell, Visiting Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Western Australia & Manager of Economic Services, Western Australian Department of Agriculture.

If you or your organisation are interested in being involved in this event please contact the Executive Director, Mick Keogh on 61 2 9690 1388 or via email keogh.m@farminstitute.org.au

Farm Policy Journal – August Quarter 2005

The next edition of the Farm Policy Journal will focus on Market-based instruments for natural resource management. The development of Market-based instruments for the management of on-farm natural resources in Australia is limited and is considerably less developed than in some other developed countries. Regulatory measures still predominate in policy settings for issues such as vegetation, land and water management, threatened species and biodiversity conservation. Understanding Market-based instruments is a key requirement for developing better natural resource management policies and is the focus of the contributed papers of the August Quarter 2005 edition of the Farm Policy Journal.

To view the current Farm Policy Journal, ‘EU agricultural policy - reforming or just rebadging?’ go to www.farminstitute.org.au/publications/journal2

Corporate Membership

The Australian Farm Institute is pleased to announce TWYNAM Agricultural Group as a new Gold Corporate Sponsor of the Institute.

The Twynam Agricultural Group was established in the early 1970s by John Dieter Kahlbetzer, founded upon his strong affinity with rural Australia. This affinity with agriculture, which is shared by his two sons Johnny and Markus, also led to the foundation of the Liag Group in Argentina in 1982.

Today, the Twynam and Liag property portfolios have a wide geographical base expanding over 540,000 hectares with a sector spread providing security against adverse weather conditions and commodity market fluctuations.

The Group’s rural industry mix now includes beef, cattle feedlotting, wool, rice, cotton, cereals and cotton ginning. Twynam is one of the largest cotton, rice and wheat/pulse growers in Australia operating 15 properties totalling 400,000 hectares.

Twynam Agricultural Group supports internal, local and industry research programmes through active participation in on-farm demonstrations and research including variety trials, nutrition, Integrated Pest Management and farming systems. The group recognise the importance of sharing results and actively participating with industry Research and Development organisations in regional trial work.

To contact Twynam Agricultural Group call 61 2 9329 9000 or visit www.twynam.com

Other agribusinesses which have recently become Corporate Members are Australian Food & Fibre Limited, Nufarm Limited, Kraft Foods NZ/Australia, Monsanto Australia and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

Further information about the Institute’s Corporate Members and more information regarding Corporate Membership can be obtained at www.farminstitute.org.au/sponsorship

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