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## **AUSTRALIAN FARM INSTITUTE LAUNCHED AT FIRST FARM SITE.**

Government policies that make it easier for farmers to be farmers is the key objective of the Australian Farm Institute, a new independent farm policy 'think tank' that has been officially launched in Sydney.

The event has been held on the site where Australia's first European-style farm was established in 1788, which is now Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens.

Chairman of the Institute's Board of Directors, John Ralph, said that the aim of the institute was to assist Australian farmers to set their own agenda on policy issues, rather than to be continually responding to agendas set by others.

"By carrying out strategic research projects and developing innovative policy solutions, the Institute hopes to encourage Government policies that maximise the opportunities for Australian farmers to operate profitable and sustainable businesses."

Also released at the function was the first edition of the Australian Farm Institute's new quarterly publication "Farm Policy Journal" which contains papers by a number of international authors on the future of farming.

Executive Director of the new Institute, Mick Keogh, explained that the focus of its activities would be very much on strategic issues impacting on Australia's farm sector.

"The Institute will identify a small number of strategic farm sector issues each year, and carry out or commission research to develop policy responses to these. The focus will be on strategic issues with medium to long-term timeframes," he said.

The Institute has established a Research Advisory Committee, consisting of some of the most senior academics involved in agriculture in Australia, to advise on research projects and oversee the quality of projects that are carried out.

"Three initial research projects have been identified. These are:

- a comprehensive audit of the extent to which various sectors of the Australian economy depend on agriculture;
- a study into the implications of the growth of 'contract agriculture' in Australia; and
- a study of changes in farmer demographics in Australia, and the implications these have for farm labour requirements and farm policies more generally.

"The Institute has received initial seed funding from NSW Farmers' Association. However over time the objective is to broaden the membership base, and in particular to involve agribusiness in the operations of the Institute," Mr Keogh concluded.

**Further Information:**

**Mick Keogh**

**(02) 9690 1388**

**AH**

**0418 256066**

[www.farminstitute.org.au](http://www.farminstitute.org.au)