

**From:**   
**To:** [Committee, Agriculture \(REPS\)](#)  
**Subject:** submission  
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**Attachments:** [soils.rtf](#)

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House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Agriculture  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

## Submission; Inquiry into food security in Australia

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important issue. I would like to start this submission with the claim that the terms of reference for this inquiry are inadequate and do not reflect the extreme seriousness of our present situation. The opening line of the terms states that the inquiry is into strengthening and safeguarding food security which considering the present situation in the local and world environment is rather like having an inquiry into the safety of the Titanic when it is known that water is coming in faster than it is being expelled. It is disturbing that the inquiry would include the prospects of "potential opportunities" from climate change suggesting perhaps that Australia will somehow be able to take advantage of climate induced food shortages in the rest of the world. It is a statement that will probably create submissions demanding that we expand agriculture by even more destructive land clearing, a process that has already done great environmental damage to our nation. Ecologists list land clearing as a top cause of wildlife losses and the State of the Environment report said between 2000 and 2017, there were 7.7 million hectares of land cleared across Australia and 93 per cent of the vegetation was felled without federal approvals for threatened species habitats. It also seems odd to include a request for information on food production, consumption and export when the department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry would have the best overall access to this information. There have been many investigations into food security by national and world organizations all of which show alarming trends including a growing number of people affected by hunger, an increase of 46 million from 2020 to 2021. The UN has admitted that the world is moving away from its goal of ending hunger and numerous scientific reports point to a looming catastrophe as agricultural production will be hit by climate change, diseases and insect attacks. Australia is considered likely to be hit worse than most because of water shortages - made worse by damage from mining and fracking which threatens aquifers. We have allowed some highly dangerous practices including underground gasification and acid leaching of minerals such as copper and uranium even though the former process

was shown to have created an environmental disaster in China.

Data from the ABS shows which foods have risen in price and by how much and the findings are alarming because it will impact on the health of those on lower incomes who will cut spending on healthy foods relying more on cheaper "fast food" and as a result 50 per cent of Australians now live with chronic disease. More alarming is the growth in our food imports which have increased by 12.1% in 2021 much faster than exports suggesting we are on track to become a net food importer. We have already reached this in about 10 food items including seafood and rice. In 2020 Australia imported 220 thousand tonnes having gone from being an exporter of rice in 1971. Our imports, which come from Asian countries, drive up the cost for those who can least afford it. We also import \$2.1b worth of seafood 20% of which is prawns. Their cheapness has made it difficult for local producers not only in competing on price but the imported prawns have brought in diseases, a situation that has occurred with many other products including Tuna.

Conclusion;

I believe this inquiry should have been guided by the findings of the State of the Environment Report which shows that successive governments have ignored scientific advice and relied instead on economic theories based on fostering GDP growth above all else. The report found all areas of the nation were in a "poor and deteriorating state" and likely to get worse with climate change.

The report also made clear that our population growth was detrimental to all of the 12 sections that it investigated. It is a policy which increased our imports and reduced exports while urban sprawl has swallowed up some of our best agricultural land. We should therefore stabilize our population asap and wean ourselves off fossil fuels by rapid electrification of heavy vehicles, buses, trucks and tractors.

I have included a few relevant articles which expose the extent of the situation we now face.

[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/county\\_of\\_cumberland\\_planning\\_scheme](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/county_of_cumberland_planning_scheme)

<https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/australia-s-risky-food-supply-chains>

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2344912-the-us-megadrought-wont-just-end-it-will-change-the-land-forever/>

Yours faithfully.

Don Owers 