



October 31, 2011

Senate Standing Committees on Economics
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) thanks you for the opportunity to provide comment to the Senate Economics Committee's Inquiry into the Constitutional Corporations (Farm Gate to Plate) Bill 2011.

As background, WAFarmers is the State's largest and most influential rural lobby and service organisation. WAFarmers represents approximately 4,000 Western Australian farmers from a range of primary industries including grain growers, meat and wool producers, dairy farmers, pastoralists, horticulturalists, commercial egg producers and beekeepers.

Collectively our members are major contributors to the \$7.1 billion gross value of production that agriculture in its various forms contributes annually to Western Australia's economy. Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and capably manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental well being of that land.

Whilst WAFarmers applauds the object of the Bill, we recognise that influencing behavioral change in consumer purchases that result in a measurable increase in the commodity price paid to the farmer is a complex and difficult outcome to achieve. We also recognise that it is one which requires significant financial resources. In recent years, broadly similar Federal Government initiatives in this area, the GROCERYchoice website and Country of Origin Labeling (CoOL) have highlighted the vast difference between policy intent, and the establishment of a workable operational framework which delivers a positive outcome for farmers.

Whilst supportive of the Bill's objective, WAFarmers believes that the Bill, if passed, faces operational difficulties in accurately establishing and displaying the price paid to the producer. Further, in addition to point of sale considerations, to be effective, WAFarmers believes that the initiative must be delivered as an overall package which (1) educates the consumer to initially understand what is being displayed, and then to make informed choices about locally produced food, and (2) delivers an investigative and prosecution response where breaches are reported.

As such, WAFarmers requires further information on the funding, delivery and operation of the Bill as an education, awareness and compliance program, before being able to support its passage.

WAFarmers thanks you for your consideration of this submission. Should you wish to further discuss the issues raised in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact myself or WAFarmers Director of Policy,

Yours sincerely

Mike Norton
President