



COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF NSW SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY – BEEF IMPORTS INTO AUSTRALIA

The Country Women's Association of NSW would like to take this opportunity to comment on the possible lifting of the ban on importation of beef products into Australia.

- Currently Australians don't have to worry about the safety of the meat they eat in Australia. Importation of beef products from some countries poses a risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and/or Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).
- Australia is seen as having a "clean, green" image. Lifting the ban would put that reputation at risk and we need to maintain this marketing advantage.
- A continued ban would give our country the opportunity to maximise our chances of remaining free of these repugnant diseases.
- Even a negligible risk, of importing one or both of BSE and FMD, is an unacceptable risk to take when one considers the possible effects on the health of Australia's people and animals.
- There are numerous examples, in our history, where hindsight would have produced a different response to the importation of foreign species e.g. foxes, cane toads, European carp and rabbits.
- If fresh meat is to be allowed there must be very stringent checks of all imports, they must meet Australian Food Safety regulations and no imports from countries with a record of BSW and/or FMD even if they have been free of these diseases for several years.
- Vigilance must be unequivocally guaranteed with a binding or statutory agreement from government that compensation, equal to pre-collapse market prices, will be paid to every beef producer if our markets are lost as a result of importation. Producers are tired of bearing the brunt of government mistakes.

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State Agricultural and Environmental Officer