

21 October 2021

Dear Senator McDonald,

Thank you for your letter dated 6 October regarding adverse comments contained in a submission by the Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee's inquiry into definitions of meat and other animal products.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide the statement below in response to the misleading and unsubstantiated claims made by RMAC towards me as an individual and to Food Frontier.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSE

The claims that RMAC has made in its submission that suggest I, along with Food Frontier, are "anti-livestock", are completely unsubstantiated.

Further, RMAC's allegation around Food Frontier providing misinformation at any point in this conversation is unfounded and malicious.

I continue to resist being drawn into any campaign where the intent is to undermine my personal credibility and integrity, and that of the not-for-profit organisation I founded, Food Frontier.

It has certainly not gone unnoticed that there is a pattern in RMAC's behaviour that consistently serves to attack the credibility of individuals and organisations that are simply bringing facts to the conversation around plant-based product labelling. This includes criticism of government agencies¹ and academic institutions² who work directly with the red meat sector.

It is my assessment that such credibility attacks are done to distract from relevant facts being presented, whether those facts are from Food Frontier or other knowledgeable organisations and experts. This only reflects poorly on RMAC as an industry council.

On the topic of my career path, I have always been very open about my experiences prior to founding Food Frontier. I've spoken about my personal journey on many occasions, including public talks and national media interviews. These are widely available via a simple web search.

¹ CSIRO insists fake meat push does not diminish its support for farm industries. Farm Online. 25 Aug 2021. <https://www.farmonline.com.au/story/7401626/csiro-insists-fake-meat-push-does-not-reduce-support-for-farmers/>

² RMAC demands apology from anti-meat academics. Farm Online. 28 June 2021. <https://www.farmonline.com.au/story/7317407/rmac-demands-apology-from-anti-meat-academics/?cs=5373>

What I will say about my experiences to date, and what they have taught me, is how I treat and respond to those with alternative views to mine - with civility, transparency and respect.

In a career mostly focused on advocacy, I value the importance of working collaboratively, basing opinions on sound data and evidence, and listening carefully to the views of others with a desire to find common ground. Pitting sectors against each other and attacking individuals who hold different views is not helpful or productive.

A short part of my 11-year career, which has included work with six organisations spanning conservation to poverty alleviation, was the two years I spent as a teenager at not-for-profit organisation, Animals Australia. My formal relationship with that organisation ended when I left. Neither Food Frontier nor any member of our team has any official association with Animals Australia.

Food Frontier prides itself as being an independent think tank on alternative proteins. It operates under the philosophy of listening, learning, exploring and understanding.

Our purpose is to gather data from leading science, health, agri-food and economic development authorities, and share evidence-based insights that help guide intelligent conversations and well-considered policies for the alternative protein sector. Our work is based on evidence, not ideology, and the evidence is clear: new protein sources will be required alongside traditional ones as global demand grows. This presents significant opportunities for Australian businesses, farmers and consumers.

We pride ourselves on having conversations with leaders across respected organisations in agriculture, research, food industry and academia. These leaders recognise the opportunity alternative proteins offer Australia and the critical importance of bolstering the domestic plant protein supply chain to bring value to many Australian farmers. This is demonstrated through initiatives like the [Future of Protein Forum in partnership with NSW Farmers and the National Farmers Federation](#). We have excellent relationships with food manufacturers that produce both plant-based and traditional protein products and are associated with peak agriculture and food industry organisations. The [speakers line-up](#) at our forthcoming inaugural conference on alternative proteins is a visible testament to the strength of these relationships, and the breadth of organisations engaged with this value-adding young sector.

Our dedicated and highly qualified team brings experience from agriculture, FMCG, retail and food certification, research and nutrition. They were employed on their professional merit and experiences and matched into the roles that make Food Frontier the reputable think tank it is. They reflect a cross-section of Australian consumers, from avid meat-lovers to meat-reducers and flexitarians, who are like-minded when it comes to the values of choice and respect for others' views and way of life.

When Food Frontier was invited to join the Agriculture Minister's Working Group, we were well represented by our Director of Policy and Government Relations, Mr Sam

Lawrence. Mr Lawrence's previous experience working for Australian Pork – the very opposite of an “anti-livestock” organisation – lends to his knowledge and expertise of food and agriculture industries that was a valuable contribution to the Working Group.

Food Frontier takes its obligations to confidentiality seriously, and we shared the Working Group's majority recommendation only after the full report was published in the public domain by others (including: on the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) website in May 2021; a public presentation at the 2021 Beef Week event in Rockhampton; in a Beef Central news story³).

Finally, in terms of public information, organisations regularly update their websites. As an evidence-based organisation, we strive to ensure our content reflects the latest research across all of our communication channels. We produce an abundance of news, information and resources that are freely available to anybody who wishes to access them.

I invite you to sign up to our e-newsletter and receive first hand the information we share to our interested community.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to set the record straight regarding unsubstantiated allegations and claims.

Thomas King
CEO, Food Frontier

³ Chicken and red meat align over plant-based protein labelling. Beef Central. 14 May 2021.
<https://www.beefcentral.com/news/beef-2021/chicken-and-red-meat-align-over-plant-based-protein-labelling/>