

Submission No:	..... 24 .....
Date Received:	..... 20-3-09 .....
Secretary:	..... <i>[Signature]</i> .....



ABN: 75 266 051 838

Telephone: (08) 8410 7233  
Facsimile: (08) 8211 7303

Level 1 / 67 South Terrace,  
Adelaide, SA 5000  
Postal Address: PO Box 6014  
Halifax Street, SA 5000

Email: [info@saff.com.au](mailto:info@saff.com.au)  
Website: [www.saff.com.au](http://www.saff.com.au)

Ref: S-09NRC\_SCPIR.doc

18<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Resources  
PO Box 6021  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

**RE: INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN ASSISTING AUSTRALIAN FARMERS TO ADAPT TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

The South Australian Farmers' Federation (SAFF) is the State's principal farmer organisation and has a proud history of representation and support for farmers dating back more than 100 years. SAFF represent industries which have helped to build and shape South Australia, and will continue to play a key role in its future.

The Natural Resources Section of SAFF is a major policy group representing the organisations entire membership on environmental issues. The Section is directed by the Natural Resources Committee (NRC). The Natural Resources Section vision is for an integrated and sustainable landscape that delivers simultaneous improvement of natural resource management outcomes and farm productivity, efficiency and profitability.

SAFF believes that adaptation to climate change is one of the biggest issues that will affect its membership and the South Australian and Australian farming industry in the future. At the moment with the extended drought, a lot of the focus of climate change is on a higher incidence of and extended periods of drought. The farming industry must also be able to adapt to increased incidence of storms, flood, dust storms and heatwaves, which may result in an increase in the risk of bushfires. Other impacts of climate change will include the spread of weeds, pest animals and diseases as well as native animals into areas where they have not previously existed or at much reduced levels.

The farming community must successfully adapt to climate change and the permanent changes it will bring to industry. It is vital that Government show leadership in policy based on good research and development, provide education and awareness in new technologies and farming systems, and provide skills and training to implement and adapt the new technologies and farming systems to their properties.

Please find attached SAFFs comments on the Inquiry. If you would like to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact myself or Ms Sandra Keane, Natural Resources Officer at the Federation

Sincerely

*Sandra Keane*

for Sharon Starick  
Chair, Natural Resources Committee



*Submission into the*

**Inquiry into the role of government in  
assisting Australian farmers to adapt to  
the impacts of climate change**

by

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FARMERS FEDERATION  
(SAFF)  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

On

March 2009

CHAIR: Sharon Starick

Level 1, 67 South Terrace  
Adelaide SA 5000

CONTACT: Natural Resources Executive Officer  
Ms Sandra Keane  
Email: [skeane@saff.com.au](mailto:skeane@saff.com.au)

PO Box 6014  
Halifax Street SA 5000  
Telephone: (08) 8410 7233  
Facsimile: (08) 8211 7303  
Website: [www.saff.com.au](http://www.saff.com.au)

## **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Research and development will be essential to enable primary industries to adapt to climate change. However it is concerning that Governments (both State and Commonwealth) are decreasing the amount of funding provided to research and development. This has the potential to severely impact on agriculture's ability to adapt to the changing climate whilst improving productivity.

Government has a role in funding and assisting industry in the development of farming systems that are more able to withstand a highly variable climate. This could include a focus on new varieties (better adaptation to a dry climate, high temperatures and increased incidence of frosts), new technology eg opportunities to reduce inputs or maximise productivity through technology such as biochar or production of ethanol from animal effluent, and new farming systems including new types of crops and pastures.

Research is also needed to identify the potential impacts of climate change within regions, including production and impacts on the natural resources, which would enable a greater understanding and the potential for rural communities and primary industries to develop strategies to address these impacts.

## **EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

Government has a role in the provision of consistent messages around climate change. Presently there are very mixed messages about climate change and its potential impacts for Australia from a range of sources – within Governments and outside of Government. This makes it very difficult for industry and individual farmers to interpret and develop strategies to reduce or address the impacts of climate change.

Governments can have a role in funding projects or programs that could trial or demonstrate outcomes from research and development eg emerging industries, new varieties and new farming systems.

## **SKILLS AND TRAINING**

Governments have a role in the provision of funding for the development of skills and training. This should include a focus on:

- 1) Production systems including benchmarking,
- 2) Natural resources and opportunities for improvement to enable production systems to be more resilient,
- 3) Risk management skills, and
- 4) Business management skills including strategic planning.

This also includes the provision of extension services to enable farmers to access the knowledge and information required to be able to make sound decisions and the confidence to make changes. However, Governments (particularly State) have been withdrawing funding to extension services throughout Australia which will impact on agriculture's ability to adapt to climate change.

## **POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

Governments have a responsibility and leadership role in developing policy that is able to assist rural communities and agriculture to adapt to climate change. Often Government policy is developed in reaction to a particular issue. However, there is an opportunity to develop policy that is proactive in addressing the potential impacts of climate change. For example in water management, using alternative water sources such as waste water and storm water for agriculture. Planning of water resources will need to be more flexible and take into account climate change and address risks to the resource such as plantation forestry (including forestry for biosequestration), farm dams, groundwater extraction and unregulated flows.

Policy development needs an integrated approach to look at both short-term and long-term issues. Any changes need to be made on good economic foundation and not only driven by tax incentives.

With climate change, greater pressure will be placed on agricultural areas for food production. In higher rain fall areas, competition for land will become greater with conflicts between agriculture and other land uses such as rural living. All levels of government have a role in development planning and as such an opportunity to protect agricultural areas.

## **CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

Regardless of activities undertaken to mitigate carbon emissions, agriculture will need to adapt to a changing climate. Governments have a role in working with industry to:

1. Develop stewardship payments for protection and enhancement of native vegetation or water quality improvements,
2. Develop 'new' industries such as power generation from piggery waste,
3. Provide research funding into conversion of urban and animal waste to biochar which may provide an alternative to fertiliser use in horticulture and cropping systems,
4. Produce more agricultural product with less water, and
5. Develop programs to monitor changes in the natural resources, eg monitor the spread of weeds.

There is also a need to assist some rural communities to adjust to a changing climate. An example is irrigators and communities within the Murray Darling Basin, which will need to adjust to less water being available for use. In this instance Government has a facilitation and coordination role to ensure that whole communities are able to make changes which will have positive impacts on productivity as well as on the resilience of our natural resources.