

PO Box 46, THEODORE QLD. 4719



**FITZROY BASIN FOOD & FIBRE
ASSOCIATION INC.**

20th March 2009

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

Submission No: 34
Date Received: 20-3-09
Secretary: <i>[Signature]</i>

Via Email: pir.reps@aph.gov.au

Submission to the "Inquiry into the role of government in assisting Australian farmers to adapt to the impacts of climate change".

The Fitzroy Basin Food & Fibre Association is the foremost group representing Fitzroy Basin irrigators in Queensland. Our members own and manage farming and grazing enterprises that range in size from small intensive farming blocks (<50ha) to large areas of mixed farming and grazing (>10,000ha), that include irrigation and dry-land farming practises. The association is a fully voluntary organization, formed in 2001, and continues to grow and attract new membership of dedicated irrigators. It is an important voice for irrigators, to communicate with government agencies, researchers and external stakeholders.

We may have difficulty providing solutions for this inquiry, but we wish to make it known that we stand to be negatively impacted upon, both financially and productively, if government doesn't handle the process correctly.

Some of the ideas that have been raised by our members are listed below –

- Firstly government must convince all farmers that they are being affected by climate change. This will be difficult given that a lot of farmers don't believe we have global

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Board Member Contacts

Lower Fitzroy: <i>Ron Bahnisch</i>	Ph: 4933 4011	Nogoa River:	Geoff Kavanagh	Ph 0409 724475
Dawson River: <i>Greg Hutchinson</i>	Ph: 4997 4001	Mackenzie River:	Charlie Wilson	Ph 0428792787
Cornet River: <i>Ross Ingram</i>	Ph: 4984 4072	Non Catchment:	Alicia Dunbar	Ph 4982 0933
Callide Valley:			<i>Rob Hutchinson</i>	Ph: 4997 1907
Isaac/Connors: <i>Sean Conaghan</i>	Ph: 4938 9134		Nigel Burnett	Ph 4987 3481
			(Chairman)	

warming. Many say that we have had droughts and floods before, and our climate is always in change mode. Some believe in the climate change theory, but not much of the hype and doomsday predictions.

- Man cannot hold back the tide of change at all costs and farmers don't want to pay for unrealistic political folly.
- Irrigated agriculture produces approx. 25% of Australia's agricultural production so longer droughts and more intense rainfall events will create a big change to the availability of irrigation water, given current planning.
- The real difficulty we are facing is the capacity to pay, particularly the asking price for new water. There has to be government financial input into infrastructure – the market forces currently being applied may have to change. This is a very difficult, political and philosophical area but we wish to make our thoughts known, and be involved with future planning.
- There must be national recognition for the maintenance and improvement of food and fibre production in Australia. This is essential for the long term security of all Australians.
- Measures must be based on science that has multiple proven supports, and is not politically driven or manipulated.
- There needs to be a change to time frames for funding, to realistic lengths – not 3 years, were the first year is spent setting up, the second working, and the 3rd winding-up and reporting. Agriculture is long term and seasonal and funding for research, data collection, and trials needs to be for much longer periods.
- Science of soils, pasture, livestock and human impact must be properly researched.
- All decisions and changes, impacting on agriculture should have consultation and genuine participation from the rural sector.
- The current Queensland Government's aggressive stance against farming affecting the reef, with threats of regulation & penalties is both counter-productive and politically motivated.
- Irrigator's need to be encouraged to utilise the Natural Resource Management Catchment work by groups like Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA), Central Highlands

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Regional Resources Use Planning (CHRRUP), and Dawson Catchment Co-ordinating Association (DCCA) as part of the way forward, and to seek solutions to the changing climate.

- Farmers need financial incentives, in order to implement Best Management Practices (BMP) and Land & Water Management Plans, which deliver outcomes and improvements that benefit the wider community. Reducing farm run-off reduces environmental pollution in rivers and in turn reduces pollution on the Reef.
- Changes to improve agricultural impacts that provide wider community good, must get financial support.
- After the recent bushfire tragedies, there needs to be a more balanced approach to planning, with importance being placed on lives, as well as the environment. There also needs to be more planning for the location of mining and agriculture, to prevent the situations that have occurred in Queensland following recent flooding.
- In order for farmers to adapt to changes of practises and investigate new production methods, more money needs to be invested in tours, to different areas, to look at different ideas.

Jeanie Conachan

Executive Officer
Fitzroy Basin Food and Fibre Association Inc

Tel: 07 4993 1547

Mobile: 0429 931547

Email: fbff.jeanie@bigpond.com

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