

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Skills Training, Agriculture and Climate Change

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Rhiannon

QUESTION No.: A1-175

Given the recognised shortage of higher level skills in the agriculture sector, will the government consider targeting the sector via the Critical Skills Investment Fund: If not, why not?

The agriculture sector is recognised as suffering a professional image problem, which is contributing to higher level skills shortages in the industry. Given the importance of climate change and skills training to the sustainability of agricultural industries, what is the government doing to integrate climate change research and emissions reduction research into research and skills training for the industry?

ANSWER

The Critical Skills Investment Fund (CSIF) was established to provide Australian Government co-funding for industry projects that provide training and employment opportunities in the critical industry sectors of resources, construction, renewable energy and infrastructure. These sectors were selected because they all have strong labour force growth. The CSIF has now been incorporated into the National Workforce Development Fund, which provides Australian Government co-funding for industry training in all sectors, including agriculture.

Under the COAG-endorsed *Green Skills Agreement*, Australia's Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) reviewed and where appropriate revised national Training Packages to integrate sustainability knowledge, skills and principles. The agriculture sector's ISC, AgriFood Skills Australia, reviewed its Training Packages in 2010/11 and has since been funded by the Department to develop teaching and learning resources to support delivery of units of competency targeting environmentally sustainable work practices.

Under its Clean Energy Future Plan, the Australian Government is supporting skills development in carbon farming and land management. The Carbon Farming Skills Initiative will ensure that landholders have access to credible, high quality advice and carbon services. Administered by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, the \$4 million measure will fund:

- development of a new nationally accredited qualification for carbon service providers;
- accreditation of carbon brokers and aggregators operating in the Carbon Farming Initiative; and
- information workshops for farm extension officers, catchment authorities and rural service providers about carbon farming.

Employers in the agriculture sector may access the Australian Government Skills Connect, a new integrated approach helping to link Australian businesses and industry with a range of services and programs in workforce development. It is employers' gateway to information and support that will connect them with Australian Government funding that meets their unique business or industry training and workforce development needs-helping them to build productivity and improve the future of their business.