

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Budget Estimates

1 June – 3 June 2010

**Question: BET 48**

**Topic: Population Growth & Food Production**

**Hansard Page: E51 (02/06/2010)**

**Senator BOB BROWN asked:**

**Senator BOB BROWN**—Just on that question, coming from what Senator Joyce asked, you are using current food production in Australia. Would that be adequate for a population of 36 million?

**Mr Murray**—I do not know. We are a significant exporter of food at present. What happens in the overall trade is an important issue, and what happens in the overall effects, say, on our terms of trade is again an important factor in terms of driving the economy.

**Senator BOB BROWN**—Could you take that—

**Senator Sherry**—We can take on notice—

**Mr Murray**—But also, Senator Brown, if we are looking at projected population figures, I think we would provide you with not just current net production figures in agriculture but net projected agricultural figures, because there will be productivity improvements and output improvements that may be identified. I do not know whether those figures are available but we will certainly supply them.

**Senator BOB BROWN**—Minister, have you taken into account the Garnaut report which estimates that on current climate change projections with business as usual, productivity in the Murray-Darling Basin may be reduced by over 90 per cent this century.

**Senator JOYCE**—Then you will be very hungry.

**Senator BOB BROWN**—Have you correlated that with the population growth that is being projected here?

**Senator Sherry**—What I have indicated here, Senator Brown, is that we will take on notice what you started to ask for and which I think I anticipated, which is the current net surplus agricultural production for Australia and also, if it is available and I do not know whether it is, the projected surplus of agricultural production in what I think is the relevant year here, which is 2050.

**Senator BOB BROWN**—Yes, whether the current food production would be enough for that population.

**Senator Sherry**—And also the projected food production is enough for the projected population.

**Senator BOB BROWN**—You may do that. I am not asking that question. I am asking the question about current—

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**Senator Sherry**—I am always trying to be helpful so if we have got that figure I will provide that as well.

**Answer:**

Treasury has not modelled future agricultural output. However, Australia exports almost two-thirds of its agricultural produce while ensuring around 97 per cent of the fresh fruit and vegetables sold in supermarkets is grown and supplied by Australian farmers. This provides significant capacity to meet our future food needs.