

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2011-2012**

Agency - Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority

DEEWR Question No. EW1014_12

Senator Nash provided in writing.

Question

Australian Curriculum Website

"Refer to the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum on the Australian Curriculum website , that was endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) last October. In browsing the subjects for each year level, there was overall little mention of agriculture. Year 8 science has the most to do with agriculture but fails to go into detail about the industry, food production and its contribution to the national, state and regional economies. It instead focuses on: `describing how technologies have been applied to modern farming techniques to improve yields and sustainability' and `describing the impact of plant cloning techniques (asexual production) in agriculture such as horticulture, fruit production and vineyards'. The cross curriculum priorities include `sustainability' but again there is little focus on agriculture. The website states: In this learning area, students develop understanding, for example, of the changes in environments over time, the role played by individuals and communities in protecting environments, the emergence of farming and settled communities, the development of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of population, the overuse of natural resources and the rise of environmental movements. • Has the minister/dept say if there is more focus on agriculture in the curriculum that may have been missed or not on the website • Why is there is no focus on agriculture in the years prior to year 8 (given the strong view that primary school children should be learning early about agriculture) • What is the extent of focus on agriculture on schools now, both primary and high school level, compared to what it will be when the new national curriculum is introduced. • Does the dept know how many HSC students study agriculture and go on to study agriculture at a tertiary level.

NOTE: Agriculture in the curriculum was briefly raised by Senators Back and McKenzie but the details on the website and questions above were not asked.

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>

Answer

ACARA has provided the following response.

Focus on agriculture in the curriculum now

In most states and territories, Agriculture is a subject in the Technologies learning area, rather than the Science learning area.

Focus on agriculture in the curriculum – proposed

Compared to what is typically available around the country, it is anticipated that there will be an increased focus on agriculture in the Australian Curriculum in the primary years and maintenance of the current level in secondary schools.

The Australian Curriculum addresses Agriculture in two ways:

- across a number of learning areas, where it is identified in content descriptions such as Science and Geography (see below), or in content elaborations (in these two learning areas and others such as Mathematics or English),
- as a context and a body of knowledge, understanding and skill in the Australian Curriculum: Technologies.

Advice has been prepared for writers to guide the inclusion of agriculture across learning areas. Also, feedback has been sought from the Primary Industry Education Foundation (PIEF) and NSW Farmers Association.

Geography - focus on agriculture

In Geography (Year 1), students learn about the environmental features of places and begin to consider ways of caring for the environment. In Year 2, students recognise the environment as the source of things they use or consume. In Year 3, students learn that people are able to influence the future capacity of the environment to sustain life. In Year 5, students discuss contemporary sustainability issues. In Year 9, Unit 1 examines the personal and global patterns of food production, food consumption and food security. In Year 10, students examine some environmental challenges that will affect their future lives. They also find out how geography contributes to the understanding and management of these challenges.

In Senior Secondary, the focus is on the changing biophysical cover of the earth, sustaining places, environmental risk management and global connections.

Technologies - focus on agriculture

Curriculum development for the Australian Curriculum: Technologies is at the shaping phase, which provides a 'blueprint' for the next stage of development. The draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Technologies* paper will be available for public consultation in March, 2012.

All students in primary years will learn about food and fibre production when the detailed Technologies curriculum is developed.

Data

ACARA does not have data on how many HSC students study agriculture or who study agriculture at a tertiary level. This data would need to be obtained from the individual curriculum, assessment and certification authorities in each state and territory.

