

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio**

**Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 17-20 October 2011**

**Question: 19**

**Topic: Northern Australia Beef Industry Strategy**

**Asked By: Senator MACDONALD**

**Type of Question: Hansard F&PA 131**

**Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 December 2011**

**Number of pages: 3**

**Ms Fleming:** There was not a communiqué from that group, but David Crombie provided the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum with a verbal report back at their meeting in Port Hedland, and we continue to progress the issues that were raised at that forum through the long-term beef strategy and the work that we are doing with the states and territories. We would be happy to take you through that or provide further information on notice.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD:** In my rush at the end of my last go at this, I asked you to put on notice questions about the northern Australian beef industry strategy. I am really interested to see where the strategy for the Northern Australian beef industry is now at, following the live cattle ban, which set it back quite considerably if it did not destroy it. It is not destroyed but it has certainly been set back some time. Can you mention that in your written response?

**Answer:**

The Office of Northern Australia and the Northern Australia Beef Industry Strategy Working Group have been developing projects for some time that focus on the structure of the northern beef industry and the risks it faces, as well as the opportunities it offers. Details on all of these projects are available on the Department's website, at: [www.regional.gov.au/regional/ona/nabis.aspx](http://www.regional.gov.au/regional/ona/nabis.aspx).

Under the leadership of the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum, the Beef Industry Strategy Working Group continues to work with industry to develop a cooperative strategy to realise the potential for the northern beef sector.

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The Forum is focusing on five themes:

- Diversification and market development
- Infrastructure and transport logistics
- Productivity improvements throughout the supply chain
- Indigenous engagement and capacity building
- Pastoral land reform.

Five joint projects are currently being progressed to support the northern beef industry to establish a sustainable long term development path:

1. Assessment of contemporary risks and opportunities facing the northern beef industry
  - Already underway and being led by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), this project will provide a thorough assessment of emergent risks to the live cattle trade, and identify opportunities and constraints to the diversification and growth of the northern beef and meat processing industries.
2. Building capacity and partnerships in the Indigenous pastoral industry
  - This project is focused on achieving improved Indigenous business and employment outcomes in the northern Australian beef industry through assisting communities to develop under-performing Indigenous pastoral businesses into commercially viable and sustainable businesses that are in a position to partner with other commercial operations.

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3. Assessment of the sustainability and prospectivity of mosaic agriculture in northern Australia
  - Also underway, this project will provide a thorough analysis of mosaic irrigation techniques and its application to the northern beef industry, including potential impacts, opportunities and challenges.
  - The first stage of this project is being led by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).
  
4. Optimising livestock industry logistics and productivity improvements
  - This project will provide comprehensive logistical analysis of the livestock industry value chain (production; transport and handling; live cattle trade; processing; retail and exports) and how productivity could be optimised in both the short and medium term.
  
5. Roles for Governments in the development of meat processing capacity in northern Australia
  - This joint study will consolidate work that is being undertaken on the commercial viability of establishing new meat processing capacity in northern Australia, and draw out the key issues of relevance and importance to Governments.