

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2011  
**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question: 12**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Research and development

**Proof Hansard page:** 18

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

**Dr O’Connell:** Our Agricultural Productivity Division looks after the research and development corporations in terms of their statutory funding agreements and other related issues, and that is the area you would be interested, I think, in looking at GRDC issues.

**Senator SIEWERT:** How do you keep an eye on that?

**Dr O’Connell:** Through them, really.

**Senator SIEWERT:** How does that process work? Have you had any reports about concerns around undue influence on research? Let’s use GM as an example.

**Dr O’Connell:** Not to my knowledge, but I might want to talk with my Agricultural Productivity people.

**Senator SIEWERT:** Can you take that on notice?

**Dr O’Connell:** We can do that, yes.

**Answer:**

The department received no formal reports about undue influence on research in the RDCs, including in relation to genetic modified organisms, during the 2010–11 financial year.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question: 13**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Research and development

**Proof Hansard page:** 18

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT:** I appreciate that they are the ones who specifically do it, but what I want to know is how the department keeps an eye on that overall to ensure that does not happen?

**Dr O'Connell:** As I say, the overwhelming amount of resources going to research is channelled through the research and development corporations and APD looks after that area in governance terms.

**Senator SIEWERT:** Can you take on notice how many reports you have had?

**Dr O'Connell:** We will do.

**Answer:**

Please refer to the answer to Question 12 from the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing on 17 October 2011.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2011  
**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question: 27**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Animal welfare - stunning

**Proof Hansard page:** 39

**Senator RHIANNON asked:**

**Mr Morris:** Just to clarify it, we do allow unstunned slaughter of sheep in Australia. For cattle, we do allow, for ritual slaughter purposes, stunning to occur after the cut has been done, so it is a post-cut stunning. We require it in fact. So there is a slightly different situation for cattle than for sheep in Australia.

**Senator RHIANNON:** So you will take on notice the quantities of the chilled Australian meat that are stunned and unstunned?

**Mr Morris:** We will try and identify it. We have looked at that question before. If we can identify it, we will certainly advise you.

**Senator RHIANNON:** I understand that the DAFF budget statements provide that 100 per cent of funds have been allocated to deliver capacity building and technical assistance projects to improve animal welfare in the Middle East and south-east Asian countries through the Live Trade Animal Welfare Partnership program. Could you provide details on how these funds have been allocated between those countries?

**Ms Evans:** I can.

**Senator RHIANNON:** I am happy if you take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The practice of slaughter without prior stunning is lawful in all states and territories of Australia when undertaken in compliance with the requirements of the *Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption* (the Standard).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collects monthly data on numbers of animals slaughtered and carcase weights produced from slaughtering and processing establishments across Australia under section 9 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* (the Act) and publishes information derived from this data under section 13 of the Act.

The data that is collected and subsequently used to provide the information that is published covers cattle, sheep, lambs and pigs but not goats. Data for goats is however collected and made available on request.

This year regulators in the states and territories and the Commonwealth requested all processors with approved arrangements that allow them to slaughter animals without prior stunning to provide estimates of how many animals had been slaughtered without prior stunning for the twelve months up to 30 June 2011.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

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**Question:** 27 (continued)

Of approximately 265 000 animals reported as having been slaughtered without prior stunning during that period approximately 228 000 were lambs, 10 000 were sheep, 12 000 were goats, and 15 000 were cattle.

**TABLE 1: Figures derived from ABS data provided and PISC Survey of July 2011 (estimated)**

	<b>Total No. Slaughtered (head)</b>	<b>No. Slaughtered without pre-stunning (head)</b>
<b>Cattle</b>	8 097 000	15 147
<b>Sheep</b>	5 341 000	9 942
<b>Lamb</b>	17 880 000	227 867
<b>Goat</b>	1 700 000	12 388
<b>TOTAL:</b>	33 018 000	265 344

In relation to the Live Trade Animal Welfare Partnership (LTAWP) program, a detailed breakdown of funding at country level is not available within projects designated at a regional level. In 2010–11, four projects were supported to deliver animal welfare improvements in South-East Asia and the Middle East.

- **Middle East and North Africa point of slaughter improvements** – \$665 000 [Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) \$332 500] for point of slaughter improvements in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well as for the training of local staff.
- **Indonesia point of slaughter improvements** – \$250 000 (DAFF \$125 000) for upgrading and maintaining abattoir infrastructure in Indonesia.
- **Jordan slaughterhouse improvements** – \$140 000 (DAFF \$70 000) for funding slaughterhouse improvements in Jordan.
- **Regional Animal Welfare Strategy** – \$38 000 (DAFF \$19 000) went to supporting World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) member countries in Asia and Oceania to promote, adopt and implement OIE animal welfare standards.

In 2009–10, three projects were supported to deliver animal welfare improvements in South-East Asia and the Middle East.

- **Indonesia point of slaughter improvements** – \$300 000 (DAFF \$150 000) for upgrading and maintaining abattoir improvements in Indonesia, as well as training and an independent assessment of past projects in South-East Asia.
- **Middle East livestock slaughter and handling improvements** – \$590 000 (DAFF \$295 000) for infrastructure improvements and training in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.
- **Malaysian point of arrival and slaughter improvements for Australian goats** – \$100 000 (DAFF \$50 000) for infrastructure improvements in Malaysia.

Further information is available on the department's website.

[www.daff.gov.au/market-access-trade/iac/live-animal-trade#projects](http://www.daff.gov.au/market-access-trade/iac/live-animal-trade#projects)

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**Question: 58**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** National food plan

**Proof Hansard page:** 107/108

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

**Senator COLBECK:** In relation to the national food plan, you had a webcast on 18 August. How many people participated in that process, do you know?

**Mr Glyde:** I know I was involved—that is one! I might ask Mr Souness to answer. He might be able to provide the details of the number of people who participated and the number of people who joined in the discussion.

**Mr Souness:** We were advised that there were about 180 to 200 people online at any one point in time during that webcast.

**Senator COLBECK:** Was there a registration process or did people just log in?

**Mr Souness:** People were asked to register. They could do that online through the department's website.

**Senator COLBECK:** How many did register?

**Mr Souness:** I do not know. The people that provided the online connection monitored those that were online. That is where we got the figure of 180 to 200.

**Senator COLBECK:** So you do not know whether more registered than came on?

**Mr Souness:** No, we did not seek that information.

**Senator COLBECK:** But you gave them the opportunity to register.

**Mr Souness:** Yes.

**Senator COLBECK:** So you can check it.

**Mr Souness:** Yes, we can take that on notice.

**Answer:**

One hundred people logged on to view the national food plan webcast on 18 August 2011, from around 250 people who registered prior to the webcast. As at the end of September 2011, a further 68 people had viewed the webcast, on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website, since the live event.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question:** 60

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Animal welfare

**Proof Hansard page:** 110

**Senator RHIANNON asked:**

**Senator RHIANNON:** I am particularly interested in the selection process, because I understand that, unlike how it has often been done in the past—but that is no reason to continue doing it—you are no longer selecting members on the basis of representing certain groupings but on the basis of their skills. Could you tell me who the members are and how they were selected? And, if it was on the basis of skills, what are the skills that you attempted to identify in those people?

**Senator RHIANNON:** Did you set out the skills you were looking for when you determined the people you were selecting? Can you provide that to the committee, please?

**Mr Murnane:** Yes, Senator. I will have to provide that to you on notice.

**Answer:**

On 1 September 2011, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, appointed a new Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AAWAC).

The members of the Advisory Committee are:

Dr Gardner Murray AO (chair), Mr Keith Adams, Professor Mary Barton, Dr Norman Blackman, Mr Bill Bray, Mrs Helen Cathles, Dr Kevin Doyle, Mr Brett McCallum, Ms Glenys Oogjes, Dr Lyndy Scott, Dr Hugh Wirth AO, Dr Dedee Woodside, Dr Rick Symons (Chair of the Animal Welfare Committee) and Mr Phillip Glyde (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry).

Members of the former Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) Advisory Committee were invited to provide nominations for the new committee, and the department also investigated the department's BALANCE database for potential candidates. The former AAWS Advisory Committee then reviewed this information and prepared a list of 27 suitable candidates.

Sixteen candidates were asked to provide a CV and a short statement outlining their suitability for the committee and the contribution they expected to be able to make. These items were assessed by a departmental panel which prepared a shortlist for consideration by the Minister.

The department also consulted its database on suitable candidates for the position of independent Chair. The CVs of candidates that agreed to be considered were provided to the Minister for his determination.

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**Question:** 60 (continued)

In identifying potential candidates, committee members needed to collectively demonstrate skills across industry, public policy, strategic planning and implementation, animal health and welfare, program management, research management, education, public affairs and communications. The members selected provide a balance of these skills.

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**Question: 89**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** NT abattoir

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator Rhiannon asked:**

Is it the case that the major live cattle exporter to Indonesia, AACo, has been considering since an announcement in October 2010 the establishment of an abattoir at a cost of some \$50 million south of Darwin?

**Answer:**

Yes.



**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question: 94**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Live animal exports - department advice and minister's office

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator RHIANNON asked:**

Is it the case that the federal department of agriculture handed to Senator Ludwig eight months before the Four Corners program screened on 30 May 2011 a Red Book noting that “if not appropriately handled”, animal welfare concerns could threaten the long term viability of several livestock industries in the live export trade? What was the basis of the federal department's concerns about animal welfare?

**Answer:**

On 10 February 2011, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry released the Incoming Government Brief via its website. The information contained in the briefing to the Minister is publicly available.

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**Question:** 107

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Genetically Modified wheat crops

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

If any of the current field trials of experimental Genetically Modified (GM) wheat found their way into the human or animal food supply would a cleanup be required?

**Answer:**

Licensed GM trials in Australia are subject to strict containment conditions and are actively monitored by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. There is no evidence of GM wheat being found in the commercial human and animal food supply.

There is zero tolerance for unapproved GM products in the food supply. In the unlikely event that this occurs, any response to the unintended presence of unapproved GM product, such as GM wheat in the food supply chain, would be determined on a case by case basis in consultation with relevant departments and agencies, state governments and the food, grains and livestock industries as appropriate.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question:** 108

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Genetically Modified wheat crops

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Who would pay the costs of a clean up?

**Answer:**

The responsibility for any costs would be determined on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the situation and of the response required to address it. It would be expected that the Australian Government would coordinate such responses across relevant departments and agencies, state governments and industries as required.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question:** 109

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Genetically Modified wheat crops

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Has the government in any way agreed to limit the liability of those responsible for such contamination?

**Answer:**

No.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question:** 110

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Genetically Modified wheat crops

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Has DAFF conducted any assessment or analysis of the effect on Australia's wheat export markets should any of the current field trials of experimental wheat find their way into Australia's wheat exports is detected?

- a) If yes, please describe the effects and table any relevant documents
- b) If no, what effect do you think it would have on Australia's wheat exports and wheat export markets?

**Answer:**

No.

- a) Not applicable.
- b) The current trial sites for genetically modified (GM) wheat are subject to strict containment conditions set by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator to prevent seed from these trials entering the commercial human or animal food supply and it is considered highly unlikely that such an event would occur. Any response to the unintended presence of unapproved GM wheat would be determined on a case by case basis in consultation with relevant departments and agencies, state governments and grains industry as appropriate.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question: 111**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic: Genetically Modified wheat crops**

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Has the Department assessed the likely costs both in terms of lost exports, cancelled contracts and lost markets?

- a) If not, what is your estimate of the likely costs to our wheat export industry?
- b) If yes, please describe the likely effects and table any documents.

**Answer**

No.

- a) Trials of genetically modified (GM) wheat are subject to strict containment conditions and it is considered unlikely that such an event would occur. Impacts on exports would depend on the nature of any incident and the response required to address it.
- b) Not applicable.

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**Question:** 112

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Genetically Modified wheat crops

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Supposing that current field trials of experimental Genetically Modified (GM) wheat find their way into Australian conventional wheat export crop, has the Department assessed what measures would need to be taken in order to fully remove the GM wheat from the wheat supply – including costs and clean up time?

If not, what measures do you think would be needed and how much would it cost and how long would it take to get the GM wheat out of the wheat supply?

**Answer:**

No. The measures required would be determined on a case by case basis, dependent on the nature of the incident, in consultation with relevant departments and agencies, state governments and industries as appropriate. Measures taken would relate to returning the situation to compliance. Please also refer to the answer to Question 108 (cleanup costs) from the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing in October 2011.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question:** 113

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Genetically Modified wheat crops

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

If any of the current field trials of experimental Genetically Modified (GM) wheat found their way into Australia's conventional wheat, who would pay the costs of cleaning it up? And who would pay the costs of compensating farmers for their losses?

**Answer:**

Please refer to the answer to Question 108 (cleanup costs) and 109 (liability for contamination) from the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing in October 2011.



**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** 114

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Genetically Modified wheat crops

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator SIEWERT asked:**

Has there been a review of Australia's wheat export markets to find out whether or not our customers want or will accept genetically modified wheat? If so, when was that review and what were the results?

**Answer:**

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has not undertaken or commissioned reviews specific to genetically modified (GM) wheat, however the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) has produced a number of analyses of market acceptance of GM grains, since GM grains began to make inroads in world grain markets, including:

- 2010, Evidence of price premiums for non-GM grains in world markets. ABARE Conference Paper 10.04, Canberra, February.
- 2007, Challenges for agricultural markets: coexistence, segmentation of grain markets, costs and opportunities. ABARE Conference Paper 07.9, Canberra.
- 2007, Market Acceptance of GM Canola, ABARE Research Report 07.5 prepared for the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, March.
- 2003, Market Access Issues for GM Products: Implications for Australia, ABARE eReport 03.13 to DAFF — Australia, Canberra, July.
- 2001, GM Grains: Market Implications for Australian Grain Growers, ABARE Research Report 01.10, Canberra.

Broadly, the conclusions of these analyses have been that GM grains have been finding ready markets throughout the world and dominate the world grain trade. There are niche markets for certified non-GM grains but the price premiums on offer in these markets are small.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

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**Question:** 163

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** National Food Plan

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

Please provide an analysis of the issues raised during the National Food Plan webcast and an analysis of the registrants and participants.

**Answer:**

A broad range of issues reflecting those outlined in the National Food Plan issues paper were raised by people participating in the webcast.

A full transcript of comments provided during the webcast is available at [www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/food/national-food-plan/webcast-transcript](http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/food/national-food-plan/webcast-transcript). The webcast can also be viewed online at

[webcast.viostream.com/?viocast=4398&auth=c1b746ad-581d-4222-aac7-96856aec313](http://webcast.viostream.com/?viocast=4398&auth=c1b746ad-581d-4222-aac7-96856aec313).

All comments provided during the webcast will be considered during the development of the National Food Plan. A breakdown of registrants and participants of the webcast and their role in the supply chain is provided below. While around 250 people were registered and 100 people participated in the webcast, some people nominated multiple roles in the supply chain.

<b>Role in supply chain</b>	<b>Roles registered</b>	<b>Roles participated</b>
Australian Government	10	6
Consumer	29	8
Distribution, wholesale and logistics	6	2
Educator	41	11
Exporter	7	1
Fisher	5	1
Food services (restaurants, catering etc)	9	3
Importer	1	-
Lobbyist	7	3
Local government	7	2
Manufacturing, processing, transformation, packaging	13	4
Non-government organisation	49	22
Peak body	18	9
Primary producer	21	6
Private individual	15	3
Retail	2	2
Service sector (e.g. consultant)	26	9
State and territory government	25	10
Transport, landing, storage, inventory	1	-
Other role than listed above	35	19

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**Question:** 164

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** National Food Plan

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

1. Why did the Minister not call for Expressions of Interest in the Working Group (QON 14 May 2011)?
2. What are the specific areas of expertise of each member of the Working Group?
3. How did the Minister determine the number of working group members?
4. What are the Terms of Reference of the Working Group?
5. How often is the group expected to meet?
6. Where are the costs of the Working Group accounted for within the Department?
7. What costs have been incurred since responding to QON 14 May 2011Text?

**Answer:**

1. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, chose the members of the Working Group.
2. The members of the working group were chosen to include the following expertise:
  - research and innovation in relation to food and food production
  - emerging trends affecting food processing and consumer markets
  - emerging consumer trends and retail market dynamics
  - opportunities and challenges for food producers and exporters,
  - Australia's food production sector and market dynamics
  - infrastructure and logistics
  - consumer issues in the food sector
  - dynamics of Australia's agri-business sector
  - experience and perspectives on the food retail sector
  - food distribution and marketing issues
  - food manufacturing and the market dynamics defining the agri-food supply chain,
  - food and nutrition
  - perspective on working conditions for Australians.
3. Minister Ludwig determined the number of working group members to ensure a wide range of relevant expertise while keeping the size of the group to a level that would allow for informal discussion.
4. The Terms of Reference for the Working Group are on the department's website.
5. The Working Group is expected to meet twice a year, initially for a period of two years.

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**Question:** 164 (continued)

6. The costs of the working group are met from the budget of the Food Branch of the Agricultural Productivity Division.
7. Direct costs for this function, predominantly staffing, are estimated at \$8 500 per year.

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**Question: 165**

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** COAG reforms

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

1. The COAG reform deadline is being sought from June 2011 to December 2011. Is the department confident this deadline can be met?
2. In response to QON 13, May 2011 the department advised that the remaining activities were:
  - A preferred regulatory model
  - Funding model
  - Inter-governmental agreement.

What progress has been made and what remains to be done?

**Answer:**

1. At the Primary Industries Ministerial Council meeting on 28 October 2011, members agreed that the Chair write to the Chair of the Business Regulation and Competition Working Group requesting the deadline be extended to the end of December 2012.

A Primary Industries Standing Committee CEOs' forum is planned for early 2012 to discuss progress of the reforms and ensure they are on track to meet the December 2012 deadline.

2. Preferred options for the regulatory, funding and governance arrangements have been developed between the jurisdictions and are undergoing analysis to determine their viability. The regulatory model, funding model and inter-governmental agreement will be finalised once this analysis is complete.

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**Question:** 166

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Milk pricing

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation is reporting lower milk production due to natural disasters and the supermarket 'milk price war.'

1. Given Minister Ludwig advised, in response to QON 17 from Senator Heffernan, that the department was continuing to monitor the situation regarding milk prices and the Coles situation, what does the Minister make of this report?
2. Is the Minister considering any actions as a consequence of this information?
3. If so, what are they?
4. If not, why not?

**Answers:**

1. Senator Bushby who, in speaking on the tabling of the recent report of the Economics references Committee on the impacts of supermarket prices on the dairy industry, said:

*'It is important to keep in mind that the price cuts are good news for many consumers who are facing ever-growing cost-of-living pressures. In most cases, price discounting will be pro-competitive and of benefit to consumers. Provided it does not constitute predatory pricing, a retail price cut should not be discouraged. The committee was concerned, however, about the possible impact the price cuts would have on dairy farmers. Farmers in most states will be insulated from retail price cuts because their milk goes into manufacturing and export, and international prices play a key role. However, farmers in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia largely produce drinking milk for consumption within their states and are much more exposed to retail prices. The fact that changes to retail prices will affect some dairy farmers but are likely to leave the majority largely unaffected makes the search for appropriate solutions challenging.'*

I also note that Senator Colbeck's comment in speaking on the tabling of this report, who said something that I have been saying since milk prices were reduced by Coles earlier this year:

'...dairy farmers (should) get a fair price for their product....'

- 2/3/4. Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation gave evidence before the Senate Economics References Committee on 6 October 2011. The government will fully consider the committee's recommendations, including those regarding competition policy and a report into the sustainability of the industry.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question:** 167

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Regional food producers program

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

1. Has there been any change in the amount of money uncommitted through this program?
2. Is the department interested in hearing from any regional food producers who could make use of the remaining ~\$3million within the existing timeframe of the program?
3. Would the department consider extending the program or permitting efforts to be made through regional networks to utilise the remaining funding?

**Answer:**

1. No commitments have been entered into since February 2011 and the majority of uncommitted funds have been used for other government priorities of that are outside this program.
2. The program guidelines set out the funding round process. The program does not accept ad hoc applications.
3. The program guidelines state the program will end on 30 June 2012 and that funded projects should be completed by 30 April 2012. There are insufficient funds and time remaining to fund projects prior to the program end date.

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**Question:** 168

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Murray-Darling Basin Plan

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

Please provide an update on DAFF's involvement in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan since Estimates?

**Answer:**

Officers from the department meet regularly with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and other interested agencies to keep informed of developments and convey stakeholder perspectives on matters relating to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) is undertaking additional modelling and analysis of socio-economic impacts, and is finalising a report commissioned by the MDBA.

ABARES has also attended three workshops and made a number of presentations on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan related work since Estimates in May 2011. This involved presenting preliminary modelling results and discussing/refining the assumptions underlying the model estimates.



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**Question:** 203

**Division/Agency:** APD – Agricultural Productivity Division

**Topic:** Shortage of young scientists

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator FAWCETT asked:**

There is a serious shortage of young scientists seeking to make careers in agriculture and natural resource management research. The science of rabbit control is a good example where most of the scientists in this field are of retirement age and beyond, with little prospect of younger qualified people taking their place. Is the seriousness of this situation recognised and if so, what is being proposed to address the problem?

**Answer:**

The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) has recently developed the *Inspiring Australia* strategy. The strategy recognises the importance of addressing identified skills shortages in the sciences by encouraging young Australian scientists to communicate science and young Australian students to further their studies and take up careers in the sciences. The government has provided \$21 million over three years in the 2011–12 budget towards an *Inspiring Australia* program.

DIISR has also developed a research workforce strategy, *Research Skills for an Innovative Future*. The strategy was developed in consultation with research training providers, research employers and other relevant stakeholders to address expected shortfalls in the supply of research-qualified people. The strategy aims to strengthen the nation's research workforce to 2020 and beyond.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry supports initiatives which endeavour to attract youth to study in and pursue careers in primary industries and primary industries science.

The Australian Government's Community Networks and Capacity Building program has provided \$3.6 million under the Next Gen Farmers grant program to increase the leadership and representative capacity of young people to enhance their ability to contribute to Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

The government is also working with the Primary Industries Education Foundation, the Primary Industries Centre for Science Education and the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture (ACDA) to increase awareness of agricultural careers and educational opportunities and hence build Australia's capacity in the long term to meet labour requirements with skilled Australian workers. This included providing the ACDA with \$80 000 funding in 2010-11 to develop the Careers Harvest website.

**Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2011

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question: 203 (continued)**

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) also host the Science and Innovation Awards for Young People in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. This competitive grants funding program aims to encourage science, innovation and technology in rural industries and help to advance the careers of young scientists aged 18-35 years through national recognition of their research ideas. Project recipients can undertake groundbreaking research and innovation with the objective of keeping Australia's rural industries sustainable and profitable. Each award category is sponsored by a rural research and development corporation or industry organisation. Award applications are judged by a panel of industry representatives convened by the award sponsor. To date, more than 150 Australians aged 18-35 have received awards.