

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: MLA 01

Division/Agency: Meat and Livestock Australia

Topic: Food Security

Hansard Page: 42 (27/05/08)

Senator Scullion asked:

Senator SCULLION—I have one short question. I will ask Meat and Livestock to comment. Mr Mortimer, in response to a question on food security I had a little while ago, you said in the context of food security, ‘The answer lies largely in our investment in R&D.’ While we have MLA here, CSIRO decided to shut their tropical beef research centre in Rockhampton. With 27 people and a huge corporate history in the area, what sort of impact do you think that will have on our capacity to increase beef production and use the very best animal husbandry practices and cutting edge research? What impact do you think that will actually have on the beef industry?

Mr Mortimer—In terms of that particular facility, I am not in a situation to give any advice. I do not know what the focus of its R&D activities were and whether they were being—

Senator SCULLION—It was tropical beef.

Mr Mortimer—I think it is best if I do not proffer any advice on that.

Senator SCULLION—Perhaps MLA might be able to talk about it.

Dr O’Connell—I think, again, MLA will be able to assist.

Mr Palmer—What I can say is that the budget announcement is a little early for us to understand the full effects. CSIRO’s head of livestock industry is actually going to meet with us on Thursday this week. We hope to be able to quantify what the full effects of it all mean. So I am happy to take the question on, but we really will not know the answers until Thursday at the earliest.

Answer:

CSIRO management has assured Meat and Livestock Australia that any projects currently underway at the Rendell Laboratory and Belmont Research Station near Rockhampton will be completed or continue through to the review of the station lease in 2010 and that staff involved in this research would be relocated.

While the short term impact may be minimal, Rendell Laboratory and Belmont Research Station are major centres for tropical beef cattle research and the long term effect the Rendell Laboratory closure would have on the industry is difficult to gauge at this stage.

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Question: MLA 02

Division/Agency: Meat and Livestock Australia

Topic: Comparative figures for beef/veal and mutton/lamb through supermarket chains

Hansard Page: 45 (27/05/08)

Senator Hutchins asked:

Senator HUTCHINS—And do you have figures, not necessarily now, for the amount of, say, beef that goes through the supermarket chains as opposed to lamb as opposed to veal as opposed to mutton?

Senator HUTCHINS—If you could supply them to me or the committee, that would be appreciated.

Answer:

According to Roy Morgan's Australian Meat Purchasing Data for 2007, of the meat which is purchased for in-home consumption, the following represents the shares held by each retail channel:-

| | Supermarkets | Retail Butchers | Other retail |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Beef & veal | 64.1% | 29.9% | 6.0% |
| Lamb | 63.4% | 29.6% | 7.0% |
| All fresh meat | 65.1% | 26.4% | 8.5% |

Specific data for fresh mutton is not reliable given the limited presence this meat has in retail and the very small base of purchasers within Roy Morgan's sample. Most mutton in Australia is used within the industrial sector for processed meat products such as pies and canned meats.

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Question: MLA 03

Division/Agency: Meat and Livestock Australia

Topic: Kids Love beef marketing campaign

Hansard Page: 46-47 (27/05/08)

Senator McGauran asked:

Senator McGAURAN—Kids Love Beef

Mr Thomason—That commenced in 2006. I am certainly happy to send a copy of the campaign to you.

Senator McGAURAN—We will look out for it.

Answer:

The following information has been provided to the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport:

- DVD of the recent 'Kids Love Beef'
- DVD of the current 'Beef getintoit' campaign
- DVDs of Meat and Livestock Australia's (MLA) most recent Lamb and Red Meat campaigns

For further information:

- Direct link to MLA campaigns: www.mla.com.au/campaigns

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Question: MLA 04

Division/Agency: Meat and Livestock Australia

Topic: Carbon content embedded in a leg of lamb

Hansard Pages: 51 (27/05/08)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—I would like to ask how much embedded carbon there is in a leg of lamb landed into Brussels and how much embedded carbon there is in a kilogram steak landed into Tokyo.

Mr Palmer—I, for one, cannot give you the answer, but I would be more than happy to take it on board. Seriously, we actually take this—

Senator MILNE—I am very serious about this.

Mr Palmer—We additionally take this very seriously. We employed recently a very talented officer from the Queensland government to assist in this whole area. The livestock industries take very seriously their role in this whole matter of emissions. We are pleased to see some of the successes that have been achieved since the 1990 Kyoto years, where livestock industries have reduced emissions by about 12 per cent. The other part of your question I might answer slightly differently. I have seen some research work done by Massey University in New Zealand.

Senator MILNE—Lincoln.

Mr Palmer—Thank you. That shows how favourably New Zealand lamb stacks up against European lamb, and apples and butter. We could extrapolate some of that work to apply to ourselves or do some stand-alone work. But can I take the question on notice? I am happy to come back with an answer.

Senator MILNE—It is a bigger question. It really is: why has the Australian meat and livestock industry not anticipated the whole argument about food miles and embedded carbon and recognised this as one of the biggest threats to your export markets that is looming on the horizon? Why is New Zealand now able to tell Tesco exactly how much embedded carbon is in a leg of lamb and yet we have not done any work on it? Why is that?

Mr Palmer—We do do work. I will furnish it. Because I cannot answer the question does not mean to say work has not been done. We will furnish you with the answers.

Answer:

Life Cycle Analysis is a recognised methodology to quantify the environmental impacts of various human activities. Although internationally recognised as an approach, the assumptions about which inputs should be included or excluded from the calculation are not standardised; hence estimates of global warming impact for the same product can vary widely between different studies.

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Meat and Livestock Australia is currently funding a Life Cycle Analysis of three meat supply chains to quantify the greenhouse gas contributions associated with each production system.

Preliminary results for a specific commercial lamb production system involving some grain finishing suggests production and processing of a lamb carcass to the abattoir chiller is associated with release of about 10 kg CO₂ equivalents per kg carcass weight.

Of this total, approx 90% is attributed to energy-dense inputs (including grain production) and methane release during the growth of the lamb on farm. Some additional emissions will be associated with refrigeration and transport to retailers, but these are expected to be minor.

Of similar interest to senators and using the same methodology outlined above, the measurement in respect of CO₂ equivalents embedded in a kilo of beef varies between different supply chains. As an example, certain supply chains in Australia measure 15 to 20 kg of CO₂ equivalent in a kilogram of beef. In Japan, the figure is 36 kg and in tribal Africa as low as 7 kg.

The Australian meat and livestock industry treats very seriously our responsibility to reduce the emissions and carbon impact in our food production systems. The 12% reduction in beef and sheep meat emissions since 1990 is an important achievement and one that we will continue to work on in the years ahead.