

In light of the worldwide phenomenon of climate change, Australia has now been placed in the position of re-defining its agricultural strategy and policy. Irrespective of its causes, climate change has indisputably arrived. Its time may be short lived or, if it is cyclical, it may well emulate the middle ages where climate warming lasted for over two centuries. Therefore, as a consequence agricultural land west of the Great Dividing Range is becoming marginalised. Indeed the Murray-Darling basin is – agriculturally speaking – reaching a terminal stage. Senator Heffernan has suggested that Australia’s agricultural production should move where the rainfall is high i.e. Northern Australia. For some products that may well be the answer. However, in light of rising fuel prices productive land closer to the main southern markets should be explored. Also, products such as pome fruit would have great difficulty surviving in tropical climates.

In spite of the growth in housing, there is still substantial agricultural land each of the Great Dividing Range. Even in dry periods rainfall is higher east of the Range. The area is full of microclimates that vary from temperate to sub-tropical. The result is that many agricultural products could be grown within close proximity of major markets. The development of these areas would fit in with the growing community movement which demands access to locally-produced food and the capacity to visit its sources, i.e. the producing farms.

John Maguire