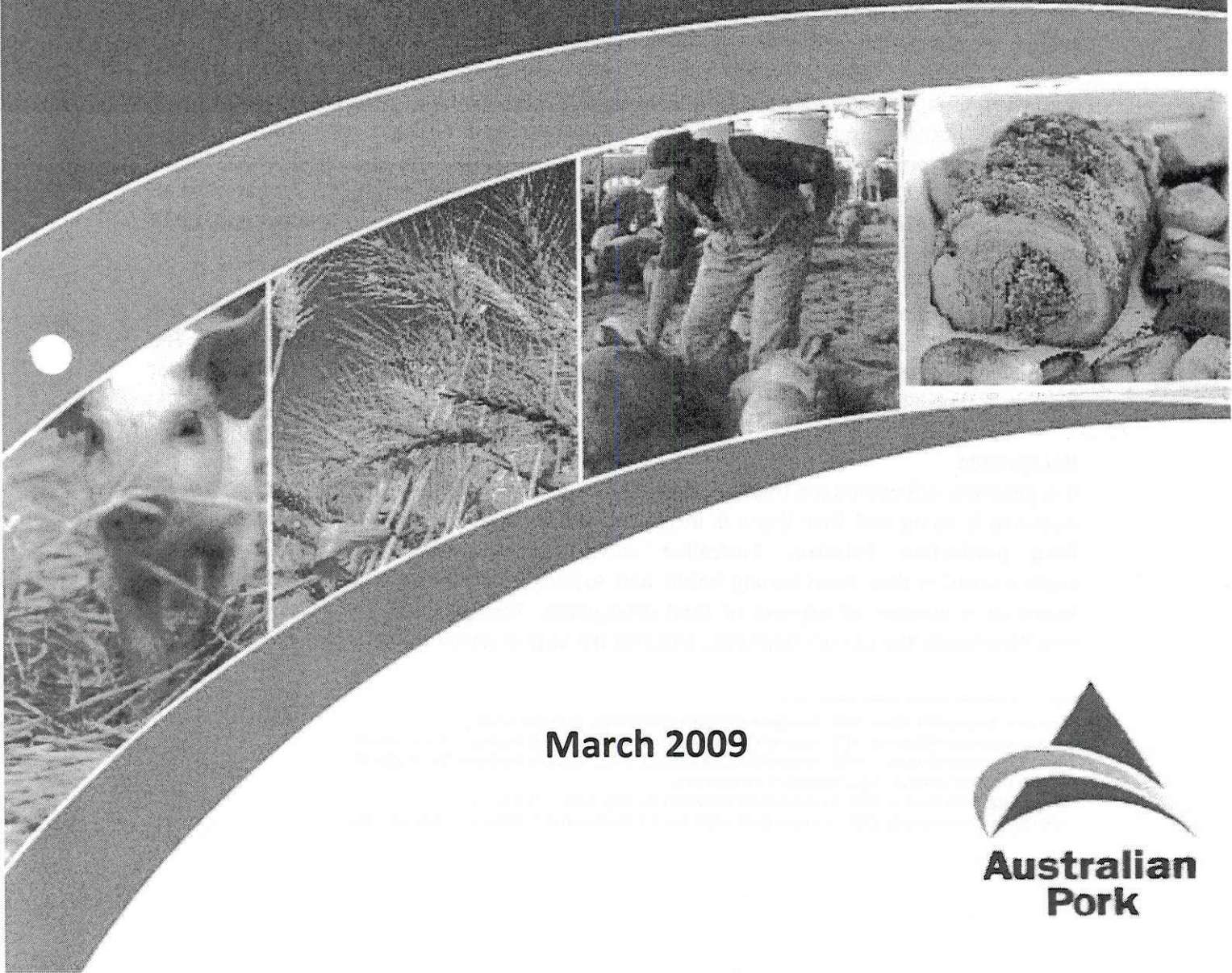


AUSTRALIAN PORK LIMITED

APL Submission #2

**The Standing Committee on Rural and Regional
Affairs and Transport Inquiry into Meat Marketing**



March 2009



With increasing consumer concern about how their food is farmed, free range, organic and biodynamic standards are playing an increasingly important role in the food industry. In the absence of regulations, this has led to a number of third party accreditation schemes as well as reviews of Model Codes of Practice for Animal Welfare in an attempt to address consumer concerns about the treatment of farm animals.

While Australia has consumer protection laws and food safety laws which cover many aspects of food labelling, the only legislation which requires production systems for animal-derived food products to be identified or provided on product labels covers egg carton labelling. Egg cartons must include the method of production, whether cage, free range or barn laid eggs. These egg production systems must comply with the definitions stated in the Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry. The production system definitions must be printed on the carton or made available to the public upon request. The Australian egg industry has since established a third party auditable quality assurance program which addresses issues including food safety, biosecurity, animal welfare and egg labelling.

Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance

The Australian Pork Industry Quality program (APIQ) is a HACCP based food safety program which also addresses biosecurity and animal welfare (based on the new Model Code for Animal Welfare (Pigs) 2007). It was designed and continues to be relevant to all forms of pig farming whether it be free range, indoors, eco-reared or a combination of systems. We currently have free range producers registered and certified under APIQ. While quality assurance schemes could possibly be further developed to assist in any labelling scheme, given their role in providing assurance about livestock products, no current welfare labelling schemes rely on industry QA schemes. Critically any such development of industry QA systems would need to be market driven and most importantly ensure that the QA system does not become over burdensome to implement and thereby a deterrent to producers. It is important that the QA system remains easy and cost effective for producers to implement and deliver so as to ensure their maximum coverage.

Production Descriptors

APL is currently developing and refining the industry's production descriptors to ensure clarity in understanding and confidence in what defines these systems.

APL developed a descriptor for "Free Range Pork" in 2005. This was done following a review of existing free range definitions internationally and domestically for livestock production and in consultation with the ACCC and the Australian Consumers Association, as well as legal advice. According to this descriptor:

Free Range Pork is pork derived from animals raised in Australia with adherence to humane animal practices as prescribed by the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals (Pigs). Throughout their lives the pigs are provided continuous free access to the outdoors and shelter from the elements furnished with bedding .This term may only

carried out by one of Australia's seven approved certifying bodies. Most organic certifiers apply the National Australian Standards for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce ('National Standard') developed by the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) for exported produce; however some certifiers have developed their own standards which also apply to domestic sales.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is in the interests of the pork industry in Australia to have a range of production systems to meet the needs of today's discerning consumers. The further development of production descriptors by APL is also in the industry's interests to ensure clarity in understanding and confidence in what defines these systems.

The further development of production descriptors into standards (with associated independent verification systems) is essentially a matter for the markets. To date APL has not developed specific standards for any form of pig production system and will continue to be non-discriminatory in this matter. As previously stated there is no obstacle to producer groups or associations from developing these standards and systems themselves as a step to marketing their product based on its animal welfare criteria. APL has indicated both in the past and present, that it is more than willing to provide assistance in this matter.

For further information please contact Amanda Reagan, Issues Manager on (02) 62852200.

Yours sincerely,

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Australian Pork Limited