

SENATE INQUIRY INTO RECENT TRENDS IN AND PREPAREDNESS FOR EXTREME WEATHER EVENT

Submission from the Centre for Policy Development

18 January 2013

Dear Senators,

Our recently published report *Farming Smarter, Not Harder* is relevant to two of your terms of reference:

“(b)(ii) the costs of extreme weather events and impacts on natural ecosystems, social and economic infrastructure and human health,”

(c) “an assessment of the preparedness of key sectors for extreme weather events, including major infrastructure (electricity, water, transport, telecommunications), health, construction and property, and agriculture and forestry”

Farming Smarter, Not Harder considers the future competitiveness of Australian agriculture in a context of rising global food prices, scarce resources and more frequent extreme weather due to climate change.

The report finds that Australian agriculture can build a lasting competitive advantage through innovation that raises agricultural productivity, reduces fuel and fertilizer dependence, and preserves the environment and resources it draws on. The case to increase research funding and foster innovative farming is made even stronger by the potential impacts of climate change. Without action to adapt to more variable and extreme weather, by 2050 Australia could lose \$6.5 billion in agricultural production.

To ensure Australian farmers and graziers are in a position to benefit from higher long-term food prices, it recommends four key areas in which policies need to be scaled up, streamlined, or resourced with more consistency than in the past. These include long-term investment in soil research and monitoring. The report estimates that improving soil condition could deliver up to an additional \$2.1 billion per year in agricultural production.

The full report is available on the Centre for Policy Development’s website at:
<http://cpd.org.au/2012/10/farming-smarter-not-harder/>

Warm regards,

Laura Eadie

Research Director, Sustainable Economy Program