



Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee (Supplementary Budget Estimates)

Tuesday 22 October 2019

Australian Pork Limited opening remarks

Margo Andrae, CEO Australian Pork Limited

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today on behalf of Australia's 3700 pork producers, our sector's 36,000 employees and all the families deriving their livelihoods from our \$5.3 billion industry.

APL is unique in terms of livestock industry representation. We are a producer owned organisation. We promote sustainable growth across the Australian pork industry's entire supply chain by overseeing integrated marketing, research and innovation and policy initiatives for the whole industry.

Our progressive model means we sit at both the R&D and representation tables and can truly be one voice for industry.

African Swine Fever will feature prominently in our discussion today, and rightly so given its threat to Australian agriculture.

Australia's pig industry has been scrutinised publicly for many years – we've embraced that scrutiny and we're proud of where the industry stands today. Producers must be commended for investing in new production and husbandry methods – making Australian pork an environmentally and ethically sustainable industry.

We've reduced our carbon footprint by 70 per cent, our water use by 80 per cent and producers are adopting technology to make further sustainability progress, including on-farm waste management and electricity generation. Our animal welfare standards and outcomes – the way we manage the wellbeing of sows and piglets – is a journey we're proud of and one we will continue to advance.

Australian pork producers demonstrate the highest level of animal biosecurity of any livestock industry in Australia. So much depends on our disease-free status in terms of our production capacity, our market access and our consumer reputation.

All this is now at stake.

An ASF outbreak in Australia would be devastating – remember there is no cure. For producers and employees, the lasting financial, social and emotional devastation would be akin to the worst kind of natural disaster.

As an industry we are grateful for the coordination taking place between industry and government agencies, such as the special Biosecurity Roundtable in Canberra in September, convened by Minister McKenzie.

The collaboration of agencies and industry groups has given us an opportunity to strengthen our broader biosecurity measures – not just for ASF – which could cost industry \$2.5 billion. Let's not forget that if Foot and Mouth Disease reached Australia, it would be catastrophic for our entire livestock industry, with estimated economic costs \$50 billion over 10 years.

This coordination, including the imperatives of overcoming cross-jurisdiction overlap between states and agencies, means we are now better placed than we were just a month ago in terms of securing our national biosecurity. This means we're better able to protect not just the pork industry, but all livestock industries. APL is playing a leading role in strengthening national biosecurity measures because we're at the frontline in this battle. We're determined to continue to play a leading role.

Federal efforts to hold back African swine fever have sparked a 15 per cent increase in biosecurity testing and we welcome the deportation of a Vietnamese woman last week who was caught carrying more than 4.5 kilograms of pork product – such action sends a strong message to travellers.

From an on-property perspective, producers know their front gate is their last line of defence in their fight against ASF. With fragments of the virus detected in a large number of products seized at the border, farmers know our nation's first line of defence will never provide a fool-proof safety net.

On-farm biosecurity measures, which already represent best practice, are now at unprecedented levels. Producers are determined to secure their farms and their herds – and their families' livelihoods.

APL is determined to keep this devastating disease away from Australia's pig farms and we're grateful for the emphatic bipartisan producers are receiving in this fight.

Thank you.

