

4th September 2009

Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Radcliffe

RE: Inquiry into the Removal of Rebate for AQIS Export Certification Functions

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) thanks you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Inquiry into the Removal of Rebate for AQIS Export Certification Functions.

As background, WAFarmers is the State's largest and most influential rural lobby and service organisation. WAFarmers represents approximately 4,000 Western Australian farmers from a range of primary industries including grain growers, meat and wool producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers, commercial egg producers and beekeepers. Collectively our members are major contributors to the \$5.5 billion gross value of production that agriculture in its various forms contributes annually to Western Australia's economy. Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and capably manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental well being of that land.

The capacity to export produce in a cost effective, timely and efficient matter is of vital importance to the Western Australian agricultural industry. The Department of Agriculture and Food estimate that in 2007/08, 71 per cent of Western Australia's agrifood produce was exported, equating to Amillion \$4,928. Of this, cereals, pulse, pasture and oilseed crops, and meat and animals composed over 80% of the total export value.

WAFarmers believes that the Government's commitment to maintaining secure and efficient export program systems should have commenced with the development and implementation of the reform package, and that this activity needed to occur prior to the removal of the 40% rebate for AQIS export certification functions. Currently, WAFarmers has a level of uncertainty over the benefits that the reform process will deliver, and farmers are currently faced with a short-term increase in costs, due to the 'push back' of (effectively) higher export-related costs. At this stage WAFarmers has not been able to make a per-industry assessment of these costs. WAFarmers believes that an industry-inclusive consultation process which reviews the delivery of the reform's benefits is required to ensure that there is a reduction, rather than an increase, in the costs to industry and that the reform process is clearly communicated to its stakeholders.

I thank you for consideration of this brief submission. Should you wish to discuss this matter please do not hesitate to contact me or WAFarmers Director of Policy, Alan Hill on 9486 2100.

Yours sincerely



Mike Norton
President