

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Australia

Western Sydney University welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security in Australia. Western Sydney University was recently ranked 1st in the world for commitment to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals and, with its Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment, is viewed as an exemplar in research related to sustainability and the environment more broadly.

It is of critical strategic importance that Australia continues to produce enough food to sustain its population. While the nation is currently producing enough food for 75 million people¹, the Federal Government must consider a range of challenges when formulating policy which strengthens our nation's food security, including land degradation, geo-political challenges, population increases and climate change.

Central to strengthening the nation's food security is its investment in new, technology driven approaches to agribusiness. The University's Agri Tech Hub, which will be located at the Hawkesbury Campus in Richmond, is just one example of this investment. The Hub – [to which the Commonwealth has pledged \\$16.7m](#) – has been designed to help address the sovereign risk in food security by providing a significant and sustainable supply of fresh produce to Western Sydney and Greater NSW, reducing dependency on foreign supply chains. Further, it is projected to support the creation of up to 1,620 jobs, and by virtue of its logistical proximity to the coming Western Sydney International Airport, amplify the rapid export of high-quality, high yield produce, from Western Sydney into South-East Asia.

Agriculture is a significant contributor to our nation's economy, and is projected to become a \$100 billion industry by 2030. An appropriately skilled labour force is critical to unlocking this industry's potential, as well as facilities which enable teaching and research alongside commercial food production at scale are integral to this. Western Sydney University is a leader in this regard, delivering a Bachelor of Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security and a distinctive, industry focused Masterclass in Protected Cropping (Grad Dip/Grad Cert) with specialisations in business, plant science and technology.

Additionally, large scale transport infrastructure that is fit for purpose is central to ensuring the competitiveness of our nation's agricultural and livestock exports. The proximity of the Agri Tech Hub to the new airport at Badgerys Creek will support the rapid export of high-quality, high yield produce, increasing local producers' opportunities in expanding markets in South East Asia.

It is important to acknowledge that some of the key inputs for food production, such as fuel and fertilizer, are not produced locally on a scale that is required. As a result, the agriculture industry will continue to be impacted by external factors which are not the nation's control. Rising geopolitical

¹ <https://www.afgc.org.au/news-and-media/2020/06/no-need-to-panic-australia-produces-enough-food-for-75-million>

tensions, particularly evident through the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict, demonstrate how volatility overseas contributes to rising costs for businesses, and subsequently consumers.

The impact of climate change on food security in Australia is likely to intensify over the coming decades, and it is critical that innovative methods of food production are explored to ensure food security. The University will draw upon its existing expertise through its National Vegetable Protected Cropping Centre to develop sustainable approaches to future peri-urban farming through the Agri Tech Hub. This development of a strong evidence and practice base is critical to supporting food production industries to navigate any climate related impacts to their business.

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