



INQUIRY INTO THE DEFINITIONS OF MEAT AND OTHER ANIMAL PRODUCTS

Written questions on notice from the Office of Senator Whish-Wilson

How does NSW Farmers represent both plant industries and livestock sectors?

NSW Farmers represent the interests of a broad range of farmers – from avocados and tomatoes, apples, bananas and berries, through grains, pulses and lentils to oysters, cattle, dairy, goats, sheep, pigs and chickens. We also have an eye on the future; we are advocates for innovation in agriculture, striving to give our members access to the latest and best innovation in research, development and extension. NSW Farmers would like to highlight our support for all agricultural industries and actively advocate on their behalf. It is our objective to represent both plant industries and livestock sectors by supporting further research and development into agricultural products including alternative proteins.

What measures would you recommend the federal government undertake to actively support the growth of the alternative protein sector to achieve its \$3 billion potential by 2030?

Consumption of protein - both plant and animal based - is rising, driven by a growing population and an emergent middle class in our key export markets. NSW Farmers supports federal government research and development into new market opportunities for agricultural producers alike. We see the opportunity for ongoing collaboration between traditional and alternative protein sectors to meet future protein demand.

Are you aware of any programs by the federal government to support the emerging alternative protein sector?

1. The government-funded scientific agency, CSIRO, has launched the Future Protein Mission to grow Australia's protein industry and produce an additional \$10 billion of new products by 2030¹. This program brings together Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, Meat & Livestock Australia and the Grains research & Development Corporation along with a variety of industry partners aimed at creating novel protein production systems and reaching new markets.
2. The CEFC is an Australian Government-owned green fund established to finance the green energy sector. The CEFC commitment, through the Clean Energy Innovation Fund on behalf of the Australian Government, is made alongside many other private sector investors into a range of industries and companies including plant-based and alternative proteins².
3. Australian field crop producers, including plant-based protein producers, are required to contribute to research and development via their compulsory field crop levies. They are

¹ <https://www.csiro.au/en/about/challenges-missions/future-protein-mission>

² Clean Energy Finance Corporate, [Media release 6 September 2021](#).

required to pay around 1.020% of the sale value of their crop³ and the funds are invested in emergency plant pest response, national residue testing, Plant Health Australia and research and development. They do not however, pay levies for marketing, as is the case with livestock (red meat, dairy and pork).

4. NSW Regional Growth Development Corporation has established a special activation precinct in Parkes as a master-planned economic zone designed to capitalise on the abundant grain production, skilled workforce and transportation connections of the region as a centre for plant-based protein alternatives⁴. By setting up in the precinct, business can benefit from government support, infrastructure investments and government-led development.

Could you provide any empirical peer-reviewed evidence demonstrating that livestock sectors have suffered detrimental impacts due to increasing sales of plant-based products?

The Australian red meat livestock industry is required to pay a compulsory livestock and meat processing levy, collected by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Levies Service and the expenditure of these levies are managed by industry R&D service provider Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). The levies collected contribute to R&D that is undertaken on behalf of industry, and co-matched by the Commonwealth Government utilising public funds. For products such as beef, a significant proportion of the levy payment (\$3.66 per \$5 per head transaction levy) is put toward the marketing of the product utilising common descriptors for their product such as "beef", "meat" and "steak". Australia's other livestock and affiliated industries also pay levies that directly contribute to R&D and marketing on behalf of industry.

The use of industry and public funds for the R&D and marketing of product under a legislated body such as MLA should remain protected. We believe it necessary to retain the use of these descriptors paid for in part by levies, in order to maintain their market presence while reducing the misuse of these terms by other industries. Our livestock industries are regulated to the point that a product such as 'mutton' cannot be marketed and sold as 'lamb'. We request that labelling laws exist to ensure an alternative protein product cannot be marketed or sold as being similar to or having the same attributes as meat category products.

Are you aware of any empirical peer-reviewed modelling demonstrating that livestock industries will suffer negative impacts due to increased sales of plant-based products?

Alternative plant based protein will be complementary to our traditional agricultural industries rather than a direct threat to their viability. NSW Farmers believes that clear labelling of alternative protein products, including blended and cell-based products, without the use of existing definitions relating to meat and animals, be established so as not to confuse or deliberately mislead consumers.

How have you engaged with leading alternative protein representative organisations to discuss your concerns and a potential path forward, for example that recommended by the Minister for Agriculture's working group?

NSW Farmers is committed to our agriculture industry pursuing and achieving the NSW goal of becoming a \$30 billion industry by 2030. NSW Farmers also acknowledge and support the development and potential of the alternative protein sector in NSW and Australia.

³ DAWE, Levy and Charge Rates, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates#field-crops>

⁴ [Plant-based protein in Parkes \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://Plant-based%20protein%20in%20Parkes%20(nsw.gov.au))

In March of 2020 NSW Farmers held an Alternatives Protein Forum including representatives from industry bodies, government and regulators, researchers and academics, and companies developing alternative protein products. The forum offered some key lessons for animal agriculture – most importantly, that we can all share in the forecast additional demand for protein. There is a need to focus on the areas where value growth for our farmer members will be possible, including new opportunities for cropping and niche, high-value animal products.

Subsequently, NSW Farmers, in partnership with other national organisations, established a national protein forum to discuss opportunities, challenges, share insights, and develop resources for industry⁵. Membership included peak industries bodies, alternative protein companies, government departments, state farming organisations, retailers, and research organisations.

NSW Farmers has been briefed on Minister Littleproud's activated working group on the issue of plant-based protein and labelling and the options developed to address issues of misleading labelling of plant-based proteins including an adopted voluntary code by industry. Our belief is that the voluntary code has not had wide update and issues regarding the labelling of alternative protein products still exist.

We support the ongoing research and development into new marketing opportunities for agricultural producers including the alternative protein sector. We continue to support all agricultural industries but also support the need for clear and truthful labelling of all products, and not to the detriment of others. We are open to and look forward to the opportunity for ongoing engagement with government and industry across all commodities to establish a roadmap forward that supports the growth and success of both alternative and traditional protein markets.

⁵ <https://nff.org.au/media-release/farming-and-food-industry-bodies-unite-to-focus-on-the-future-of-protein/>