

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 25

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Mr O'Sullivan involvement in the Federal Government's white paper

Proof Hansard page: 9

Senator LUDWIG asked: The question that flows from that is: do the secondments and persons you have put across to the review include a Mr O'Sullivan?

Dr Grimes: Not to the best of my knowledge. I am not aware of that officer.

Senator LUDWIG: It was in *The Courier Mail* on Friday, 1 November 2013. I am happy to make this available to you so that you are not at a disadvantage. I will continue because it will become plain and I am sure you can answer the questions. But if you need to stop and refresh yourself about that article I am happy for you to do so. It says Mr O'Sullivan conducted research for the federal government's white paper. Is he an employee, or has he been employed by the department of agriculture?

Dr Grimes: Not that I am aware of, but we would have to check.

Senator LUDWIG: You would know, wouldn't you, if you were employing a Mr O'Sullivan who is the—

Dr Grimes: There is a large number of people in the department but I am not aware of that officer working on the white paper task force.

Senator LUDWIG: The paper could be completely wrong, of course, so we would need to clarify that. It says:

In a move that threatens to ignite tensions within the Liberal National Party, Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has engineered a plan for Mr O'Sullivan to conduct research for the government's Agriculture White Paper ...

Can we rule out the department of agriculture having him on your books at all?

Dr Grimes: We could certainly check.

Mr Koval: Mr O'Sullivan is not one of our staff members that we have seconded across. Whether or not he is being employed separately by PM&C I am not sure, but we can check and get a response for you.

Senator LUDWIG: If it is not within you, I will go and find out from PM&C whether there is an alternative employment arrangement there. Can you take that on notice to ensure that you have not either employed him as research staff for the white paper or on secondment. If you have and you discover that at some point during the day, can you advise the secretary. You will be able to check this morning and let us know and then if I need to do some follow-up questions I can do that.

Mr Koval: I will check straight after this.

Question 25 (continued).

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture does not hold any records for Mr Barry O'Sullivan as an employee.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Agriculture

Question: 26

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Food Plan

Proof Hansard page: 12

Senator SIEWERT asked: Okay. Minister, can I ask you: has the government made a decision on whether it is going to proceed with the food plan or is it going to trumpet or alter it?

Senator Abetz: I am not aware of that. I will take that on notice for you.

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you.

Answer:

The Australian Government is currently considering the National Food Plan.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 27

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Wheat Export Taskforce & Mandatory Code of Conduct

Proof Hansard page: 49

Senator SIEWERT asked:

Senator SIEWERT: Can I ask here about the wheat export task force?

Mr Murnane: I think on the wheat export task force you are better off asking Agricultural Productivity Division.

Senator SIEWERT: Why is that?

Mr Murnane: That division has policy responsibility for the wheat industry and is dealing with the task force.

Senator SIEWERT: Presumably that is where I ask about the mandatory code as well.

Mr Murnane: Correct.

Dr Grimes: Obviously we could take the questions on notice.

Senator SIEWERT: Okay. What I am after is an update on progress—where that task force is up to.

Dr Grimes: We would be able to take that on notice. It appears that we do not have the relevant officers here, so we could take that on notice and provide you with a short update.

Senator SIEWERT: Okay, could you take that on notice. I am also after an update on the mandatory code development.

Answer:

The taskforce is required to submit a final report to the Minister for Agriculture by 1 July 2014.

On 16 July 2013, the taskforce invited submissions to its inquiry on the most appropriate mechanisms to enable the publication of timely and accurate grain stocks information. Submissions closed on 9 August 2013. Thirty submissions were received and a report, taking account of the submissions, was submitted to the Minister for Agriculture on 6 December 2013.

On 25 October 2013, the taskforce invited submissions to its inquiry on grain pools as financial products. Submissions closed on 15 November 2013. Thirteen submissions were received. The taskforce is planning to submit its report to the Minister for Agriculture for consideration in December 2013. The taskforce is planning to release a discussion paper on wheat export quality management practices for public comment in December 2013.

Question: 27 (continued)

Mandatory Code of Conduct

A draft set of principles for the operation of a Mandatory Code of Conduct has been developed by industry, through its Code Development Advisory Committee. These are being considered by agencies in the development of a draft code. It is intended that the draft code be released for public comment.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Question: 31

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Wheat Export Taskforce & Mandatory Code of Conduct

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator SIEWERT asked:

Please provide an update on the work of the Wheat Export Taskforce. Has it continued to meet? What progress has been made on the issue of stocks information? Please provide an update on the mandatory code development taskforce.

Answer:

Please refer to response QoN 27 from Supplementary Budget Estimates in November 2013.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 32

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Status of the overseas agricultural specialists

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

What is the status of the four additional overseas agricultural specialists announced in the national food plan?

Answer:

The Australian Government is currently considering the National Food Plan and associated initiatives.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 33

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: National Food Plan funding

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

The National Food Plan included funding for "Building our food trade ties" - what is the status of that funding?

Answer:

The Australian Government is currently considering the National Food Plan and associated initiatives.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 34

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Red and green tape impact on foreign investment in Australian Agricultural Land and Agribusiness

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Can you provide detail how the coalition's cuts in red and green tape will impact on Foreign Investment in Australian Agricultural Land and Agribusiness?

Answer:

Foreign investment policy is a matter for the Treasury portfolio.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 35

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Foreign investment policy

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Prime Minister Abbott released a foreign investment policy ahead of the election which said the threshold of \$248 million which triggers a review by FIRB; would be reduced to \$15 million. Is the Minister for Agriculture supportive of this policy?

Answer:

Foreign investment policy is a matter for the Treasury portfolio.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 42

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Update on white paper

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Can you update the committee on work being undertaken on a white paper on the competitiveness of the agriculture sector?

Answer:

A taskforce has been established in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to lead the development of the white paper. Terms of Reference for the white paper are expected to be released soon.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 43

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: National Food Plan

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Has the department briefed the Minister on the National Food Plan released on 25 May 2013?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture has provided information and briefing on the National Food Plan and associated initiatives to the Minister.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 44

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Proposed White Paper

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Does the Minister acknowledge the Government's proposed White Paper plan will essentially produce the work already done in National Food Plan?

Answer:

The Agriculture White Paper will focus specifically on the competitiveness of the agriculture sector, and provide a basis for longer term policies to boost agriculture's contribution to economic growth, export and trade, and innovation and productivity. The agriculture sector includes fibre such as cotton and wool.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 45

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Agriculture White paper funding

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Why is the Agriculture White Paper being funded and conducted by Prime Minister and Cabinet? If no,

a) Who will be funding and conducting the Agriculture White Paper

Answer:

The Australian Government committed during the 2013 election that the white paper on agricultural competitiveness would be developed through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Department of Agriculture is providing the majority of funding for the development of the white paper. The Department of Agriculture has provided staff to the agriculture white paper taskforce in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 48

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Funding chicken, feedlot and kangaroo

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

1. What level of funding has the government directly or indirectly expended on supporting or assisting these respective Australian industries?

- a) Chicken meat industry
- b) Feed lotting industry
- c) Kangaroo industry

2. Please provide a breakdown of the figures as to the areas/producers/organisations to which the support was directed.

Answer:

Chicken meat

Rural Industries Research Development Corporation's (RIRDC) investment in chicken meat research, development & extension (RD&E) during 2012–13 was \$2 945 504. This includes program administration and management costs.

RIRDC-funded RD&E activities are undertaken to benefit the chicken meat industry as a whole, which is present across Australia. Below is a list of chicken meat RD&E projects RIRDC funded in 2012–13, the research organisation that undertook the activity, and the 2012–13 expenditure.

Question: 48 (continue)

| Project Name | Research Organisation | 2012-13 Expenditure |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| Implementation of a net energy system for the Australian chicken meat industry | University of New England | \$155 000 |
| Development of a vaccine to control campylobacter in chickens | University of South Australia | \$154 908 |
| Steam pelleting temperature of sorghum-based broiler diets | University of Sydney | \$5000 |
| Poultry litter: alternative fertiliser and ways to increase soil organic carbon | The University of Melbourne | \$32 470 |
| Poultry CRC (09/10 to 16/17) | Poultry CRC | \$350 000 |
| Dislocated calcium alimentation for broilers | University of Sydney | \$87 825 |
| Campylobacter dynamics in free-range & conventional farming systems | Qld Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry | \$196 301 |
| Parallel development of novel vaccine vectors (pilot study) | The University of Melbourne | \$9484 |
| Available phosphorus requirement of broilers | University of Queensland | \$100 000 |
| Robert A Swick, UNE Poultry Research Hub | University of New England | \$55 782 |
| Available and retainable phosphorus of feedstuffs for broilers | University of Queensland | \$64 871 |
| Optimization of Australian Protein Meals | University of New England | \$161 351 |
| Co funding contribution National Welfare RD&E Capacity Building Project | Australian Pork Limited | \$29 720 |
| Artificial Olfaction System for On-site Odour Measurement | Qld Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry | \$50 936 |
| CME Horizon Scholarship sponsorship Andrea Craigie (See PRJ-005772) | Horizon Scholarship Program (RIRDC) | \$10 000 |
| CME Horizon Scholarship sponsorship Emma Ludington (see PRJ-008419) | Horizon Scholarship Program (RIRDC) | \$10 000 |
| Steam pelleting temperature of sorghum-based broiler diets | University of Sydney | \$8500 |
| Co-funding for Executive Function Strategy Committee for NAW RDE Strategy | Australian Pork Limited | \$3260 |
| APL National agricultural manure management program (NAMMP) | Australian Pork Limited | \$90 701 |
| Evaluation of NIR-based diet formulations for broiler chickens | University of South Australia | \$48 490 |
| Rapid continuous chemical analysis of broiler shed emissions by SIFT-MS | Qld Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry | \$15 000 |

Question: 48 (continued)

| Project Name | Research Organisation | 2012-13 Expenditure |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships - Guy Hebblewhite 2013 | Nuffield | \$50 000 |
| Controlling virulent ILTV field recombinants using vaccination | University of Melbourne | \$124 325 |
| National Tunnel ventilation workshops | University of Georgia (various) | \$55 209 |
| Parallel development of novel vaccine vectors (pilot study) | University of Melbourne | \$5000 |
| Assessment of factors influencing behaviour & welfare of birds in FR systems | University of Melbourne | \$45 400 |
| Poultry CRC WPSA Schools Poultry Education competition | Poultry CRC | \$10 000 |
| FAO Poultry Technical Working Group | FSA Consulting | \$6458 |
| Chicken Meat R&D Program Evaluation and Five Year R&D Plan 2014/15-2018/19 | AgEconPlus | \$20 000 |
| Vitamin K and broiler bone development | University of Queensland | \$13 000 |
| Feed Grains R&D Partnership | GRDC | \$7142 |
| Subunit vaccine against Infectious bursal disease virus | CSIRO | \$20 000 |
| Evaluation of new high yielding Triticale lines for broilers | University of Sydney | \$28 897 |
| Improving control of infectious laryngotracheitis in Australian broiler flocks | University of Melbourne | \$6325 |
| An integrated typing service for the surveillance of Salmonella in chickens | Institute of Medical and Veterinary Sciences | \$58 167 |
| Phage-displayed peptides for the real-time detection of Campylobacter jejuni | CSIRO | \$50 000 |
| Campylobacter genotypes in chickens - national and regional influences | Qld Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | \$33 165 |
| Surveillance and pathotyping of circulating IBDV strains | CSIRO | \$116 145 |
| Free range chicken farms – odour emissions and nutrient management | Qld Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | \$6612 |
| Characterisation of avian nephritis virus (ANV) in commercial poultry | University of Melbourne | \$95 648 |

Question: 48 (continued)

| Project Name | Research Organisation | 2012-13 Expenditure |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Part funding of Director Poultry Research Foundation A. Cowieson | University of Sydney | \$34 375 |
| Quantifying On-Farm Energy Usage in the Australian Meat Chicken Industry | FSA Consulting | \$4800 |
| Omega-3s and broiler heart health | The University of Adelaide | \$5000 |
| Egg incubation and broiler chicken leg weakness | University of Sydney | \$104 745 |
| Low ANF faba beans for chicken feed | The University of Adelaide | \$4000 |
| Evaluation of sodium bisulphite in sorghum-based broiler diets | The University of Sydney | \$25 753 |
| Contribution to 2012 Wild Bird Surveillance Program | Taronga Conservation Society Australia (Australian Wildlife Health Network) | \$4545 |
| AECL Poultry in schools competition in SA, VIC and WA | AECL | \$4182 |
| APSS 2013 Invited Speaker Travel Funding | University of Sydney | \$6000 |
| Stephen Wiedemann travel to Rome FAO Environmental Benchmarking | FSA Consulting | \$2327 |
| 2013 Microorganism survey to support ongoing pathogen reduction programs | CSIRO | \$92 880 |

Feed Lot Industry

In 2012–13, \$2.41million in Government funding was invested to match levy funds in MLA's RD&E grain fed programs. A breakdown of Government investment in grainfed programs under MLA's strategic imperatives is provided below:

\$69 573 towards maintaining & improving market access

\$287 744 towards growing demand

\$1 018 741 towards increasing productivity across the supply chain

\$871 234 towards supporting industry integrity & sustainability

\$164 301 towards stakeholder communications, reporting and corporate services

Kangaroo

RIRDC's investment in kangaroo research, development & extension (RD&E) during 2012–13 was \$157 754. This includes program administration and management costs.

Question: 48 (continued)

RIRDC-funded RD&E activities are undertaken to benefit the kangaroo industry as a whole, which is present across Australia. Below is a list of kangaroo RD&E projects RIRDC funded in 2012–13, the research organisation that undertook the activity, and the 2012–13 expenditure.

| Project Name | Research Organisation | 2012-13 Expenditure |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| Building confidence in kangaroo meat for pet nutrition | Biologic Pty Ltd | \$17 860 |
| Kangaroo sulphur dioxide and thiamine relationship study Supplemental study # 2 | Biologic Pty Ltd | \$24 000 |
| Improving the welfare and humaneness of commercially harvested kangaroos | The Department of Primary Industries, an office of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, NSW | \$46 758 |
| Characterising the Australian public and communicating about kangaroo management | Animal Welfare Science Consultants | \$40 000 |

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Agriculture

Question: 49

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Information provided to Australian overseas posts

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

1. An answer to a QoN by Senator Nash in 2009 about the independent report on kangaroo shooting, 'A Shot in the Dark' commissioned by Animal Liberation, stated " that relevant Australian overseas posts, including in Brussels, Moscow and Beijing, have been provided with detailed and balanced information on the hygiene, sustainability and animal welfare practices of the kangaroo industry to respond to any approaches by host governments, industry or the public".

May I have a copy of the briefs, reports or other documents that made up the 'detailed and balanced information' provided to those overseas posts please?

2. With regards to funding of projects that promote kangaroo meat to consumers, what responsibility does the RIRDC have to ensure its funded projects do not present a health risk to consumers?

a) Did the RIRDC approve the recommendation in the KIAA's RIRDC funded kangaroo recipe book, "Roocipes" that kangaroo is best served undercooked or rare?

b) What food safety checks were provided before this publication was published by either Dept Health's Food Standards, or by Dept Agriculture's Food Division?

3. Is the RIRDC or Food Division aware of predictions in the scientific literature predicting the next human outbreak of T.gondii in Europe due to marketing of kangaroo meat, which needs to be undercooked to avoid unpalatability of the meat?

4. In previous Senate Estimates I was advised by Dept Agriculture-Food Division that raw kangaroo meat is not tested for food-borne pathogens such as Toxoplasma gondii or Salmonella spp, both which are zoonotic agents present in kangaroos, because "this is not a requirement of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code".

a) What information does the RIRDC or the Food Division have regarding the reported 13 fatalities during 1993 in Australia associated with T.gondii caused by consumption of undercooked kangaroo meat?

b) In relation to government-funded advice to undercook the meat, which agency is legally liable for any health risks or fatalities that arise from ingestion of undercooked meat thus contaminated?

Question: 49 (continued)

5. The RIRDC would be aware of the industry's heavy promotion to the food and cooking industry, and to consumers, of undercooked kangaroo meat – especially given most marketing and promotional strategies are funded by the RIRDC. What are the agency's concerns regarding this potentially serious health risk?

Answer:

1. The information below on hygiene, sustainability and animal welfare matters associated with commercial kangaroo harvest was provided to posts following the release of the report commissioned by Animal Liberation.
 - Hygiene and kangaroo (game) meat
 - The Australian Government continues to ensure that meat exported to trading partners meets all import requirements and food safety standards.
 - Kangaroo meat and meat products are produced, stored and transported in accordance with the *Australian Standard for Hygienic Production of Game Meat for Human Consumption* and the Game, Poultry and Rabbit Meat Orders.
 - This standard is consistent with the Codex Alimentarius Commission's *Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat* – reflecting internationally agreed standards.
 - The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) monitors industry's compliance with the Australian standard.
 - AQIS and company controls at export-registered game meat processing establishments ensure that only meat that is fit for human consumption is exported.
 - *A Shot in the Dark* incorrectly states that “the European Union has recognised the potential dangers of game meats, with the European Council issuing a Directive on the killing of wild game and the placing of wild game meat on the market”
 - The EU directive (Council Directive 92/45/EEC of 16 June 1992) specifies that wild game meat from third countries should be treated consistently with internally traded meat. Australia's wild game meat production system has been reviewed by the EU against this directive on several occasions and found to comply.

Animal Welfare

- In late 2008, the NRM (Natural Resource Management) Ministerial Council (consisting of Australian, state, territory and New Zealand government ministers responsible for primary industries, natural resources, environment and water policy) endorsed new Codes of Practice for commercial and non-commercial shooting which represent best practice and replace the previous Code.
- The methods outlined in the Codes, including for the euthanasia of pouch young, are considered by animal welfare experts to be both humane and practical.
- These Codes were developed after a long process of consultation involving industry, government, animal welfare groups, the scientific community and the public.
- Commercial shooters who supply kangaroo meat for domestic and export markets must comply with the Code for commercial shooting.

Question: 49 (continued)

Sustainability

- Commercial kangaroo harvesting is a sustainable industry. It is one of the world's best wild harvest operations because management goals are based firmly on principles of sustainability.
 - All kangaroo species harvested are widespread and abundant, but populations fluctuate naturally. Populations are surveyed regularly. Harvest quotas are scientifically set as a percentage of the population.
 - The approved levels of harvest will not affect the long term viability of kangaroo populations in Australia. These are unique species that are adapted to Australia's extreme fluctuations in climatic conditions. There has been no adverse long-term impact on the kangaroo population after over 25 years of commercial harvesting. This includes several periods of drought, including the severe impact of the 1981-83 drought, and the current drought.
 - Even in the presence of drought, the kangaroo industry remains sustainable because the overall population of each species is regularly monitored and annual harvest quotas adjusted to reflect changes.
2. Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) has a responsibility to provide information to the public that is based on the research, advice and knowledge of experts and professionals. In the case of research that involves kangaroo meat, RIRDC took (and will continue to take) the advice of experts and professionals (including professional chefs) and disseminated information based on this advice and knowledge.
 - a. RIRDC approved 'Roocipes' to be published including the statement: *'For best results kangaroo should be cooked rare to medium rare...'*.
 - b. This information is unknown.
 3. Neither RIRDC nor Food Division are aware of these claims. The department requires the testing of kangaroo carcasses for *Salmonella* at all export registered establishments processing kangaroo meat for human consumption. This is carried out as part of the ongoing monitoring of hygienic production. *Salmonella* is monitored for kangaroo meat in accordance with the same procedures as for other slaughter species, such as beef, sheep, goats and pigs, under the department's *E. coli* and *Salmonella* Monitoring Program.
 4.
 - a. Neither RIRDC nor Food Division holds this information.
 - b. In regard to this issue, the department is not in a position to provide advice on legal liability.
 5. RIRDC will be informed by government food safety agencies (in Australia, Food Standards Australia New Zealand) in regard to any health risks posed by any of its food-producing portfolio industries, including the kangaroo industry. The level of detail provided within the cooking instructions included in Roocipes was consistent with other meat-based recipes and recipe books, including those which include meats (such as lamb, pork, venison and free-range poultry) that have the potential to harbour *T.gondii*.

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Question: 50

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Chilled meat value & investments

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

What is the value of government investment and funding into promoting and growing the live export trade compared to the chilled meat trade?

2. How does that proportionately compare with the relative value each of those trades makes to Australia's GDP?

Answer:

Live animals and red meat are important components of Australia's export trade and government investment in activities to gain and maintain market access varies market by market depending on preferences, on the maturity of the market in relation to these products and also as issues arise. As a result it is not possible to provide a precise breakdown of the investment.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 51

Division/Agency: Agricultural Productivity Division

Topic: Palm oil in Indonesian feedlots

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

1. Would the Minister for Agriculture please advise whether Australian cattle exported to Indonesia to be fattened in feedlots before slaughter are being fed agricultural wastage from the palm oil industry? If so:
 - a) What are the known nutritional values and what are the health repercussions on the cattle being fed this material?
 - b) what assurances Australia has that this is only sourced from certified RSPO sustainable plantations?
2. Would the Minister for Agriculture please advise with respect to MLA project W.LIV 0393 Indonesian Cattle Breeding Demonstration at Way Laga, Indonesia, published October 2013:
 - a) How much the government paid in matching funding to MLA?
 - b) Which Animal Ethics Committee approved the project?
 - c) Did the project comply fully with the Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition (2013), and if not, how not?
 - d) How DAFF managed the conflict of interest arising from the fact the veterinarian who prepared the report also appears to provide veterinary advice to the Indonesian company supplying the cattle for the project?
 - e) When will the findings be submitted for publication in a peer reviewed journal? If not, how may I access a copy of those findings please?
 - f) What investigation has DAFF conducted into the death of animals in the research project, including the apparent delay in examination of a sick cow, and a second diseased cow that ‘...was sold for slaughter ... following a series of infections beginning in the jaw and extending to many parts of the body’.
 - g) Was the palm plantation used in the project certified as a RSPO sustainable plantation, and were other palm products fed to the cattle also from certified plantations?
 - h) The recent project report states that representatives from government and privately owned palm oil plantations raised concerns in March this year about feedlotting cattle on palm plantations including ‘(1) ... the complexity of taking on an additional enterprise within the plantation; (2) the potential for internal and external corruption, which would be difficult to control; (3) the profit margins do not justify the effort and new management that would be required; (4) the opportunities for corruption and theft include, but are not limited to stealing cattle feed; secret commissions on the rations; stealing cattle/calves; and stealing funds from the proceeds; and (5) the level

Question: 51 (continued)

of profit margin does not make the extra effort to control this potential leakage justifiable”.

- i. May I please have a copy of any documentation relating to these concerns that the Department might have. If not, why not?
- ii. Have any considerations or discussions have taken place in regards to the issues raised in this report? If yes, what were those considerations or discussions?
- iii. What actions or procedures is Australia considering or taking with regards to risks to application of the ESCAS in this project raised by the concerns in this report?
- iv. How can DAFF ensure the security of ESCAS in Indonesia in a case such as this?

Answer:

1 a) In the demonstration project W.LIV.0393, Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) engaged a veterinary consultant to, among other things, arrange the assessment of the average nutrient value of palm leaves fed to livestock in the study. The palm leaves sampled during the project and submitted to Dairy One in the US quite variable with Dry Matter = 46 per cent (39 per cent – 55 per cent), Crude Protein = 6.96per cent (5.1 per cent – 12.4 per cent), and Metabolisable Energy 7.57 MJ/kg (4.94 MJ/kg – 10.16 MJ/kg). These values reflect the stage of maturity of the frond - mature fronds were harvested for the purposes of this project.

b) Among the requirements under W.LIV.0393, a MOU was signed with the local palm plantation owner where the Way Laga Facility was built. The agreement covered the supply of approximately 1500 m of land, access to 2500 litres of water a day, access to electricity, security and approximately 260kg of palm oil leaf per day. The agreement requires that the Consultant must comply with all relevant laws and regulations when performing the contract which is a requirement of RSPO certification.

2 a) \$110 250 in Government funding which matched the levy investment from MLA and LiveCorp for this project.

b) Animal Ethics Committee approval was not sought or required for this project to be conducted in Indonesia. An Australian qualified veterinarian was the principle investigator.

c) The project was conducted in Indonesia and was not required to comply with the Australian code for practice care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition (2013). An Australian qualified veterinarian was the principal investigator. There was 24/7 supervision of the animals and if at any time an animal required attention or medical assistance it was immediately attended to.

d) The department does not have a role in managing MLA research projects.

e) The report is available at the following website: <http://www.mla.com.au/Research-and-development/Final-report-details?projectid=15445>

f) The department has no regulatory powers over exported breeder livestock after arrival in the importing country and does not investigate post-arrival mortalities in exported breeder livestock.

Question: 51 (continued)

g) Pursuant to the requirements of the MLA project W.LIV 0393 agreement, an MOU was negotiated and signed with the local palm plantation owner where the Way Laga Facility was built. The agreement covered the supply of approximately 1500 m of land, access to 2500 litres of water a day, access to electricity, security and approximately 260kg of palm oil leaf per day. The agreement requires that the Consultant must comply with all relevant laws and regulations when performing the contract.

h) i) The department has not raised any concerns about the project.

h) ii) See response h) i).

h) iii) The ESCAS framework is not applicable to breeder livestock.

h) iv) See response h) iii).