



7 March 2012

Hot News Topics

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Draft Agvet Chemical Regulations Battle Continues

A delegation of industry representatives led by TFGA met last week with Minister Green and departmental and agency staff to discuss the proposed new draft AGVET chemical regulations.

We were seeking some explanation of the science behind the proposed new draconian regulations - but we were offered nothing other than motherhood statements and unsupported assertions.

With the support of other industry stakeholders, TFGA is commissioning expert advice to support our submissions about the severe impact the proposed regulations will have on Tasmanian farming businesses.

These misguided proposals are just one more example of the state government's schizophrenic attitude to agriculture. On the one hand, they talk the industry up; on the other, they tie good businesses so tightly in red tape that it is becoming impossible to continue to operate.

If these draft regulations were

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Biosecurity Survey

NFF's new Biosecurity Liaison Officer Tim Lester has prepared a short commencement survey. This short survey will be used to assist him to establish a baseline for later evaluation of the position, and in work planning of priority issues that need to be addressed.

Use the following link to access the survey [click here](#) or if you would rather have a conversation with him call 02 6269 5663.

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Clean Up Continues After Fires

Farmers across the state continued to clean up after the fires last week. There was considerable damage in the Meadowbank, Ouse and Powranna districts.

The Meadowbank fire burned out more than 5000 ha and caused significant damage to several properties, including the Meadowbank vineyard. At Powranna, more than 500 ha was burnt and the damage; and a further 400 ha were affected by the fire in Ouse.

Another alert went out on the weekend as strong winds threatened to

to be implemented as they stand, Tasmanian farmers would be forced to comply with standards that are in some cases higher than those anywhere else in the world. This drive make our farmers uncompetitive and ultimately drive some farms out of business.

The support of a number of Legislative Councillors, led by Greg Hall, is welcomed in our continued efforts to negotiate a satisfactory outcome.

For more information, please contact [Nick Steel](#) – 6332 1800.

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re-ignite the Meadowbank blaze.

In the short term, affected farmers particularly in the Meadowbank area were concerned about meeting immediate fodder needs for their stock. In the medium term, farmers in all areas are going to face issues with getting fences back up.

Offers of fodder and other assistance were quick in coming in. Large quantities of fodder were donated; and transport companies moved this to the affected areas for free. We know the farming community likes to look after our own – and this is just another reflection of the generosity that is so much a part of Tasmanian farming.

If you feel you can help out in any way, please contact [Mel King](#), TFGA policy advisor, phone the TFGA office on 6332 1800, or 0409 004 228.

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Foodmap Report Details the Food Situation in Australia

The federal government has released its FOODmap report: an analysis of the Australian food supply chain, available [here](#).

The report, released by the federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, has a very strong emphasis on the retail and processing aspects of food consumption in Australia. Given the utmost importance of primary production in the process of food consumption and retail, we would have liked to have seen a greater emphasis on primary production within this report.

The farm sector continues to face very significant challenges which underscore the fact that it cannot be taken for granted in terms of long-term food security. Currency exchange rates, rising costs, pressures on terms of trade, and increased regulation are all factors that stand to impact the productivity and profitability of the farming sector. The farming sector will now be looking for the federal government to further the findings of this report, and to implement positive policies that can continue to increase the profitability and productivity of farmers.

We'll be providing more information on this report in an upcoming issue of our monthly magazine, VOICE.

Farmers Batting Above the Average

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) has recently released Farm Facts 2012, which shows that agriculture continues to grow both its food and fibre production and its contribution to Australia's economy.

NFF President Jock Laurie says that Farm Facts 2012 shows that the agricultural industry continues to play a vitally important role in Australia's society, economy and environment. The contribution that our farmers and the agricultural sector make to Australia, and indeed the world, is of vital importance, and Farm Facts 2012 reflects this – showing that Australian farmers produce almost 93 percent of Australia's daily domestic food supply, and that the average Australian farmer grows enough food to feed 600 people: 150 at home and 450

abroad.

In 2010-11 alone, Australia's farm exports earned the country \$32.5 billion, up \$400 million in two years. And the gross value of Australian farm production at farm gate in 2009-10 was \$48.7 billion – up a massive \$600,000 million in just one year. These increases in productivity and value show that our sector has enormous strength and potential, and that we are well placed to meet the challenges ahead. Challenges like the declining number of farm businesses in Australia, the increase in the average age of Australian farmers to 52 (12 years above the national average for other occupations), and the labour shortage that the industry faces, with some 18,000 people having left the sector in the last year alone.

And then there is the challenge of increasing productivity enough to meet the growing global demand for food and fibre. The UN estimates that production will need to increase by 70 per cent by 2050 in order to meet the world population need – which is why increased investment in research and development for Australian agriculture is critical, to ensure that our farmers can achieve this great task.

These challenges are among the key priority areas for the NFF and are a major focus of the Blueprint for Australian Agriculture project currently underway. This will ensure a clear direction for the agricultural industry and supply chain.

Farm Facts 2012 is a compendium of facts and figures about Australian agriculture, based on fully attributed data from independent sources. The annualised data is accurate as to the last recorded production period. A snapshot of key data in Farm Facts 2012 is available from the [Farm Facts](#) and [Commodities](#) pages of the [NFF website](#), where the full publication can also be downloaded.

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Dairy Farmers Urged to Vote in Levy Poll

“Dairy Poll 2012 represents every dairy farmer’s opportunity to support the aspirations of our industry. It’s your industry, your investment and your future. Make your vote count.”

Chris Griffin, Chair, Australian Dairy Industry Council, Australian Dairy Farmers Chair, Dairy Service Levy Poll Industry Advisory Committee

The legislation governing Dairy Australia requires a levy poll to be conducted in early 2012 to give the nation's dairy farmers the opportunity to have their say on the Dairy Service Levy rate for up to the next five years.

The dairy industry's peak representative bodies believe the industry has reached a turning point as farmers continue their recovery from drought, volatile milk pricing and margins and general market uncertainty.

We need to ensure the level of research, development, education and industry promotion and protection, currently provided by Dairy Australia, is safeguarded to deliver a profitable and sustainable future

for the industry, and not eroded by the impact of inflation.

In early 2011, a Dairy Poll Advisory Committee, comprising industry representatives, was established to advise on the voting options to be offered to farmers in the Dairy Poll 2012. Taking account of the costs associated with delivering services to dairy farmers, the Committee determined that a 10 per cent increase in the dairy levy would allow Dairy Australia to maintain its services over the next five years.

Voting closes on March 16th, so make eligible dairy farmers should make sure they don't miss the deadline. For more information, [click here](#).

NFF Members' Council

TFGA President, David Gatenby, attended the first NFF Members' Council meeting for 2012 last week.

This forum brings together the Presidents, CEOs and representatives of the twenty four NFF member organisations to discuss policy and NFF committee and taskforce updates.

For more information, [email](#) David or phone 6332 1800.

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Woolworths Launches Supplier Complaints Line

Supermarket chain Woolworths has launched Speak Up, a new, externally-hosted hotline for Woolworths suppliers to report trading concerns of a serious nature after standard procedures have been exhausted. Issues which can be reported anonymously include fraud, corruption, threatening behaviour, people or product safety risks, theft, conflict of interest, bullying and harassment. Woolworths says that the delivery by external consultants, Deloitte, assures a greater level of independence.

By establishing this new complaints mechanism, Woolworths has acknowledged that many suppliers are not comfortable bringing their concerns directly to the company for fear it may impact on their ongoing trading relationship.

The Woolworths initiative comes after ACCC Chairman Rod Sims invited to suppliers to inform the ACCC any abuses of market power by supermarket groups. However, some industry observers are saying that Mr Sims has been more reticent to discuss in public forums the issue of alleged supermarket power abuses.

The ACCC also has previously incorporated a whistle-blowing scheme in its highest level compliance program against a company engaging in anti-competitive conduct. The move by Woolworths may therefore be connected with a desire by Woolworths to improve its existing Competition and Consumer Act compliance programs. It might also be viewed, however, as a pre-emptive move in the context of pressure from the industry for an independent Supermarket Ombudsman office to be instituted through government policy.

It remains unclear whether suppliers to supermarkets will feel

adequately protected by the new Woolworths scheme and its assurance of anonymity.

An Apple a Day Keeps the Snails Away!

Apple flavoured jelly could be used to kill off snails found in crops.

The South Australian No Till Farmers Association is trying to find ways to stop snails causing millions of dollars damage to crops. Researchers tried caffeine pellets, as the stimulant is toxic to the slimy creatures but they believe caffeine hidden in jelly will be more effective.

According to the researchers, snails and slugs don't actually like to go near caffeine and the juveniles don't seem to eat the hard baits that are currently available. That's why they've been trying a gelatinous type of bait; and apple jelly seems to be working.

Sun Setting on Agricultural Training Funding

The Federal Government's FarmReady Reimbursement Grant scheme finishes this year with no more reimbursements available for approved courses held after the 31 May 2012 deadline. So farmers should consider taking advantage of the funding, while it's still here.

Farmers are able to claim up to \$1500 per financial year to attend FarmReady-registered courses, with additional funding available for associated reasonable travel, accommodation and childcare expenses. Registered courses focus on areas designed to equip primary producers with the tools to manage and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Over the last four years, FarmReady has made provision for farmers and other industry people access \$34.4 million dollars to improve their productivity and skills.

Check with your training provider to see if their courses are eligible for FarmReady funding. More details are available [here](#).

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Colour and Design of Meals have Special Appeal for Children

A new study by American and UK scientists has revealed that colourful food appeals more to children than adults.

The study presented pre-teen children and adults with full size photos of 48 different combinations of food on plates that differed by number of items, placement of main food item, and food organisation.

Children were found to prefer meals with seven different items and six different colours (compared to adults who preferred three items and colours). Children also preferred main food item placed in front of the plate with figurative designs.

This research shows that the visual presentation of food can influence children to eat more vegetables.

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Fast Facts

- Contrary to popular belief, there are not a lot of fish in the sea, say US researchers. Despite covering 70% of the Earth's surface, marine environments contain only 20% of its entire species. Scientists have made the surprising discovery that freshwater rivers and lakes contain more fish species than salty oceans; yet freshwater environments occupy only 2% of the Earth's surface.
- Averaged across Australia, the two-year rainfall total for 2010-2011 was of 1409mm. This beat the old record of 1407mm set during 1973-1974. Despite the heavy rainfall during that period, the southwest WA coast, western Tasmania and parts of Victoria had record 15-year low rainfall levels. In fact, 2010 was the driest year on record for south-western Australia, with just 395mm of rain falling.
- The Australian manufacturing industry received about \$6.5 billion in net tariff assistance, plus about \$2 billion in subsidies in 2009-10. Pity the farm sector isn't given the same levels of support!
- The minimum wage in Australia is \$15.51 per hour. In Japan it is A\$10.16; in Britain A\$9; and in the US it is A\$7. So much for a level playing field.

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Catching Up With The News

- Phosphorus scarcity is one of the newest global threats – and without phosphorus we cannot produce food. Yet if no one takes responsibility for ensuring phosphorus security, we can expect it will one day run out. Read about it [here](#).
- A Victorian farmer has grown a monster pumpkin – it stands a metre high and weighs 385 kilograms. That's an awful lot of pumpkin soup! You can see it [here](#).
- Tas Country is now online so you can catch up with the rural Tasmanian news wherever you are. Bookmark it [here](#).

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What's On

There is so much going on, we know it is hard to keep up. To try and help you keep track of what is happening, we've recently added an interactive calendar onto our website. Have a look [here](#). All the events are shown on the day in the calendar; click on the function and all the details come up. If you have any events you'd like included, [email](#) them to us.

These are the events we have listed for the next fortnight:

What: Cheaper Energy Solutions information sessions
Where: Kendall's Hotel/Motel Scottsdale
When: Thursday, 8th March 2012, 7.00pm - 9.30pm
Contact: [Melinda King](#) – 6332 1800

What: Cheaper Energy Solutions information sessions
Where: Argosy Hotel, Devonport
When: Friday, 9th March 2012, 10.30am - 1.00pm
Contact: [Melinda King](#) – 6332 1800

What: Cheaper Energy Solutions information sessions
Where: Beachway Motel, Ulverstone
When: Friday, 9th March 2012, 3.00pm - 5.30pm
Contact: [Melinda King](#) – 6332 1800

What: "Prohand" Workshop #1– Professional Handling of Pigs
Where: Deloraine High School VET Workroom
When: Friday 9 March
Contact: RSVP - [Malcolm Cowan](#) – 0417 573 991

What: Potato Industry Extension Program Seminar
Where: The Argosy Motel, Devonport
When: Wednesday, 14th March 2012, 6.00pm – 8.00pm
Contact: Christopher Ritchie from Ausveg 9822 0388

What: Alternative Pasture Cropping Trial Field Day
Where: 'Saltwood', End of Saltwood Road, Pipers Brook
When: Thursday, 15th March 10am – 11.30am
Contact: Adrian James – 6333 7777 or email [Adrian James](#)

Tasmanian Irrigation - Kindred: the water sales period for the scheme opened on Thursday 2nd February and will close on 12.00 noon, Thursday, 15 March 2012. Individual landholders are able to talk to TI and TFGA representatives about the water sales process and receive information about the proposed irrigation scheme.

What: Tasmanian Irrigation landholder information session
Where: Kindred Hall
When: Wednesday, 14th March 2012, 9.30am -4.30pm
Contact: [Ian Herbert](#) - 0400 006 095

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Where: Kindred Hall
When: Thursday, 15th March 2012, 9.30am -4.30pm
Contact: [Ian Herbert](#) - 0400 006 095

What: Meander in our Valley – 10th Women on Farms Gathering
Where: Rotary Pavilion, Alvestone Drive – Deloraine
When: 18th-20th May 2012
Contact: meandervalleytwia@gmail.com

TFGA MEETINGS - MARCH

Contact: [Fiona Gluszyk](#), TFGA Secretariat, or phone 6332 1800

What: Dairy Council
When: Wednesday 14th

What: Environment Forum
When: Wednesday 15th (AM)

What: Vegetable Council

When: Monday 19th

What: Agriculture Council

When: Wednesday 21st (PM)

What: Meat Council

When: Friday 30th

What: Annual Conference & AGM

Where: Country Club, Tasmania

When: 11-13th July 2012

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