



QUEENSLAND
FARMERS'
FEDERATION

New National Drought Agreement

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Prepared for:

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Date prepared:

1 September 2023

The united voice of
Queensland agriculture

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This submission is provided to:

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
NDA Review Secretariat
GPO Box 2247
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Submitted online https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/national-drought-agreement-review/survey_tools/new-national-drought-agreement-2

Our members

- Canegrowers
- Cotton Australia
- Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers
- Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland
- eastAUSmilk
- Australian Cane Farmers Association
- Queensland United Egg Producers
- Turf Queensland
- Queensland Chicken Meat Council
- Pork Queensland
- Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group
- Burdekin River Irrigation Area
- Central Downs Irrigators Ltd
- Fairburn Irrigation Network
- Mallowa Irrigation
- Pioneer Valley Water Co-operative Ltd
- Theodore Water Pty Ltd
- Eton Irrigation
- Queensland Oyster Growers Association
- Lockyer Water Users Forum

About the Queensland Farmers' Federation



The Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) is the united voice of agriculture in Queensland.

We are a member-based organisation representing the interests of peak agriculture industry organisations (both state and national). Through our members, QFF represents more than 13,000 primary producers across the cotton, cane, horticulture, dairy, nursery and garden, poultry, pork, and intensive animal industries.

We unite the sector to engage in a broad range of economic, social, environmental, and regional issues through advocacy, policy development, and project activity. We work with the government of the day on behalf of industry, farmers, and the community to provide powerful representation and contribution to the policy direction, sustainability, and future growth of Queensland's agriculture sector.

Our Council of member representatives and policy committees set the strategic priorities for policy development and advocacy, while our Executive Board ensures our corporate governance.

QFF draws on the expertise and industry knowledge of our members and through our commitment to collaboration and considered policy development, we lead Queensland's agriculture sector towards a strong future, ensuring our members are ahead of the game and have a voice at the table on the issues that matter to their members.

Submission

The National Drought Agreement (NDA) aims to create a joint approach to drought and drought management across all states and territories within Australia. QFF welcomes the opportunity to engage with the agreement as a non-party stakeholder. QFF has been a significant participant in drought policy over the years and has engaged with both state and federal governments to develop and consult on vital drought policy and drought assistance programs. QFF supports a unified approach to drought policy which would remove unnecessary areas of duplication and create a more equitable approach to drought management across states. A nation-wide consistent definition of drought would aid in creating a balance between transactional assistance from the government and farmers building self-reliance and capacity with drought resilience. QFF supports the purpose of the National Drought Agreement to create uniform positions across commonwealth state governments and align with intersecting policy and programs which are not just drought focused but also pertain to areas of policy such as water and disaster management. QFF supports the following focus points of the NDA;

- The Principles identified to guide drought preparedness, response and recovery operations by the parties to the agreement overall are appropriate.
- QFF would be identified as an NDA non-party stakeholder within the NDA.
- QFF supports the ongoing focus on farm businesses, farming families and farming communities affected by drought.

- QFF supports the continued emphasis on long-term preparedness, resilience and risk management in the current and proposed new NDA.

QFF supports the goals and forecasted outcomes of the agreement and highlights the importance of future and continued engagement with non-party stakeholders throughout the term of the agreement in order to achieve these.

Guiding Principles

QFF supports the guiding principles of the NDA and the direction they provide for the national agreement. QFF provides the below comments on the principles described within the agreement.

Principle 1

QFF supports the need to partner with First Nations people and communities when developing and delivering drought policies and programs. This agreement highlights the focus by government funded projects to actively include First Nation demographics moving forward.

Principle 2

QFF supports the development and delivery of drought policies and programs to be evidence-based with a clear role for government to deliver a public benefit. A consistent and scientific basis for definitions of drought is critical to decisions made at a whole-of-government level, catchment level and farm level. Evidence-based scientific data, that investigates impacts of droughts on the agricultural sector needs to be a priority when formulating drought policy.

QFF advocates for an approach to drought resilience on a catchment-by-catchment basis or where irrigated commodities rely on a water allocation and licenses to ensure farm viability and sustainability. For example, a single year of zero access in a particular catchment, may not be considered outside the normal range for that catchment, and in some catchments (based on historical records) two years of zero access may not be considered abnormal. However, in other catchments the same variance might be extremely abnormal and therefore could trigger assistance. Determining the different severity levels of drought and aligning those levels to water availability and use for irrigation requires more integrated water management.

Principle 3

QFF supports the focus on drought as one of numerous hazards that farmers should actively prepare for and adapt. QFF and its members recognise that drought and climate variation is an integral part of farming in Queensland, and farming businesses need to be able to plan for and manage these variations as part of their risk management.

QFF encourages policies and programs with preparation and resilience a priority across all known risks and hazards. QFF encourages farmer self-reliance and as such, supports programs that assess suitability of financial instruments, soil management, water efficiencies and climate adaptation practices. Building capacity and preparation for drought encourages a move away from “transactional” government assistance during dry seasonal conditions that can be considered part of the normal climate cycle.

Preparation and risk mitigation activities are crucial in managing the effects of drought on farm. Risk mitigation is vital, however many farmers are already implementing climate adaptation strategies, such as increasing on-farm dam storage and water-use efficiencies. As such, drought policy and

implementation of the shared responsibility mantra requires details that allow for a local interpretation of drought or extreme drought conditions, the increase in adaptation measures such as an increase in water storage options, and water market trading that help to alleviate the stressors of drought.

QFF encourages primary producers to adopt financial instruments that stabilise and support farm income during extreme and pro-longed drought periods. Financial instruments might include Farm Management Deposits, bank overdrafts, parametric insurance products or a blend of instruments that can provide farm businesses with capacity to survive the financial stress brought on by drought. Pre-season preparation for financial provision is a priority to ensure farm businesses can manage during drought.

Principle 4

While QFF supports and encourages producers to build capacity and self-reliance for drought resilience, there is a limit to how much farmers can prepare themselves. Drought following periods of other weather events or periods of severe weather can compound the adverse impact upon farmers. This principle would allow for farmers to receive government assistance during these times regardless of declaration status.

Principle 5

QFF supports drought policy being extended to not only farmers and producers but the broader community and local government areas which are impacted. Not only will these individuals also feel the impact of drought in different ways (i.e. animals, biodiversity) but can provide input and knowledge in intersecting policy areas which may help local drought agencies better assist the broader community.

Principle 6

QFF has always advocated for drought policy to be catchment-by-catchment focused (or where irrigated commodities rely on water allocation). In order for federal or even state policy and programs to be successful and respond to each catchment and local communities' differing needs, there needs to be a high level of coordination and collaboration between all stakeholders. This engagement needs to be continued throughout the entire term of the NDA to ensure drought preparedness, response and recovery is complementary to existing policy, does not add unnecessary duplication or additional layers of bureaucracy.

Principle 7

Non-party stakeholders are critical to drought policy, especially at a local level decision making on community impacts. QFF plays a role in fostering self-reliance and advocating for appropriate water policy at a state and national level. QFF has always advocated for the fair and equitable use of this resource, engaging with and informing various water and basin plans and legislation throughout the years. As water policy is intrinsically connected with drought policy, these dual discussions should always be considered when developing new frameworks to ensure a unified approach to drought policy. Engaging with stakeholders who have the experience in these policy areas and these connections at regional and local levels is vital for the successful implementation of the NDA.

Principle 8

QFF acknowledges mental health, safety and wellbeing as a critical inclusion within drought policy and program considerations. QFF supports the NDA in fostering more opportunities to improve and provide support for mental health and wellbeing for producers and the wider rural community.

Principle 9

In order to help producers and communities bounce back quicker, QFF supports the NDA in streamlining drought policies to ensure they are efficient in delivering timely assistance during these drought periods. Policy planning should always consider how to help end-users in the fastest and most effective way to prevent flow on impacts to production chains and broader food security.

MEL framework

QFF supports the inclusion of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and reporting framework within the NDA. Transparency and communication with non-party stakeholders and the wider public is a key part of these national agreements and frameworks being successful and supported. It also allows for the continued engagement, review and improvement to the agreement throughout its term. QFF further supports the use of case studies as indicators for Outcomes 1 and 3 and encourages these to be across a variety of local and regional areas, being inclusive of a variety of different users/producers.

Yours sincerely

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