

**Submission to  
THE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD POLICY REFERENCE GROUP  
By  
COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING  
15 July 2005**

**Re: ENSURING A PROFITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE  
AND FOOD SECTOR IN AUSTRALIA**

*Compassion in World Farming* (CIWF) welcomes this opportunity to submit our comments to the *Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group*.<sup>1</sup>

**Section One** of our submission consists of information relevant to the development of future policy directions for Australian agriculture and food.

In **Section Two** we submit CIWF's comments on selected issues raised in the above-named document.

**Section One**

**Relevant information on the development of future policy directions for Australian agriculture and food**

CIWF believes each farmed animal is an individual sentient being, capable of enjoying his/her life, but equally capable of feeling pain and experiencing suffering. Thus these animals should be treated with compassion, care and respect by humans. As long as society wishes to eat meat and eat/use animal products, then we owe those animals a decent quality of life and as humane a death as possible.

CIWF believes that all farmed animals should be kept in circumstances that meet their physiological, social and behavioural needs. Where these needs cannot be met, then the species should not be kept for farming purposes and/or the system should not be permitted.

CIWF opposes the use of non-therapeutic mutilations, operations or invasive procedures on farmed animals. Animals should not be adapted to 'fit' unsuitable systems: such systems should be changed to meet the needs of the animals.

CIWF believes that where the welfare of a farmed animal is in question, then the animal must be given the benefit of the doubt (and the 'precautionary principle' applied).

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<sup>1</sup> CIWF is the leading international animal welfare organisation dedicated to the welfare of farm animals. Based in the UK, CIWF has been established as a farm animal welfare lobby group, seeking humane conditions of rearing and slaughter of farm animals, for nearly 40 years. CIWF now has offices in Ireland, France and The Netherlands, representatives in South Africa, Oceania, several eastern European countries and China. CIWF coordinates the European Coalition for Farm Animals (ECFA), comprising 31 members in 25 European countries and Israel, and is a member of the International Coalition for Farm Animal Welfare (ICFAW) whereby it is officially represented at meetings of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

There are very many practices in animal farming that do not respect the sentience of the animals that we use. Just one example is the long distance transport of animals from Australia to the Middle East. The Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group will be aware of the increasing consumer concern about the treatment of farmed animals, including the very long journeys to slaughter to which some are subjected.

### **Long distance transport of live animals**

CIWF is totally opposed to the long distance live transport of farmed animals for slaughter or further fattening. We believe that animals going for slaughter should be sent to a slaughterhouse as near as possible to the farm on which they have been reared, thus restricting further transport to meat or carcass form, and that an overall maximum limit of 8 hours should be placed on all journeys for live farm animals. While animals are transported, all laws and guidelines should be rigorously enforced.

### **International trade in animal products**

WTO rules currently mitigate against the introduction of good new animal welfare measures. Whilst the WTO allows a country to ban a cruel rearing system within its own territory, it prohibits any ban on the import of products from that cruel system. Producers who may otherwise wish to adhere to higher welfare standards are thus understandably concerned about competition from countries where production costs are lower.

CIWF and partner organisations are working to see WTO rules reformed, to allow WTO members to introduce trade-related measures that are genuinely aimed at securing improved standards of animal welfare. When a WTO member state prohibits the use of a cruel rearing system, they should be entitled to prohibit the *import* of products derived from that cruel system.

The European Union is calling for mandatory labelling on all domestic and imported agricultural products and this would be a useful means by which consumers could identify the conditions in which animals were raised.

### **The need for training and licensing of personnel involved in animal agriculture**

CIWF believes that all stock-people, transporters and slaughterers should be required to be licensed, a condition for which would be appropriate training. This should include animal behaviour and animal welfare aspects.

## **Section Two**

### **CIWF's comments on selected issues raised in *'Ensuring a profitable and sustainable agriculture and food sector in Australia'***

#### **A. Introduction**

#### **2. Future operating environment**

Bullet point 6, p3, *'Food production will involve more direct linkages'*:

CIWF welcomes the fact that a reduction in the use of livestock selling centres is foreseen. Livestock selling centres are likely to be distressing for the animals. Taking the animals there and onward movement can involve substantial travel, which is also often detrimental to the animals' health and well-being. CIWF believes that transport of live animals should be kept to a minimum and that animals should be raised and slaughtered as close as possible to their place of birth.

Bullet point 7, p3, *'Although there is currently considerable debate about genetically modified crops in Australia'*:

This paragraph seems to be referring to GM crops and human health, or more accurately, 'consumer acceptance' of GM products. However, CIWF would like to point out that the feeding of GM crops to livestock is a potential risk to farm animal health. Animals may be fed GM crops that are not considered acceptable for human use and CIWF is very concerned that farm animals may be given GM feed without adequate evidence of its safety. Animals should not be used as sales outlets for agricultural products or by-products that cannot be used elsewhere.

## **Part B – Markets for Agriculture and Food**

### **4. Domestic Markets**

As mentioned above, the European Union is calling for mandatory labelling on all domestic and imported agricultural products as a useful means by which consumers could identify the conditions in which animals were raised.

There is also increasing demand by Australian consumers for the labelling of products domestically produced and sold (including imported), to enable them to ascertain the origins and production methods (i.e. welfare and ideally, environmental) of animal products – food and clothing – they may wish to purchase. Australian consumers are increasingly aware of the range of welfare conditions applied to farmed animals and critical of those which confine animals so that they e.g. cannot move normally and express their natural behaviours. Labelling to denote the system of rearing of farmed animals will help to establish a more discerning public and a market place which responds to the demands of consumers and adjusts accordingly.

## **Part C – Competitiveness of Australian Agriculture and Food Business**

### **7. Research, development, innovation and technology**

We have stated in Section 1 above, our belief that farmed animals should be kept in circumstances that meet their physiological, social and behavioural needs. It therefore stands to reason that agricultural research should be towards systems that accommodate the same needs of animals.

CIWF also believes it vital that a culture of consideration be taught at agricultural colleges and equivalent, to improve the manner of husbandry of farmed animals, including those extensively farmed. Many practices, such as dehorning, castration, spaying, identification by hot iron branding, even methods of shearing, are often routinely carried out in rough or unnecessarily brutal manner.

We draw the attention of the Reference Group to the paper by Dr Carol Petherick, Queensland DPI (Rockhampton), entitled: 'Animal welfare issues associated with

extensive livestock production: the northern Australian beef cattle industry'.<sup>2</sup> Attention to the issues raised by Dr Petherick and recommended action taken would ameliorate many of the welfare problems currently widespread in extensive cattle, and sheep farming by analogy. We strongly recommend that the curricula of agricultural colleges be reviewed and changes made to better reflect a public far more discerning and aware of the standards of animal care and treatment in various Australian animal farming industries, and increasingly demanding of consideration and compassion towards farm animals. The reputation for 'barbarity' in Australian 'livestock' industries extends far beyond Australian national boundaries. Australian agricultural industries would profit, domestically and internationally, from a reputation for more humane/compassionate animal husbandry in extensive (as well as intensive) animal enterprise.

Similar comments apply to 'The need for training and licensing of personnel involved in animal agriculture', above i.e. all personnel involved in animal rearing, handling, husbandry and transport should be trained according to good animal welfare practice.

An appropriate course in the ethics of animal husbandry/handling and associated issues would be a worthwhile additional consideration for agricultural courses.

## **Part D – Using and managing natural resources**

### **Climate variability and change**

While not versed in the detail of drought relief measures to individual farmers, we are aware that many thousands of animals suffer from starvation and dehydration, often to the point of death, throughout Australia, in times of drought. Relief may well be given to farmers, but there is no requirement for a portion of relief funds to go to relieving the suffering of sheep and cattle. The vision of weakened animals unable to extract themselves from the drying mud of dams and waterholes is quite common but unfortunately the farming community may be desensitised to this image and to that of parched animals expiring on an equally parched, cracked and/or dusty landscape. Such extreme, prolonged and ultimately lethal animal suffering should not be tolerated.

Land that will not sustain animals should either be destocked when animals are still able to be moved, either to a slaughterhouse or to property elsewhere where they will receive sustenance, or the animals should be euthanased.

We advocate that a scheme be introduced that would ensure that animal suffering in time of drought is not permitted to the point where animals succumb to either starvation, thirst or exhaustion. If farmers are unable to remove, or euthanase their own animals, either due to lack of will or emotional incapability brought on by their own plight, an authority should step in to ensure that this is done for them.

*In closing*, we add that our comments are by no means exhaustive. However, we trust they will be of assistance to the Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group when looking at a way forward for Australia in terms of a profitable and sustainable agriculture and food sector. We thank the Reference Group for the opportunity to comment.

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com) Applied Animal Behaviour Science 92 (2005) 211-234.