



**Queensland food
and fibre policy**

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A message from the Minister

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting the growth of a productive and prosperous food and fibre sector. Estimated to be valued at \$15.02 billion in 2014–15 (*AgTrends update April 2015*), the sector contributes significantly to the Queensland economy.

Around one in seven working Queenslanders are employed by the agricultural supply chain. Supporting a prosperous and sustainable food and fibre sector will generate long-term jobs, underpinning the economies of our regional and rural communities.

Strong regional and rural economies in turn support local businesses, schools, hospitals and other services, creating prosperous, vibrant, self-sustainable communities. With the globalisation of our markets, it is important that Queensland industries enhance their profitability and growing Asian markets present significant opportunities.

A whole-of-supply-chain approach will drive job creation beyond traditional on-farm employment towards value-adding, exporting and marketing. High-end, value-added products targeting the emerging middle classes in Asia will provide additional opportunities for the sector.

Looking to the future, research and development will be critical to ensure our food and fibre industries are sustainable and the impact on our natural resources (like the Great Barrier Reef) is minimised. This will be particularly important as we further develop the agricultural and pastoral capacity of North Queensland.

Research and development partnerships will be critical to the development of innovative technologies, including remote sensing, robotics, unmanned aerial vehicles and industrial biotechnology. This will be achieved by increasing the productivity of the traditional food and fibre sector, as well as stimulating new industries and servicing niche, high-value markets.

However, we must ensure that Queensland can create and attract a world-class agricultural workforce that can support a modern, innovative and productive sector. We need to work with non-government organisations and industry to ensure that workers with appropriate skills are matched with employers. Equally, we need to provide the opportunity for all workers to gain or update their skills so they can also work in this vibrant sector.

Shared responsibilities between governments and industry is central to managing the risks of pests and diseases, ensuring sustainable natural resource use and addressing impediments to growth through infrastructure, planning and logistics—we are all responsible for the ongoing success of our food and fibre industries. We need to support the food and fibre sector to capitalise on emerging export opportunities, enhance global competitiveness and build on Queensland's reputation as a provider of world-class tropical research and development.

Queensland has a unique opportunity to capitalise on our strengths and grow our food and fibre industries in a sustainable way. This policy outlines the way forward—taking advantage of opportunities while confronting the challenges.

Honourable Bill Byrne MP
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing

Challenges

On coming into office, the Government faces a back drop of the resources boom slowing and unemployment higher than it has been in 11 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force survey, April 2015).

Some of Queensland's major, more traditional, advanced-economy export destinations within Asia are seeing more modest growth than previously experienced (e.g. China, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan) and some are slowing (e.g. Japan). The United States and the Eurozone are still showing mixed signs and, in some cases, significant slowdowns.

To meet the needs of this new era of agricultural production, industry needs to ensure there is a pool of skilled people able to meet the demand. However, connecting skilled workers in urban and peri-urban areas with regional areas is essential for future growth. Agricultural education and skills training will be critical to develop the workforce needed now and in the future.

Biosecurity will always present challenges, as pests and diseases continue to spread around the world through the increasing movement of people and products. Agricultural productivity is particularly susceptible—as is the Queensland environment and our way of life—and it is critical that Queensland ensures its biosecurity capability is world-class.

Agricultural productivity has now reduced to the same level as the whole economy. Research and development can boost growth and invigorate the food and fibre sector with more strategic investments and innovative technologies and practices.

Whole-of-supply-chain approaches are critical, as input costs increase. Efficiencies must be sought from gate to plate to ensure the profitable supply of food and fibre products to markets.





Solutions

Our vision is to support a productive and prosperous food and fibre sector. We will continue to deliver key services across the sector and refocus those services in five priority areas:

- drive growth, efficiency and sustainability
- support a modern and skilled workforce
- advance research and development
- improve Queensland's biosecurity capability
- deliver service innovation.

We will work with industry associations, research bodies and all levels of government to secure the future of the agricultural industry through planning and capitalising on regional opportunities. These services will enable businesses to build capacity and improve productivity, manage risks and increase resilience. Supporting sustainable, long-term management of Queensland's natural resources will also enable the economic growth of the sector.

Focused work around prevention of, response to and recovery from biosecurity threats will mitigate the risks and impacts of animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds to the economy, the environment, social amenity and human health. Services also maintain market and consumer confidence by ensuring the welfare of animals and reducing the risk of agricultural chemical contamination.

Drive growth, efficiency and sustainability

The food and fibre sector is uniquely placed as a mainstay of the Queensland economy. Burgeoning global food demand, driven largely by emerging Asian markets, provides unprecedented opportunities for sector growth.

Working with industry is essential to drive growth and innovation across the entire supply chain, particularly with respect to opportunities presented by North Queensland agricultural initiatives.

At a community level, a productive and prosperous food and fibre sector will drive job creation in regional and rural Queensland.

In consultation with our stakeholders, we will:

- support and monitor the horticulture code of practice
- drive potential domestic and international market expansion with industry partners
- improve the efficiency of transport and logistics across the supply chain
- seek to renegotiate a memorandum of understanding on the delivery of grazing and grains best management practice systems
- work cooperatively across agencies to ensure we adopt a whole-of-supply-chain approach to policy.

Support a modern and skilled workforce

Queensland's regional and rural communities have much to offer in terms of opportunity and lifestyle. However, many people are unsure about the availability of jobs or the skills needed by prospective employers.

Continuing to develop a modern and skilled workforce is essential to future growth in a globalised market. Industry, schools, Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges and local universities will be critical entry points for new rural workforce employees with contemporary skills crucial for industry growth.

In consultation with our stakeholders, we will:

- Implement the rural jobs initiative in conjunction with industry to address labour issues facing Queensland's food and fibre sector
- implement the new partnership agreement between Central Queensland University and the Queensland Agriculture Training Colleges to deliver skill-based training.

Advance research and development

Research and development innovation will be promoted by close engagement with key funding bodies, such as industry-owned research and development corporations. Partnerships between our department and the university sector will be critical to leveraging funding, skills and knowledge, and driving innovation.

A network of strategically placed regional research facilities will support research and development into key commodities across the entire state.

To develop a sustainable and productive sector specialising in high-value and value-added products that can compete in an increasingly globalised market, we will:

- modernise food and fibre technologies across the supply chain that currently limit the potential of the sector
- develop a research and development blueprint with a focus on productivity growth
- support Queensland technology through to commercialisation.





Improve Queensland's biosecurity capability

Queensland's biosecurity preparedness and response capability needs to match the world's best practice. It is a shared responsibility.

Enhanced biosecurity capability will help respond to new biosecurity threats (such as Panama disease tropical race 4) that threaten our food and fibre industries.

Working in partnership with industry and the community to strengthen our biosecurity capability will help position our state as a leader in biosecurity management, and protect our productive food and fibre industries, our lifestyle and our environment.

To achieve this, we will:

- invest \$5 million in the control of wild dog and feral cat populations
- establish a new animal welfare advisory board to address animal welfare issues
- improve our regulatory models to deliver flexible, responsive and proportionate regulation through the implementation of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* and related regulations
- implement a biosecurity information management system that supports timely data capture and analysis to improve the management of day-to-day business and emergency responses
- conduct a detailed review of Queensland's biosecurity capability
- work in partnership with Queensland's agricultural industries, within the national biosecurity system, to ensure the state's interests are represented and our efforts to increase Queensland's preparedness and responsiveness to biosecurity risks are supported nationally.

We are also committed to partnering with other agencies, local governments and industry to deliver more sustainable outcomes for our agricultural producers affected by pests and diseases.

Deliver service innovation

Innovative approaches and more effective ways of engaging with stakeholders and delivering services to our customers will support the growth of a prosperous and profitable food and fibre sector.

To enhance industry engagement and promote the exchange and adoption of ideas and innovation across the sector, we will:

- build on the development of technologies, such as smart apps and e-extension, to create additional and more advanced modes of engagement and innovation across the food and fibre sector
- further streamline regulatory requirements and administrative processes.

Our commitment

We have a unique opportunity to capitalise on our strengths and grow our food and fibre industries in a sustainable way.

To meet our challenges, enable the food and fibre sector to increase productivity and prosperity, and drive long-term job creation in regional and rural Queensland, we will work in partnership with industry and stakeholders across the entire supply chain.

We will:

- work cooperatively across agencies, including Trade and Investment Queensland, and adopt a whole-of-supply-chain approach to policy
- support existing drought relief arrangements until 2018, and work concurrently with industry to develop and enhance a suite of measures that will assist producers to improve their climate risk-management and preparedness strategies for the longer term
- support rural job opportunities in conjunction with industry
- develop a 10-year research and development blueprint for agriculture and food to enhance scientific collaboration within the state, ensure research is aligned with emerging opportunities and seek new and innovative ways to attract new funds
- support industry initiatives for the development of a national multi-peril crop insurance scheme to provide insurance cover for a range of climatic events that could result in a poor harvest (such as drought or floods)
- support and monitor the horticulture code of practice between growers and retailers
- conduct a detailed review of Queensland's biosecurity capability to develop a long-term plan that restores our state's biosecurity response to world's best practice standards



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- implement the new partnership agreement between Central Queensland University and the Queensland Agriculture Training Colleges to deliver skill-based training
 - support three government-sponsored outbound trade missions per year in conjunction with industry to support traditional food and fibre products, and encourage niche, new and emerging products
 - provide an additional \$5 million over three years to leverage additional investment by local government and industry to support new initiatives aimed at destroying wild dog and feral cat populations
 - establish a new animal welfare advisory board comprising technical, community and industry representatives to advise the Minister on issues associated with the development and promotion of codes of practices for the humane treatment of animals—on farm, in transport and at point of slaughter.

To achieve an increase in agricultural productivity and more prosperous communities, we will continue to deliver key services, collaborate with stakeholders and support the growth of the Queensland food and fibre sector.



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