

18 December 2023

Re: Agriculture and land sector sectoral plan discussion paper

The Australian Government is developing a net zero plan, to outline how Australia can transition its economy by 2050. Six sectoral plans will support this work, including one for the agriculture and land sectors. To develop the right plan, the Government has indicated it needs a better understanding of what is possible for the agriculture and land sectors in terms of emissions reductions and what technologies and practices Australia needs to invest in to help the sectors to transition. Feedback has been requested to help ensure the plan is ambitious but achievable.

The Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform was established in Australia in 2007 as a loosely affiliated Chapter of the Global SAI Platform. The SAI Platform has a unique value proposition that differentiates it from other sustainability and industry organisations. Its membership from across the food and beverage value chain provides unique commercial supply chain perspectives on issues and policies relevant to sustainability in the Australian context. The platform includes a number of other Australian agricultural companies and corporations as well as multi-national entities with subsidiaries in Australia.

The Vision of the Platform is to:

“A sustainable, thriving and resilient agricultural sector that protects the earth’s resources, human rights and animal welfare.”

SAI Platform Australia’s Strategy Plan has three strategic priorities:

1. Facilitate sustainability learning among members
2. Promote sustainability practices among farmers, members and other stakeholders
3. Build partnerships and alliances to implement sustainable practices along the supply chain.

SAI Platform Australia is not an advocacy organisation and its only interest in making this submission is to inform the development of the Government’s agriculture and land sectoral plan by requesting that the Government take a number of considerations into account when developing the plan.

These are:

1. Take into account the implications for the supply chain of any policies for the agriculture and land sector. Producers on inputs, producers of agriculture, food, fibre and fisheries, processors and distributors of those products will all be potentially impacted by agriculture and land sector policies. Participants at a Carbon Practice Forum held by the Platform in Canberra on 10 October 2023 were provided with perspectives on carbon practice change opportunities and challenges by SAI members from across the chain, and a key theme that emerged from the Forum was the complexity of implementing practice change along the chain. The Platform urges the Government to consider this carefully in framing policy positions.
2. Reflecting the complexity of policy-making in this area, the Government should ensure that both the costs and benefits of policies be considered in their design and implementation. Whilst there are many opportunities for practice change that change also entails costs, including opportunity costs and adjustment costs. Recognising these will help ensure the best initiatives are pursued and have the greatest chance of being successfully implemented.
3. The SAI Platform is available to provide to the Government its unique supply chain-based perspective on the development of the best possible sectoral plan. The Forum mentioned above included presentations from several SAI members on their initiatives and challenges in this space, and Government representatives participated to learn about these, but the Platform is willing to facilitate further opportunities for Government to engage with senior sustainability executives within our member organisations to help inform the future development of the sectoral plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information or assistance from the Platform.

Regards



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