

SUBMISSION INTO THE CONSULTATION ON PHASING OUT LIVE SHEEP EXPORTS BY SEA

Mechanism

The Federal Government needs to start the process by giving a firm date for the cessation of the trade to enable graziers time and opportunity to develop a frozen meat market or pursue alternative farming practices. It is then up to each exporter as to how they manage their own transition away from live exporting.

Government assistance could be given in the form of research relevant to each farming region, e.g. anticipated effects of climate change; demographic trends; new market opportunities for growing silage, hay, crops for human consumption, and developing tourism.

Government assistance should also be given in solving labour shortage issues and/or providing re-training opportunities for personnel adversely affected by the transition.

Timeframe

It is essential that legislation ensuring the permanent cessation of the live sheep export trade be passed as soon as possible within this Federal Government's first term of office. To not do this makes the stated commitment meaningless. This trade must be stopped with all speed because:

- Every ship loaded with sheep for export that leaves an Australian port carries with it a high risk of animal suffering and abuse as demonstrated since 1985 from the Senate Select Committee Report into the trade, through to the Awassi Express incident, McCarthy and Moss Reviews etc.
- Once such legislation is passed, the planning and procedures necessary to enact it will take time, so the sooner the process starts, the sooner the legislation can be implemented.
- The credibility of, and confidence in, this Federal Government lies in the fulfilment of this election promise. It cannot become just rhetoric and left to the vagaries of the winner of the next election.

Impact and adjustment

Following the media exposes of its operations, the live animal export trade does not have public licence to operate.

The cessation of this trade will demonstrate steps being taken by the agricultural sector and Government to bring its practices into alignment with community values regarding animal welfare standards.

The barriers and constraints faced by exporters and related supply chain operators can be overcome by planning and genuine consultation.

No grazer or supply chain participant should be left without a living. Financial support should be given to those suffering financial disadvantage through the transition period, along with government assistance in exploring new job opportunities through domestic processing; investment in chilled and frozen meat only trade; exploration and investment in more sustainable and humane plant based options e.g. crops for human and animal consumption.

Foreign aid can be given to third world live animal importing countries such as Indonesia who claim they don't have refrigeration facilities to store frozen meat. This is not an impediment to other principle importers such as Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE!

The transition period will depend on how well planning is done, and the willingness of participants to approach the transition with an open mind and explore new possibilities.

New Zealand has proven that live animal exporting can stop without the sheep industry collapsing. Our own agricultural sectors affected by Chinese levies, e.g, wine, lobster, barley, rapidly found new markets or alternative production lines. Newcastle now flourishes after the closure of the coal industry. Successful transition is possible!

Opportunities

Through the agricultural Research & Development Councils substantial funding already exists - \$800m+per annum - to fund research such as improving crop yields, animal welfare and processing, and the efficiency of harvesting. This is particularly true of Agricultural Innovation Australia. This funding should be applied to setting up the necessary infrastructure to develop and market a frozen/chilled exports market.

While climate change is one of the biggest threats to primary industry, it also brings opportunities through forcing reappraisals of the appropriateness of current primary production lines given the changing weather patterns and whether, for instance, cropping would be a better alternative to sheep farming.

Lessons can be learned from the cattle industry e.g. [REDACTED], who have developed a co-operative model for pastoralists operations. Pooling of individual resources could help fund the establishment of new abattoir facilities, or even micro abattoirs such as trialled on [REDACTED] – near sheep production hubs. Not only would this create more jobs regionally, but obviate the need to truck sheep long distances. The result of stopping the live animal export trade should not result in exchanging one form of horrendous animal abuse for another by land!

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