

Dear Panel,

I wish to express my heartfelt opposition to Australia's live sheep export trade and will address the term of reference pertaining to opportunities for farmers involved in this distasteful trade – opportunities that don't involve the exploitation of non-human animals. We need to start looking towards humane alternatives to the live sheep export trade.

Without question, there has been much opposition from the farming community to plant-based products but even the National Farmers' Federation – who could be considered the nemesis of non-human animals and those who speak up for them – concedes that there is a shift in the world, that this shift is happening quickly, and they can no longer afford to consider plant-based food production as a threat. They need to consider it an opportunity.

NSW Farmers CEO, Peter Arkle, is on the record as saying there is a need to ensure that Australian producers are able to diversify and take advantage of new opportunities. For this to happen he has said that it's necessary "that policy and regulatory settings are in place to encourage production and manufacturing in Australia" and that "Australia has the potential to become a plant-protein powerhouse".

Cultured meat (also known as "cell-based meat"), meat grown from cell cultures, is one example of this kind of protein. Cultured meat not only spares misery and animals' lives, but it has far less of an environmental impact than meat production.

There is an expectation that we will have access to commercially available cultured meat in the not-too-distant future. Farmers involved in the live sheep export trade need to acknowledge that they cannot continue indefinitely with this trade and that it is imperative they seek other ways of farming, if farming is what they wish to continue to engage in. Cultured meat is one possible avenue for them.

With the rise in vegan food, either from vegans themselves or from those interested in eating vegan food, farmers would be wise to explore the potential here.

Another alternative to live sheep export is that of cropping. Cropping is likely to increase in the future and with technological advances, the rise in the demand for plant-based food, and with the less physical demands of cropping, for future generations of farmers producing high-protein crops would be far more sustainable than sheep farming.

Our food system needs an overhaul – an overhaul to address the health of humans, climate change, environmental destruction, and animal welfare. Old ways of thinking (such as a belief we need to consume animal products) are increasingly losing favour as we wake up more and more to how destructive the animal agriculture industry is. The live sheep export industry is a component of that destruction.

This trade should be phased out at the very earliest opportunity. Anthony Albanese promised a phase out and now he needs to honour his promise.

The live sheep export trade needs to go.

Thank you for your time.

Saskia Lemerande