

## farmonline feedback

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### ONLINE POLL

WITH billion-dollar Asian free-trade deals hinging on complex negotiations, including the option to change foreign direct investment thresholds for some countries, this week www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au wants to know: **Should we compromise on foreign investment rules to facilitate agricultural trade?**

● Results from last week's poll (Are you changing your farming practices to adapt to climate variability?): yes – 44pc; no – 52.4pc; not sure – 3.6pc. Total votes: 84 (by Monday).

### READERS' SAY

#### CCA seeks slice of levy

THE Cattle Council of Australia wants \$4 million from income generated by the \$5/head grassfed beef cattle levy to help long-term planning. Here's what www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au readers say.

- Well, this will get a volley of shots from the sidelines, but the article is right on the money. Learn how your industry works before you try to pull it down. – **Logic.**
- The levy is not for political purposes and cannot/must not be used to fund CC or any other political body. Bad idea and must be fought at every level. – **Chick Olsson.**
- Whoa, CCA – no money until there is a complete restructuring, and if that cannot be done, start off with a fresh fully democratic organisation. – **Bushfire Blonde.**
- The headline says: 'CCA seeks slice of levy'. My headline would read: 'But hell would freeze over first'. The very notion that a 'political' organisation should be funded via a government 'tax' is about as abhorrent as it can get. These leeches should fund themselves. – **PAYG.**
- The government will never support compulsory levies on cattle advocacy and the cattle industry will never unite until the government makes it compulsory. We despair ... this unsightly infighting is not helping any side. – **The Older I Get.**
- I agree with PAYG and Chick Olsson 100pc. We should never allow political movements to be funded from tax – it circumvents democracy. That's why we are in this unprofitable mess ... a black hole into which our hard-earned money falls. No government funding for CCA! – **Northern Exporter.**
- Well, it's a start, but the big, fat mining companies still have the see-saw tipped in their favour – by a long shot. – **Antonbiz.**

#### CSG contamination fear

● I'm all for mining and for farming on our beautiful land, but the more I read about CSG, any chance artesian water could be contaminated [means] we should walk away. – **Concerned.**

## BJD's red herring

QUEENSLAND'S chief biosecurity officer, Jim Thompson, provides no evidence for the claim that BJD's "greatest impact is on access to BJD-sensitive markets in Australia and overseas" (QCL 6-2-14). That's because there is little basis to this claim. Later in his letter Mr Thompson says: "The maintenance of the protected zone status is necessary for ongoing exports to BJD-sensitive markets, including Indonesia". Indonesia is also sensitive to 11 other diseases, many of which are present on most Queensland farms – e.g. pestivirus. So media repetition of BJD-sensitive markets that singles out BJD as a special case is emotive and misleading. These other diseases are managed on-farm without the need of a protected zone. If BJD in Queensland was a BJD management area and not a protected zone status, all currently quarantined BJD-suspect Queensland producers could send cattle to Indonesia.

Being only suspect means they have no confirmed infection and clearly comply with Indonesia's requirement that their property "c) has been free from clinical evidence of Johne's disease, which officially reported during the five years prior to shipment", quoting from the Indonesian list of import requirements. Only five properties of the 19,000 beef properties in Queensland currently could not meet this requirement. Queensland DAFF recently released a report titled 'Summary of factors and costs associated with different bovine Johne's disease management options in Queensland'. The mention of Japan limiting the import of beef products because they are considering eradicating BJD would be laughable if it were not so damaging in this debate.

The author of this report diminishes his work with this red herring. In all my time of trading beef to Japan over many trips, our customers keenly sought out our beef as wholesome – both lotfed and grassfed. Their other major supplier is the US where BJD is endemic. Japan would not deny supply from their two major and respected suppliers of beef because of BJD. In his letter Mr Thompson asserts: "In all industries and regions in Australia and overseas, where regulatory control of BJD has been abandoned in favour of producer management, infection has increased in prevalence and distribution." These claims by Mr Thompson are a clear case of scaremongering of our beef producers by a person who holds a place of trust in his role with Biosecurity Queensland. He goes on to suggest that on-farm management of BJD rather than a regulated protected zone would result in the "spread of infection, as can be seen in states that have deregulated BJD control, for example, Victoria and NSW".

Victoria deregulated in July 2012 and NSW deregulated their dairy sector at the same time. He has no evidence for this emotive and misleading statement. – **John Gunthorpe, chairman, Australian Beef Industry Foundation, Melbourne.**

## LETTER OF THE WEEK

# Govt misses point on carbon flows

I WAS appalled to read the patronising response by Agriculture Minister John McVeigh in response to the billboard shown in QCL 27-2-14 that states "Campbell. Remind McVeigh carbon flows underpin food production, profit and protect the reef. Recognise 21st century knowledge."

Mr Lauder, a former pastoralist and shown in the photo, has demonstrated on numerous occasions that it is possible to use science to mitigate the impacts of nature and to improve the resilience of the landscape, recarbonise the soil and reduce methane emissions. The Queensland government has given lip service to the concept and has missed the point that this process of management of carbon flows has also been proven as a consistently successful approach to drought management, and a low-cost, low-technology mechanism for farming in a wide range of grazing situations and soil types.

Mr Lauder has not dismissed the holistic management of farms or the support the

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government has given to education relating to basic farming techniques, but is trying to say that when producers understand the concept of carbon flows, current extension becomes easier to understand. He says that it is following the path of carbon that makes it easier to understand the landscape functions, and in turn, easier to manage resources sustainably and profitably. He is rightly suggesting that these concepts are missing from current extension and general programs, and would provide a critical link between good practice and the goal – best practice. I encourage the decision-makers in both

the Queensland government and Meat and Livestock Australia to read Mr Lauder's online material, and to stop dismissing proven science and good practice.

And another thing... I commend Geoff Edwards for his opinion piece in last week's QCL (12-3-14) titled 'Stewardship payments: remedy for drought pain'. Dr Edwards suggests it is time for city folk to pay their share of the true cost of sustainable and profitable agriculture. However, most of his suggestions link closely to an article in the previous week's QCL showing that this could be achieved for virtually nothing with better extension of knowledge regarding the carbon flows concept. Dr Edwards' opinion piece notes that "Farming properties are not just food and fibre factories but complex natural systems". Alan Lauder addressed this very issue in the article discussing his billboard. – **AJ Hunter, Wynnum.**

Editor: Thanks for your letter, AJ. A book is on its way to you.

## CSG sits on hands

DESPITE Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney's warning that Powerlink Queensland requires a social licence to operate, minor policy changes are not changing the attitudes in regards to negotiating compensation. Minister, we have done the full circuit and are back at the start. Landholders requested change almost 12 months ago for resource infrastructure under the Acquisition of Land Act 1967, which has not kept pace with today's resources boom. The ALA 1967 is allowing the coal seam gas companies to sit on their hands and say we are merely customers of Powerlink. This infrastructure is not advancing the act's purpose under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, and ensuring accountable consultation occurs or seeks to provide for equity between present and future generations in agriculture. Fast-tracking the resources sector may be a Queensland government priority, but to fulfil the four pillars of the economy, a more fair and equitable outcome is needed for rural Queenslanders and the productivity of their properties. 'Co-existence' and 'social licence' have little meaning for agriculture at this time. Writing about the Regional Planning Interests Bill, Queensland Resources Council's Michael Roche in a major Brisbane newspaper likened the current evaluation for resource development to of all things the family home, saying it provided an annual opportunity for neighbours to object to your house because they don't like the way it looks.

QRC is then quoted as saying: "So would you build your house and invest your

I will not buckle to mining'



A MARK PHELPS  
A QLD, been paid proper compensation for the loss of their land and the government knows the industry is not doing them any favours.

It removes the psychological barrier that mining companies have held over landholders. ... government has never condoned a mining sector free-for-all.

The negotiation involves an independent valuation, agreements and the consultation of the community. The Queensland Resources Council is not doing them any favours.

family's funds in Queensland, or would you go and live in another state where you have certainty that as long as you meet all the necessary regulations, you can live in the house, observing the laws, for decades to come?"

The trouble is that resource development, so flippantly called the 'family home', actually does impact on our homes. We liken the resources sector and Powerlink to having a public laneway in our back yard constantly being landscaped into an industrial site and never knowing who or what will be there next. Landholders must have the right to object and negotiate commercial compensation for the 80-year life of the projects. – **Kerry Ladbroke, Bulah, Yuleba.**

## Landholders at risk

DEPUTY Premier Jeff Seeney is trying to hoodwink Queenslanders into believing he is standing up to the mining industry to protect landholders. The government's proposed Regional Planning Interests Bill does nothing to protect landholders, and Queensland's best agricultural land will

continue to be overrun by mining. Jeff Seeney thinks he can hoodwink Queenslanders into thinking he is trying to protect them and their livelihoods, but we all know this is rubbish. The reality is the LNP is continuing to allow open slather to mining companies wanting to open-cut some of the best farming country in the state. A clear sign that this report favours the mining industry is the fact that Michael Roche of the Queensland Resources Council is singing its praises. If the proposed bill is passed:

- The Strategic Cropping Land Act, which provides the only protection for the best cropping land in the state from open-cut mining, would be dropped;
- Mining would continue to be allowed near homes and towns and in environmentally sensitive areas;
- Regional interests would be ignored and tourist icons could be mined;
- Landholders would be isolated from their communities to fight against mining giants.

In the rush to pass this bill, the government is ignoring the fact that they haven't finished mapping the 'priority agricultural areas' supposedly protected by it. I'd be surprised if Mr Seeney or anyone in his government read any of the landholders' many submissions warning about the ramifications of this bill. – **Drew Hutton, national president, Lock the Gate.**

## Santos takes water responsibility seriously

IN RESPONSE to the article 'Narrabri probe uncovers CSG contamination' (QCL, 13-3-14), I would like to set out the facts regarding groundwater underlying a pond that is being decommissioned at our operations near Narrabri in NSW. Santos has been clear about the fact that certain facilities constructed by the previous owner did not meet our high operating standards. After we took over the Narrabri operations and became aware of the issues, we immediately decided to shut down the water-treatment facilities and promptly installed monitoring wells. Last year, Santos recorded elevated levels of trace elements in localised groundwater underneath a holding pond constructed by the previous operator near Narrabri. We proactively reported this finding to the NSW government and the local council, and received a \$1500 fine which reflected the minimal environmental impact, Santos' responsible reporting and the remedial actions we are undertaking. The facts are:

- The elevated elements in the water under the pond are naturally occurring.

Narrabri probe uncovers CSG contamination



By GIAN NICOLIS  
A QLD, been paid proper compensation for the loss of their land and the government knows the industry is not doing them any favours.

There has been no 'contamination' from introduced compounds.

- The elements were at lower levels than are contained in the surrounding soil.
- The uranium level in the tested water is less than half that found in sediments in the local river system.
- The affected water is isolated. It is not used for drinking or irrigation. The NSW government and the EPA found the leak was "small, localised and contained", and there was no harm to either humans or animals. With regards to Queensland specifically, your readers can be confident that Santos is operating its business safely and responsibly, and in accordance with Queensland's strong regulatory framework. This includes six pieces of legislation and four government agencies regulating water issues alone. – **James Baulderstone, vice-president, eastern Australia, Santos Ltd.**

## QUEENSLAND Country Life

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