

Australia can shift from vicious to virtuous cycles in agriculture – new discussion paper

EMBARGOED: 12 noon Wednesday 12 August 2015

A discussion paper released today by the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) finds that sustainability-focused farmers, brands, investors and supply chains will play a key role in a stronger economic and ecological future for Australian agriculture.

From vicious to virtuous cycles: a sustainable future for Australian agriculture argues that the natural resource base that underpins agricultural production has been gripped in a cycle of mutually-reinforcing environmental and economic decline.

Innovative brands, farming practices and supply chains that meet growing consumer demand for sustainable products can help to reverse this trend. This can offer a new competitive edge for Australian agriculture as sustainability concerns and resource constraints reshape global marketplaces.

Co-author Sue Ogilvy said the first step towards achieving this is to demonstrate the sustainability and productivity benefits of tapping into virtuous ecological cycles – and to encourage more producers, brands and investors to get on board.

“Innovative farmers are already showing that regenerative approaches work. They are delivering output that meets more exacting quality and sustainability standards – and in some cases may be doing so at a lower cost of production.”

“Linking these producers to sustainability-conscious brands and consumers, and improving how we measure and value the natural resources that underpin agricultural productivity, are key to building on the progress Aussie farmers have already made.”

Co-author and CPD fellow Dr Anand Kulkarni said that while sustainably boosting the volume of output is part of the picture, the most enduring opportunities for Australia will stem from our ability to deliver high-quality, differentiated products.

“Consumers are voting with their wallets. The agricultural supply chains Australian producers are part of are increasingly focused on serving high-value, sustainability-conscious markets, in Australia and overseas. We are already in the mix – but we have the potential to be leading the charge.”

The discussion paper recommends three policy for seizing this potential: building the evidence base for sustainable approaches; extending cutting-edge sustainable practices to ‘fast followers’; and developing metrics and measurement techniques to ensure market participants have the information and incentives needed to drive better sustainability outcomes.

The launch of the paper was hosted by Ernst & Young as part of a broader stakeholder roundtable. This included an address by Major General Michael Jeffery, former Governor General and current National Advocate for Soil Health.

Lead author Sue Ogilvy is available for interview.

Full report available here: www.cpd.org.au

Media contact: Sam Hurley 0405 771 538 sam.hurley@cpd.org.au

MELBOURNE
15-31 PELHAM STREET
CARLTON
VIC 3000
03 9929 9915

SYDNEY
PO BOX K3
HAYMARKET
NSW 1240
02 9043 6815

www.cpd.org.au

ACN: 124 425 896
ABN: 82124 425 896