



Newsletter

APRIL 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001
Website: www.nswfarmwriters.org

Climate change - a view from the farm

THE contentious issue of climate change and its impact on agriculture will be the focus of the Farm Writers' 27 April luncheon.

Members and guests will hear from forward-thinking NSW farmer and Nuffield scholar David Cattnach, who has been investigating this issue over the past decade, sparked by his own farm planning and then through studies conducted in Australia and overseas as part of his scholarship.

He was involved with the Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Accounting and is working on a number of climate change projects including adaptation and risk management.

Mr Cattnach believes Australia's agricultural industry needs to accept a future of rising temperatures and reduced rainfall and invest now in research to find ways for farmers to adapt to this new reality.

"While there is a growing knowledge base for how we can become more energy efficient at home, there is a lack of knowledge about how to address and reduce the impacts of climate change and global warming on-farm," Mr Cattnach said.

His presentation will outline the key

research areas he believes need to be urgently addressed, including how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, developing new crop varieties that can cope with global warming and assessing integrated pest management strategies and chemical registrations to deal with predicted southern migration of insects, weeds and diseases.

Mr Cattnach will also explain why he believes carbon trading is not a practical or profitable solution to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture.

He believes an important tool is an on-farm emissions audit, which he was the first farmer in Australia to undertake in 1999. He advocates the need for such an audit to be internationally standardised.

Mr Cattnach manages "Sunshower", his family's 600 hectare cropping property at Darlington Point in south-western NSW, where he has implemented a number of energy and resource efficiency strategies, including a fully integrated irrigation and drainage system to ensure no water leaves the property even if a storm event coincides with an irrigation. The farm is based on a permanent bed system using satellite technology to get the beds both straight and at the



NSW farmer David Cattnach will address climate change and its impact on agriculture.

correct spacing so as to eliminate underlap and overlap with chemicals, fertiliser and planting.

Join Farm Writers' Corporate Member of the Month, **Telstra Country Wide**, to hear a farmer's view of climate change and the emerging responses.

[To book your place for lunch on Friday 27 April go to our website: www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm)

Bookings for the Federal Budget Breakfast on Wednesday 9 May (7-9am) open soon.

Register early and online for the Friday, 27 April luncheon for a farmer's view of climate change

Corporate Members of the Month: Telstra Country Wide

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington Street, Sydney

When: **Friday, 27 April at 12pm for 12:30pm**

Cost: \$60 per head, or voucher, for members. \$70 per head for all non-members

Register: **BEFORE 5:00pm on Tuesday, 24 April 2007**

online: www.nswfarmwriters.org, email: bookings@nswfarmwriters.org, phone: Lauren Duff (02) 8204 3731

Reminder: If bookings are not cancelled by the deadline, the person making the booking will be invoiced. We will do our best to accommodate late bookings and cancellations – please phone Lauren Duff on (02) 8204 3731.

Single desk discussion highlights need for best outcome for growers

Contributed by Trudy Glasgow, Department of Primary Industries

AUSTRALIA'S single desk wheat export marketing arrangements have come under considerable scrutiny in recent months as a result of the Volker and Cole inquiries into the AWB Iraqi "kickback" scandal.

The contentious issue of whether the single desk should be retained or abolished was the topic of a lively discussion at the March luncheon.

Members and guests heard the case for retaining the existing arrangements from NSW Farmers Association senior vice president Richard Clark, while grain trader and OzEpulse managing director Peter Howard outlined his reasons for why it should be "immediately deregulated".

Mr Howard described how, from his experience, the single desk system was flawed because AWB failed to maximise grower returns by blocking export applications from private grain traders, such as him on more than one occasion, who offered prices much higher than those offered by AWB.

In the 1999/2000 season, the newly privatised AWB International rejected his company New England Agricultural Traders' (NEAT) application to export fungal stained durum wheat, for which AWB was not offering a pool price.

Mr Howard explained how this decision instigated NEAT's journey through the Federal and High Courts in a bid to prove that AWBI should review each application on its merits and that it was unlawful for AWBI to throw a blanket rejection over all applications from private exporters.

But the Federal Court found AWBI's actions were not unlawful. NEAT, supported by 200 NSW durum growers, unsuccessfully appealed to the High Court which ruled that the power of veto was not judicially reviewable because a private company, not the government, made the decisions.

Mr Howard said the outcome highlighted the absurdity of the current legislation, which continued to stifle his efforts to export wheat at prices higher than those AWB was offering growers this year, despite the power of veto being temporarily transferred from AWB to the Federal Government.



Richard Clark and Peter Howard presented the pros and cons of the single desk, respectively.

"The legislation is flawed – why have a legislated application process when it's a foregone conclusion that all applications will be unsuccessful - and the power of veto has been misused to maximise returns to AWB Limited rather than maximising returns to growers," he said.

"In my opinion, growers would be much better off if the export market was immediately deregulated."

Mr Howard said it was significant that during the High Court hearing, Justice Michael Kirby warned of the danger of a private company such as AWB using legislative powers but not being accountable to the public, and that the judge said last year, amidst the unfolding of the Iraqi debacle, that his fellow High Court judges had got it wrong in the NEAT case.

Presenting the case for the other side, Richard Clark focused strongly on the collective views of NSW Farmers Association members, 75 per cent of whom indicated in a recent survey that they support the single desk, and 66 per cent support AWBI as its manager.

Other surveys, rallies and meetings have reinforced this result, including a series of national meetings with industry in recent months, Mr Clark said.

"Growers like the market power they get from selling collectively and they have a very substantial investment in the reputation of Australian grain internationally," he said.

Mr Clark stressed that while the association was supportive of the single desk, it was also keen to see incremental change to improve corporate governance transparency and independence within the AWB group.

"For example we support more contestable pool service arrangements, a national standardised grain pricing information system and the publication of more timely and accurate stock information," he said.

Mr Clark outlined the numerous benefits to growers of the single desk arrangement including the ability to extract price premiums on export markets for growers, promote income/price stabilisation and reduce domestic supply chain costs.

"NSW Farmers Association members want a single desk which is as cost effective and efficient as possible so they get the highest possible returns for their wheat."

The presentations prompted a lively discussion and a range of questions from the audience identified as the common link between the speakers a desire to see the best outcome for the grower. 🙌 ***Thank you to corporate members of the month, Rimfire Resources and Rabobank.***

🗣️ If there is a speaker you'd like to hear at a Farm Writers' event - email us at suggestions@nswfarmwriters.org

April 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc

President:

Bev Jordan
bevjordan@msn.com.au

Secretary:

Emily Ray
eray@hassall.com.au

Newsletter:

Sally Edgar
sally@oneprofile.com.au

Website sponsored by Telstra Country Wide