



# Newsletter

March 2008

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc  
GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001  
Website: [www.nswfarmwriters.org](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org)

## Food Vs Fuel: Where is agriculture's future ?

Driven by oil prices, concerns about energy security, greenhouse gas emissions and in some instances government policies, global biofuel production is likely to impact on many areas of Australian agriculture.

While grain growers might rejoice at dwindling global stocks and strong prices, grain dependent industries, including human food processors, are facing steep input price rises.

In another Farm Writers' inter-active panel discussion, Ingrid Richardson, Senior Analyst with Rabobank, will join Rob Gordon, Executive Director of Renewable Fuels Australia, and Jim Cudmore, Vice President of the Australian Lot Feeders Association, on March 28 to discuss the impact and potential of the sector in Australia.

Michael Condon, ABC Radio's NSW Country Hour Presenter, will direct the panel discussion and encourage audience interaction.

Farm Writers can expect a spirited debate between Mr Gordon, the biofuel industry's leading advocate, and Jim Cudmore, whose members wear the pain of any upward movement in grain prices.

Mr Gordon is in the middle of a battle with the new Rudd Government to

reverse the planned phase out of tax exemption for biofuels from 2011 and introduce a mandated target for their use.

He is widely admired for his passionate advocacy of renewable fuels in Australia.

Rabobank's senior analyst Ingrid Richardson has been given the tough job of making sure there are some facts on the table as the debate warms up.

When Jim Cudmore is not working on industry matters he runs the 9000 head Kerwee feedlot on Queensland's Darling Downs.

Michael Condon is hoping to produce a highlights package from the panel session to broadcast during ABC Radio's Country Hour.

Michael encourages interaction from the floor via questions to the panellists.

ABARE's Outlook conference heard this month that global biofuel production had tripled since 2000. The largest biofuel producers are the European Union, the United States and Brazil.

ABARE says the price of grains and oilseeds has been at record levels during 2007-08 and are expected to remain high in 2008-09. It is enough to give Jim Cudmore indigestion at Farm Writers.



*Rabobank's Ingrid Richardson*

Join our corporate members of the month to participate in this panel session on Friday, March 28.

To get your book of 6 (\$360) or 12 (\$720) vouchers contact [Richard.Hincks@rabobank.com](mailto:Richard.Hincks@rabobank.com)

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

**Register early and online for the Friday, March 28 lunch. Please note booking deadlines are extended to 5 pm on the Tuesday following Easter (Tuesday March 25)**

**Venue:** The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington St, Sydney  
**When:** **Friday, March 28 2008 at 12.00 pm for 12.30 pm**  
**Cost:** \$60 per head, or voucher, for members. \$70 per head for all non-members  
**Register:** **BEFORE 5:00pm on Tuesday March 25 2008**  
online: [www.nswfarmwriters.org](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org), email: [bookings@nswfarmwriters.org](mailto:bookings@nswfarmwriters.org)

**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 Stuart Hutton (02) 9338 2626

## Max Ould on leadership and globalisation

NSW Farm Writers was pleased to host Max Ould, Chairman of Goodman Fielder – Australia's largest food manufacturer – and a director of Pacific Brands Limited, Foster's Group Limited and The Australian Gas Light Company, at our 29 February meeting.

Max spoke on two areas he is passionate about – leadership, and the future and direction of the agriculture sector.

“There are many facets to a good leader,” Max said. “Vision, culture, empathy and teambuilding are mainly down to personal style.

“But what defines a true leader are the hard issues. Scale and efficiency. Identifying the right signals to base strategy on. Discipline to stick to the strategic direction.”

Max then moved on to the future and direction of the food, fibre and beverage sector.

“Globalisation of trade has had a massive impact on Australian agriculture. In terms of our industry – consolidation is the key. It is going to come. You need to decide if you want to be ahead of the trend or behind it. Historically, agriculture tends to be behind.

“There is a long history of boom and bust in agriculture, but the current ‘protein boom’ and ‘ag-flation’ have been achieved in a time of global abundance, which is rare.

“How has this been achieved?

“Global stocks are low, and dietary change in developing countries, such as China and India, has increased demand for protein products.

“Demand for bio-fuels is changing the nature of crop production globally. Areas that had been planted to soy and wheat are now going into maize for biofuels,” Max said.

“The use of protein beyond human food consumption is driven by government policy, and in the short term this does not look like it is going to change.

“This could be a permanent shift, as opposed to the traditional ‘boom and bust’, but long term there has always been some intervention that causes the booms to end – with some permanent inflationary impact.

“Governments tend to respond with monetary pressures, which in turn makes the demand in developing countries worse.”

In terms of agricultural production, Max sees the development of water as a tradable commodity a key factor that will determine the changing face of agriculture in Australia.

“About 30 per cent of agricultural production comes from irrigated areas that account for about one per cent of the total productive area.

“I think we will see a permanent shift in farming practices – with much expected to move north, where the majority of the runoff water falls,” Max said.

## Awards Reminder

### 2008 Alltech Award now open: closes March 31

Farm Writers' Association and Alltech are looking for young journalists with leadership ambitions for the 2008 contest.

The winner will represent NSW and compete for the national award – a trip to Europe to attend the 2008 IFAJ Congress.

The national award covers airfares and registration costs for the IFAJ congress up to the value of \$5,000.

The 2008 State winner will be the entrant who best illustrates leadership potential and a commitment to rural journalism.

To qualify, entrants must be financial members of Farm Writers' Association of NSW, 32 years of age or under as at 31 December 2007, and actively working in the media in Australia, covering rural or agricultural issues.

The 2008 congress will be held jointly by Austria and Slovenia in early September 2008.

**Entries for the 2008 award close on March 31.** Details are available on the Farm Writers' website at <http://www.nswfarmwriters.org.htm>.

### JB Fairfax Award for Rural Journalism

The JB Fairfax Award for Rural Journalism encourages undergraduate or postgraduate students of studies relevant to rural affairs to consider a career in rural journalism upon graduation.

One annual award of \$10,000 will be offered to an outstanding student enrolled in a relevant degree to be used towards the costs of the student's education.

The Award is managed by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Foundation (RASf). Apply at [www.rasf.org.au](http://www.rasf.org.au)

## If you could listen to Farm Writers online...

Farm Writers is seeking fast and frank feedback from members to know if you would listen to our guest speakers if we posted audio files on our website after the event.

Not all speakers provide written copies of their speech; if we record guest speakers and place an audio file on our website members will be able to access past speeches. Remember, many presentations run longer than 30 minutes.

If members strongly support this, please email Tim Powell with the words YES TO AUDIO ONLINE in the subject line ([timp@coxinall.com.au](mailto:timp@coxinall.com.au)) before March 28. A lack of emails will be taken as a sign you would not value this service.

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### March 2008

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc

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