



Queensland Country Life column

17 November 2009

Beef producers across the nation should be pleased with organizations like AgForce and subsequently the Cattle Council of Australia, the Peak Council representing your interests to the Federal Government on climate change policy legislation. If it were not for organizations such as these, beef producers may have been squashed by the 'CPRS cattle crush.'

This week Minister Wong announced the positive news that direct emissions from agriculture would not be covered under the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. This is a result of a collective lobbying effort, from our Peak Industry Councils, State Farmer Organisations and in particular the National Farmers' Federation.

Cattle Council of Australia and its members demonstrated through individual case studies the devastating impact the CPRS would have on business profitability and this message got through to the Government and our fellow producers.

Justin MacDonnell, a Queensland beef producer from Injune, told QCL of his 153K price tag if he had to pay a fee for his livestock's emissions. Now he is thankful that there will be no 153k cost impost, a cost he would not have been able to absorb at current market levels.

Beef producers across the country now have a level of certainty, and the CPRS 'grey cloud' has been partly removed. Beef producers are no longer left in a jam to make business decisions for a future in which they had no clarity on whether they will be incurring significant financial penalties for every beast they owned.

However, the cattle industry is not out of the woods on the CPRS yet.

Whilst this announcement is a positive step, there is still much work to be done both domestically and internationally to improve the emissions profile of the beef cattle sector whilst maintaining its productivity.

The good news is, producer run organisations like the Cattle Council remain strong in their purpose and successful in influencing the Federal Government on issues pertinent to producers' productivity and profitability. Beef producers' concerns around the CPRS is getting through to the Government and they're beginning to understand that the Australian beef industry is part of the solution to Australia managing its greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States, Canada, Europe and Japan have all announced the exclusion of agriculture from their emissions trading schemes, in favour of providing incentives to food producers to mitigate carbon. Australian agriculture must continue to explore a similar path.

Moving forward, Cattle Council and its members such as AgForce will work hard to ensure that any policy takes into account producers' positive actions on-farm in managing emissions and one that recognises agriculture's unique carbon cycle.

Cattle Council and the National Farmers Federation will represent beef producers at the United Nations Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen next month as part of its lobbying effort to change the international accounting rules to see them better recognise agriculture and the role of farmers in managing emissions.