

Meeting summary of Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) Executive Council held in National Farmers' Federation (NFF) Boardroom, Canberra, ACT, 16-17 May 2011.

Upcoming 2011 Council meetings include:

- 29-30 August - CCA Executive Council Meeting, Canberra, ACT
- (Dates TBC) November - CCA Annual General Meeting, Longreach, Queensland

Note: Greg Brown, President, Cattle Council was unable to attend the meeting due to personal circumstances.

Day 1. Major issues discussed included:

Carbon pricing

At the February Council meeting, Cattle Council formed policy that opposed any price on carbon that would compromise the sector's competitiveness. Cattle Council is currently negotiating with Australian Farm Institute (AFI) on receiving figures about the impact of a carbon price on producers across Australia. As well as engaging the Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) policy unit in an analysis of the impact of the carbon price on the red meat sector, Cattle Council is working with Australian Meat Processing Council, Australian Livestock Property Agents and AFI on other depth research that industry can use in lobbying efforts.

Cattle Council's Environmental Taskforce will evaluate detail of the carbon price and Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) as they arise.

CEO report

David Inall, CEO, Cattle Council briefed the Council on his activities since the meeting and discussed governance and industry issues. The latter, focused on the livestock export trade and Coles 'no added hormones, more tender beef' campaign.

National Farmers' Federation

Jock Laurie addressed the Council on the Government's carbon tax, the CFI, RD&E industry funding with reference to the beef Cooperative Research Center re-bid and current NFF activities around the Murray Darling-Basin plan.

Mr Laurie highlighted the industry's opposition to any proposal that places agriculture at a competitive disadvantage. Details are yet to emerge about the Government's carbon tax design, particularly surrounding the critical issues of transport fuels and food processing. Once detail is received Cattle Council will work closely with NFF to form an appropriate response strategy.

Livestock exports

Lach MacKinnon, Australian Livestock Exporters Council (ALEC), provided an update on the Indonesian livestock market, including the development of long-term goals and objectives for animal welfare and the Indonesian livestock export trade. Mr MacKinnon also outlined ALEC's response to the Janelle Saffin motion which calls for renewed consideration of a planned and supported transition in the medium term away from live exports and towards an expanded frozen and chilled meat export industry. CCA will continue to work closely with ALEC and the livestock export industry in ensuring the continuation of the livestock export trade.

Teys/Cargill venture

Geoff Teys, Brad Teys and Tom Maguire addressed the Council about the joint venture between Teys and Cargill business. Cattle Council is not opposed, in principle, to the news that Teys Bros and Cargill are undertaking a joint venture. Cattle Council's overarching position states that any action or activity that results in detrimental outcomes for beef producers through a reduction in market competition will not be supported; there is no reason at this stage to suggest that the recent venture falls into this category.

Animal Health and Welfare Standards and Guidelines

Cattle Council discussed re-engaging in the development process of Standards and Guidelines for cattle. Outcomes from the 8-9 March 2011 Livestock Welfare Workshop were discussed and the Cattle Council Board acknowledged the effort made by attendees in addressing government and industry concerns relating to the harmonization of Standards and Guidelines. Cattle Council authorises representatives to re-engage in the S&G development process provided PISC accepts the workshop outcomes.

Livestock handling manual

Cattle Council will send a representative to participate in and critique a workshop to trial an animal handling workshop (train the trainer) on best practice for livestock handling.

Industry Liaison Officers

Animal Health Australia will be conducting another round of training in the second half of 2011. CCA will provide advice on priority areas and courses will be targeted accordingly.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)

Cattle Council participated in an FMD Round table discussion in Melbourne on 11 April 2011 to review Australia's current FMD policy and AUSTVETPLAN and recommend changes if necessary. Discussions at the round table meeting focused on policies relating to the use of vaccines and the movement of livestock and livestock products. Cattle Council will consult its members throughout the ongoing review of FMD policy.

Animal welfare communications strategy

Samantha Jamieson, Manager Integrity Communications, MLA presented the strategic priorities for an industry animal welfare communications strategy. Cattle Council will discuss the proposal further before endorsing the programs objectives and funding.

Hood Network / Livestock Biosecurity Network

The Cattle Council Board agreed to the continued development of the Livestock Biosecurity Network, including involving Sheepmeat Council, WoolProducers Australia and potentially Australian Lot Feeders' Association in formulating a formal proposal for their involvement as 'partners' in the funding and management of the Network. This proposal will be available for discussion at the next CCA Board meeting on 29-30 August 2011.

Animal welfare R&D

Sandra Welsman presented her research on animal rights and animal law to Cattle Council and a discussion followed on animal health and welfare strategic priorities for the beef industry. CCA will work on an R&D animal health and welfare strategic plan in consultation with members and producers.

Best practice loading recommendations

Keith Walker, MLA presented a paper to the Council about the gaps in science relating to food safety, welfare, meat quality and carcase yield. The paper also identified R&D projects to address these gaps and the Council reviewed these research recommendations.

The Council noted new research has already commenced incorporating a survey of producers, the running of bloods and urine assays and the collection of Meat Standards Australia (MSA) meat quality data. This research aims to better understand the pre-slaughter factors affecting meat quality so that practices along the supply chain can be modeled to maximize the number of cattle meeting MSA specifications.

MLA Annual Operating plan

Laurie Robinson, General Manager, Corporate Services, MLA, presented the MLA Annual Operating Plan, outlining MLA's program objectives, major key performance indicators and budgets for research and marketing activities for the Australian beef industry. The AOP reflects the priorities in the Meat Industry Strategic Plan (MISP) and provides the direction for services to be provided by MLA over the next twelve months. The Council is yet to endorse the MLA AOP 2011-12.

MLA Board Selection

Three independent Directors are to be appointed to the Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) Board at the November 2011 Annual General Meeting. MLA Board is seeking candidates with skills and experience from a range of areas to maintain the balance of expertise, including a vacancy for northern beef production. Cattle Council has issued a media release encouraging producers to consider nominating for positions.

Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC)

Angus Hobson, CEO, RMAC, provided an outline of developments for European Union Market Access in relation to the European Union Cattle Accreditation Scheme (EUCAS). Discussions included the review of measures to address demand-supply imbalance for EU markets and seeking ongoing improvements to visual identification measures.

Day 2. Day 2 focused on membership and Cattle Council structure discussions.