



Two weeks in, northern graziers still reeling from Yasi

Two weeks after Tropical Cyclone Yasi cut a swath through Far North Queensland, many northern beef producers are only just now able to navigate fallen timber, flattened fences and destroyed roads to assess the damage to their properties, says state farm group AgForce.

AgForce president Brent Finlay said although cane and horticulture growers and coastal communities felt the worst of the Category Five tropical cyclone, the northern grazing industry did not escape unscathed.

“Graziers across the region are facing extensively damaged buildings, roads and power lines; destroyed fences; fallen timber; and displaced – in some cases deceased – livestock,” Mr Finlay said. “One AgForce member aptly described his Mt Garnet property as ‘looking like a warzone’.

“The size of enterprises in north Queensland means it will take northern graziers on average nine months just to repair on-property infrastructure before they can return to their core business of producing food. Some graziers may have to replace up to 500km of internal fencing on individual properties.”

AgForce is on the ground in north Queensland, working with primary producers, local councils and volunteer organisations to fast-track the recovery and rebuilding efforts.

“We can’t have a second disaster – an economic disaster – on our hands,” Mr Finlay said. “AgForce is calling on local governments to apply for, and the federal government to approve, appropriate Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements so regional communities can receive a much-needed economic stimulus.

“Concessional loans are currently available to primary producers through Category B status but many producers are reluctant to take on the extra financial burden, so we are calling for activation of Category C.

“Category C status provides grants of up to \$25,000 to producers which will literally put ‘fuel in the tank’ by delivering a cash injection to businesses so they can retain skilled workers and contribute to the long-term sustainability and morale of regional communities.”

Mr Finlay said although the long-term productivity loss to the grazing industry will be minimal and isolated to the areas which experienced significant pasture loss, the short and medium term recovery process is extensive.

“Producers are still trying to get around their properties to understand the full impact of the cyclone and we urge them to measure and report the damage so they can contribute to an industry assessment,” he said.

“We urge all graziers to report their individual assessments of infrastructure damage and lost productivity to AgForce on agforce@agforceqld.org.au or 3236 3100.”

AgForce continues to represent primary producers on industry and government natural disaster recovery taskforces to ensure economic, infrastructure and productivity rebuilding across the state.

“The resilience of our industry and individuals is critical to regenerating the sector to emerge stronger and more productive – but it must be underpinned by a commitment from Government to make the road to recovery as smooth as possible for primary producers by minimising red tape and prioritising the repairs of critical infrastructure to keep supply lines open,” Mr Finlay said.

For comment, contact Brent Finlay on 0414 415 361 or Robert Walker on 3236 3100.

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