



Cropping land criteria not so strategic

Today's release of criteria intended to identify and protect 'strategic cropping land' in Queensland has left the state's peak broadacre farm group AgForce questioning the announcement's relevance without the disclosure of crucial details.

AgForce policy director Drew Wagner said although AgForce welcomed the long-awaited release of the criteria and thresholds for strategic cropping land (SCL), he questioned its value in isolation as no indication has been given to as to what land it will protect, or the level of protection.

"Queensland has some of Australia's best and most productive farm land, but it is a finite resource which must be conserved and managed for long-term sustainability," Mr Wagner said.

"AgForce saw the Queensland Government's commitment last year to identifying and protecting sensitive areas of farming land as a step in the right direction to secure food production, safeguard sustainable farming enterprises and protect the environment.

"However, today's announcement by Environment and Resource Management Minister Kate Jones has fallen short in delivering confidence to the farming sector.

"Without the knowledge of how the proposed State Planning Policy and the strategic cropping land framework will tie together to preserve food production in the face of competition from the resource industry and urban development, it is difficult to understand how the SCL will provide certainty for both landholders and resource companies.

"AgForce has taken a lead on this issue to ensure safeguards to protect such land from developments which undermine its productivity and environmental integrity.

"A lot more work is needed and AgForce urges the state government to clearly articulate the level of protection 'strategic cropping land' will receive, what areas will be specifically protected, and the size of the area which will be afforded this SCL protection."

Mr Wagner said AgForce also urged the government to reconvene the Strategic Cropping Land stakeholder advisory committee, which has not met for six months.

"The loss of Queensland's highest value agricultural land has the potential to reduce the state's future capacity to grow crops with associated economic, environmental and social implications.

"AgForce continues to ensure the rights and opportunities for landholders remain at the front of mind in policy and legislation formation to secure sustainable food and fibre.

"We continue to lead the call for government and the resources industry to recognise the serious consequences resource extraction activities are having on the environment, underground water and the productive capacity of food producing land."

For comment, contact Drew Wagner on 0488 084 007 or Ian Burnett on 0407 598 998.

AgForce media manager: Rebecca Jennings 0418 733 102 or jenningsr@agforceqld.org.au

AgForce communications officer: Grace Reck 0427 626 853 or reckg@agforceqld.org.au