

## **Advancing Rural Queensland**

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## **Budget fizzer fails to impress**

Agriculture has once again failed to be prioritised in this year's Federal Budget, says Queensland peak broadacre farm group AgForce.

AgForce president Brent Finlay said the lack of a reference to agriculture in the Federal Treasurer's speech last night was both conspicuous and disappointing, and AgForce supported the National Farmers' Federation's call for the government to strengthen key priorities for agriculture through funding security.

"AgForce welcomes continued funding in areas such as the Environmental Stewardship Program of Caring For Our Country and the extension of the Western Australian drought reform pilot for another 12 months," Mr Finlay said.

"While there have been no cuts to key initiatives in biosecurity and research, development and extension, AgForce is concerned that standing still is going backwards.

"Productivity gains in food production has plateaued in recent years and we must see increased investment in research, development in extension if our industry is to meet the challenge of doubling food and fibre production in the next 50 years."

AgForce's initial budget analysis included the following for rural and regional Queensland:

- **Skilled migration**: AgForce initially welcomes the announcement of an additional 6000 new migrants to regional areas in the Regional Sponsored Migration Skill and reduction in initial tax rate (29% down to 15%) for Pacific Islander workers to help meet worker and skill shortages.
- Capital depreciation: Small businesses, including farms, will be able to benefit from the proposed immediate depreciation write-off of first \$5000 to cover capital purchases such as motor vehicles and plant equipment.
- Farm Management Deposits (FMD): More flexibility in accessing FMDs in first 12 months will aid natural disaster affected producers recover more quickly.
- Mental health: AgForce welcomes additional mental health funding of \$1.5 billion over five
  years to support all who struggle with mental health, including producers who are struggling
  with stress following from natural disasters."
- Regional infrastructure: The ongoing commitment to the Regional Infrastructure Fund of \$916 million is initially welcomed to continue to make much needed upgrades in rural and regional Queensland, but it is important these funds are used fairly and widely.

"Australians have the best food in the world, produced right on our doorsteps, but we take it for granted. All levels of government must recognise the contribution producers make globally and locally, and start planning the future of sustainable and profitable food production in Australia."

For comment, contact Brent Finlay on 0414 415 361 or AgForce CEO Robert Walker on 32363 100. AgForce media manager: Rebecca Jennings 0418 733 102 or <a href="mailto:jenningsr@agforceqld.org.au">jenningsr@agforceqld.org.au</a> AgForce communications officer: Grace Reck 0427 626 853 or <a href="mailto:jenningsr@agforceqld.org.au">jenningsr@agforceqld.org.au</a>