



7 September 2018

Dry Conditions Working Group

Representatives from State Government, the State's agricultural and business sectors held the second meeting of the Dry Conditions Working Group on 23 August, 2018.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Honourable Tim Whetstone chaired the meeting, opening with reflections on recent visits and engagement with farmers and regional communities on Eyre Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula, Murray Mallee and Riverland regions.

It was acknowledged that farmers and communities in some regions, including the Upper North, were experiencing hard times. Feedback from farmers and industry representatives emphasised that many in these regions were prepared for these events.

It was noted that Rural Business Support, which delivers the Rural Financial Counselling Service in South Australia, has had a significant rise in client enquiries – in particular, staff are providing more information and support for Farm Household Allowance (FHA) applications.

The Working Group agreed that enhanced promotion of the FHA would be undertaken and that recent changes had improved accessibility. The Working Group re-emphasised that farmers should not self-assess and should seek assistance from the Rural Financial Counselling Service if they would like assistance in accessing FHA.

The Working Group acknowledged that the next critical period will be the coming six weeks, as Spring conditions will determine the ongoing impact on those areas already affected, but also more broadly.

Rainfall, temperature, wind and frost in September and October will all play critical roles in pasture growth and crop yield. The Group agreed to continue to monitor the situation closely and respond to industry and community needs as they arise, noting it is critical to also consider the long-term implications for the State's agriculture sectors.

Industry representatives from Grain Producers SA, Pork SA, Livestock SA, Horticulture SA and SA Dairy Association provided intelligence on the current situation, captured through their own monitoring of seasonal conditions and engagement with farmers and regional communities via workshops, surveys and meetings.

The Working Group, using the PIRSA Adverse Events Recovery Framework, determined the following actions are needed, in addition to current support available, to continue to build individual farming businesses and regional communities' capacity to cope with, and respond to, the dry seasonal conditions:

- Arrange visit from the national drought coordinator Major General Stephen Day on Federal Government support measures.



- Continue the 24-hour Agriculture and Animal Health and Welfare Hotline (1800 255 556) and encourage producers to call if they have any questions or concerns about animal health or welfare and any issues related to the current dry conditions.
- Develop joint industry and government campaigns to extend and incorporate the Eat Local SA message as a way to support for South Australian farmers.
- Increase engagement with producers who are affected or who have concerns regarding the impacts on their business, and encourage them to contact the Rural Financial Counselling Service and to seek advice on applying for Farm Household Allowance support.
- Work with SA Health to promote and implement recovery and resilience programs amongst regional and rural farming communities.
- Support decision making, resilience and wellbeing for farmers through the delivery of technical workshops, guidance material and advice. Workshop content will be defined by the needs identified in the region but may include: soil and land management, animal nutrition, alternative feed sources, financial literacy and business planning, as well as health and wellbeing tools and support services.
- Continue to gather intelligence and extend PIRSA's Crop and Pasture Report to include information about fodder stocks and impacts on the livestock industries.
- Create a fodder register that includes offers of donations and requests for fodder.
- Develop a donations register that includes central collection points for offers of donation.

Member organisations of the Working Group include:

- Primary Producers SA
- Grain Producers SA
- Livestock SA
- Pork SA
- South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association (SADA)
- Horticulture Coalition SA
- Rural Business Support
- Australian Fodder Industry Association
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA
- Department of Environment and Water
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Health SA