

We own and manage a small (1400 acre) beef cattle breeding operation in Central Victoria. It comprises 250 breeding cows and 7 bulls. We also run 400 merino wethers.

In recent years we have become interested in ensuring that our farming operations are sustainable and we have undertaken courses / attended seminars and engaged consultants in an attempt to gain more information about what we can do as a small-scale farmer, to support Australia's ambition to become 'net zero'.

We have read the 'Agriculture, land and emissions discussion paper' which identifies many of the opportunities and issues we have encountered as we have sought information in this area. We agree that natural capital and biodiversity should be incorporated in the Strategy.

We make the following comments in relation to the questions raised in the discussion paper (not referencing particular questions as these comments apply to a number of them);

- The barriers to action from a small farmer's perspective are; the lack of 'easy to access' information / education about sustainable farming practices (eg herd management, pasture management and food additives); the lack of independent specialists eg agronomists, who can advise on how best to go about implementing changes to traditional farming practices; and the lack of any financial incentive to implement sustainable farming practices (which would motivate those farmers who are less inclined to change their traditional farming methods).
- Education in sustainable farming practices needs to be more widespread, and included as part of all agricultural courses so that those 'younger farmers' starting out, are encouraged to 'do things differently' to some of their forebears on the land.
- Some of the initiatives or innovative programs we have identified that could be applied or expanded on at a national scale include the 'Grazing for Profit' course run by RCS, which provides an excellent overview of 'regenerative farming' practices; and the software being developed by organisations such as Ruminati and Regen Digital, to assist farmers calculate their current emissions and also understand how much their emissions would be reduced if certain 'projects' or changes to farming practices were undertaken.
- The Australian Government needs to oversee the introduction of consistent measurement standards and tools, for assessing and reporting emissions as this is an area which is currently very confusing for those 'on the ground' and consequently discourages farmers from implementing changes. We understand that AIA has now developed a common framework for greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting, however to the best of our knowledge this has not yet been 'rolled out' to farmers, who also need some easy to use tools to correctly implement the framework.
- Ideally, farmers would receive a premium price for the sale / export of carbon neutral products. This would share the cost burden of implementing changes across society rather than letting it all fall on the farmer. Net zero will only be reached if everyone plays their part.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to further discuss these comments.

Stephanie. Reeves and Cameron Stewart