



1 December 2011

Dear Editor,

I'm beginning to wonder if Ross Gittins has actually ever stepped foot on a farm, or met an actual farmer. His opinion piece in yesterday's Herald ("Farmers fall silent while food brings home bacon," SMH, 30 Nov) stated that you never hear from farmers when times are good. Funnily enough, he then goes on to ask: who's interested in good news?

This is exactly the challenge facing our farmers and the agricultural sector. We have thousands of positive stories to tell – but who helping us to tell them? Ironically, Gittins's article appeared in the Herald on the exact day that 250 farmers were gathered at the first of a series of forum's around the country to talk about the positive things about agriculture, to celebrate a booming agribusiness sector and to help us map out the vision to achieve a strong and sustainable future via our Blueprint for Australian Agriculture.

Ross, how are these for some positive stories? The growth in the farm sector was a key reason Australian avoided a recessions during the GFC. The prospects for agriculture are huge, with the need to feed, clothe and house a booming world population. Agriculture has an enormous uptake of new technology, we have thousands of jobs available, we contribute \$32 billion in export income to the economy and we produce the clean, healthy, fresh food that you, and your family, enjoy.

Sure, there are challenges – but the biggest one is that the positive story of farmers isn't being heard. I invite Ross to come to my farm and meet some local farmers. Hell, I'll even throw in a pair of workboots, in case he's keen to get his hands dirty. Maybe then he'll realise the story of farming is a positive one – and perhaps he can help us tell it.

Jock Laurie  
President, NFF