



National Farmers' FEDERATION

Policy on Climate Research, Development and Extension

November 2014

Introduction

NFF's climate change resilience policy highlights the importance of research and development to underpin the resilience and adaptation of Australian agriculture to climate change and the ability of the agriculture sector to contribute to reducing national and international emissions.

Investment in focused climate R,D&E for the agriculture sector will assist Australian farmers:

- manage risks that may arise as climate changes in the short, medium or long term
- take advantage of the opportunities arising from and respond to the challenges posed by the domestic and international policy responses of governments

Climate R&D encompasses:

- *Mitigation* - to improve our efficiency and reduce the emissions intensity of our production
- *Adaptation* – to provide options for farmers should climates change in the longer term
- *Resilience* – to provide the tools, information, resources and options for farmers to better deal with season to season variability and to prepare for adverse climatic events.

Climate mitigation research and development is largely focused on the reduction of emissions intensity. In the agriculture sector, an underpinning principle of many mitigation options are focused on increased efficiency such as better feed conversion rates or reduced use of inputs (e.g. fertilisers). Options that improve productivity and profitability are more likely to be adopted by farmers – as it will make business sense to do so. Options that are less cost effective will require greater incentives to encourage adoption.

The climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience research agenda needs to focus more broadly than just the technological options for mitigating emissions, adapting farming systems and the information and resources that farmers need to aid decision making. Business management options are also required, such as alternative insurance and financial products or instruments, to make Australian farm businesses more resilient to climate change.

To maximise the benefits of the climate R,D & E effort, farmers will need the skills, tools and resources to make the most appropriate management decisions for their businesses. To make good business decisions, farmers require:

- information to assist them to identify and understand the potential risks associated with seasonal variability and short and medium term climate change
- information to assist them to understand the opportunities and risks of Government policy responses
- a range of options to consider including adaptation and mitigation technologies and practice changes and financial and business products.
- tools, resources and support to assist them to analyse options and make the most appropriate decision for their business.

Just as NFF's climate resilience policy seeks to embed consideration of climate variability as a normal business "risk" for farmers, consideration of climate change risks should be a core consideration that guides agriculture sector investment in R,D&E.

NFF's policy principles

- Investment in climate R,D&E should recognise the short, medium and long term lead times of the range of adaptation, and mitigation options.
- Consideration of climate risks and opportunities should be a core consideration that guides agriculture sector investment in R,D&E.
- Adaptation, mitigation and resilience options that improve farmer productivity and profitability should be a priority for climate R,D&E.
- In addition to technological or practice change options, climate R,D&E should also explore management options that can improve the capacity of farm businesses to manage the potential risks of climate change and season to season climate variability.
- Investment in climate R,D&E should build the capacity of farmers to make good climate risk management decisions including capacity to manage increased climate variability. This requires investment in awareness, information, skills, tools, resources and support networks.
- Investment in climate R,D&E should be cognisant of the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture Initiative, and work towards the intended outcomes of this initiative.