



Government of South Australia

17 October 2018

Dry Conditions Working Group

Representatives from State Government and the State's agribusiness sectors attended the Dry Conditions Working Group on 8 October, 2018.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Hon. Tim Whetstone chaired the meeting and opened the meeting by formally acknowledging that the season had continued to worsen and drought was now affecting several regions across the state.

The recent visit from the National Drought Coordinator was well received and he plans another visit to the affected regions. The Premier and Minister have been invited to attend a Drought Summit, convened by the Prime Minister, on 26 October 2018 in Canberra.

The latest season update showed continuing dry conditions and frost in September and October had impacted pasture growth and crop yield – with a number of producers now opting to cut crops for hay.

Consequently, as at 30 September, the grain crop estimate has been reduced to 4.9 million tonnes (from 5.8 million tonnes).

Representatives of the Bureau of Meteorology, Viterra and Macro Meats presented to the Working Group, on current outlook, grain stocks and demand, and concerns regarding kangaroo management, respectively.

BOM's update noted that rainfall for South Australian drought affected regions in September 2018 was lowest since records commenced. Soil moisture levels are also extremely low, contributing to higher frost risks.

Department of Environment and Water (DEW) and SA Health spoke to the Working Group providing latest advice on water levels, future water allocations and kangaroo management programs as well as regional and rural mental health services and related support programs.

The industry groups also provided updates, with Pork SA and SA Dairy Association noting their concerns that demand for SA hay and the transport subsidies in NSW and QLD had significantly increased cost of feed, and added to further cost of production for farmers across the state.

Livestock SA reported that its fodder register aimed at connecting producers with donated fodder was working well, with one donation from Western Australia received and allocation underway. The association is also recording increased concerns relating to the season in the South East region.



Rural Business Support reported that demand for its financial counselling services had grown by 57 per cent since December and was reaching capacity. They welcomed the rollout of the Family and Business Support (FaB Support) Program to help alleviate some of the demand.

The Group agreed to the following actions:

- Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development would represent industry concerns at the National Drought Summit about the detrimental effect the NSW transport subsidy was having on other states and industry sectors.
- Plan urgent meeting to address the gap in the mental health support system and develop actions.
- Continue to work with other support and government agencies to coordinate and increase positive engagement with producers through relevant events and workshops and promote available health and wellbeing, financial and technical supports services available.
- Organise a meeting with State Emergency Relief Fund to seek advice on coordination of donations and charities in times of adverse events and emergencies.
- PIRSA and State Recovery Office to discuss and plan for the rollout of local drought coordination committees, in drought affected regions as next stage of the drought response program.

Ongoing Actions of the Drought Working Group also include:

- Continue to gather intelligence and extend PIRSA's Crop and Pasture Report to include information about fodder stocks and impacts on the livestock industries.
- 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.

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
- Bureau of Meteorology
- Local Government Association
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA
- Department of Environment and Water
- Department of Human Services
- SA Health