

Article Information

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Government releases terms of reference for Agriculture White Paper

On 9 December 2013, Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce announced the terms of reference of the Agriculture Competitiveness White Paper, stating that the purpose of the paper would be to generate jobs, increase farm gate returns, investment and economic growth in one of Australia's key export industries.

Item 1 of the 13 initiatives in the Coalition's policy for a competitive agriculture sector released in August 2013 related to commissioning an Agriculture White Paper.

"Australia is a leading agricultural producer and exporter, and the sector has considerable opportunities for future growth creating a greater overall breadth and strength for the Australian economy. As a nation we must encourage a strong agricultural sector, with primary producers that remain among the most innovative in the world", said Minister Joyce.

The paper will examine the competitiveness of Australia's agriculture sector and will seek to outline a clear strategy to boost the competitiveness and profitability of the agriculture sector, increase its contribution to trade and economic growth, and build on its ability to drive greater productivity through innovation. "A vibrant, innovative and competitive sector will lead to better returns to farmers, more jobs, more investment and stronger regional communities", said the Minister.

The Agriculture Competitiveness White Paper will consider issues including:

- food security in Australia and the world;
- means of improving farm gate returns;
- access to investment finance, farm debt levels and debt sustainability;
- efficiency and competitiveness of agriculture supply chains; and
- investment, job creation and private sector led growth in the agriculture sector.

Industry competitiveness in respect of the fisheries and forestry sector and human nutritional health issues are, however, outside the terms of reference of the White Paper.

An issues paper for the Agriculture Competitiveness White Paper will be released over the coming weeks ahead of extensive consultation with the agriculture industry, non-government experts and the community. "We are encouraging people to have their say with this important policy document, and we want a wide cross-section of Australians to contribute", said Minister Joyce.

The Government has said that boosting the agriculture sector is part of its initiative to build a diverse five-pillar economy to create jobs and deliver a stronger, more prosperous Australian economy.

The White Paper is expected to be released towards the end of 2014.