



Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator for Queensland

REF: MNMC2011-12304

Mr Nick Rose
National Coordinator
Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance
PO Box 3349
ST PAULS NSW 2031

Dear Mr Rose and cosignatories

Thank you for your letter of 31 October 2011 about the Food Policy Working Group and the Australian Government's development of the national food plan.

Through the national food plan, the Australian Government is aiming to foster a sustainable, globally competitive, resilient food supply that supports access to nutritious and affordable food. Fundamentally, the national food plan will be a framework in which to better integrate the government's approach to food policy, from production through to consumption. The government believes that an overarching approach will ensure that the government's policy settings are right for Australia over the short, medium and long term.

I note your concerns about opportunities to date for stakeholder participation in the development of the national food plan. I assure you that I am committed to ongoing and meaningful public consultation throughout the plan's development. In addition to broad consultation on *the Issues paper to inform development of a national food plan*, which included a call for public submission, 19 roundtable discussions around Australia and a public webcast, the next step in this process—the release of a national food plan green paper—will involve extensive consultation with stakeholders. The government will announce details of future consultation opportunities in due course, with feedback on the green paper informing the national food plan, to be released as a white paper.

I note your specific comments about the Food Policy Working Group and the roundtable discussions that were undertaken on the national food plan issues paper.

The Food Policy Working Group was not established to develop the national food plan. Rather, it was established to advise the government on issues and policies affecting Australia's food chain—from paddock to plate. It is a forum for active communication between the food industry and government to foster a common understanding of the industry's priorities, challenges and future outlook. In relation to your concerns about its membership, members were invited for their specific areas of expertise in food matters across the food chain in addition to health, consumer, research and labour market expertise. Members are also not representative of any company or organisation. While I do not plan to extend the working group's membership, it is just one of many mechanisms through which stakeholders will be able to contribute to the national food plan's development. I also note your request for

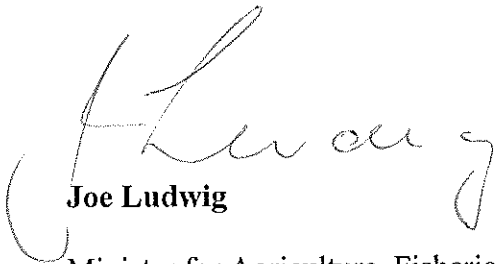
minutes of the working group to be publically released and will take this under consideration for future meetings.

The roundtable meetings were designed to collect qualitative information in a focus-group setting from a wide range of stakeholders. Nineteen meetings with up to fifteen people at each meeting were organised in all capital cities and a range of regional and remote communities. People with a broad perspective on food-related issues were invited including farmers, small and large food manufacturers, transporters, retailers, consumers, researchers, health providers, community groups, and others. There were 178 organisations that attended the roundtable meetings (with over 350 invited). I assure you that community and consumer groups were well represented at these meetings and I thank the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance and the Food Connect Foundation for the contribution they made.

The results of the initial round of consultation, including submissions, a recording of the live webcast and a full list of stakeholders who attended the roundtable meeting, are available on the department's website www.daff.gov.au/nfp. I expect to release a summary report of issues raised at the roundtable consultations shortly.

I look forward to your continued participation in the national food plan's development.

Yours sincerely



Joe Ludwig

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) December 2011