
MEDIA RELEASE

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It's time to rethink Australian agriculture:

Support our local producers and boost local food economies

The Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance welcomes the opportunity to participate in the National Agriculture Competitiveness White Paper consultations.

Dr Nick Rose, AFSA National Coordinator, stated that, "We hope this round of consultation will lead to governments and stakeholders across the country recognising the importance of fixing and securing our local food systems, before we venture into expanding our agro-export sector further".

"Quite simply, more monoculture, large scale export-focused farming is not the solution to food security and food sovereignty issues. We need instead to address many of the underlying causes that adversely impact our food system and invest smart in local food economies."

"The current food system – and our farmers in particular - are under enormous stress, as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Dr Olivier de Schutter, has just categorically stated in his final report."

"We need a food plan for Australia that will address the pressures caused by the negative impacts of a globalised food system, the constant drop in the number of primary producers, and the loss of prime farmland to urban sprawl and the mining industry. We also need to be aware of the increasing threat of climate change on food production, as identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the critical constraints on non-renewable energy sources and other agricultural inputs."

'In this, the first United Nations Year of the Family Farmer, we need to do much more to support Australian farmers better. A simplistic message of 'ramp up production and export more' is not good enough", said Dr Rose.

In response to farmer demands for fairer representation, AFSA recently launched a dedicated farmers' chapter, Fair Food Farmers United (FFFU). The FFFU will work collaboratively with farmers and, if it is willing, Federal and state governments, to improve access to domestic markets and tackle predatory practices. The goal is to improve farm gate prices – and farmer profitability. The FFFU wants fair prices for farmers and eaters.

AFSA is also looking to the Federal government to reinstate the Community Food Grants program immediately. Dr Rose stated: "It's very disappointing these grants were axed. There is no alternate policy to fill the role played by this program, which really focused on supporting our communities across Australia."



“In our submission to the government’s consultation process, we have made it clear that the government should undertake many common-sense measures that would provide instant relief for the food production sector. Our Australian People’s Food Plan – collaboratively developed over 12 months - represents the views of both consumers and farmers and is a key element of AFSA’s submission to the Agriculture White Paper consultation process” said Dr Rose.

AFSA’s Australian Peoples’ Food Plan represents the voices and work of hundreds of supporters who contributed their skills and time to create a shared vision. Between September and November 2012, 40 public forums nationally were organised by AFSA.

AFSA is asking the Federal government for a series of consultation meetings with its members and supporters in every state and territory in conjunction with the current round of Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper process. The details of these consultation meetings will be made public once they are available.

FOR INTERVIEW:

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To listen to Dr Nick Rose being interviewed on ABC Radio on 21/2/14, visit:
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-21/food-grants-scrapped/5274530>

About Dr Nick Rose:

Nick is the national coordinator of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, a position he has held since August 2010. Recently he was also appointed as Project Coordinator, Food Systems, for the Food Alliance at Deakin University in Melbourne, where he is leading an initiative to establish a Victorian Urban Food Network and an Urban Food Charter for Victoria.

ABOUT AFSA:

- A growing national organisation consisting of individuals, community food groups, farmers, social enterprises working in food processing and distribution, food cooperatives, small food business and academics, AFSA has developed [a People’s Food Plan](#) as a viable counterpoint to the free trade and big volume commodity export program of both major political parties. AFSA is a non-partisan organisation and is not aligned with any political party.
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