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BACKGROUND

South Australian Farmers Federation

The South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF) is South Australia's peak lobbying organisation representing farmers across South Australia and is the recognised conduit between Government, the public and farmers.

Our farming communities are an integral part of our state's history, culture and landscape. SAFF aims to ensure that those communities continue to play a key role in the development and sustainability of our state as well as their own livelihoods.

SAFF works to:

- Assist South Australian farmers and their rural communities achieve sustainable profitability.
- Provide effective representation, leadership and service to members.
- Provide a united voice promoting farming interests and the rural communities where farmers live and work.
- Support consumers in their demand for accurate labelling.

SAFF does this by:

- Maintaining an effective and open communication approach with governments, other farming and farm-related organisations, media, community groups and the public.
- Developing policies and submissions that are mindful of farmer's rights as well as the rights of other stakeholders and associated interest groups.
- Representing the interest of our members in various forums, at all levels of Government, in the media and with the general community.
- Developing and implementing strategies to support farmers and their livelihoods.

SAFF Pork Committee

The SAFF Pork Committee represents the pork industry in South Australia. It is involved in issues pivotal to sustainability and efficiency of the Pork Industry in South Australia and deals with matters such as Environmental Legislation, National Biosecurity and threatened incursions of exotic disease, and animal welfare regulations. The Committee is represented on the Pig Industry Advisory Group which is a ministerial advisory committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a growing trend for consumers to expect concise food labelling. The SAFF Pork Committee believes that there is a need for consumers to be able to make a clear choice between what is 100% Australian grown/sourced and what is not.

The SAFF Pork Committee believe strongly that the basic reason for food labelling is to provide the consumer with a clear and simple method of identifying the product they are purchasing and the country of origin of that product. The principle behind any food labelling must be based on total integrity.

We believe food labelling for the pork industry must be:

1. Transparent – protecting both consumers and honest producers.
2. Effective – providing necessary information without bogging producers down in red-tape.
3. Standardised – ensuring that claims made adhere to a central set of guidelines and definitions.
4. Monitored – ensuring all products adhere to labelling principles.

Food labelling for the pork industry must allow the consumer to have a choice in what they decide to buy, by providing clear and accurate information regarding the origin of the contents that the customer will consume.

Current labelling laws have made it difficult for consumers to accurately understand what it is they are buying and where it comes from. It could be said that current food labelling practices make it intentionally confusing for consumers to make an informed choice.

We believe that the KISS principal should be applied to food labelling.

Executive Summary - Recommendations:

1. The label accurately describes the content of the package that the customer will consume.
2. The label clearly identifies the product in the package as 100% Australian Grown/Sourced.
3. The size of the printing and position is easy to find and read.
4. All other confusing labels such as:
 - a. Company is Australian owned;
 - b. Made in Australia;
 - c. Made in Australia from local and imported products; and
 - d. Packaged in Australiashould be removed altogether.

This would need to be embedded in a much tighter legislative environment than currently exists.

METHOD OF PRODUCTION (MOP) LABELLING

At present, there are no standardised definitions for pork production systems. Australian Pork Limited have highlighted a recent Senate Inquiry into Meat Marketing by the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport which stated that animal welfare-related labelling should be subject to tighter controls to protect both consumers and genuine producers.¹

The SAFF Pork Committee believes a standardised set of requirements for voluntary MOP labelling is necessary in order to protect consumers and honest producers.

The SAFF Pork Committee believes there should be a standardized auditing process in place for accurately describing the various Methods of Production for the claims made on any label to have integrity.

The SAFF Pork Committee understands that implementing and monitoring a validation scheme will involve costs that are passed on to consumers and producers. We believe the system should be voluntary and on a user-pays basis.

MOP Labelling - Summary of recommendations:

1. There should be a standardised definition regarding the description of production methods.
2. There should be an industry accepted set of guidelines and principles governing the framework for definitions.
3. There should be similar requirements for guidelines and definitions expected from overseas producers.
4. These guidelines should be administered by a centralised body.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELLING (COOL)

Presently, complex and confusing Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) laws make it difficult for consumers to recognise local product from subsidised imports as they allow loopholes for processed pork products to be labelled as "Australian" when they are not.

COOL - Summary of recommendations:

1. A more efficient enforcement system is required than currently operates in Australia in order to ensure compliance with our suggested changes.
2. To remove labels other than 100% Australian Grown/Sourced product.
3. To mandate the use of the label "Product of Australia" to mean 100% Australian Grown/Sourced.
4. To ensure integrity, an accreditation or auditing system would need to be put in place to support these claims.

¹ The Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, 2009 "Meat Marketing – Final Report – June 2009".

ENVIRONMENTAL FOOD LABELLING

The SAFF Pork Committee strongly and vigorously believes that it is premature to second-guess what is going to be accurate information on the label, until the Government reframes its revamped ETS legislation.