

Australian agriculture should go ‘off the grid’ to avoid energy crisis.

Kate Trotter

24/10/2017- Australian agriculture should go ‘off the grid’ and develop its own energy sources, according to pioneering energy farmer, renewable resource advocate and the Director of Meralli Projects, David Mailler.

“The Federal Government fluff about trying to solve problems today that require a long-term sustainable solution,” Mr Mailler said. “Frankly it leaves rural and regional Australia out in the cold, literally.”

“Rural Australia is left with no other option but to come up with their own solution, as their energy needs are once again being left without investment,” he said.

David Mailler will be featured in the program for the Australian Farm Institute’s Roundtable Conference session on energy. David has been instrumental in establishing Meralli Projects; currently constructing the largest privately-funded, unsubsidised solar farm of its type in the world.

Technological change has led to an increase in the economic potential for farm businesses to be significant generators of energy. To capture the full benefit of that potential, partnerships between energy infrastructure providers, large energy companies and farm businesses need to be formed. The current and ongoing uncertainty surrounding energy policy is a barrier to the development of those partnerships.

The new National Energy Guarantee plans to scrap subsidies and incentives for renewable energy production, placing the responsibility for meeting obligations under the Paris Agreement on electricity retailers. So where does this leave the Australian farmer that may be looking to invest in significant on-farm generation of electricity?

Other speakers in the session include Matt Brand, the Chief Executive Officer of NSW Farmers, and Gavin McMahon, the Chief Executive Officer of Central Irrigation Trust and a Director of Central Irrigation Pty Ltd.

Matt will be discussing the current energy policy debate and the impact it is having on farmers and agribusiness, while Gavin will talk about how agricultural businesses can best partner with each other to find solutions for high energy costs.

The Australian Farm Institute’s Roundtable Conference will be held at the International Convention Centre- Sydney on 9th and 10th of November. Get in touch with the Institute via their website www.farminstitute.org.au or for further details or contact the office directly.

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*Media contacts: Mick Keogh – 0418 256 066
and Richard Heath – 02 9690 1388 or 0427 447 872*

The Australian Farm Institute is focused on devising solutions to farm-sector issues, not just highlighting them. As such, a great opportunity exists to set strategic directions for farm policy in Australia, and internationally. In doing so, farmers’ ability to manage their farms profitably and sustainably will be further enhanced.

David Mailler is a farmer and Director of Meralli Projects from New England & Northwest NSW. With over three decades of farming experience, a keen interest in spiralling business energy costs and the emerging opportunity from renewables.