

Farm sector risks being steamrolled by climate policy.

Australia's farm sector needs to be proactive in developing a future role for the sector in climate policy, or it will face a very real risk of being steamrolled by the issue in the future, according to Australian Farm Institute Executive Director Mick Keogh.

'There is a bit of a hiatus in climate policy debates at the moment, and some complacency in the farm sector based on the belief that the issue will just go away. However, both sides of politics have committed to future climate policy action, and the agriculture sector features prominently in both sets of plans.

'It needs to be remembered that the coal and electricity sectors have made it very clear they want agricultural emissions to be included in any future policy, because the wider the national emissions net is cast, the lower the cost of emission reduction.

'Farmers and agribusiness also need to remember that State Governments receive billions of dollars annually in royalties from the coal sector, and large annual dividends from the coal-fired electricity generators they own, especially in NSW, Queensland and Western Australia. These Governments and the coal industry have a very strong motivation to impose emission reduction requirements on the agriculture sector.

'During the past decade and a half, State and Commonwealth Governments of both political persuasions have not hesitated to impose harsh and uncompensated land clearing regulations on the agriculture sector in order to ensure that Australia could meet its Kyoto Protocol commitments, so there is history on this issue that the agriculture sector should take heed of.

'The best approach for the agriculture sector is to have a good hard look at the range of possible policy options, to identify a preferred approach and communicate that clearly to policymakers. In this way, the agriculture sector can map out its own future on this issue, rather than have a map handed to it by Governments and major emitting sectors.'

A forthcoming Australian Farm Institute conference to be held in Adelaide on May 18th and 19th will provide a forum for farmers, agribusiness, scientists and policymakers to develop a common understanding on this issue, and to begin to map out a preferred future option for the sector on this issue. It will include speakers from the US and New Zealand farm sectors, as well as senior Australian policymakers and scientists.

An important session at the Agriculture and Greenhouse Emissions Conference will examine the realities of carbon sequestration in agricultural soils, and assist participants to gain a clear understanding of the potential role of soil carbon sequestration in future climate policies.

Further conference details and registrations are available on the [Australian Farm Institute website](#).

Ends

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Journalists can register to attend the Conference by contacting the Australian Farm Institute info@farminstitute.org.au or (02) 9690 1388