

## CFNA Dairy summit - Nov 2024

### Introduction

- Da jia hao, wǒ shì àodàliya dàshǐguǎn gōngshǐ xián nóngyè cānzàn Lín Fèngyí
- I apologise, that is about all I can manage in what is terribly accented Chinese - it is probably better for everybody if I continue in English
- I would like to begin by acknowledging Vice President Madam Yu for the invitation to be here and for her tireless efforts to support trade and relationships between China and Australia
- This afternoon I will be talking to you about sustainability in the Australian agriculture and dairy industry
- But I would like to start with an acknowledgement of the First Nations people of Australia - they were the first custodians of our land, and have lived and worked with the - at times harsh and extreme - environment for over 60,000 years. We have much to learn from them about working with the land - to support our people now and into the future
- I am happy to be here to talk with you about sustainability - this is a particular passion of mine. One of my first jobs with the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, about 20 years ago, was working with local communities and farmers in Victoria to improve the way that they looked after our environment. We worked with them to fence off rivers and coastline to assist with the management of erosion, to plant trees and reestablish bushland so that native animals could travel through corridors of habitat and we worked with farmers to understand how to better manage salinity on their land.

- In 2008 I also led a government program that invested in research to help farmers understand and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from farming and to adapt to climate change.
- Since I have been in China, I have also seen your wide range of agricultural production and the varied environments in which you do it - including the more challenging aspects. I don't think I will ever forget a trip I did to Gansu last year - I was there when the wine grapes were being uncovered for the start of the growing season, not something we need to do in Australia. And I watched a sandstorm move toward me from the horizon while it was snowing. This is not something I have ever experienced before. Both of our countries have these amazing, diverse and extreme environments. And our people work this land to produce food for our people and the people in other countries.

## **Sustainability**

- Around the world, food systems face major challenges:
  - providing food security and nutrition security for growing populations
  - supporting livelihoods along food supply chains and
  - contributing to environmental sustainability goals
- Governments and companies around the world are grappling with these issues, as well as how to reduce agricultural emissions and manage climate risk while maintaining critical production of food and fibre.
- When you put all of these issues on a timeline - that we need to meet these challenges both today and into the future - long term sustainability and sustainment of productive capacity is critical.
  - We may be able to achieve food security goals today - by intensifying production to extreme degrees - but it will sap the soil, use up our

precious water resources and undermine our food production into the future.

- We need to think on a longer timescale and of our future generations.
- The Australian government, producers and land managers are responding to these challenges. We are innovating, adapting, improving resilience and investing to lower emissions.
- We are doing things like:
  - improving water use efficiency in irrigated cropping and pasture systems
  - using climate prediction and risk management tools
  - changing land management practices, such as conservation tillage and soil amelioration to maximise soil moisture
- To support these efforts, the Australian Government has a long standing investment to deliver on our natural resource management, sustainable agriculture and environmental protection outcomes. We do this by supporting our farmers, and we also support industry own efforts like the development and implementation of the Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework - which has been developed by the National Farmers Federation.
- The Australian industry has articulated its vision of agricultural sustainability as the production of food and fibre which is environmentally, socially and economically responsible. Australia's environment and climate is unique and requires production systems and an approach to sustainability that is in tune with our local conditions.
- The whole of industry framework has been created to tell our story. To provide our trading partners with confidence that Australia takes agricultural

sustainability seriously and to provide clarity about how our agricultural production aligns with international climate and sustainability initiatives and objectives.

- The framework is based on 17 principles across three key aspects of environmental stewardship, social responsibility and good governance. It is scientifically and data driven, and has clear and transparent reporting criteria
- The Framework also supports sector or commodity specific frameworks, it implements the idea that we must work to the same objectives and outcomes - but there needs to be a little flexibility in how we get there. As all farmers, industries and indeed, countries, operate in different climates and environments. There cannot be a one size fits all approach to implementing and achieving sustainability.

## **Dairy industry**

- One of the sectors that is leading the way with the development of its own framework is the Australian Dairy Sector.
- At the heart of sustainability in the Australian dairy industry is to provide nutritious food for a healthier world. The promise is underpinned by four commitments and 11 goals.
- The **first commitment** is to enhancing the economic viability and livelihoods of the industry - to create a vibrant industry that rewards dairy workers and their families, communities, businesses and investors
- To underpin this commitment the industry will:
  - Increase competitiveness and profitability

- Increase community resilience and prosperity
  - Make sure that everyone returns home safely everyday
  - Provide a productive and rewarding workplace
- With this the industry has recognised that the centre of any industry is its people and making sure that they have safe and rewarding work lives
- The **second commitment** is to improving the wellbeing of all people - to provide nutritious, safe and quality dairy food
    - The industry will ensure that all dairy products are safe and that the products contribute to improving health outcomes
- **Thirdly**, the Australia dairy industry commits to providing the best care for animals - and providing this best care for the whole of life.
- The **fourth commitment** is for the industry to reduce its environmental impact.
    - It will meet the challenges of climate change and providing good stewardship of our natural resources.
    - The industry will improve land management, increase water use efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity and reduce waste.
- These four commitments cover the full supply chain, from on the farm through manufacturing, marketing and distribution, export, retail and food services and to the consumer.
- It is easy to make these kind of commitments, but the industry has also been acting on them. They have:
    - Implemented a road map to improve the sustainability of packaging of dairy products

- Launched a tool that enables farmers to use genetics to breed low greenhouse gas emitting cows
  - Released Australian agriculture's first industry action plan for halving food waste
  - And implemented the Australian Dairy Carbon Calculator which enables dairy farmers to measure their carbon footprint
- Industry members and farmers have also been acting. Results from a Land, Water and Carbon Survey in 2023 have shown that:
- 83% of farmers with natural waterways on their properties have at least some, if not all, of them fenced off from livestock.
    - This helps with erosion of the riverbanks, maintaining water quality and also means less injuries for animals.
  - 59% of dairy farmers report that they implemented a soil and nutrient management plan - this is up from 50% in 2020.
    - The ongoing health of our soils and management of nutrient runoff means ongoing productivity of our land, and minimising the impact of nutrients on our rivers and coastlines.
  - Of the famers that have native or remnant vegetation on their land, 82% undertake practices to protect them and only 1% of farmers have reported a significant reduction of native vegetation.
    - This does not only contribute to our commitments of reducing deforestation but in Australia these kinds of activity by our farmers is critical in not only looking after the land that they produce from but also in protecting our unique plants and animals.

- Since 2011/12 - the dairy processing sector has seen a 25.5% reduction in emissions intensity and a 27% reduction in absolute emissions. Well on the way to the 2030 target of a 30% reduction
- Farmers are also working to reduce their emissions intensity and both dairy farmers and processors are generating and using their own solar or renewable energy. In 2022/23, 71% of Australian dairy farmers implemented energy efficiencies and/or renewable energy on farms
- None of this has been easy. It has required a strong plan by the whole of the industry, and constant investment, effort and commitment by all members of the industry and the supply chain.
- As the global challenges accelerates, the Australian dairy industry has reconfirmed its resolve to set these types of ambitious goals and targets for 2030 and to measure its progress with credible indicators.
- Consumers of Australian dairy products can be assured that not only will the sustainability of the industry mean that our products will be reliably available into the future, but they will have a reducing impact on the environment.

## **Conclusion**

- In Australia, we know that a climate smart, sustainable agriculture sector will help farming be more productive and profitable, better protect our environment, increase access to international markets, strengthen our farming rural communities and contribute to food security.
  - And we are very happy to do our part.

- Thank you for your time and attention and I wish you a successful summit and a productive and enjoyable time here in Shanghai during the China International Import & Export Expo.