



9 July 2021

Gayle Milnes
First Assistant Secretary, Data, Policy and Analytics Division
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and
Communications.
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: regionaldatahub@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Ms Milnes,

RE: Consultation paper - Regional Data Hub: understanding and responding to regional data needs

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the consultation paper for the proposed Regional Data Hub.

The NFF, broader agriculture industry and the Australian Government have a target of growing Australian agriculture to \$100 billion by 2030. Achieving this target, through improved competitiveness, is a shared responsibility and requires commitment from all levels of government and all agricultural industries.

On the 23rd of February this year, the NFF launched its regionalisation agenda. The NFF Regionalisation Agenda proposes more than a repeat of the tired thinking of relocating city jobs to regional areas, it charts a vision for regional Australia where regional economic activity and jobs are designed to thrive in the unique economic and geographical conditions of that region.

The regionalisation agenda aims to provide a focus on placed-based development for our regional centres that are the economic and social heartbeat of regional Australia. These centres should provide a network of economic and social infrastructure across all of Australia that provides physical and social access to economic opportunities, a skilled workforce, and social amenities needed to maintain vibrant regional economies and communities.

Specifically, in regard to the consultation paper, the NFF would like to identify and support the following comments:

- Regional data will improve the outcomes for regional Australia by strengthening the evidence base of future decisions.
- The hub should improve regional data and not replace it.
- The types of data collated should focus on economic, demographic and socio-economic data.

- The hub should enable easier access to data that exists, improve data that is available and address data gaps.
- The data hub should underpin program and policy design to further growth innovation and investment in regional Australia.

Data privacy and the NFF Farm Data Code

While supporting the intent of the consultation paper the NFF wishes to take this opportunity to caution the government when it comes to data ownership and data rights. Such concerns have driven the NFF to develop the Australian Farm Data Code in consultation with industry. The Code is intended to inform the policies of service providers who manage data on behalf of farmers. It is also a yardstick by which farmers can evaluate the policies of those providers.

The Code defines and covers three distinct categories of data:

- Public Data – data from any source which relates to a farmer or their business, excluding Farm Data and Private Data;
- Farm Data – data which originates from a farmer, or a service provider in the course of providing a service to a farmer (including aggregated or transformed data); and,
- Private Data – data which could be used (whether on its own or through combination with other information), to identify an individual farmer or farm business.

The Code deals with each of these data types slightly differently, with Private Data being the most heavily protected, followed by Farm Data then Public Data. Where uncertainty exists about which category data should fall in, Providers are encouraged to assume it falls in the more protected category.

Should you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact the NFF's General Manager for Rural Affairs, Mike Darby at MDarby@nff.org.au or 02 6269 5666.

Yours sincerely,



TONY MAHAR
Chief Executive Officer