



Image: Sally Lees

# Growing Australia:

National Farmers' Federation's  
2026–27 Pre-Budget Submission



Leading  
Australian  
Agriculture

# Foreword

The 2026-27 Federal Budget will be handed down against a backdrop of complex domestic economic challenges and ongoing global uncertainty.

At home, the operating environment for small and medium enterprises remains difficult, with the cost of doing business and stagnating productivity growth creating an uncertain outlook.

Abroad, the geopolitical, institutional and monetary stability that has benefited the agriculture sector, and the Australian economy more broadly, continues to face mounting pressures.

Yet despite this, the sector has shown remarkable resilience over the past year, with the gross value of agricultural production forecast to rise to \$99.5 billion in 2025-26.

This demonstrates agriculture's ability, in the right policy and investment settings, to play our part in helping Australia overcome these challenges – something we are proud of.

Shifting global markets and consumption patterns, climate variability, land-use competition and the accelerating pace of technological change are reshaping the operating environment for producers. They are adapting to these changes, seeking to respond to challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

That's why our 2030 Roadmap, released in 2018, is more important than ever before. It outlines the key actions across five pillars to increase the annual farm output to \$100 billion by the end of the decade.

As that aspiration becomes within reach, the lessons we have learnt are clear; considered and strategic investments in the sector, matched by the right policy settings, will deliver genuine benefits to all Australians, now and into the future.

To this end, the 2026-27 Federal Budget offers an important opportunity to support the sector, and Australia more broadly, for success.

I'm pleased to present the Government with 20 strategic investments – aligned with the 2030 Roadmap – to directly address the challenges facing Australia.

These include programs to help ensure Australia's supply chains drive national productivity and protect Australia's food security, targeted and practical ideas to underpin Australia's sustainability, and investments in the sector's most valuable resource – our people – rounding out our set of recommendations.

This Budget is the chance to seize the opportunities before us and keep Growing Australia towards a more prosperous and resilient future.

On behalf of the sector,



**Hamish McIntyre**  
President  
National Farmers' Federation

# 20 investments to drive Australia's growth

## 2030 Roadmap Pillar 1: Customers and the Value Chain

1. \$4.0 billion over four years to reinstate the Roads of Strategic Importance program.
2. \$150.0 million over three years to address short-term exporter fees and charges deficits, as well as investments in measures to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's cost recovery arrangements.
3. \$100.0 million over four years to support market access, maintenance and utilisation activities by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
4. \$50.0 million over four years to fund the implementation of the National Biosecurity Strategy and Action Plan.
5. \$36.0 million over four years to support the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's public benefit functions.

## 2030 Roadmap Pillar 2: Growing Sustainability

6. \$2.0 billion over four years to support implementation of Nature Repair methodologies with a focus on reducing predation by invasive species.
7. \$2.0 billion over four years to support complementary measures in the Murray-Darling Basin.
8. \$750.0 million over four years to support long-term community vitality and adjustment to the socio-economic impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan implementation.
9. \$10.0 million over four years to support the development and application of the Spatial, Agriculture, Forestry and Environment model to deliver a national agricultural land capability assessment.
10. \$200.0 million over four years to support agriculture to implement National Environmental Law reform through targeted communication, adoption, and extension.

11. \$20.0 million over four years to prioritise the development of Australian Carbon Credit Units to drive innovation and support methane-reducing livestock feed technologies and whole-of-farm emissions reduction practices.
12. \$25.0 million over four years to amplify Australia's position as a world leader in agricultural sustainability via the Agricultural Sustainability Australia Alliance.

### **2030 Roadmap Pillar 3: Unlocking Innovation**

13. \$85.0 million over four years to implement key recommendations of the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review.

### **2030 Roadmap Pillar 4: People and Communities**

14. \$175.0 million over four years for a 'farmworker accommodation stimulus package' of taxation concessions and incentives to accelerate the construction and upkeep of farmworker accommodation.
15. \$50.0 million over four years for a national, industry-led approach to improve farmers' wellbeing and prevent suicides.
16. \$24.0 million over four years to support the Australian Veterinary Association Rural Placement Incentives Scheme.
17. \$3.0 million over two years to extend the Productivity Education and Training Fund to specifically support the farming sector.
18. \$3.0 million over four years in support of an Ag Trade Apprenticeship to ensure a professionally trained workforce with the relevant skills required by the industry.

### **2030 Roadmap Pillar 5: Capital and Risk Management**

19. \$2.2 billion over five years of reduced Commonwealth tax receipts to extend and increase the instant asset write-off for small business to \$150,000 for 12 months until 30 June 2027.
20. \$1.0 million over two years for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to investigate the role of government in facilitating intergenerational change and new entrants in the agriculture sector.



Pillar 1.

# Customers and the Value Chain

# Investment 1

## **\$4.0 billion over four years to reinstate the Roads of Strategic Importance program.**

### **What is the issue?**

Australian agriculture is heavily reliant on efficient transport networks to access global markets. However, this essential network is under growing strain – characterised by ageing infrastructure, underinvestment and the impact of more frequent climate-related disruptions.

As the Australian agriculture sector continues to grow and diversify, strategic investment in freight infrastructure will be essential to address existing infrastructure gaps. Strategic investment is required to target inefficiencies within supply chains or Australia's competitiveness will be threatened.

Further, the sustained population shift to regional Australia continues to place unprecedented pressure on regional infrastructure. This ongoing demographic transformation, which accelerated during the pandemic and has continued through recent years, requires commensurate increases in investment.

### **Why does it matter?**

Investing in regional freight infrastructure is crucial for several reasons, including:

- **Global competitiveness:** Australia's ability to compete in global markets depends on efficient and reliable transportation networks. Delays or inefficiencies in supply chains can result in increased costs and a loss of market share.
- **Agricultural sector growth and productivity:** Investments in supply chain infrastructure often act as a catalyst for industry growth and development and are one of the genuine means by which the sector can seek to counteract stagnating productivity growth.
- **Improving sustainability outcomes:** Modernising infrastructure can lead to more efficient transportation methods, reducing fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Additional information:**

This increased appropriation should also be complemented by an increase in the allocation of the Local Government Financial Assistance Grants to 1% of Commonwealth tax revenue to support infrastructure, service responsibilities and prioritisation of road repair and maintenance, with an expected additional allocation from the Commonwealth of \$2.5 billion per year.

Overall, this investment will improve the efficiency and competitiveness of Australia's freight supply chains and contribute to the agricultural sector's long-term growth and sustainability, benefitting both rural communities and the nation.

# Investment 2

**\$150.0 million over three years to address short-term exporter fees and charges deficits, as well as investments in measures to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's cost recovery arrangements.**

## **What is the issue?**

Many Australian agricultural industries are subject to prescribed export processes undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), whereby the cost of undertaking such actions is completely or partially cost-recovered from exporters.

In December 2025, the Government announced changes to move to a fully cost-recovered model by 2028. Industry is concerned the proposed changes to export cost recovery arrangements may hurt the competitiveness of agricultural exports and producers.

While in most instances these are important and required services to facilitate export, industry holds concerns related to both the underlying efficiency of the service provision, as well as cost recovery arrangements being used to unsustainably support the broader departmental cost base, unrelated to export services.

To this end, we recommend appropriations are made to address short-term exporter fees and charges deficits, as well as investments into the underlying efficiency and effectiveness of export services, ensuring the adoption and use of contemporary regulatory technology. Appropriations are made to fund broader departmental costs and overheads.

## **Why does it matter?**

This investment is crucial for several reasons, including:

- **Protecting export competitiveness:** Unsustainable increases in exporter fees and charges will reduce the competitiveness of Australian agricultural exports, eroding margins in already tight global markets. Recent events such as volatile US trade policy and Chinese tariffs on beef exports underscore the need for supporting short-term export competitiveness.
- **Supporting whole-of-sector productivity:** Given the sector exports 70% of production, impacts on our international competitiveness have direct and material impacts on the overall productivity of the industry.
- **Ensuring industry confidence in service provision frameworks:** It is imperative that export regulatory services are efficient and suitable, and associated cost recovery frameworks fund actual service provision.

## **Additional information:**

Many agri-export participants have expressed concerns that export service functions are often inefficient, complex and cumbersome to comply with and have not adopted contemporary regulatory technology. Further, the growing use of export cost recovery frameworks to fund broader and unrelated departmental overheads risks the competitiveness of Australian agri-exports due to higher regulatory costs through the supply chain. These issues are widespread, with concerns being raised by NFF members and supply chain partners across the red meat, grains, horticulture and livestock export industries.

# Investment 3

## **\$100.0 million over four years to support market access, maintenance and utilisation activities by Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.**

### **What is the issue?**

As the designated Competent Authority for Australian food and fibre market access, DAFF plays a critical role in realising the sector's trade success. This role is of critical importance against a backdrop of increasing trade uncertainty.

While headline tariff reductions are often the primary target when pursuing market access opportunities, non-tariff barriers (NTBs, sometimes referred to as technical market access barriers) can dictate the realities of long-term export success. Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARES) research shows NTBs are equivalent to a 19% tariff, representing a multi-billion dollar burden on Australian agricultural exports.

Further, recent experience has demonstrated the volatility of the global trading environment where market access dynamics for Australian agricultural exports can change at a rapid pace. Time and time again, a resourced in-market presence has assisted industry to navigate and resolve such challenges.

The NFF recommends a commitment of \$100 million over the forward estimates for technical market access resources within DAFF, as well as in-country resources via the Overseas Agriculture Counsellors Network.

### **Why does it matter?**

This investment is critical for several reasons, including:

- Taking advantage of market access opportunities: An appropriately resourced DAFF supports the sector's response to technical market access issues when they arise, ensuring genuine realisation of market access opportunities.
- Supporting whole-of-sector productivity: Given the sector exports 70% of production, any impacts to our international competitiveness have direct and material impacts on the sector's overall productivity.
- Expanding trade diversification: The Government and industry are in lockstep on the need to diversify trade, with a resourced DAFF a central enabler to achieving this aim.

### **Additional information:**

As ABARES notes, resolving NTBs is a complex process requiring sustained strategic effort, often over several years. However, they also outline that success is possible if appropriate resourcing is provided. Concerningly, Australia's technical in-market presence is being reduced.

# Investment 4

## **\$50.0 million over four years to fund the implementation of the National Biosecurity Strategy and Action Plan.**

### **What is the issue?**

Australia's biosecurity system is facing increasing pressure from complex and evolving threats. Persistent outbreaks like red imported fire ants, the multi-state varroa mite response, and near misses such as khapra beetle highlight this intensifying challenge. Northern Australia, as the frontline for many high-risk animal and plant pests and diseases, remains under serious strain. Meanwhile, threats such as H5 avian influenza are edging closer to our borders. The stakes are high: Australia must future-proof its biosecurity system to protect agriculture, the environment, and the economy.

While the National Biosecurity Strategy (NBS) and its Action Plan provide a clear roadmap for reform, progress is hampered by a lack of dedicated funding. We cannot afford to wait for the system to fail. Without urgent investment, Australia risks losing its ability to protect farms, ecosystems, and export markets - putting food security, jobs, and trade at risk for every Australian.

### **Why does it matter?**

Funding the Strategy's implementation will:

- Strengthen national preparedness: Support coordinated, risk-based responses to emerging threats across plant, animal, and environmental biosecurity.
- Modernise the system: Enable reform of outdated structures, improve data sharing, and integrate new technologies for early detection and rapid response.
- Safeguard productivity and trade: Minimise costly disruptions to agricultural production, domestic food supply chains and exports.
- Deliver public good outcomes: Enhance compliance, enforcement, and community engagement, ensuring biosecurity is a shared responsibility across all sectors.

### **Additional information:**

The NBS outlines a vision for a stronger, more mature biosecurity system that is proactive, collaborative, and resilient. Its Action Plan, endorsed by Commonwealth, state and territory agricultural ministers, identifies priority areas including shared responsibility, stronger partnerships, workforce development, and technology integration. As a member of the NBS National Implementation Committee, the NFF has consistently championed the Strategy and stressed the importance of firm timelines, clearer accountability, and measurable outcomes.

This investment would allow the Australian Government to lead the delivery of these reforms and ensure Australia's biosecurity system remains fit for purpose. It would also support transparent annual reporting and performance tracking, helping build public trust and demonstrating value for money. This funding should act as a catalyst, unlocking co-investment and ensuring all parties uphold their shared responsibility to protect Australia's agricultural future.

# Investment 5

## **\$36.0 million over four years to support the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority's public benefit functions.**

### **What is the issue?**

Agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines (AgVet chemicals) are essential for producing safe, affordable food and fibre in Australia. Timely access to these products underpins not only farm productivity and sustainability but also national food security, public health, and consumer confidence. This includes ensuring farmers can access minor-use products critical for niche crops and rangeland industries, where limited market size often makes registration challenging.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is Australia's independent regulator for AgVet chemicals, ensuring products meet strict safety and efficacy standards. However, the APVMA is the only pesticide regulator in the OECD funded entirely by industry fees and levies. This model, combined with Australia's small market size, discourages global innovators from registering new technologies and limits access to safer, more sustainable products.

### **Why does it matter?**

Public funding for the APVMA would:

- Improve efficiency for national benefit: Additional investment would allow the APVMA to operate more effectively across all core functions. This means farmers gain timely access to innovations that keep food affordable and sustainable, benefits that flow through to every Australian household, while ensuring the regulator can deliver essential public-good activities like compliance and chemical reviews.
- Support public confidence: Aligning the APVMA's funding model with other public-good regulators, such as the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the Therapeutic Goods Administration, would strengthen independence and reinforce trust in the safety of food and fibre.
- Strengthen competitiveness: Lowering barriers to entry for registrants, especially for minor crops and niche industries, would encourage innovation and improve access to cutting-edge technologies.

### **Additional information:**

According to an independent review of the APVMA in 2023 by Ken Matthews AO, commissioned by the Australian Government, an annual appropriation of \$8.4 million would fully support the APVMA's public benefit functions. This investment would bring the APVMA into alignment with other regulators. For example, the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator receives over \$8 million annually, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration receives \$15m annually for its public good activities.

The APVMA's activities of chemical review, compliance and monitoring deliver public benefit by protecting health, the environment, trading relationships and consumer confidence. Public funding for these activities would improve efficiency and enable the APVMA to deliver on its vision of being a global leader in agricultural and veterinary chemical regulation for the benefit of Australia.



Pillar 2.

# Growing Sustainability

# Investment 6

## **\$2.0 billion over four years to support implementation of Nature Repair methodologies with a focus on reducing predation by invasive species.**

### **What is the issue?**

Vertebrate pests including feral cats, foxes, pigs, dogs, and deer cause enormous damage to Australia's environment and harm Australia's agricultural productivity. Simultaneously, noxious weeds and other pests such as carp continue to threaten Australia's biodiversity.

Australia boasts a robust system of national plans for strategic responses to manage vertebrate pests, with cross-jurisdictional collaboration led by national coordinators. However, additional funding is required to fully implement these long-term approaches and support on-ground management and eradication activities. Utilising the nascent Nature Repair Market to address predation by vertebrate pests would deliver material outcomes for Australia's environment and restrict biodiversity declines.

### **Why does it matter?**

- **Building farm resilience and prioritising sustainability:** To remain competitive and resilient, agriculture needs robust natural capital markets. The development and long-term support of these markets will provide farmers with the financial incentives to adopt sustainable practices and combat invasive species.
- **Building market capability:** Natural capital markets are in their infancy, requiring adequate structures and support for effective environmental stewardship. We need a sensibly designed marketplace that does not place undue compliance burden on the farm sector while allowing public then private capital to effectively flow.
- **Global market alignment:** With a global shift towards sustainable models influenced by Sustainable Development Goals and Environmental, Social and Governance objectives (including via the Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework), Australia needs to align its practices to remain globally competitive.

### **Additional information:**

Several initiatives, including the government's Agriculture Biodiversity Stewardship Package which includes the Platform for Land and Nature Repair and Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot methodologies are pioneering efforts in the planning, monetisation, and development of natural capital markets. However, for these to realise their full potential, the creation of a transparent marketplace akin to an Australian Securities Exchange is paramount.

One of the primary challenges in this venture is the quantification and valuation of natural capital. While there are concerted research efforts backed by government and the private sector, more investment is crucial for market development and validation. Prior reviews of National Environmental Law and successive State of the Environment Reports have highlighted the potential of market-based mechanisms.

# Investment 7

## **\$2.0 billion over four years to support complementary measures in the Murray-Darling Basin.**

### **What is the issue?**

The Murray-Darling Basin plays a vital role in sustaining regional communities, driving agricultural production, and supporting diverse environmental habitats. The current Murray-Darling Basin Plan disproportionately focuses on water recovery to support environmental outcomes. The purpose of the Basin Plan is to support a sustainable Murray-Darling Basin as well as Basin communities, which requires more than just 'water flow'.

Investments in complementary measures are projects that do not involve water buybacks but instead implement non-flow measures that improve environmental outcomes and address degradation drivers. This may include installation of fishways and fish diversion screens, addressing cold water pollution, managing invasive European carp, and supporting riparian vegetation.

### **Why does it matter?**

Complementary measures in the Murray-Darling Basin are essential for several compelling reasons:

- **Holistic environmental approach:** While water flow is a substantial factor, achieving true ecological health requires a multi-pronged strategy. Implementing these measures helps ensure the Basin's overall environmental vitality.
- **Enhanced ecological outcomes:** By addressing factors like cold water pollution, fish diversion, and invasive European carp, we can achieve better environmental results that are not solely reliant on water flow adjustments.
- **Community benefits:** These measures don't just help the environment, they directly impact Basin communities by fostering a healthier ecosystem, which in turn supports socio-economic activities and resilience.
- **Filling the gaps:** The current Basin Plan, while beneficial, has areas that have been largely overlooked. By investing in these complementary measures, we can create a more comprehensive and effective strategy.

### **Additional information:**

While restoring and maintaining adequate water flow is undeniably essential, relying solely on this approach overlooks the multifaceted nature of ecological health and community welfare. There is significant scope to improve environmental outcomes through complementary measures that have largely been neglected in the Basin Plan and which would provide a valuable investment for Basin communities.

The proposed \$2 billion investment over four years would be instrumental in propelling the Murray-Darling Basin towards a sustainable future. By endorsing and financing these complementary measures, we not only address the gaps in the current Basin Plan but also champion a holistic approach that promises enhanced ecological outcomes and community resilience.

# Investment 8

## **\$750.0 million over four years to support long-term community vitality and adjustment to the socio-economic impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan implementation.**

### **What is the issue?**

A stronger, renewed focus on an effective long-term transitional assistance strategy in the Murray-Darling Basin will ensure communities and industries negatively impacted by the implementation of the Basin Plan are better positioned to absorb socio-economic impacts, grow sustainably, and deliver persistent economic activity. Such an approach must place communities first and be supported by robust audit and monitoring frameworks to deliver co-benefit outcomes and economic multipliers in regional communities and townships.

Measures to achieve legislated water recovery targets, including 450GL of additional environmental water as required under the Basin Plan, will inflict negative socio-economic impacts on irrigated agricultural production and Basin communities. This is a reality recognised in the 2012 Basin Plan Regulation Impact Statement Addendum to the Water Act 2007. These impacts include increasing water allocation prices, decreasing surface water use in the southern connected Basin, decreasing annual production of food and fibre, and diminished rural community vitality and prosperity.

### **Why does it matter?**

A long-term strategy, as opposed to a singular one-off payment approach, is essential for reasons including:

- Improving community health and resilience: Ensuring communities and industry are provided the necessary transitional assistance over the long term will deliver positive outcomes for social, mental, and economic health in regional Australia. It can also help build community trust and confidence in government services.
- Securing food and fibre production for the future: These measures will ensure communities have the resources and assistance they need to meet the food and fibre demands of domestic and international consumers.

### **Additional information:**

The NFF continues to oppose buybacks. Several reports including a recent report from Dairy Australia point to the adverse impacts on communities due to buybacks. We need to recognise that the ongoing social dislocation has been poorly dealt with. Real investment in economically additive jobs is critical. There is simply not yet enough on the table to meet the emerging needs of affected communities.

# Investment 9

## **\$10.0 million over four years to support the development and application of the Spatial, Agriculture, Forestry and Environment model to deliver a national agricultural land capability assessment.**

### **What is the issue?**

Australian agriculture is experiencing increasing pressure from competing land-uses. This includes environmental offsets, critical minerals projects, housing development, biodiversity conservation measures, and most notably renewable energy infrastructure development. Ensuring arable land and agricultural assets are mapped at the national scale is essential to managing land-use conflict and safeguarding the sector's responsibility to produce nutritious food and fibre for the domestic and international market.

There is currently no authoritative and nationally consistent dataset identifying high-value agricultural land. Without this visibility, agricultural regions remain exposed to poorly informed development decisions, creating long-term risks for food security and regional economies.

### **Why does it matter?**

A national land capability assessment is essential for several compelling reasons:

- Protecting future production: Without a clear national picture, agriculture risks being sidelined or diminished by competing land-use priorities. Comprehensive mapping ensures that food and fibre production remains a core determinant factor in land-use planning.
- Responding to National Environmental Law Reform: Bioregional planning is a cornerstone of proposed reforms to the EPBC Act. A dedicated agricultural overlay is essential to inform social, cultural, and economic assessments and to safeguard agricultural production in Development Zone regions.

### **Additional information:**

The proposed \$10.0 million investment over four years will support the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry to further develop and apply its Spatial, Agriculture, Forestry and Environment model for national agricultural land capability assessment.

This investment is essential to ensuring that Australia's arable land and agricultural assets are accurately mapped and understood, strengthening national planning and safeguarding agricultural regions as competing land-use pressures intensify. It will also complement government's policy of a fair and equitable transition to a lower emissions future.

# Investment 10

## **\$200.0 million over four years to support agriculture to implement National Environmental Law reform through targeted communication, adoption, and extension.**

### **What is the issue?**

Recent reforms to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) have significantly altered how farmers will interact with National Environmental Law. Without clear guidance, practical decision-support tools, and accessible extension services, there is a material risk that farmers will inadvertently fall foul of these complex new requirements through misunderstanding rather than misconduct.

This proposed \$200.0 million investment over four years will deliver fit-for-purpose guidance, decision-support tools, and extension support services to ensure reforms are implemented effectively and efficiently for agriculture.

### **Why does it matter?**

- Regulatory certainty: Farmers require clear, fit-for-purpose guidance on how reforms will interact with day-to-day operations and State and Territory legislation to ensure they understand their obligations.
- Avoiding unintended penalties: Decision-support tools must deliver robust mapping outcomes to provide certainty and confidence.
- Trusted and local support: Farmers need direct access to real people to resolve issues quickly and efficiently.

### **Additional information:**

For the agricultural sector, the EPBC Act is much more about continuing-use provisions than it about assessments. For the former, agriculture needs to be confident that obligations imposed are well articulated and accessible. Unreliable mapping, the differentiation of potential or critical habitat, or how the listing of a species and its subordinate threat abatement strategies are resolved and communicated are all of concern. On the latter issue of assessments, clarity on scale, offsets calculators, and risk attribution are all issues which are complex and difficult to communicate.

# Investment 11

**\$20.0 million over four years to prioritise the development of Australian Carbon Credit Units to drive innovation and support methane-reducing livestock feed technologies and whole-of-farm emissions reduction practices.**

## **What is the issue?**

Australia is projected to face an Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) shortfall as demand for carbon credits increases under the Safeguard Mechanism, but Tradable Emissions Baselines continue to decline year-on-year. At the same time, safeguard entities remain overly reliant on land-based sequestration credits due to lower costs and limited non-land-based carbon credit alternatives.

There is a limited suite of dedicated agricultural methods and those that exist have or will soon sunset. New methods under development fail to prioritise or reflect the whole-of-farm opportunity within the sector, with approaches such as the Integrated Farm and Land Management Methodology remaining too narrow in focus.

## **Why does it matter?**

Accelerating the development of ACCU methodologies for agriculture is essential for several reasons:

- Addressing the emerging ACCU shortfall: Multiple forecasts point to a tightening ACCU market. New agricultural methods are critical to strengthening supply and reducing pressure on land-based offsets.
- Unlocking agricultural abatement: Livestock methane reduction is one of the most scalable abatement opportunities available to the sector.

## **Additional information:**

The proposed \$20.0 million investment over four years will drive innovation, increase supply of high integrity carbon credits, and ensure producers have financially viable mechanisms to contribute to national emissions reduction objectives without undermining productivity and profitability.

# Investment 12

## **\$25.0 million over four years to amplify Australia's position as a world leader in agricultural sustainability via the Agricultural Sustainability Australia Alliance.**

### **What is the issue?**

The Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework (AASF) is Australia's flagship industry-led and government-supported framework for demonstrating our sustainability credentials and our commitment to low-emissions agriculture. Sustainability has become a major non-technical barrier to trade. Overseas markets often misunderstand Australia's unique production systems and environmental conditions, which is increasingly used to challenge our 'clean, green' reputation.

It is time to take AASF from concept to coordinated national action. Funding will implement the AASF's Strategic and Operational Plan through the establishment of the Agricultural Sustainability Australia (ASA) Alliance: an industry-government partnership.

This five-year investment will continue the refinement of the AASF as Australia's unifying sustainability framework and establish the Sustainability Data Ecosystem to support trusted, interoperable evidence access for supply chains. It will also deliver nationally consistent indicators and metrics required for reporting, verification and government policy and strengthen Australia's international engagement and reputation, including targeted partnerships in Southeast Asia.

### **Why does it matter?**

- A nationally consistent approach: A single, coherent national framework reduces confusion across markets and supply chains, builds confidence in Australia's sustainability credentials, and strengthens our ability to promote science-based evidence over ideology.
- Maintaining and expanding market access: Australian agriculture depends on exports, but global sustainability requirements are escalating rapidly. Meeting expectations at an industry scale, rather than farm by farm, is essential to protect market access, support negotiations, improve on-farm productivity and position Australia as a trusted producer.
- Reduced regulatory burden: A coordinated, national approach avoids duplication. The AASF provides a clear, industry-wide framework for identifying strengths, gaps and improvement pathways without increasing compliance load on producers.

### **Additional information:**

With the AASF now reaching maturity, Australia has a unique opportunity to cement its global leadership in sustainable agri-food and fibre. To maintain momentum and secure the gains made to date, investment is required in the governance, operations and national coordination functions of the ASA Alliance.



**Pillar 3.**

# **Unlocking Innovation**

# Investment 13

## **\$85.0 million over four years to implement key recommendations of the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review.**

### **What is the issue?**

Connectivity remains a critical enabler of productivity, safety, and wellbeing in regional Australia. Despite progress, rural and remote communities continue to face persistent gaps in mobile coverage, connectivity literacy, service reliability, and access to fit-for-purpose technologies. The 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review identified 14 key recommendations to address these challenges, including the need for a national regional telecommunications strategy, enhanced consumer support, and modernised investment programs.

### **Why does it matter?**

Implementing the Review's recommendations will:

- **Expand the reach and impact of the Regional Tech Hub:** Since 2020, the Hub has supported over 340,000 individuals and small businesses with free, independent advice to help them get and stay connected. With major telecommunications transitions ahead and growing demand for trusted guidance, further investment is needed to scale its services and ensure all regional Australians can access the support they need.
- **Strengthen safety and emergency resilience:** Connectivity is a lifeline during natural disasters, medical emergencies, and bushfire seasons. Modernising government programs must include mandated emergency roaming, improved network redundancy, and prioritised coverage for critical transport corridors and evacuation routes.
- **Address on-farm connectivity gaps and support productivity:** The NFF strongly supports the continuation and expansion of the highly successful On Farm Connectivity Program to enable farmers to access fundamental connectivity and AgTech equipment, improve operational efficiency, and manage risk.

### **Additional information:**

The Regional Tech Hub has become a critical resource in this space. In 2024–25, it responded to 24,800 assistance requests, attracted 110,000 website visits, and reached 4.4 million people via social media. In the past three months alone, it recorded 322,035 visits and raised 402 support tickets, driven by major developments such as the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation, nbn's fixed wireless rollout, and concerns around Triple Zero outages.

The 2024 Review recommends extending the Hub's contract, developing a Regional Connectivity Strategy, mandating emergency roaming, and modernising the Universal Service Obligation to reflect current connectivity needs. These reforms are essential to ensure coordination, redundancy, reliability, and safety. This investment must be co-designed with industry and communities and deliver measurable improvements in connectivity outcomes for regional Australians.



**Pillar 4.**

# **People and Communities**

# Investment 14

**\$175.0 million over four years for a 'farmworker accommodation stimulus package' of taxation concessions and incentives to accelerate the construction and upkeep of farmworker accommodation.**

## **What is the issue?**

Farmworker accommodation is essential for attracting and retaining agricultural labour, particularly in remote or rural areas. However, many farms lack adequate housing facilities for their workers, leading to labour shortages, workforce turnover, and substandard living conditions.

A \$175.0 million investment should be allocated to introduce tax concessions that incentivise the development of worker accommodations and enhance existing fringe benefits tax concessions to reduce the financial burden on employers providing accommodation as well as allowing accelerated depreciation to maintain and improve accommodation.

## **Why does it matter?**

Investing in a 'farmworker accommodation stimulus package' is essential for several reasons:

- Improving labour attraction and retention: Access to suitable and comfortable accommodation is key to attracting and retaining agricultural workers.
- Enhancing safety and health: Proper accommodation promotes worker health and safety by providing hygienic and comfortable living spaces. This reduces the risk of accidents and illnesses associated with substandard housing.
- Supporting industry reputation: A commitment to providing quality accommodation demonstrates the agricultural sector's responsibility and care for its workforce. This can improve the sector's public image and strengthen community support.
- Current accommodation market: There are genuine accommodation shortages in regional Australia which can inhibit an employer's capacity to provide reasonable accommodation for their workforce as well as increasing the employers' costs.

## **Additional information:**

Investing in farmworker accommodation supports the sector's ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce, enhances productivity and safety, improves industry reputation, and contributes to the overall economic stability and growth of rural and regional communities. This investment promotes a fair and responsible approach to labour practices within the agricultural sector.

# Investment 15

## **\$50.0 million over four years for a national, industry-led approach to improve farmers' wellbeing and prevent suicides.**

### **What is the issue?**

Farmers die of suicide at twice the rate of other working Australians. This equates to one farmer dying by suicide every ten days. Farmers are also half as likely as other rural people to have seen a mental health professional in the past 12 months.

The 2023 National Farmer Wellbeing Report, delivered in partnership between dairy cooperative Norco and the NFF, found that close to half of Australian farmers (45%) who participated in the survey had thoughts of self-harm or suicide. In terms of causes, the report found that weather, including natural disasters, and financial stress, were leading contributors to psychological distress.

Research has consistently shown that farmers will only access mental health-related help if they feel that the person offering support understands their way of life.

### **Why does it matter?**

A national, agricultural-industry-led approach to grow farmers' wellbeing and prevent suicides is crucial for:

- Driving health and community outcomes: Farmers are an at-risk demographic for death by suicide. It has devastating social consequences for families and communities.
- Addressing barriers to support: There are multiple barriers to farmers engaging with mainstream mental health services and helplines. Research has shown that farmers will only access mental health-related help if they feel that the person offering support understands their way of life.
- Increasing social resilience: The increasing prevalence and severity of drought and natural disasters across Australia, combined with financial strain and uncertainty for farmers, mean targeted support to bolster agricultural communities is needed.

### **Additional information:**

A coordinated, bespoke, industry-based approach will provide opportunities for farmers to optimise their wellbeing and decision-making, improve productivity, and prevent suicide in this at-risk group. Given the significant implications of poor wellbeing for the industry, there is a need for a targeted, five-year multi-modal campaign to support cultural shifts across the agricultural industry to address this crucial issue.

A proposal has been developed by iFarmwell/University of South Australia, in collaboration with key organisations such as Lifeline Australia, Farmsafe Australia, the National Centre for Farmer Health along with the Regional Wellbeing Survey/ University of Canberra, and is supported by the NFF and 60 organisations and individuals as part of the Coalition for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Agriculture.

# Investment 16

## **\$24.0 million over four years to support the Australian Veterinary Association Rural Placement Incentives Scheme.**

### **What is the issue?**

There is a concerning decline in the number of production animal veterinarians in rural and regional areas, a trend that has persisted for decades. A significant proportion of veterinarians stationed in regional areas opt to leave the profession within five years post-graduation. Furthermore, demographic data show that the regional production-animal veterinary workforce is ageing, with nearly 20% more veterinarians exceeding the national average working age than their counterparts in urban areas.

### **Why does it matter?**

Veterinarians play a multifaceted role that extends beyond providing primary animal health services. The presence and role of veterinarians in rural and regional areas are crucial for multiple reasons:

- Improving agricultural health: These professionals are paramount to maintaining the health and productivity of the nation's agricultural sector, sustainability, and animal welfare.
- Bolstering biosecurity defence: Veterinarians are a key element in the frontline of Australia's biosecurity system, ensuring timely surveillance, detection, and defence against biosecurity threats.
- Growing economic impact: Veterinarians contribute to the growth of the agricultural economy, supporting sustainable livestock production.

### **Additional information:**

The NFF supports the Australian Veterinary Association's recommendation for the Australian Government to allocate funding for a Rural Placement Incentives Scheme. This initiative aims to encourage early-career veterinarians to practice in rural and regional areas.

The proposed financial support of \$24.0 million over a span of four years would underpin this scheme, facilitating HECS fee forgiveness for participating veterinarians. For a detailed breakdown of the scheme's costing, please refer to the Australian Veterinary Association's pre-budget submission.

The proposed scheme, which is open to all veterinary graduates within five years of their graduation, includes participation mandating employment with a veterinary practice predominantly focused on production animals and prospective employment locations must qualify as rural or remote based on the Australian Government's rural and remote areas classification.

# Investment 17

## **\$3.0 million over two years to extend the Productivity Education and Training Fund to specifically support the farming sector.**

### **What is the issue?**

The agriculture sector in Australia is subject to evolving workplace relations laws and reforms that can significantly impact farmers and the farming sector. However, farmers often face challenges in understanding and adapting to these complex regulations, which can result in compliance issues, inefficiencies, and increased administrative burdens.

The \$3.0 million investment should be allocated to extend the Productivity and Education Training (PET) Fund to agricultural industry organisations, allowing for the provision of sector-relevant workplace relations advice.

Key components of this initiative should include developing resources and advisory services specifically designed for farmers and the agricultural sector to help them understand and implement workplace regulations. This initiative should also include creating educational programs and training initiatives that empower farmers and their workforces to engage effectively with workplace laws and reforms.

### **Why does it matter?**

Investing in the extension of the PET Fund to support farmers and the farming sector is essential for several reasons:

- Addressing specific industry needs: Agriculture has distinct workplace requirements and challenges that generic workplace relations laws and reforms may not adequately address. Tailored advice and consultation are essential to ensure that these regulations align with the realities of farming.
- Aiding compliance and efficiency: Farmers must comply with various workplace laws, from employment contracts to health and safety regulations. Access to active advice and consultation can help farmers navigate these requirements efficiently and effectively.
- Promoting productivity and innovation: Supporting farmers with education and training initiatives related to workplace laws promotes productivity and innovation within the sector. It enables farmers to adopt best practices that drive growth and sustainability.

### **Additional information:**

By extending the PET Fund to the NFF, this investment not only addresses the unique needs of the farming sector but also contributes to more effective, balanced, and practical workplace relations policies. It empowers farmers to navigate complex regulations, enhances compliance, and promotes Australian agriculture's long-term sustainability and growth.

# Investment 18

**\$3.0 million over four years in support of an Ag Trade Apprenticeship to ensure a professionally trained workforce with the relevant skills required by the industry.**

## **What is the issue?**

There is widespread appetite in farming communities for a trade-level apprenticeship to lift the skills and professionalism of the farm workforce, promote an agricultural career pathway, and professionalise the management and delivery of labour in the industry.

## **Why does it matter?**

An Ag Trade Apprenticeship will aid the sector's competitiveness through:

- Ensuring workforce development and retention: Establishing a dedicated apprenticeship program will attract and retain skilled workers, ensuring the agricultural sector has a robust pipeline of talent trained specifically for trade roles within the industry.
- Developing a proven model: Building on the success of the NFF's AgCAREERSTART program, the Ag Trade Apprenticeship will benefit from a strong foundation, using data-driven processes and proven pastoral care frameworks to ensure both the program's success and the wellbeing of its participants.
- Enabling economic sustainability: This allocation will fund a comprehensive feasibility study and the creation of a specific Group Training Organisation (GTO) to ensure that the program is financially sound and delivers long-term value.

## **Additional information:**

The initial approach to the program will be scalable. It is envisaged that there will be an intake of 20 apprentices in the first year, moving to 50 in the second year and 50-70 in the third year to ensure a sustained rollout.

Feedback from employers is also a key challenge. It is envisaged that a central GTO will provide both uniform management and key support for all parties, thus ensuring the program's smooth operation.

Financially, while the program may not be self-sustaining in the first one to two years, it is envisaged that it will achieve financial self-sufficiency in the third year with the support of the community as well as industry.



**Pillar 5.**

# **Capital and Risk Management**

# Investment 19

**\$2.2 billion over five years of reduced Commonwealth tax receipts to extend and increase the instant asset write-off for small business to \$150,000 for 12 months until 30 June 2027.**

## What is the issue?

The instant asset write-off (IAWO) has proven to be an effective taxation mechanism to assist farm businesses to increase productivity and build resilience by incentivising investment in plant and equipment (P&E).

With both agriculture's and the broader economy's productivity declining, it is critical that appropriate incentives exist to encourage the adoption of more effective and efficient farm machinery. In a high-cost-of-production economy, advancements in operating efficiency are critical to ensuring Australian businesses can stay competitive both domestically and against global peers.

Given this, the NFF welcomed the 12-month extension of the \$20,000 IAWO for small businesses announced in the federal election campaign. Continuing the IAWO policy for small businesses and increasing the asset threshold to \$150,000, consistent with calls from broader small business representatives, would further broaden the benefits of the IAWO.

## Why does it matter?

- **Increasing productivity:** The adoption of improved P&E, including the upgrading to contemporary, digitally-enabled equipment, will play an important role in seeking to arrest the declining productivity of not just the agricultural sector, but small and family businesses more broadly.
- **Enhancing sustainability:** The turnover of older P&E to that which is more efficient and with a lower emissions profile is an important element of the sector's emission reduction journey given the stock of older, less efficient machinery in the sector's inventory.
- **Improving health and safety outcomes:** The upgrading of older equipment plays an important role in improving on-farm health and safety. The adoption of contemporary agricultural equipment, which has a greater focus on user safety, has played a significant role in reducing on-farm health and safety incidents, materially improving outcomes for farm owners and employees.

## Additional information:

Historically, the adoption of improved P&E has played a significant role in step changes in the sector's productivity when it has either flatlined or been in decline. Australian producers are faced with a similar opportunity now with modern, digitally connected equipment likely to transform the competitiveness and output of the sector.

# Investment 20

**\$1.0 million over two years for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to investigate the role of government in facilitating intergenerational change and new entrants in the agriculture sector.**

## **What is the issue?**

Encouraging and facilitating intergenerational change in the agriculture sector is critical to future industry success, but nonetheless a challenging and complex issue.

The vast majority of Australian farming businesses are multi-generation family operations. Their future success is intrinsically linked to the considered and effective transfer of operating and real assets from one generation to the next. Yet changing financial, operating and demographic dynamics in the sector mean succession planning is more challenging than ever.

More challenging is the entry of new farmers into the sector outside of established farming businesses. While new entrants potentially bring new and innovative ideas to the sector, contemporary financial realities may see them unable to gain a foothold into agriculture.

In 2024, the Review of the Operation of the Regional Investment Corporation Act 2018 (RIC Review) acknowledged the importance of the issue and recommended that DAFF investigate the ongoing role of government in facilitating inter-generational change in the agriculture sector.

## **Why does it matter?**

This investment is important for several reasons, including:

- Supporting sound farm transition policy: It has been identified by the Government and industry that there is an urgent need to undertake a contemporary policy review of succession and new entrant policy.
- Supporting the continuation of strong family farms as the sector's cornerstone: Family farms make up most Australian agricultural businesses, proving a sustainable and profitable model to meet the nation's economic, trade and food security aspirations.
- Supporting effective intergenerational capital management in the sector: Such a review would support the retention and reinvestment of capital into the Australian farming sector.

## **Additional information:**

As outlined in the RIC review, encouraging and facilitating intergenerational change in the agriculture sector is challenging, and a broader issue for industry and government to work through. To this end, the NFF recommends a \$1.0 million investment to provide the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry with dedicated funding to undertake a holistic policy review of farm succession and new entry consistent with the recommendation from the RIC Review.

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