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TFGA Submission: Independent review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) is the leading representative body for Tasmanian primary producers. TFGA's members are responsible for generating approximately 80% of the value created by the Tasmanian agricultural sector.

The TFGA appreciates the opportunity to make comment on independent review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 (hereafter referred to as 'the Act').

Farmers are at the front-line of dealing with the impact of climate change on a daily basis and many are adapting their farm system to continue to thrive. Agricultural productivity in Tasmania, much like the rest of the world, heavily relies on climatic conditions. Fortunately, TFGA members and the broader Tasmanian farming community are well recognised for their understanding of the state's unique climatic conditions and are early adopters of technologies of adaption and management, but there is room to improve. The Government will also no doubt be cognisant of the fact that the reductions in GHG on the state inventory to date largely reflect changes in the forestry sector, while the contribution of agriculture has been low. This submission points out that sustainable growth and sustainable productivity improvements are forecast for the agriculture sector going forward.

Primary producers in Tasmania are making integral steps towards the reduction of the State's carbon footprint and have exercised a keen interest in a continual effort to incorporate practical, profitable and sustainable practices. It is important that if any legislation is required which would dictate state action on climate change in Tasmania that it remains evidence based, incorporates a strong agricultural perspective, and considers Tasmania's unique microclimates. That is, the process through which we engage with climate change requires care and deliberation – knee-jerk reactions or significant alterations shouldn't be made under pressure and without extensive consultation and consideration.

The Tasmanian agriculture sector needs Tasmanian Government commitment:

- 1. To continue to invest in climate change adaptation and mitigation, development and extension programs for agriculture.**
- 2. To invest increased funding into drought preparedness initiatives.**
- 3. To ensure that emissions reduction targets are not set in isolation from economic development and rural community resilience policy.**

The TFGA wishes to comment on the series of questions pertaining to "Emissions Targets" posed in the Discussion Paper:

8. *What would you consider to be an appropriate long-term greenhouse gas emissions or emissions reduction target for Tasmania (in terms of date and level of emissions or emissions reductions)?*
9. *What (if any) value do you think targets for specific sectors of the economy would offer, including for the sector itself? If you agree with the concept of sectoral emissions targets, which sectors should have emissions targets? Why?*
10. *What key factors should influence Government decisions to set State, sectoral and/or interim targets?*

The TFGA and its members support practical and pragmatic efforts to better deal with a changing climate and believes that setting emission targets is an appropriate mechanism for measuring action. The agricultural industry in Tasmania has already reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 8.3% since 1990, therefore the TFGA believes that it may be a worthy endeavour to separate industry targets in an effort to clarify efforts made in each sector. Other sectors that may be struggling to manage emission targets should not be allowed to “drag the chain” and negatively effect those that are actively adapting to the changing climate. The Tasmanian agricultural industry should be recognised for its innovation and progress, and not lumped into a state-wide figure that may be negatively skewed by industries that are not making the same advancements or efforts. The positive story that agriculture has to tell in this space is also a potential economic advantage e.g. carbon neutral beef.

This being said, the Act needs to consider targets as resembling “aspiration goals”, rather than as becoming mandated obligations. Examples of these aspirational goals already taking place include: the Australian red meat and livestock industry having committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and the Australian Dairy industry striving to reduce emissions by 30% by 2030. The TFGA is not equipped to accurately recommend specific emissions targets. However, our members are concerned that if mandated targets *are* set and they are beyond reasonable means of attainment, that this would be counterproductive to efficiency, productivity and sustainability. The TFGA also notes that Tasmania has had net zero emissions since 2016.

The TFGA also wishes to bring particular attention to the below question put forward in the “Climate Resilience & Adaptation” section of the Discussion Paper:

13. *What do you consider to be the main roles for State government in supporting Tasmanian communities, infrastructure, economic activities and environments in becoming more resilient to projected climate change?*

There are many key roles of the State government in the effort to continue to support and promote a more climate resilient state. Many TFGA members have voiced a need for the State government to invest more towards research and development to aid climate change mitigation efforts. For example, some TFGA members have voiced the need for there to be a greater emphasis on developing and investing in technologies that may significantly reduce carbon emissions, while simultaneously increasing productivity and profitability. For example, greater funding put toward researching pasture species, such as gene edited ryegrasses, may have significant potential to limit methane emissions, given its high energy/low fibre content. The TFGA notes the GMO moratorium and the Tasmanian Government’s position on SDN-1, but also notes the important role that such sciences and technologies can play in the mitigation of a changing climate.

Other TFGA members have expressed that there should also be a greater funding emphasis put towards renewable energy research, to ensure that the transition to cleaner energy is informed by a strong understanding of the most appropriate options available for Tasmania. In line with supporting research

into clean energy, the State government should also consider encouraging environmental stewardship by providing financial benefits to those that incorporate adaptive technologies (e.g. more efficient on-farm machinery, solar power, wind power etc.). This could, for example, be in the form of subsidies or tax-right offs. There are initiatives that are currently being progressed, such as NRM Norths federally funded pilot programme in the stewardship space, that should be monitored and potentially replicated across the state if they prove to be successful. Others have highlighted that issues such as food waste are still rife throughout the state, and thus educational initiatives to combat this need greater state investment (e.g. potentially through the appointment of a project officer etc.).

The Tasmanian Government should:

- 4. Develop emissions reduction policies that accommodate agriculture industry growth and recognise productivity.**
- 5. Seek funding opportunities with industry that accelerate the uptake of new technological innovations in Tasmanian farming systems**
- 6. Ensure that the state regulatory and policy environment facilitates commercialisation of these new technological advances**

As Tasmania continues to enhance its production and outputs, particularly in the effort to reach the state's \$10 billion annual value goal by 2050, the Government must continue to facilitate and promote adaptive capacities in the agricultural sector. In aiming to achieve this 2050 target, there is the potential to significantly increase production and outputs, such as through expansions of irrigation schemes. Therefore, these ambitious efforts to expand the agricultural industry must be coupled with funding toward research and development efforts and promote the continued uptake of sustainable advancements. The TFGA encourages the State Government to consider the 6 recommendations outlined throughout this submission and to ensure that the agricultural sector continues to receive unfettered support and guidance in the transition towards a more climate resilient state.

The TFGA looks forward to continued consultation on this important topic. Please contact the TFGA if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,



John McKew
Chief Executive Officer
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