

**2<sup>nd</sup> State Biosecurity Forum 2014**  
**4 December 2014 – Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle**

**Valuing our future, connecting people, managing pests and diseases**

**WELCOME SPEECH**

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Biosecurity is a current and future responsibility: We must optimise the sustainable use of our biological resources today and we have a responsibility to ensure future generations can experience and benefit from our place, as we do now.

Australian and Western Australian agricultural industries need to have access to the world's premium markets. We are enjoying the strongest demand in the international marketplace than we have for a long time; however, we still do not have access to some markets due to biosecurity restrictions.

Interest in our agriculture and food products from Asia, particularly China, and the Middle East is rising as those regions struggle to meet their increasing food needs and diverse consumer demands.

Western Australia wholeheartedly welcomes increased demand and trade, however, we're mindful of the need to protect the biosecurity status of our plant and animal production systems if we are to profitable increase and sustain production.

Let's be clear – WA's reputation for producing clean, safe, healthy food is a distinct advantage in overseas markets. People pay more for food that comes from a diverse, professional managed, low-pesticide use production region like WA.

WA agriculture and food products are valued at \$20 billion at the retail and export levels, with up to 80% of our products exported. Agriculture and food exports valued at \$6.4billion in 2013/14, account for approximately 5% of the State's total exports (with 92% attributed to minerals and energy).

While only 30,000 people, or thereabouts, are employed in farm jobs in WA<sup>1</sup>, the agrifood sector has important links with other aspects of the economy and delivers flow-on benefits for our social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Market, processing, supply chain and production systems innovation is vital to the growth, profitability and sustainability of the State's agrifood industries. Innovative ways to minimise risks to the biological resources on which all agriculture depends are equally vital.

Department of Agriculture and Food increasing scarce resources are focused on the biosecurity risks with the best of probability of mitigation and benefit delivery to WA.

The current State and Federal Government commitment to develop northern WA is generating considerable interest. As irrigated agriculture in northern WA expands and agribusiness diversified, the region will be vulnerable to pests and diseases that enter via unregulated pathways and via movement of production inputs, equipment and people.

These risks must be addressed at the same time as the development occurs if we are to avoid them threatening the contribution of agriculture to the economic, environmental and social development of in the north.

DAFWA recognises these challenges and the need to reshape and strengthen our biosecurity systems.

The State Government's \$20 million Royalties for Regions investment over 4 years in Boosting Biosecurity Defences, will significantly boost Western Australia's biosecurity capability for all partners.

We will continue to experience an increasing number of biosecurity threats. It is crucial for the overall wellbeing of our agricultural sector and the environment that Government, industry and the community members acknowledge and embrace their biosecurity roles and responsibilities.

It is important that forums such as today continue to inform biosecurity partners and stakeholders, and foster the collaborative effort so vital in this important area.

On the program here today, we have an impressive line-up of speakers and topics that will no doubt invite stimulating discussion.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2<sup>nd</sup> State Biosecurity Forum.

### **Sources**

1. National Farmers' Federation Farm Facts, 2012
2. Western Australian economic profile, October 2014, Department of State Development