



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Agriculture White Paper

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Tehan, Dan, MP

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Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (12:09): I rise today to speak on the agriculture white paper which was launched by Minister Joyce earlier this week and to commend the white paper process to all Australians, particularly those Australians from rural and regional Australia. This is going to be a very important document because it is going to set the framework for what we do in agriculture in the next 10, 20 and 30 years. It is going to home in on the thing which is most crucial, and that is making sure that our farmers are profitable at the farm gate. It will deal with other issues as well: improving market returns, better managing drought, access to investment finance, farm debt levels and debt sustainability, and the competitiveness of the Australian agricultural sector and its relationship to food and fibre processing and related value chains, including achieving fair returns. It will also look at the efficiency and competitiveness of inputs to the agriculture value chain, such as skills training, education, human capital, research and development, critical infrastructure, and opportunities for enhancing agricultural exports and new markets.

Research, development and innovation are going to be vital for our agricultural sector in the next decade. If we did not have the research, development and innovation in the last 40 years, our agricultural sector would be worth \$12 billion instead of \$40 billion today. That is what research, development and innovation can do for this sector. It is why the coalition committed at the election \$100 million to research and development. We are going to deliver on that election commitment because it is a way forward for that sector.

Market access is also going to be a way forward. In the first nearly 100 days of the Abbott government we have already made achievements in this area. A free trade agreement with South Korea has been negotiated, finalised and done. Importantly, that free trade agreement will mean greater access for our dairy producers, grain producers and meat producers. It is a first-class document. I commend the Minister for Trade and Investment on what he has negotiated. But it must not stop there. There is more to be done.

We have free trade agreement negotiations going on with Japan at the moment. I am looking forward to that being completed in the first six months of next year, because, once again, it will be incredibly important. Japan is our largest dairy export market. If we can get access to that market, it will help our dairy farmers. It is also a large market for our beef and lamb exports. So, once again, if we can get access to that market, it will be great for our farmers. When it comes to seafood, Japan is potentially a very good market for us. These are the sorts of things that we can achieve. If we can do that with Japan, it will be sensational for our farming sector.

Then there is the big one: China. We have already commenced negotiations there as well. Once again, if we can achieve access to the Chinese markets, our agricultural sector will be set up for the years to come. They are big negotiations with Japan and China but, because of the way we have started with getting a deal done with South Korea, I am strongly of the view that we can get these agreements and our farmers will benefit from them.

I commend the white paper process. I say once again that rural and regional Australia and those Australians in the cities need to get involved in the process. There will be a green paper and then there will be a white paper. We hope to have it concluded by the end of next year. It will be an important document. I say to those interested in gaining access to overseas markets, 'Make sure you get behind our free trade agreement process as well.' I am sure that the free trade agreement with Japan will happen next year. We are very keen to see the one with China finalised as well. These are exciting times for our agriculture sector. The government wants to assist our farmers. It is going to and it is going to deliver for them.