



RICEGROWERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

RGA Environmental Policy

Environmental Sustainability Committee

OBJECTIVE

To ensure that our growers implement Natural Resource Management practices that protect and enhance the landscapes in which they operate, leaving a legacy of a healthy environment while demonstrating the sustainability of the rice industry.

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The Rice Industry Environmental Policy

The Australian rice industry cares about and depends upon a healthy environment. Water, soil, air, habitat and local communities are fundamental resources for the industry and the broader community.

We are working towards a better environment for current and future generations, by continually improving the management of our natural resources. We aim to achieve this through developing an improved understanding of our environmental challenges, innovative solutions, strong partnerships and appropriate practice changes.

The rice industry recognises that efficient and productive farming businesses are a necessary pre-condition for good environmental management and outcomes.

The environmental policy is a statement of commitment agreed to by the membership of the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia (RGA) to improve environmental management and stewardship in our region. The policy is supported by a range of industry environmental programs and delivered through the Environmental Champions Program.

This policy is overseen by the RGA Environmental Sustainability Committee with components of the policy managed by the other RGA committees. The responsible committees are noted against the areas of this policy within this document.

1. Policy goals

The Australian rice industry aims to implement an effective environmental policy that it will:

1. Leave a legacy of a healthy environment including productive soils, clean air and water, and diverse and robust natural habitats, rivers and watersheds.
2. Enable sustainable rice farms and regional communities.
3. Provide safe and high quality food and other products.

2. Policy implementation

The rice industry recognises the need to integrate environmental thinking into everyday farm management and decision-making, longer term farm strategic planning and the management of all non-farm aspects of the industry. The rice industry will continue to:

- a) Increase our understanding of environmental issues and the role and responsibilities of the rice industry.
- b) Promote environmental and resource stewardship with rice growers and the wider community.
- c) Build our capacity and skill base to meet environmental challenges by facilitating practice change and adaptive management.
- d) Form partnerships that serve common environmental understanding and outcomes.
- e) Develop showcases of rice industry best practice.
- f) Encourage environmental innovation.

The industry's environmental policy focuses on the five key areas of **water, air, soils, habitat and community**.

The delivery mechanism for implementing our environmental policy is through Rice Extension and the Ricegrowers' Association activities.

3. Water

The industry's policy on water management covers the following three elements:

1. Regulatory compliance
2. Water use efficiency
3. Water use planning and budgeting

3.1 Regulatory compliance

Ensuring rice growers are complying with the regulatory obligations concerning on-farm water use is necessary to avoid third party effects and maintain the broader community's support of the industry.

The RGA Policy Position:

The rice industry's policy seeks universal compliance with the following regulatory requirements:

- Whole farm water balance limits to prevent rising water tables and associated salinity issues. (where applicable)
- Drainage water management (chemical withholding and volume).
- Adhering to soil suitability requirements for rice growing.

RGA Committee: Water Committee

3.2 Water use efficiency

Improving on-farm water use efficiency reduces the volume of water required to produce each tonne of rice, ensuring the long term sustainability of the industry and continuing community support. Efficient water use also helps reduce the effect of rising water tables.

RGA Policy Position:

To ensure growers minimise water use by adopting best practice in the following aspects of crop management:

- Planning and implementing efficient irrigation layouts.
- Crop seeding techniques and timing.
- Recycling and storage infrastructure.
- Crop agronomy and crop rotation.

RGA Committee: Productivity and Industry Affairs

3.3 Water use budgeting and planning

Effective water use budgeting and planning enables rice growers to make sustainable resource management decisions.

RGA Policy position:

Our policy aims to improve irrigators' decision making about water use by improving expertise in the following areas:

- Gross margins and the opportunity cost of different water use options.
- Effective scenario planning to manage water availability risk.
- Knowledge of the water market and water trading rules.

RGA Committee: Productivity and Industry Affairs

4. Air

The industry's policy on air quality covers the following issues:

1. Responsible stubble burning
2. Preventing chemical spray drift damage
3. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions

4.1 Stubble burning

Ensuring rice growers burn stubble in a responsible way, to minimise the effect of smoke on community amenity, the health of nearby residents and on road safety, is critical to avoid third party effects and maintain local communities' support for the industry.

The RGA Policy position:

Our policy seeks to ensure all rice growers are aware of, and adhere to, responsible burning practices. These include:

- Using stubble management options other than burning.
- Burning during the middle of the day to avoid inversion layers.
- Achieving a hot burn with dry stubble.
- Burning with definite wind direction and velocity.
- Avoid burning when wind is likely to carry smoke over residential areas or roads.
- Recording stubble burning activity, including time of day and wind direction/speed.

RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability

4.2 Chemical handling and application

Ensuring the proper handling and application of farm chemicals is necessary to maintain safe working conditions on farm. Minimising agricultural chemical spray drift is also important to protect nearby vegetation and waterways. It is also a mandatory legal requirement where there are adjacent sensitive crops.

RGA Policy positions:

Our policy aims to ensure all growers and spray applicators in the industry use best practice management when handling and applying chemicals. This includes:

- Ensuring chemicals are stored, handled and transported in compliance with regulations.
- Ensuring all chemical application is carried out in accordance with product labels.
- Understanding and monitoring conditions while spraying to prevent drift damage.
- Recording all chemical applications in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- Consulting with neighbours about chemical application intentions.
- Encouraging the use of closed intake systems for chemical induction.

RGA Committee: Productivity and Industry Affairs

5. Climate and Greenhouse gas emissions

The Ricegrowers' Association of Australia seeks to maintain the Australian rice industry's domestic and global competitiveness while reducing emissions and increasing carbon sequestration. The rice industry has and will continue to adapt practices, systems and businesses to futureproof the sector, enabling farmers to operate sustainably and prosper in a changing climate.

Our policy aims to maximise the number of growers who, on the basis of current and future scientific research, undertake practices that reduce their on-farm emissions and where appropriate sequester carbon from the atmosphere. These practices will include the adoption of renewable energy technologies and management practices for vegetation, soil, irrigation, crop rotations, stubble and fertiliser that have been demonstrated to reduce net GHG emissions. This policy also aims for growers to undertake best practice energy use by carrying out energy use audits and implementing energy saving measures on farm to reduce CO₂ emissions. This policy has been developed in conjunction with National Farmers Federation and Grain Growers.

RGA Policy positions:

The RGA supports:

- Establishing representative baseline emissions data for rice farming systems by 2025¹.
- Reducing emissions and the carbon footprint of the agricultural sector and all sectors of the Australian economy.
- A farming systems approach and efforts by rice industry as a whole, rather than individual farmers to reduce net emissions².
- Coordinated Government policies and strategies to address climate change while supporting economic, environmental and social growth.

¹ Calculating baseline emissions will involve the use of a calculator tool that can calculate emissions from all of the commodities produced on the farm including energy use (diesel, electricity etc.) and the sequestration capacity (removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere) of the farm. Examples include increased soil carbon and trees and vegetation removal of CO₂.

² The farming system refers to crop rotations, pasture, livestock, vegetation, wetland and irrigation infrastructure managed on farm. It is likely that not all rice farms will be able to achieve net zero emissions. This means that the sequestration capacity of other farms e.g. farms with large vegetation areas can be used to balance the emissions of farms that have reduced their emissions but cannot achieve the zero net target.

- An aspirational goal of net zero carbon by 2050 for the agriculture industry as a whole and the need to review new technologies and innovative practices annually with the aim to set an achievable fixed rice farming system target by 2030 and then for each decade until 2050³.
- Investment, development and adoption of innovation and technology which enables farmers to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Collaborating with SunRice regarding industry wide emissions and carbon sequestration to ensure the continued marketability of Australian rice in global markets.
- Developing partnerships with other commodities groups to promote reduced rice farming system emissions and carbon sequestration.
- Adaptation that ensures that agricultural productivity and farm business profitability can be sustained with changing climatic conditions;
- A balance of production and emissions policies, by adopting the principle of emissions intensity for agricultural emissions⁴.
- A focus on innovation and investment in climate research and development that drives innovation and builds resilience; Research Development & Extension (RDE) investment to identify the baseline carbon footprint of rice farming systems.
- Embracing the opportunities for emissions reduction and sequestration in the farm sector and facilitate participation of farmers in carbon markets;
- Acknowledging the role of vegetation and soil in carbon sequestration while ensuring that vegetation management policies do not unfairly burden farmers with the cost of achieving emissions reduction goals, or unreasonably restrict development.
- Coordinated regulation and energy policy, so that growth in the use of renewable energy does not result in unintended energy price distortions.
- Coordinated RDC (AgriFutures, GRDC, etc.) investment to identify pathways to carbon neutrality (net zero) which are economically and socially feasible, followed by associated extension and adoption programs.
- A consistent approach to carbon accounting and measurement across agricultural sectors to enable accurate measurement and assist with calculating mitigation efforts and offsets.
- Governments to recognise and reward the contribution farmers have already made to adapt to a changing climate and incentivise farmers' efforts to adopt emission reduction and carbon sequestration processes that generate co-benefits to community and the environment.
- Regulation should not unfairly impose farmers with the cost of achieving national emission reductions objectives.
- Regulations and legislation should encourage access to and adoption of innovations and technologies which support climate mitigation and adaptation activities
- The Climate Solutions Fund to expand its guidelines to encourage greater uptake of agricultural climate solutions projects⁵.

³ These reviews of technologies and innovative practices should be completed alongside of the assessment of any new regulatory requirements to ensure that the reduction in emissions and the implementation of practice change does not negatively impact the profitability of rice farming businesses.

⁴ Emissions intensity is the emission rate of a given pollutant relative to the intensity of a specific activity, or an industrial production process; for example grams of carbon dioxide released per megajoule of energy produced (per ton of rice grown), or the ratio of greenhouse gas emissions produced to gross domestic product.

⁵ The Australian Government Climate Solutions Fund purchases low cost-abatement practices or methodologies. It aims to deliver a step change to the offsets market in Australia by boosting the supply of Australian carbon credit units (carbon credits).

- Any public environmental outcomes sought are agreed with land managers, including clear recognition of outcomes already achieved on farm, and appropriate incentives are available to achieve these.
- Risk management tools and insurance models that enable businesses to mitigate climate risks.
- Government funded education programs are developed and provided to assist farmers' understanding of carbon generation, offsets and markets which may impact their business. This will include targeted extension programs which outline potential income opportunities for farmers from carbon markets.

For further information see Appendix 1, Attachment 2.3. RGA Climate and Emissions Policy Questions and Answers

RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability

6. Soils

The industry's policy on soils aims to improve soil health by improving the structure, fertility and biota of the region's soils. Achieving this will reduce the effects of agricultural activity on our soils and improve on-farm productivity.

The RGA Policy positions:

Our policy aims to ensure growers can improve their soil health by identifying best practice and facilitating adoption in the following areas:

- Stubble management. Maintaining stubbles in the soil to improve soil structure.
- Optimal crop rotations. Including 'green manure' crops to minimise synthetic fertiliser use.
- Tillage management. Minimising soil disturbance.
- Precision agriculture. Reducing inputs through soil testing, effective data capture, recording and review, and developing and applying prescriptions.
- Soil types matched to production systems.

Growers will be encouraged to trial innovative soil health practices and share outcomes with peers.

RGA Committee: Productivity and Industry Affairs

7. Habitat

There are a number of important benefits that can be achieved by the rice industry improving habitats and encouraging biodiversity in the rice growing region. These benefits are many and varied, including:

- Ensuring the industry's sustainability and leaving a legacy for future generations.
- Improving species diversity and their populations.
- Achieving better integrated pest management with the environmental benefit this brings.
- Providing important ecosystem services to the broader community including assisting in the recovery of threatened species including the Australasian Bittern.
- Improving social capital through collaborative restoration projects.
- Maintaining community support for the industry.

The RGA Policy positions:

The industry's policy aims to engage and enlist as many growers as possible to undertake important habitat management practices. These include:

- Understanding and complying with legislative environmental offset requirements.
- Preserving areas of remnant vegetation.
- Rehabilitating and re-vegetating areas in need.
- Managing on farm wetlands and waterways.
- Participating in community corridor projects.
- Undertaking pest species control.
- Developing and implementing endangered species protection and recovery measures.

RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability

7.1 Bitterns in Rice

The RGA has led the research and engagement of rice growers and the broader community regarding the management of rice farms modified wetland habitats and the benefits these habitats provided for the nationally endangered Australasian Bittern.

The RGA Policy Positions:

The RGA believes it has a responsibility to research and promote best management of the surrogate wetlands that Riverina rice fields provide for the Australasian Bittern and other threatened species.

To support rice growers in adopting Bittern friendly management practices the RGA will pursue:

- Funding support for research
- Access of environmental water to enable sufficient ponding periods for Bittern habitat
- Access to incentives or premiums for growers that provide Bittern habitat
- Promote the rice industries provision of habitats that supports a diverse range of species including several that are threatened
- Promote the rice industry's contribution to the recovery of the Australasian Bittern

RGA Committee: RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability

8. Community

The capacity of the growers and the broader community to improve skills and understanding, share knowledge and work collaboratively on environmental management is critical to achieving sustainable environmental conditions, economic stability and social amenity for the region.

The RGA Policy positions:

The rice industry's policy is to foster capacity building by enabling growers and others to improve and share their skills and knowledge. This includes the following:

- Maximising grower participation in learning opportunities.

- Preparing growers and other key community members for leadership roles.
- Engaging in community activities.
- Maintaining industry, social and cultural history.
- Building networks and partnerships.

RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability and Productivity and Industry Affairs

9. Native Game Bird Management

Hunting is recognised as one of a number of tools used by rice growers in the sustainable management of native game birds.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries – Native Game Bird Management Program is responsible for licensing landholders and hunters to hunt native game birds. The Native Game Bird Management Team has issued a number of useful resources to help you understand your obligations, including the ‘Landholders Kit’, which can be found here: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting/game-and-pests/native-game-birds

The RGA Policy positions:

The RGA only supports the use of hunting where non-lethal deterrents are ineffective and when best practice is used and all relevant legislation and regulations are complied with.

RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability

10. Environmental Champions Program

The Environmental Champions Program (ECP) has been a very successful sustainability reporting program for the rice industry. A range of factors including a lack of funding, drought and changes in how rice farm businesses operate has meant that the original cluster group model has become unworkable. The RGA is currently working with SunRice to develop and implement an internationally recognised Sustainability-BMP program. This program will replace the original ECP. Until this is finalised important components of the ECP will be delivered by the RGA in conjunction with Rice Extension.

The RGA Policy positions:

The RGA supports the development of the internationally recognised Australian Sustainable Rice Platform.

RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability

11. Solar Farm Development and Irrigation Land Use

There have been a number Solar Farm developments and proposals for future developments across the Riverina's rice growing districts. RGA members are concerned about the possible impacts these farms may have on their farming businesses and the longer term impacts on agricultural production due to the removal of agricultural land from production.

The RGA promotes the protection of agricultural land. The long term success of the agriculture sector will be dependent on our continued access to land and water. Agricultural land is a valuable resource that all levels of government should preserve for the future prosperity of our sector and our nation.

The RGA Policy positions:

The RGA believes an irrigation farm owner should have the right to lease, sell or develop their farm land for use as a Solar Farm if the following NFF policy positions as endorsed by the RGA Environmental Sustainable Development Committee conditions are met.

The land use decisions of governments must:

- *Recognise agriculture as a pillar of our local, state, territory and national economies*
Solar farm developments will see the area of agricultural land reduced. The developments however need to recognise the value of agricultural production by minimising the land area removed and by not impacting on the productive capacity of other farm land.
- *Support growth in the agriculture sector enabling farmers to intensify, improve productivity, and change enterprises*
It could be argued that a solar farm development could enable the landholder of the solar farm to intensify production on another parcel of land. Again solar farm developments will see the area of agricultural land reduced.
- *Ensure that any change in land use is compatible with agriculture by ensuring that water resources are protected, food safety and biosecurity are not compromised and that the ability of farmers to implement modern farming practices is not restricted.*
The Solar Farm operators must not impose any restriction on neighbouring farmer's day to day operations e.g. Land-forming, spraying and top dressing crops. The number of Solar Farms developed in each irrigation region and the related number of irrigation outlets decommissioned must be kept to a minimum to avoid increased irrigation charges to the irrigators in a region. This impact to irrigators and the related irrigation supply company must be fully assessed prior to development approval.
- *Be based on up to date land use trend information and the best scientific knowledge.*
Solar farm developments must consider up to date land use-farming system information to ensure that the developments do not restrict the productivity of neighbouring farm land.

- *Ensure that farmers have the right to genuinely influence decisions about the activities that happen on their land.*

Property rights of the Solar Farm development land and those of neighbouring land owners need to be protected. However if the development impacts on the property rights of neighbouring landholders then the development should not proceed unless there is an agreed compensation to cover any loss.

- *Recognise the role sustainable and profitable agriculture can play in preserving Australia's biodiversity and managing our natural resources.*

Solar Farm developments where habitat is removed or modified need to include investment by the developer to establish replacement vegetation of a larger area and biodiversity value than that removed. e.g. Corridors of at least 30 metres in width planted with species of the correct ecological community for the soil type and location.

Additional Policy Requirements

- *Solar farm operators should provide regional community benefits both during their construction and their operation. Where possible they should provide lower cost electricity to the community members in the area of their operation.*
- *RGA members be given the opportunity to challenge the appropriateness of solar farm developments when proposed for their region.*

Other policy considerations include:

- *Solar Farm developers should create a reserve fund (or have insurance) to cover future possible adverse consequences connected to Solar Farm construction, operation and post decommissioning.*

RGA Committee: Environmental Sustainability

The Rice Growers' Associations key Partners

- Landcare NSW;
- Local Land Services;
- SunRice;
- NSW EPA;
- NSW Rural Fire Service;
- NSW DPI;
- NFF
- Birdlife Australia;
- The National Landcare Program; and
- A range of research institutions and producer groups.

Appendix 1: Supporting documents.

2.1. Solar Farm Discussion Paper

Purpose

To provide information to members regarding the possible impacts of Solar Farm developments on their right to manage their farm land.

Background

Currently there are a number Solar Farm developments and proposals for future developments across the Riverina's rice growing districts. RGA members are concerned about the possible impacts these farms may have on their farming businesses and the longer term impacts on agricultural production due to the removal of agricultural land from production.

Concerns raised during meetings with RGA members

- Impacts to farm operations during construction
- Removal of remnant vegetation and reduction in biodiversity
- Possible increased costs to irrigators as the developed farms will not be receiving irrigation water. i.e. less irrigators paying the fixed charges to irrigators
- Restrictions imposed on irrigation farm management e.g. dust from land levelling, aerial seeding and fertilising and stubble burning.
- The removal of prime agriculture land from agriculture production.
- The unknown;
 - Will they increase local temperatures or have a localised impact on climate
 - Any possible health issues
 - If the farms do cause climate, health or other issues will the developments impact on adjoining property values.

The property right of the landowner

Irrigation farm management more challenging than ever before, with significant water recovered by government and the establishment of a water market. In the Murray Valley around 27% of water entitlements have been recovered for environmental purposes which means that water availability significantly limits the area of land that can be irrigated.

Farm managers have to decide on how to utilise their farm land. Should they aim to have a consistent level of production by securing water through water markets? Should they be opportunistic irrigators when water is abundant? Should they dryland farm? Or should they seek another longer term use of some of their land that returns them a regular and reliable income?

Leasing land to a Solar Farm developer can be attractive financial option.

RGA Policy

The RGA promotes the protection of agricultural land. The long term success of the agriculture sector will be dependent on our continued access to land and water. Agricultural land is a valuable resource that all levels of government should preserve for the future prosperity of our sector and our nation.

An irrigation farm owner should have the right to lease, sell or develop their farm land for use as a Solar Farm if the following NFF policy positions as endorsed by the RGA Environmental Sustainable Development Committee conditions are met.

The land use decisions of governments must:

- *Recognise agriculture as a pillar of our local, state, territory and national economies*
Solar farm developments will see the area of agricultural land reduced. The developments however need to recognise the value of agricultural production by minimising the land area removed and by not impacting on the productive capacity of other farm land.
- *Support growth in the agriculture sector enabling farmers to intensify, improve productivity, and change enterprises*
It could be argued that a solar farm development could enable the landholder of the solar farm to intensify production on another parcel of land. Again solar farm developments will see the area of agricultural land reduced.
- *Ensure that any change in land use is compatible with agriculture by ensuring that water resources are protected, food safety and biosecurity are not compromised and that the ability of farmers to implement modern farming practices is not restricted.*
The Solar Farm operators must not impose any restriction on neighbouring farmer's day to day operations e.g. Land-forming, spraying and top dressing crops. The number of Solar Farms developed in each irrigation region and the related number of irrigation outlets decommissioned must be kept to a minimum to avoid increased irrigation charges to the irrigators in a region. This impact to irrigators and the related irrigation supply company must be fully assessed prior to development approval.
- *Be based on up to date land use trend information and the best scientific knowledge.*
Solar farm developments must consider up to date land use-farming system information to ensure that the developments do not restrict the productivity of neighbouring farm land.
- *Ensure that farmers have the right to genuinely influence decisions about the activities that happen on their land.*
Property rights of the Solar Farm development land and those of neighbouring land owners need to be protected. However if the development impacts on the property rights of neighbouring landholders then the development should not proceed unless there is an agreed compensation to cover any loss.
- *Recognise the role sustainable and profitable agriculture can play in preserving Australia's biodiversity and managing our natural resources.*
Solar Farm developments where habitat is removed or modified need to include investment by the developer to establish replacement vegetation of a larger area and biodiversity value than that removed. e.g. Corridors of at least 30 metres in width planted with species of the correct ecological community for the soil type and location.

Unintended consequences from Solar Farm developments (not covered by the NFF Policy)

Unintended consequences could include:-

- Will Solar Farms increase local temperatures or have a localised impact on climate?
- Will Solar Farms cause health issues to nearby residents?
- Will Solar Farm developments impact on adjoining property values?

Solar Farm developers should create a reserve fund (or have insurance) to cover future possible adverse consequences connected to Solar Farm construction, operation and post decommissioning.

Additional Policy Requirements

- *Solar farm operators should provide regional community benefits both during their construction and their operation. Where possible they should provide lower cost electricity to the community members in the area of their operation.*
- *RGA members be given the opportunity to challenge the appropriateness of solar farm developments when proposed for their region.*

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2.2. Stubble Burning Protocol.

RGA response to a report of poor stubble burning practice

1. Record report and save on file, monitor media outlets for reports.
2. Identify the farm manager connected with the fire.
3. Contact neighboring RGA members and Rural Fire Service representatives to establish if the event is a one off or if the farmer manager has a history of poor stubble burning management. This information to be kept on file for future reference. Send the farmer or farm manager a letter advising that a complaint has been made, describing how they are risking all farmers’ right to burn stubble and warn of what future action by the RFS and EPA can be taken. The letter to include all current documents describing best practice stubble burning.
4. If the farmer manager lights another stubble fire in an inappropriate manner contact the regional EPA manager and the RFS to request a meeting with representatives of these agencies and the farmer-farm manager. EPA and RFS representatives will explain the repercussions if the offence is repeated.
5. If none of the above is effective recommend that the EPA and the RFS take the appropriate legal action.

2.3. RGA Climate and Emissions Policy Questions and Answers

What does net zero emissions mean?

Net zero emissions refers to a zero balance of all greenhouse gas equivalent emissions against the quantum of carbon emissions sequestered from the atmosphere. Sequestering emissions could be

achieved through vegetation works, soil management, blue carbon and other negative emissions technologies.

Would the Net Zero Emissions target be a done through a fixed target or an aspirational target?

The proposed target is aspirational not fixed i.e. a target to set a goal or to aspire to achieving.

Is the proposed target meant to cover the individual farm, the agriculture sector only or for all of Australia's emissions?

The proposed aspirational target is an Australian economy wide target. The intent for agriculture is to not require that every farm would have to have net zero emissions. That farms' emissions could be balanced by sequestration in another location.

Why would you set such a target?

- In December 2015, 195 countries including Australia, under the banner of the United Nations Framework Convention negotiated the "Paris Agreement" which aims to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and to increase the ability to adapt to climate change. Specifically, the Australian Government committed to implementing an economy wide target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. The Paris Agreement specified that to achieve the long-term temperature goal, countries should aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible to achieve a balance between emissions and removal by sinks in the second half of the century.
- There is an opportunity for Australian agriculture to contribute to our national emissions reduction goals. This opportunity requires innovation to reduce the emissions intensity (units of CO2E emissions/ton agricultural product) and to enable farmers to efficiently participate in carbon markets.
- As every Australian state has signed up to a net zero emissions target by 2050 this policy aligns with those of all states.
- The aim of setting an aspirational target by the agriculture sector is to keep the sector involved in government policy development and avoid the unintended consequences and allowing access to opportunities.
- The Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) have recognised the need to work together on matters of strategic national importance by developing and delivering program-scale co-investments. The Council of Rural RDCs (this includes AgriFutures) has agreed to develop a co-investment program that can address climate adaptation, preparedness and resilience for rural industries. The initial stage of the project will include working with stakeholders to identify key challenges and areas of response. The investment program is anticipated to run for 5-7 years with potential for extension, and feature RDC contributions of \$15-20 million per year. Level of funding will be determined based on the work required. The design phase is planned to be completed during the next six months to allow for consideration of the investment proposal as part of the budget cycle for 2021-22 and beyond.

If such a policy is formalised what protections would be included to protect the agriculture sector from adverse impacts from the policy?

The policy is to be reviewed by 2025 to confirm that there are identifiable and economically viable pathways to net neutrality, including impacts from inputs such as energy.