

Inquiry into the impact of climate change on Queensland agricultural production

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SUBMISSION: INQUIRY INTO the impact of climate change on Queensland agricultural production

In response to the Terms of Reference, Safe Food Production Queensland (Safe Food) provides the following submission for the Inquiry's consideration. Safe Food is prepared to provide additional information to the Inquiry if members wish to explore further, the matters raised in this submission.

Safe Food Production

Safe Food is a statutory body established by the *Food Production (Safety) Act 2000* (the Act), with functions that include:

- regulating, under food safety schemes, the production of primary produce to ensure it is safe for human and animal consumption, and
- monitoring compliance with national standards and the requirements of the FPS Act and the *Food Production (Safety) Regulation 2014* ('Regulation').

We are generally in support of the committee's inquiry into the effects of Climate Change on Queensland's agricultural production. However, the inquiry's terms of reference and scope expand beyond assessing only the impacts on agricultural production. It should also consider the potential consequences for public health and safety. This involves acknowledging the heightened possibility of escalated food safety risks and supply chain disruptions. Adopting this inclusive approach is paramount for comprehending the effects of climate change on the interdependent components of the entire food system.

Climate change has significant and complex impacts on food safety, affecting various stages of the food supply chain from production to consumption. These impacts can vary by region and are influenced by factors like temperature changes, altered rainfall patterns, extreme weather events, and shifts in ecosystems.

Below are some examples of the key impacts of climate change on food safety and the food supply chain:

- Changes in temperature and rainfall patterns can affect the growth and distribution of crops and increase the risk of pests and diseases. This can necessitate changes in agricultural practices, such as the use of different crop varieties or increased pesticide use, which may have implications for food safety.
- Changes in weather patterns can lead to more frequent and severe flooding, which can contaminate water sources used for irrigation and food processing. Floodwaters can carry pathogens, pesticides, and other contaminants, which can lead to contamination of crops and food products.

- Warmer temperatures can create favourable conditions for the proliferation of foodborne pathogens, such as Salmonella, E. coli, in both the environment (particularly poultry meat and Egg Industry) and food processing facilities. This can increase the risk of foodborne illnesses and may necessitate alternate monitoring and compliance models.
- More frequent extreme weather events, such as floods, cyclones and bushfires, can disrupt transportation and supply chains, affecting livestock routes and the delivery of food products, potentially compromising animal welfare and food safety due to road closures and delays in refrigeration or storage.
- As climate change alters the distribution of vectors like insects and animals, there is the potential for the spread of diseases such as Lumpy Skin, Avian Influenza, and Lyme disease, which can indirectly affect food safety by impacting the health of farm workers and the safety of the food supply chain.
- Climate change can affect aquaculture systems, which are a significant source of seafood. Changes in water temperature and acidity can impact the health of aquatic species and lead to seafood contamination (Algal Blooms and Marine Botoxins) and safety concerns.
- Climate change-induced disruptions to food production and distribution can exacerbate food security issues, potentially leading to an increase in unsafe food handling practices, and greater exposure to unsafe or unacceptable foods.

To address these challenges, Safe Food as the agency responsible for food safety within the primary production and processing sector of the food chain, is adapting our regulatory approach to account for the changing environmental conditions and emerging risks. Our vision for the future is to move towards a model that is more predictive and proactive, harnessing the power of data, both internal and external, for advanced data modelling to achieve a more holistic view of new and emerging risks across the primary production supply chain. Access to environmental, biosecurity, and public health information held by other government agencies will be critical to help inform the model in the future.

It is crucial for the inquiry scope to include impacts of climate change for food producers and consumers and to consider benefits of adopting sustainable agricultural practices, investment in resilient food supply chains, improving food safety monitoring and surveillance, and raising awareness of the potential risks associated with climate change and food safety. Collaboration and proactive measures will be essential in Queensland to mitigate the impacts of climate change on food safety and ensure a secure and safe food supply for our consumers.

Queensland's agriculture industry plays a pivotal role in supplying essential food products to domestic and export consumers. Our "clean and green" image, while valuable, must be supported by demonstrable actions that reflect our commitment to climate action and ethical food production. Only by aligning our trade practices with global expectations can we continue to thrive in international markets. By investing in sustainability, adopting ethical practices, and engaging in transparency,

Queensland can bolster its position as a reliable supplier of safe, sustainable and ethically produced food. This path not only secures our export trade but also contributes to a more responsible global marketplace.



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