




Speech By
Steve Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENTS

Burnett Electorate, Agriculture

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.21 pm): In January 2013 hundreds of farms were devastated by the impact of flooding and families lost their homes and businesses. For the second time in less than three years, people were faced with the overwhelming task of rebuilding their lives. Whilst crops have been left destroyed and infrastructure damaged, our local farmers are fighting hard to clean up the mess and get back to work. Produce or livestock that was spared still needs to be sold and farmers will be doing everything they can to get it to market. They need to keep running in order to fund the clean-up and get back on their feet. We need people to help support Queensland farmers by buying their products. We are highlighting local brands and labels on my website so that they can look for them in their local grocer or supermarket. We want to get the message out that we still have plenty of products available and it is more important than ever to buy Queensland grown.

Many individual farms in the Burnett region have been affected by the floods, but overall our farm industries need to keep going—and they will with our support. We need to support families like the Attard family in Bundaberg, which has three generations of farmers. They produce melons in the winter months but their main line is cherry tomatoes. Unfortunately, their location between Bundaberg and Bargara meant that their farm was hit by the tornadoes which swept through and damaged 100,000 plants. Despite the huge loss, they still have the next crop of cherry tomatoes to pick and they were able to pack some on Saturday. Please support the Attards by buying their local product. We need to support companies like Austchilli, the largest chilli company in Australia and a leader in food manufacturing. With a unique processing and business approach, its fresh chilli varieties and puree products are now supplied and in demand in Australia. We need to support growers like Windhum Farms, which is well known for its label of Bundaberg Gold. The enterprise specialises in the production of premium grade sweet potatoes. We need to support growers like KC's Fresh, a primary producer of herbs supplying a large range of quality herbs to local, Queensland and interstate fruit and vegetable markets. KC's Fresh is currently producing 14 herb lines focusing on year-round quality and consistency. I am heartened to hear the pledge from Woolworths not to turn to imported products, but we need to continue to stock Queensland-grown products. I have called on Coles and other supermarket chains to follow suit and for consumers to look for, buy and support Queensland-grown products. This really is a time for consumers to buy quality Bundy and Burnett products and I call on supermarkets and other retailers to do their bit.

I take this opportunity in the time remaining to mention the most significant reforms to agricultural production introduced in the House last night—almost the biggest reforms in 20 years. I welcome the package of reforms which promises to boost food production and deliver jobs and economic benefits for the rural sector and regional communities across Queensland. The amendments proposed in the new legislation introduced will allow sustainable vegetation management activities into the future. We are closing a chapter after 20 years of Labor and poor representation in my area enforced by radical green policies upon landholders that threatened their ability and efficiency to manage their businesses and maintain productivity. We are creating an opportunity for farming businesses to expand cropping operations without the burden of unnecessary regulation.