Question on Notice

No. 1646

Asked on 17 October 2019

MR J MADDEN ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline the work the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is doing to promote future opportunities in the mungbean industry?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

Mungbean is the main summer legume rotation crop for Queensland's dryland farming systems and a valuable export crop. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has positioned Australian farmers and value chains to take advantage of growing international demand for this high value pulse crop. Before the current drought, the 2016 mungbean crop was at almost record levels worth $150 million.

DAF has led mungbean research, development and extension for the past 16 years. During this time, DAF has released five new varieties and developed best management practice that underpinned a tripling of Australian mungbean production. Three independent studies have shown that DAF mungbean breeding research has delivered a return on investment of $11 for every $1 of public sector investment. The mungbean breeding and pre-breeding investment is worth $1.34 million per annum.

DAF's National Mungbean Improvement Program develops new, high yielding and disease resistant varieties for Queensland farmers. Specifically, the program is at the advanced testing stage for elite breeding lines, with resistance to the seed-borne bacterial diseases halo blight and tan spot. The program has adopted next generation plant breeding technologies, and with new glasshouse facilities at the Hermitage Research Facility in Warwick, new varieties will be brought to market two years faster than previously.

Through co-ordinated domestic and international collaborations, DAF is working to further increase the yield potential of mungbean and develop varieties that are more resilient to biotic and abiotic pests. DAF is also leading research in optimising mungbean yields. The outcomes from this research will be regionally specific agronomy packages from Emerald in Queensland through to central New South Wales. The role of mungbeans in the farming system is also being investigated within the DAF farm practices research, focused on improving the sustainability and profitability of grain farming. Furthermore, the Queensland Government is delivering on an election commitment by investing $1 million in research to protect Queensland's valuable tropical pulses, such as mungbean, when they are in storage.

Stored mungbeans are vulnerable to attack from pests known as pulse beetles, which cause physical losses, downgrades and threaten market access. DAF research is focussing on evaluating phosphine fumigation and aeration cooling as options for managing these pests. Research results will form the basis of recommendations for Queensland's mungbean industry to protect this valuable commodity after harvest.