

Question on Notice

No. 1118

Asked on 25 October 2022

MR S KING ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on how agriculture businesses are working to reduce their emissions?

ANSWER:

There are many Queensland agribusinesses who are proactively trying to reduce their emissions by adopting or trialling low emissions production practices and technology to increase their market opportunities and maintain a balance between sustainable and ethical production, soils and the environment. Others have already gone the extra step and have become certified as carbon neutral or are marketing carbon neutral branded products.

Several leading commodity sectors have set their own industry-endorsed targets and are investing towards emissions reduction goals that align with Queensland and Federal Government emission commitments. For example, the Australian red meat sector has a target to be carbon neutral by 2030 and has invested millions of industry levy funds towards research, development, and leadership capability to achieve that goal. Australian Pork Ltd has also committed to be carbon positive and zero waste by 2025. Other commodity sectors such as sugarcane, cotton, and poultry have invested in lifecycle analyses to better understand where real emissions reductions are possible within the production system and supply chain.

Identifying and understanding emissions sources is key to any business tracking and developing emission reduction strategies. There are several tools available or being developed to help agribusinesses in this journey. For example, the Queensland Government launched the HortCarbon Info tool in August 2022 which allows horticulture agribusinesses to calculate their on-farm greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and provides information on how to reduce and/or offset emissions. I am also aware of the work being undertaken by AgForce to assist landholders to identify and capture natural capital values on property that can be used to make informed business decisions.

The recently announced Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan will provide additional opportunities for the agribusiness sector to benefit from renewable energy. To help farmers realise these benefits, the Queensland Farmers' Federation is developing a tool kit that will provide practical information to navigate land access negotiations if they wish to lease part of their property to coexist with energy projects.

Queensland agribusinesses are trialling cutting-edge technologies to reduce methane emissions from ruminant animals such as cattle, sheep and goats. Dietary supplements could be a game-changer for agricultural emissions, with biogenic methane making up approximately 80 per cent of Queensland's agriculture production emissions. Partnerships between commercial businesses and research institutions to trial, evaluate and support commercialisation of emerging technologies is vital to balance emissions reduction with sustainable food production.

I extend my gratitude to these businesses for being on the front foot and investing into the development of new technologies that could be more broadly adopted across sector.

Carbon farming projects are also opening new opportunities for Queensland farmers, either to offset their carbon emissions within their own business – known as insetting - or by selling Australian Carbon Credit Units to generate diversified on-farm income. The Queensland Government's nation-leading Land Restoration Fund (LRF) is helping to drive carbon farming in Queensland and pays landholders a price premium for carbon farming projects that also deliver environmental, social or First Nations co-benefits. Several case studies highlighting the exciting carbon farming co-benefit projects underway can be found on the LRF website.

The Queensland Government has been delivering programs over many years that are helping agribusinesses reduce their GHG emissions. In many instances, these programs were designed to deliver other benefits – either productivity or other environmental benefits such as water quality improvements that reduce agricultural emissions at the same time. For example, farmers participating in the Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan are adopting precision agriculture practices, low or zero till farming and optimised fertiliser application, which not only help to increase soil organic carbon, but also reduce emissions from machinery and fertilisers. Industry-led Best Management Practice programs are also providing support and technical guidance to producers transitioning to more sustainable production systems.

To help support more agribusinesses to lower their carbon emissions while remaining sustainable and profitable, the Queensland Government is partnering with industry to develop and deliver the Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap 2022-2032. A draft Roadmap was released for public consultation in June 2022. Proposed actions in the draft Roadmap identify areas of research and investment needed to develop and commercialise new low emissions production technologies. The roadmap also highlights practices and business planning considerations that agribusinesses can do now to start on their emissions reduction journey and be ready to adopt new technologies as they become commercially viable.

All these initiatives align well with the National Agriculture Sustainability Framework that has been developed by the National Farmers Federation and I look forward to seeing the benefits that come from government, industry, private investors and the community working together.