

Wednesday, 23 April, 2008

## **FUTURE FARMING: \$11 MILLION FOR NEW PRODUCTS, NEW MARKETS**

A major \$11 million package to help the farm sector develop new products and secure new markets was announced today as part of *Future Farming*, the Brumby Government's \$205 million strategy for new services and growth in Victoria's agricultural sector.

Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said the success of Victoria's farm businesses relies on their ability to stay ahead of their competitors in an increasingly competitive global environment.

"The Brumby Government is taking action for rural and regional Victoria and the *Future Farming* strategy will enable our farm businesses to become more productive, competitive and sustainable as they enter an era of unprecedented change," Mr Helper said.

"It will position farmers to meet the challenges ahead through new investment in modernised services, greater access to technology and research, improvements to the regional freight network, and more targeted support for farming communities.

"Agricultural production in Victoria is highly export-focused, with some industries such as dairy, exporting more than 65 per cent of their produce.

"Farm businesses must develop new products, identify and secure new markets, and maintain access to existing markets to thrive and grow in the future.

"While Victoria's farmers supply products to more than 100 countries, access to some markets for some products is limited or completely restricted.

"Easing these restrictions will create new market opportunities for Victoria's farm sector.

"Under *Future Farming*, the Brumby Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth to provide information and research to substantiate market access requirements for Victoria's farm sector and to fast-track priority market access negotiations."

Mr Helper said *Future Farming* also contains initiatives to protect existing markets and future opportunities by ensuring Victoria remains free from the many harmful pests and diseases that affect agriculture, human health and the natural environment overseas.

"The Brumby Government will strengthen Victoria's biosecurity capabilities and develop measures to address new and emerging biosecurity threats," he said.

The New Markets and Products package includes:

- \$2.93 million over four years to improve industry and Government understanding and response to market and value chain challenges. This includes developing a more responsive and internationally competitive agrifood sector that is able to capture new market opportunities;
- \$1.08 million over three years to assist the Victorian organics sector to develop its resilience and further differentiate and substantiate organic products. The funding will be used to develop a reference group to help the industry tackle current challenges and capture emerging opportunities. This initiative meets the Government's commitment to

the sector given in its response to the review of the moratorium on genetically modified canola;

- \$4.05 million over four years to improve the productivity and ability of the aquaculture sector to manage the impacts of climate change. It will provide innovative research, market and value chain development, and investment attraction to transform the aquaculture and seafood industry in Victoria into a globally competitive sector;
- \$3 million over four years for a targeted program to improve biosecurity and market access for a number of Victoria's grape-growing regions that currently have an unknown phylloxera status. The Bendigo/Heathcote, Bellarine, Peninsula and Macedon regions will be surveyed for phylloxera to enable these to be declared as phylloxera exclusion zones;
- New actions to consolidate Victoria's leadership in biosecurity, including leading the review and development of Victoria's new Biosecurity Strategy to identify current gaps in the State's biosecurity framework and risk management procedures;
- Improve food safety and standards by implementing the Government's response to the inquiry by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission into food regulation in Victoria with the aim of achieving a more simplified food regulation system;
- Improved animal management by developing a Livestock Management Bill, validating the operation of the national standards and protecting compliant farm businesses from intrusions that jeopardise the integrity of their biosecurity systems; and
- Continued support of the timber industry by providing an environment that is conducive to sustainable investment and employment.

"Over the past eight years, our Government has worked hard to build on the strength of regional communities and economies and unlock the potential for growth," Mr Helper said.

"There is now a solid foundation on which to grow Victoria's primary industries and the *Future Farming* strategy will provide the services and support that farmers and their families need to prosper in the years ahead."

For more information on *Future Farming* visit [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/futurefarming](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/futurefarming)