

HOW DID WE DO? OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2020/21



With you, for you - AgForce delivered in 2020/21:

- More than 152 **Letters to Stakeholders**
- 7 **Submissions to Parliament**
- More than 37 **Ministerial Meetings**
- 5 **Parliamentary Hearings (reduced by COVID and the state election)**

We helped keep ag powering forward under COVID

AgForce secured recognition of agriculture as an essential service at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak including negotiating border crossing exemptions and special conditions to allow farmers, farm workers, and contract harvester crews to enter Queensland. This proved especially vital for many grain growers looking to harvest their best winter crop in years.

We lobbied government for 'more carrot and less stick' for environmental management

AgForce continued the fight for fair, evidence-based Reef laws, with the state Government agreeing to soften regulatory Standards for new or expanded cropping. AgForce also kept members across the six Reef catchments up to date with all the changes, enabling commercial cane, cropping, and fodder growers to undertake preparatory work to apply for exemption from environmental permits.

We continued the development of practical Live Export regulation

AgForce, with the Northern Australia Live Export Working Group, advocated against proposed regulation changes - including to stocking densities - within the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock, resulting in savings to industry of approximately \$30 million - a boon especially for the cattle sector.

We met the ever-increasing biosecurity challenges facing industry

AgForce lobbied for an additional \$1.4m to support biosecurity preparation, secured \$89,000 from MLA to deliver communication and mapping tools for pasture dieback, informed members about new and existing pests and diseases, including fall armyworm and fire ants, and drove government responses to locust and grasshopper plagues, and the feral pig menace. Of particular note was the addition of \$4m state funding for exclusion fencing cluster projects – a life saver for many in the sheep and wool sector.

We helped secure drought support improvements

AgForce helped secure continuation of state drought freight subsidies, simplified federal Farm Household Allowance access, faster Regional Investment Corporation loan processing, further funding for the Emergency Water Infrastructure Scheme and, within the recent state budget, guarantees of a suite of programs for drought-affected producers, including to help prepare for future droughts.

We took steps to ensure greater tenure security

In 2020, AgForce wrote to 254 members with Grazing Homestead Perpetual Leases urging them to consider freeholding prior to 1 July Unimproved Value rises. We provided advice to half of these members. As a result, 138 applications were lodged prior to the freeholding prices rising, resulting in an estimated saving of \$12,292,978.

Policy key achievements

Landscape and vegetation management

- AgForce opposes mandatory Reef regulations and was at the forefront in advocating for evidence-based and fair Reef laws, including in an alliance with Queensland Senators calling for a federal Office of Science Quality Assurance.
- AgForce feedback was heeded by Queensland Government resulting in a less onerous Reef regulatory Standard and Guide for new or expanded cropping, and, by issuing Reef GeoPDF property maps and a series of summary Reef regulation factsheets to members across the six Reef catchments, members were able to commence cropping preparatory work, eligible for exemption from environmental authority permits.
- We have pushed back on incorrect government chemical record-keeping requirements and audits of cane farmers, as well as on proposed guideline values for pesticides in fresh and marine waters developed by Water Quality Australia.
- AgForce continues to develop our nation-leading natural capital policy that seeks to replace punitive legislation with rewards for farmers who look after their land. This includes the development of the AgCarE accreditation for landscape resilience program and securing \$150,000 to test it on 25 properties across a range of Queensland's bioregions.
- We ran a strong state election campaign in 2020, with the Liberal National Party adopting AgForce's landscape management policies in close to their entirety.

Agribusiness

- AgForce successfully lobbied for exemptions and special conditions during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak to allow farmers and farm workers to enter Queensland. This work coincided with a fantastic grain growing season in the south of the State, necessitating the movement of contract harvester crews and equipment from New South Wales and Victoria.
- In 2020, AgForce wrote to 254 members with Grazing Homestead Perpetual Leases (GHPLs)

urging them to consider freeholding prior to the 1 July Unimproved Value rises. We provided advice to half of these members, holding webinars attended by dozens. As a result, 138 applications were lodged prior to the freeholding prices rising on 1 July, resulting in an estimated saving of \$12,292,978.

- Over the course of 2020/2021, AgForce provided free legal representation to pastoralists affected by native title claims through a project funded by the Federal Attorney-General, representing an aggregate value of \$1,250,000 to these respondents.
- AgForce provided free one-on-one consultations to approximately 520 members regarding their 2021 land valuation. This advice would have cost approximately \$700 if it was commercially sought, saving members a total of \$364,000.
- AgForce wrote letters to 25 Mayors and Councillors in revalued Local Government Areas, resulting in many meetings to discuss the need for sustainable rating off the back of significant hikes in unimproved land values.
- AgForce's template agistment contract was provided free of charge to 32 members during the year. At an estimated retail cost of \$3,000, this represents total savings of \$96,000 for members.
- We helped more than 150 AgForce members manage their employment and workforce issues, including determining rates of pay, managing terminations and visas, and with the NFF, engaged with the Australian Government on key workplace policy issues, including Award and wage reviews, and supporting labour supply.
- AgForce was able to reverse 'secondary boycotts' by major banks, such as NAB's service withdrawal from firearm dealers and, with the Shooters Union, ANZ's carbon accounting imposition on our supply chains.
- AgForce pushed back on retailer Coles, who subsequently amended their position that eating less meat was good for the environment.
- AgForce is assisting the Cattle Council of Australia to change and develop its organisation to ensure strong and effective national producer representation, critical for future prosperity, and to make sure grass-fed beef producers capitalise on the \$2 billion spent to realise our 10-year \$57 billion red meat vision.
- AgForce with the NFF is putting pressure on the Federal Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, for good outcomes for our producers in the ongoing Australian trade negotiations with the European Union and the United Kingdom. This includes equal treatment with local EU and UK producers and substantial increases in market access.

Drought and Water management

- AgForce wrote to the State Government to delay the revocation in June 2020 of drought freight subsidies, which the Government agreed to. AgForce has been heavily engaged in the reform discussions, seeking a broadly available replacement measure. In 2019-2020 the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme provided more than \$30 Million in support.
- With other industry groups, AgForce achieved an increase in the Farm Household Allowance assets test to a single threshold of \$5.5 million, with no differentiation between farm and non-farm assets when accessing the payment, enabling wider access to this vital support.
- After sustained advocacy from AgForce and in collaboration with NFF, an additional \$50 million was announced in 2020 to administer the Federal Government's Regional Investment Corporation loans, helping reduce processing times for loans from over 365 days to now less than 300, with continuing improvements.
- AgForce and our corporate partner McCulloch Robertson were first to confirm that the JobKeeper scheme was available to drought affected producers who had a 30 percent or greater decline in income, enabling them to confidently enrol before the May 2020 cut-off. More than 45,000 people outside metropolitan Queensland accessed JobKeeper assistance.

- Through direct advocacy, and by partnering with the NFF, AgForce have been thrilled to see the Federal Government reaffirm their commitment to co-funding the well adopted Emergency Water Infrastructure Scheme, with an additional \$50 million in funding. We remain engaged with both the State and Federal governments to ensure that the funding makes its way out to producers who need it.
- AgForce continue to be highly engaged in many areas, strongly advocating for practical, fair, and effective drought preparation, support, and recovery programs:
- **State Drought Reform discussions:** representing members' interests and needs to Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries during their ongoing redesign of drought support programs
- **Federal Agriculture Minister's Drought Roundtable:** representing Queensland broadacre producers on the national stage, and promoting the AgForce Agricultural Business Cycle
- **Strong engagement with the Future Drought Fund:** driving the Federal Department and fund managers to ensure that our producers can benefit from the annual \$100 million investment
- In partnership with the Australian Drillers Industry Association, AgForce produced a practical guide to water bore drilling in Queensland for bores into the Great Artesian Basin. It will inform and assist landowners comply with regulations and get the best result possible.
- AgForce continues to defend Queensland agriculture's water interests, including ensuring stock and domestic water rights remain protected, new State Government policy on metering is proportionate and affordable, and that water user's privacy is protected.
- With other irrigator groups, AgForce advocated within the state election for greater sustainable access to water resources, and for affordable water and energy pricing, with the ALP committing \$50 million to help reduce water prices.

Transport

- AgForce, with the Northern Australia Live Export Working Group, advocated against proposed regulation changes, including to stocking densities, within the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock, resulting in savings to industry of approximately \$30 million.
- With broad consultation, AgForce pushed back through the Agriculture Ministers' Forum on proposed changes of the Australian Animal Standards & Guidelines to include all movement of horses by land transport and impose impractical conditions, seeking more research to better understand where improved welfare outcomes can be achieved.
- AgForce continued its 15-plus-year advocacy work to push the process to strengthen the health and funding of the more than 72,000 kms of stock routes in Queensland that crisscross members' properties.
- Thanks to AgForce, more than 2,000 grain producers and transport operators in Queensland now have in excess of 70 receival sites available to them to confidently transport grain from farm, with improved convenience and usability for growers.

Sustainability

- AgForce helped MLA and Cattle Council of Australia, as members of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), oppose draft GRSB goals that would have damaged the image of our cattle production systems. The GRSB is now formulating goals that will benefit all members.

Communication

- AgForce organised many successful member and industry forums across the State, including at 'Beef 2021', bringing together hundreds of members, non-members, and stakeholders, and allowing collaboration that set priorities and the future direction of the beef, cane, grains, and sheep and wool industries.
- As a member of the Regional Rural & Remote Communications Coalition, AgForce raised the profile of the communications needs of members and industry in the bush, including coverage, reliability, affordability, and user capability. AgForce is investigating establishing a similar coalition in Queensland to better address social policy issues, such as health and education services.

Biosecurity and animal welfare

- As recognised biosecurity leaders, AgForce rapidly communicated to our members to help fight new and existing pests and diseases, such as fall armyworm and fire ants, whilst reviewing government regulations.
- AgForce lobbied the State Government to rapidly respond to locust surveillance programs and to seek emergency use permits to control an advancing plague of grasshoppers across western Queensland. Strategic locust control has a benefit: cost ratio of 18:1.
- AgForce provided the only representative from Queensland in developing the national Feral Pig Action Plan designed to identify gaps and prioritise future federal funding to address a threat to Australian agriculture that costs \$100 million per year and is a risk pathway for catastrophic exotic diseases
- Building on facilitating \$5 million for pasture dieback research from Meat and Livestock Australia and the Australian Government, AgForce secured \$89,000 from MLA to ramp up communication and develop a web mapping tool for producers to better deal with a scourge potentially costing industry \$2 billion in lost livestock production and carrying capacity.
- AgForce continues to successfully support producers in securing firearms licenses with detailed information and assistance, including in challenges to Weapons Licensing Branch decisions through the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
- Within our election campaign, AgForce successfully lobbied the Queensland Government to continue the roll out of exclusion fencing cluster projects, securing an additional \$4 million and assisting producers to not only better control wild dogs, but to improve management of pastures as well.
- Our election campaign also saw the incoming State Government commit an additional \$1.4 million to support biosecurity preparation.
- AgForce continues to raise awareness of the impacts of wild dogs across livestock industries and to promote integrated pest animal management through the Queensland Wild Dog Coordinator Project, resulting in better control of wild dogs and limiting their impacts.
- AgForce has secured agreement by the Queensland Government to adopt into regulations (animalwelfarestandardsnet.au) an exact copy of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards (not the Guidelines), as well as a 6-month grace period so that people other than vets have enough time to get (provisional) accreditation to spay cattle.

Health and Safety

- AgForce has stood against mandated roll-over protection for quadbikes and calls for voluntary rollover protection, government rebates for safety equipment, and mandatory operator tickets for their safe use, with recognition of prior learning.
- Through our ongoing discussions with government, we have helped minimise the disruption to

agriculture from COVID-19, including through workplace health management plans, while also promoting the value of our high quality, safe food and fibre to urban populations, reinforcing the trusted status farmers hold in society.

- AgForce has also provided information and support to members on meeting their workplace health and safety obligations, including running farm safety workshops with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, promoting staff 'toolbox' safety meetings, and help accessing a comprehensive and affordable AgForce safety management system.

Education and training

- AgForce is rolling out the federally-funded Educating Kids About Agriculture: Kids to Farms program to increase knowledge and experience of farming practices amongst the next generation of Queenslanders to help open their eyes to the wide range of career opportunities in agriculture.
- The School Industry Partnership Program is delivering the State Government (DESBT) funded Agriculture Schools Engagement Program, with multiple events for secondary students, schools, and teachers throughout Queensland.
- AgForce Training has delivered chemical application safety training throughout the State, including workshops for regional councils, NRM groups, pastoral companies, and individual producers, sprayers, and landscapers.
- AgForce is now also delivering training to Grain Producers Australia members.