



The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee Inc. Submission on Food for a Growing Economy: An Economic Development Framework for the Queensland Food Industry

Submission To:

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This submission is presented by the Chief Executive Officer, Geoff Penton, on behalf of the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee Inc. (QMDC). QMDC is a regional natural resource management (NRM) group that supports communities in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin (QMDB) to sustainably manage their natural resources.

1.0 Background:

QMDC is a natural resource management (NRM) organisation that supports communities in our designated region to sustainably manage their natural resources. QMDC's vision is working towards the equitable, efficient and sustainable use of water, land and other environmental resources of the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin (QMDB).

2.0 Introduction:

1. To what extent do the seven themes address your major concerns, or the concerns of your organisation and its members?
2. What challenges exist that have not been addressed in this draft policy?
3. What other actions could be included under the 'What we will do' section of each theme?

These questions are discussed more fully in the following sections. Overall the *Draft policy* falls short in addressing QMDC's major NRM concerns. Challenges not addressed relate to the role regional NRM plans can play to improve Queensland's food industry and what environmental responses are needed to sustain a food industry from paddock to plate.

The constitution of an information working group is supported. Consideration should be given to rural industry and NRM organisation representation. QMDC is particularly interested in this initiative and would like to offer itself as a key regional stakeholder to assist with the ongoing development of Queensland's food policy framework.



Funded by:





In summary, QMDC asserts that a Queensland food policy and economic framework must:

- provide clarity and certainty where thresholds limits are defined for those natural resource assets (eg **water (surface and groundwater);vegetation and biodiversity; land and soils; air**) identified within regional NRM plans as being at risk to the impacts caused by activities and infrastructure integral to the food industry and associated business
- identify whether industry development will live within those threshold limits and therefore streamlines process allowing for an early assessment of development, clearly outlining “no go” zones;
- provide clear and predetermined standard environmental practices acceptable under legislation e.g. safe packaging disposal, no net loss environmental offset programmes, defined buffer zones for activities and infrastructure against stream order classifications, set road heights on floodplains etc;
- provide more efficient administrative processes so that a proposal for development if its impacts live within those threshold limits it can proceed, however if development lives outside those pre-existing limits then an assessment process is still required;
- promote implementation of new economic scenarios and related legislative measures, inspired by the results of international and local scientific research and environmental and social analysis; and
- encourage serious consideration of the biophysical foundation of production systems not just the post farm gate food system.

3.0 A value chain approach

QMDC submits that the value chain approach model being offered to inform the *Draft policy* must extend its scope. Economic growth and development must be analysed in relation to the social fabric of the regional communities of Queensland and the health and capacity of Queensland’s natural resources to support a growing food industry. Extending the scope of the value chain model will assist key stakeholders in the Queensland food industry to implement more strategic actions and strategies, as well as assisting managing the risks to food production, for example, the largest impacts on agriculture enterprises are divorce and mental health. The impacts of soil acidity and salinity, weeds and pests cost agricultural production million in Queensland every year. To improve the efficiency of food production wider impacts on the production system should be a part of a broader approach by this policy.

QMDC asserts that a food policy and economic framework by recognising the importance of valuing natural and social capital in its economic analyses will assist the Queensland food industry to develop a more sustainable future direction.



QMDC submits the value chain model as presented in the *Draft policy* does not illustrate well the potential or capability of Queensland's food industry to participate in ecological sustainable development (ESD).

Results of international research in social and environmental fields of study offer an integrated approach to the impacts of economic development and growth from the point of view of sustainability indicators and threshold limits. This research has emphasised the importance of economic and biophysical limits to human activity. It shows that sustainable economic welfare increases to a point with GDP beyond which it stagnates or decreases due to the environmental and social pressures of economic growth.

For the purposes of sustainability, the biophysical threshold is critical with respect to the economic threshold. Farber et al. (2002), identify a "critical threshold" in the availability of ecosystem services as a limit beyond which irreversible changes and catastrophes may occur, resulting in major environmental and economic consequences.

Emerging from research is the knowledge that environmental conditions, or the availability of natural capital, are essential elements of economic systems, even if they are ignored by economic accounting systems.

QMDC submits that unsustainable demands for energy, materials and ecosystem services have dangerous consequences, and increased risks (including supply risks) and urges economic development to be made sustainable by implementing a food policy and framework that acknowledges the existence of extra-economic factors. A food policy and economic framework therefore needs to recognise that regional environmental issues such as climate change and energy efficiency are equally influencing the transport and logistics sector to develop smarter transportation methods as are globalisation and technology changes.

In assessing how to best use or 'optimise', not simply "**maximise**" food production opportunities, the plan should identify risks that may impact on the food industry and in response to those risks implement risk management strategies, across the entire length of the value chain. Some of these risks are summarised in an aggregated form in **Table 1-Risks** below.



Table 1- Risks

Value chain stage	Risk factors	Mitigation measures examples
Resource protection	Land availability	State planning policies for designating and protecting the land resource
	Degradation of resource condition eg salinity, weeds	Stronger support for sustainable farming methods through Regional NRM bodies
	Lack of water	Sound and on-going water resource planning. Increased investment in Water Use Efficiency.
	Climate change eg incidence of flood, drought	Knowledge sharing and government policy initiatives
Production inputs	Increasing costs of production eg fertiliser	Cooperative purchasing
	Lack of skilled labour	Training programs reflective of industry needs
	Climate variability	Extension and education activities through Regional NRM groups to introduce risk management farming practices
Production	Resource allocation split between food, fibre and garment industries	Water pricing mechanisms
	Monoculture within industries	Incentives for more mixed farming approaches
	Distance to market	Alternative distribution eg more rail. Regional/seasonal consumption promoted.
	Take-up of technology	Encourage uptake of alternative energy source devices eg solar pumps
Processing	Narrow marketing opportunities	Encourage local planning support through Council planning schemes. Regional/seasonal consumption (more farmers' markets)
	Overseas processing	Marketing. Domestic processing/value adding.
	Lack of manufacturing sector	Government policy and renewed incentives
Marketing	Reliance on bulk commodity marketing	Encourage value adding in the regions. Promote product differentiation through

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		demonstrated environmental credentials eg EMS ISO 14001
	Meeting Asian and Chinese market demands	Market intelligence
	Lack of value adding opportunity in regions	Encourage local planning support through Council planning schemes
Food service	Poor branding	Industry self-regulation and government policy
	Lack of recognition of sustainably produced product. Verification of clean green credentials.	Recognition of environmental management systems ISO 14001

4.0 The framework’s objective

QMDC believes the stated objective of Queensland’s food policy and economic framework should represent a whole life cycle analysis of food and efforts needed to **optimise** economic growth by striving for a balance between a range of key factors such as soil health and land capability, water quality and availability, biodiversity and vegetation management.

QMDC submits that the *Draft policy* by having the **maximisation** of economic growth as its primary objective risks promoting a policy that drives investment which may support perverse outcomes, for example, maximising production of one species drives monocultures in agriculture that invariably leads to insect and disease vulnerability or maximising irrigated agriculture based on a fragile seasonal availability of irrigation water.

Redesigning the “Queensland food story” therefore requires a serious commitment to invest in economic growth that protects the integrity of Queensland’s natural resources whilst achieving sustainable food production and consumption. The *Draft policy* does not clearly articulate what it deems as “market success” and “market failure” nor does it consider these against ESD principles.

QMDC would argue that the inherent complexities of a state food policy require integrating planning, legislation, science/education and incentives for economic growth in a holistic framework. This would link economic growth strategies to natural resource management strategies aligning food policy with other policy areas.

5.0 Focus themes

Focus themes have been reviewed in terms of their ability to achieve the objective of optimised food production, set within a risk management and ESD frameworks.

QMDC suggests that focus themes need to map the challenges Queensland faces in the future. Resulting actions need to support effective natural resource management by, for example:

- building resilience to climate variability and climate change

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- boosting productivity by adding value to regional biodiversity
- protecting Queensland's rural food production from biosecurity threats
- reducing salinity threats and soil erosion
- preventing water loss through evaporation or contamination
- advancing energy efficiency
- reducing carbon emissions and dependency on fossil fuels
- optimising food distribution systems to minimise energy wastage
- minimising food wastage through wholesalers, retailers and at food consumption stage
- increasing nutrient recycling back to agricultural land and out of landfills or sewage discharge

The Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA) assert that in response “to growing evidence of the importance of environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, global investors and asset managers are increasingly integrating a broader assessment of risk into decision-making”.

<http://thehub.ethics.org.au/why/>

If responsible business practice “is the recognition of, and response to the interconnectedness and interdependence of business within our world of which the global financial crisis and climate change are consequences” then the focus themes of the food policy and economic framework need to reflect and consider what will be appropriate responses throughout the state and its diverse regions. QMDC believes some of these responses are encapsulated in the identified themes.

QMDC supports the following core elements RIAA promotes as part of responsible business practice:

- **Environmental** - the environmental impact, direct or indirect, of an organisation's operations, products or services including those of its suppliers.
- **Community/Social** - the impact of an organisation's projects, products, services or investments on the community at a local or global level.
- **Workplace Practices** - including respectful, treatment of employees in matters related to recruitment and selection, diversity and equal opportunity, work/life balance, professional development and progression, managing redundancies and full entitlement to employment rights.
- **Marketplace & Business Conduct** – responsible behaviour in developing, purchasing, selling and marketing products and services.
- **Ethical Governance** - from board level and throughout an organisation: transparency; risk management; due diligence; effective codes of conduct and ethics.

6.0 Theme 1: Reputation and the consumer

In establishing reputation for food products and a consumer preference, the *Draft policy* sets out the wider considerations of food origin, welfare and ethics, diet and nutrition, convenience, lifestyle and culture. All of these factors are supported when attempting to meet consumer demand. These factors account for consumer preference.

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A survey conducted by Choice Magazine in conjunction with Amnesty International (June 2009) discovered consumers are most concerned about the performance, quality and price of products, specifically those aspects of a product that directly affects them. Additionally almost half of those surveyed think the working conditions and human rights of the people who make the products are important. The environmental aspects of a product's performance, namely **energy and water usage** also rated quite highly in the survey. [http://search.choice.com.au/search?w=consumer preference](http://search.choice.com.au/search?w=consumer+preference)

QMDC asserts however that before the 'marketers' sell food products to meet consumer need and preference; government, industry and society have responsibilities to meet more basic needs. Promotion of systems such as EMS ISO14001 enable discerning consumers to have confidence in the product and can be reflected in the product's labelling. When this documentation is available, consumer preference is then driven by a wider range of factors including environmental sustainability.

QMDC assert that In order for this to occur, some additional strategies include:

- Implement market driven 'clean and green' reporting standards
- Implement market driven 'clean and green' labelling standards
- Maintain research, development and extension budgetary support for industry producers

Awareness and concern about environmental issues is increasing throughout Queensland, with drought and climate change issues beginning to influence state and regional policy and planning. If public concern and consumer expectations about environmental problems are already impacting on purchasing decisions then placing more pressure on the food industry to demonstrate social and environmental responsibility is necessary.

QMDC supports a high level of scrutiny to be applied to the management of environmental issues and consequentially the environmental performance of the food industry as a whole. It is noted that some food processing plants have significantly improved their operations in response to the rising costs of water, energy and waste disposal, whilst local concern relating to drought and consequent water restrictions have necessitated further water reductions.

QMDC supports the auditing of the food industry to ascertain the environmental performance of both individual companies and associated sectors. Determining whether a food processing plant, for example, is eco-efficient is a direct and immediate method of addressing environmental issues in a cost-effective manner.

The benefits of undertaking an eco-efficient or environmental performance audit can include:

- direct financial savings from reducing costs for raw material, water, energy and other resources
- savings from reduced waste generation
- greater productivity through improved use of raw materials
- reduced operational and maintenance costs
- enhanced public image and consumer support for the company, leading to competitive advantage
- motivation for continuous improvement

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- reduced exposure to risk and liability due to proactive management of environmental impacts
- capability to influence future decisions regarding generic levels of compliance for food industry facilities
- improved workplace health and safety.

QMDC submits that the food policy must inform a coherent corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy, based on integrity, sound values and a long-term approach that offers clear business benefits to the food industry. The *Draft policy* fails to align along the food value chain corporate goals with those of society; maintaining an individual company's or sector's reputation; securing their continued license to operate; and reducing their exposure to liabilities, risks and associated costs.

8.0 Theme 2: Innovation, productivity and skills

Responding to predictions indicating that food production will need to increase by about 70 per cent to feed 9 billion people in 2050, the University of Queensland's Professor of Food Security Michael D'Occhio has advocated that Australia's real contribution to global food security is through education, training and technology transfer.

<http://www.uq.edu.au/news/?article=23077>

In order for Queensland to be effective as a food producing state and contributor to a food secure, sustainable and bio-diverse future, QMDC advocates for strengthened collaboration between all stakeholders in the Australian and international research and innovation fields.

QMDC asserts that the skills of Australia's research providers and the ability of producers to innovate and adopt the products of research are fundamental to the profitability, competitiveness and sustainability of Queensland's food industry.

QMDC believes it is essential for research to be localised and regionalised in order to further the food industry's effectiveness and efficiency. Innovation is dependent on the availability of people who not only think creatively to solve problems but also the ability of users to adapt and apply the resultant new products, technologies and information to their local and regional needs.

QMDC acknowledges the Queensland Government's actions, through the Queensland Processed Food Industry Action Plan to promote sustainable regional development through:

- regional marketing and brand building linked to tourism and wine
- skills and training
- export capability
- emerging and advanced food processing technologies
- regulatory environment
- infrastructure
- investment attraction to populate the Queensland processed food hub with additional world-class food processing companies

With the additions of processing efficiencies and waste minimisation.

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Innovation in the agricultural and food industries is being challenged in the QMDB by competition from other sectors for skilled people and by the increasing level and diversity of skills needed for producers to operate sustainably in the industries.

QMDC supports the call for better understanding of human factors in the adoption of research in the agriculture and food industries.

The food policy must provide the impetus to better understand and address:

- the constraints on availability and skills for research and innovation
- the skills needed by producers to make the best use of research, innovation and extension
- the drivers and barriers to adoption of research and innovation by the Queensland food industry and in regional communities
- the impacts of research and innovation on the food industry and regional economies, including on the viability of businesses and communities.

The food policy must give priority to research, development and extension activities that will:

- enable commodities and food to be produced in Queensland more efficiently and sustainably
- encourage emerging industries in Queensland that have prospects of developing profitably and sustainably
- provide information and tools to help producers identify optimal returns on investment, especially in pursuing new product opportunities
- add value through improved products and processes that focus on consumer needs and expectations, such as healthier foods, and capture market advantage.

Sustainability should therefore be integrated in all research, development and extension agendas.

QMDC supports the idea of an innovation package tailored in partnership with QMI Solutions to the food industry.

QMDC would also offer the Regional Group Collective as a key organisation to partner with QAFFI.

QMDC also asserts that there is also an important role for Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners in Queensland to play in future food production. This may include the production of both conventional food and the development of new enterprises and markets around native bush-food.

Advances in existing technologies and adoption of new technologies are important in addressing the challenges faced by agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food industries and regional communities. Continued investment in these areas is essential.

QMDC recognises that information and communications technology, remote sensing and precision agriculture all have the capacity to deliver further important technological advances and returns to the Queensland food industry and its regional communities.

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To leverage the best returns from technological advances, cross-disciplinary and collaborative approaches are required where:

- critical points in the food value chain that would benefit from a technological solution are identified
- international research and innovation are reviewed so Queensland can adopt and tailor technologies to local and regional requirements.

8.0 Theme 3: Planning and regionalisation

The Regional NRM Plan is a framework to guide coordinated and holistic regional planning and on-ground action to improve the management and condition of the natural resources in the NRM Plan area. It is an adaptive plan that requires periodic review. It is integral to the environmental responsiveness of a food policy and economic framework as it identifies and prioritises resource condition and aspirational targets for the region's assets, together with innovative management action actions to help the regional communities' reach them. Management action targets focus on motivating changes in land use and in production and environmental management practices, protecting and conserving regional and catchment environmental values and, as appropriate, undertaking activities to arrest degradation and rehabilitate degraded areas.

Condition and trend analysis has taken a number of forms in Regional NRM plans, and includes scoping papers, technical reports and regional profiles or overviews. Regional NRM groups (like QMDC) continue to work with State and Australian governments and other science partners to better understand the impact of investment activities on the long term health/sustainability of the natural assets and regional communities.

QMDC submits there are many challenges facing the environmental responsiveness component of a regional planning framework for the food industry in relation to the diverse regions of Queensland, for example:

- Is information adequate about water supplies/reliability (especially groundwater) for defining condition, trend and threats? Is information on sediments, nutrients and chemical pollutants adequate to assess water quality?
- Have the connections between food industry trend and impacts on the condition of the resource base been made?
- Have the effects of climate variability on soil carbon management or exploring options for carbon trading been seriously considered?
- Are cumulative impacts from the food industry and associated sectors on a regional asset such as biodiversity fully understood?

QMDC acknowledges that the realities of food production—noise, odour and infrastructure—can clash with lifestyle expectations. QMDC argues that the *Draft policy* does not balance the economic and social goals of regionalisation by considering natural resource assets as well as investment attraction, lifestyle, job creation and food production.

QMDC submits that the Good Quality Agricultural Land policy must be maintained alongside the Strategic Cropping Land policy and that both agricultural land and the water resource it depends on need to be appropriately valued.



Regional NRM plans must be considered and promoted by Queensland's food industry.

9.0 Theme 4: Trade and Investment

QMDC submits that in the QMDB the Australian and state governments as yet are unable to guarantee the safety and integrity of this region's food supply in relation to the impact of coal and coal seam gas (CSG) waste products on food sources, for example, CSG water used in feedlots and for irrigation.

Discerning consumers in overseas markets look for the 'clean and green' products that Queensland has to offer. QMDC supports maintaining this reputation through the proof and verification process an EMS offers.

QMDC, supports the development of tailored trade and investment services for the food industry, and would include natural resource and sustainable production systems as well as market research, trade supply chains, business matching and market entry strategies.

10.0 Theme 5: Resources, sustainability and the environment

QMDC has already addressed in earlier sections many key issues pertinent to this theme. QMDC would like to reiterate that the Regional NRM plans support more efficient use of resources and are fundamental mechanisms to advance the management and protection of the environment.

QMDC is not sure what the *Draft policy* means by "simple" regulation but certainly supports consistency between jurisdictions, with particular reference to water resource planning.

It is agreed that ongoing RD&E is vital, and would add there is a need to ensure that resources like energy, water and soil are not only used efficiently and effectively but also within their capability and threshold limits.

The following information is offered as specific examples that need further investigation and input by the food policy and economic framework.

10.1 Food loss and wastage

It has been estimated that food waste makes up between 30 and 50 percent of all household generated waste. For every kilogram of food waste that is sent to landfill, a kilogram and-a-half of greenhouse gases is emitted. Waste policy in Australia has only recently focused on food waste and its considerable contribution to landfills and greenhouse gas emissions.

The technology exists to process waste to eliminate its greenhouse footprint and convert it into value-add composts and biofuels.

It was reported by the Australian newspaper that around 15 million tonnes or three percent of Australia's greenhouse emissions are caused by organic matter – mainly food and garden wastes, decomposing in landfills. The report also stated that food wastes, which make up over half of the nine million tonnes of garbage generated by Australian households each year, produce methane which is 21 times more potent



than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas

Professor Michael D'Occhio highlighted in a presentation that food loss and wastage in Australia alone is worth \$5 billion per year.

Foodbank Queensland estimates that as much as 20% of all food produced is unsaleable for a variety of reasons, for example, products may be incorrectly labelled, have faulty packaging, be part of a trial run or are not produced to exact specifications. Since 1995, Foodbank Queensland has distributed more than 16 million kilograms of food. <http://www.foodbank.com.au>

QMDC submits that the food industry must adopt a zero waste strategy rather than a low waste one or if there is a waste there are mechanisms available to recycle nutrients.

11.2 Peak phosphorous

Julian Cribb states in *The Coming Famine: The global food crisis and what we can do to avoid it* (CSIRO Publishing, Australia, 2010) that “the immense global waste of food is but a fraction of an even more colossal squandering of nutrients...”(p.71). Cribb likens nutrient wastage to haemorrhaging, with nutrients bleeding from every link in the food chain - from the farm in soil, water and wind; from food perishing in transit or storage; from processing and cooking; and from waste disposal.

Cribb notes that worldwide, scientists estimate, humanity is releasing “9 million tonnes more phosphorous into the Earth’s biosphere than would occur naturally” and at that scale the global phosphorous cycle will be seriously disturbed (p.74).

Canadian physicist, Patrick Dery, applied Hubbert’s “peak oil” theorem to rock phosphate leading to the claim that the world had passed peak phosphate in 1989 (Déry, P. & Anderson, B. (2007) *Peak phosphorus*. Energy Bulletin. energybulletin.net/node/33164).

Cribb points out the frightening scenario this paints is although there are energy substitutes for oil and gas when supplies run low or become too expensive, “there are no substitutes for phosphorous” (p.77).

QMDC argues that the time frames of the market and key proponents of the market system (like the fertilizer industry) are typically short term, dealing with 5-10 year horizons at the most, rather than 50-100 year time frames that are required.

Cordell, Drangert and White in *The Story of Phosphorus: Global food security and food for thought*, Global Environmental Change Journal, (2009),doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2008.10.009 state that a “balanced diet results in depletion of around 22.5kg/yr of phosphate rock per person based on current practice. This is 50 times greater than the 1.2 g/person recommended daily intake of elemental P”.



Clearly the current system of mining and processing phosphate rock, international transport and storage, fertilizer application, harvest, food processing, retailing, storage and final consumption is inefficient.

Cribb (pp78-79) suggests solving the nutrient crisis requires Australia to commit to a plan for nutrient conservation and recycling involving the following measures:

- preventing or reducing all forms of erosion
- recycling nutrients within the farming system on a substantial scale
- eliminating fertiliser subsidies, which promote wasteful use
- introduce incentives to conserve nutrients
- fund research on ways to conserve, recycle and reuse nutrients all along the food chain
- implement plans to compost all organic urban waste and put it back into the food cycle
- develop improved technologies to harvest nutrients from waste streams
- harvest urban sewage sludge and transform it into fertiliser
- replace water-based toilets with composting designs

QMDC asserts Queensland's food policy needs to develop a state plan for nutrient conservation and recycling as a key strategy for sustaining food production.

10.3 Salinity risks

A report by Daniel Brough from the Department of Natural Resources and Water assessed land in Queensland affected by salinity.

“The National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA) reported in 2000 that a total of 48 000 ha of land was estimated to be affected by salinity in Queensland (CoA 2001). The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported in 2002, however, that the current area of saline land in Queensland was 107 000 ha (ABS 2002). This represents a more than twofold increase in saline area in just two years. This increase in area is attributable mainly to landholders' greater understanding or recognition of salinity. The NLWRA has estimated that if no preventive measures are taken, the saline area will increase to about 3.1 million ha by the year 2050”.

Brough states that “the value of assets affected by salinity is not well quantified”, and notes that the costs to the community of salinity affecting agricultural land will potentially be significant. Productive land is a finite resource. The communities of Queensland will bear the full cost of the loss of productive land, to a potentially irreversible salinity outbreak.

http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/environmental_management/state_of_the_environment/state_of_the_environment_queensland_2007/state_of_the_environment_queensland_2007_contents/land_salinity.html

QMDC has conducted projects in the region to link RD&E activities with regional salinity risks. These projects can help inform the food industry adapt to regional environmental conditions and enable it to become more resilient.



11.0 Theme 6: Food supply and continuity

QMDC supports the need to provide markets and consumers with goods that are safe and meet customer requirements. This priority requires the need to:

- identify changes in Queensland's market and consumer requirements (including social and environmental concerns) regarding the integrity and safety of food and other products
- provide appropriate stages of the supply chain with timely and accurate information on market demands and consumer requirements
- effectively service the regional needs of consumers
- support the achievement of animal welfare objectives in livestock production, transport and slaughter, the management of working animals and the control of animal pests
- establish and implement cost-effective traceability, quality assurance and certification systems (EMS ISO 14001)
- improve packaging, storage and transportation, business analysis and supply chain logistics to ensure customers receive high quality products in the shortest possible timeframe
- design appropriate infrastructure to meet the needs of regional climate variability such as flooding or drought
- promote seasonal foods, local production and consumption eg farmers' markets and local food "100 mile" restaurants
- support the development of products that enhance consumer health and wellbeing, and
- underpin the safety of food throughout the production, processing and distribution chain.

12.0 Theme 7: Health, safety and food information

QMDC submits that food information must be scientifically reliable and consistent, understandable and not misleading, so as to support informed choice. More awareness needs to be raised on the potential dangers to health resulting from, for example, additives, and pesticide residue in food.

CHOICE members list chemicals and pesticides amongst their major concerns. They are telling the food industry it is time for a more effective system of chemical and pesticide approval in Australia.

CHOICE as a key stakeholder in the food industry supports a comprehensive, risk-based chemicals framework. This they claim will make the system more efficient and robust, requiring higher standards for high-risk chemicals, while allowing industry and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) to use limited resources more effectively. CHOICE state that they support "clear legislated timeframes for the completion of assessments and reviews, with these also based on risk. This will provide certainty to business and the community about review periods. As well as clear timeframes, the regulator needs additional tools, including the capacity to invoke the precautionary principle where a risk to life or health exists but scientific uncertainty persists".

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More than 80 chemicals and pesticides no longer registered for use in Europe are available for every day agricultural and veterinary use in Australia. Approximately 75% were included in Australia's current system 15 years ago as a legacy from previous decades. Some were registered for use back in the 1950s and have not been subjected to a modern safety assessment. <http://www.choice.com.au/reviews-and-tests/food-and-health/general-health/safety/apvma-wwf.aspx>

QMDC suggests there is a need for regional labeling and better labeling of imported food to help boost regional economies and promote consumer preference.

QMDC supports a stronger focus on the nutritional value of food in all strategies and actions along the food value chain. The Parliament House café/canteen could be a great place to start a statewide awareness campaign on the food policy and its intentions to enhance the health of Queensland's people and food businesses.

The *Draft policy* did not offer a commonly applied methodology to assess and communicate environmental information along the food value chain, to consumers and producers. The food policy needs to build on international standards and existing and emerging methodological developments at national and regional levels.