

Northern Territory Farmers Association

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The following submission is provided as a follow up to the face to face meeting held in Darwin. NT Farmers is the peak industry body representing all plant based industries within the Northern Territory, as such it plays an important role in advocating on behalf of the interest of Northern Territory farmers.

The review of the current regulations are timely given the rapidly changing dynamics within the global trade supply chain. It must be stressed that exports should be driven by market and economic drivers with an understanding of the complete supply chain and all stakeholders within the chain, from farmers to consumers. Talking to just one segment of this chain will not give a holistic view of complexities of export marketing. It is imperative that any review be focussed on putting in place processes that enable analysis and advice on market and economic drivers that are easily accessible by farmers. Information must be in layman terms and effort must also be put into the communication modes, tools such as Twitter may not be the most appropriate for people on the land, particularly those with poor access to communications. In addition to the need for fact based information, it is important to understand the practical aspects centred around the supply chain. In the Northern Territory for instance Issues such as the lack of irradiation/treatment facilities, lack of regular, cost competitive air and sea transport, lack of information and face to face support to navigate foreign country quarantine and import procedures, the role of market agents both in Australia and in overseas markets are some of the main issues that need resolution before discussing export regulation reviews. The value of linking commodities to particular markets is a key driver that needs to be understood, each commodity is different and has different markets, this needs to be understood by both the bureaucracy and politicians alike. It is also important to understand the farming practices of farmers in northern Australia are very different to those of our southern counterparts, we have different seasons, different climatic and geographic conditions that need recognition, blanket approaches to regulations and reviews are not helpful, particularly when they are conducted and driven by a southern Australia mindset.

NT Farmers is appreciative of the Australian Government for the opportunity to provide our feedback face to face in the first instance and via written format. NT Farmers welcomes the opportunity to be consulted on an ongoing basis in this vitally important national discussion. Australia can no longer rely on stating that the quality of our produce is better than others, the rest of the world is catching up or in many instances has already passed us. NT Farmers encourages this review to also review actual conditions in international export markets before finalising this review, as noted above, understanding the whole supply chain is critical.