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Agribusiness

PM refuses expert help on SPCA

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The Land 30/01/2014. Prime Minister Tony Abbott has declined a request from two eminent members of his government's own advisory panel to meet before cabinet discusses whether to save food processor SPC Ardmona. It can also be revealed former Labor industry minister Greg Combet, the third member of the panel put together by Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane, quit late last year and is now helping the South Australian -government deal with the impact of the closure of General Motors Holden's factories. Combet, who helped rewrite work practices at SPC Ardmona, left late last year after the panel completed its work and the subsequent decision to stop making Holden cars. The other two members of the taskforce, Telstra chairwoman Catherine Livingstone and former Manufacturing Australia chief and Reserve Bank **board** member Dick Warburton, have been seeking a face-to-face meeting with the Prime Minister in the lead-up to the cabinet meeting. But the request was denied. One -government spokesperson says Macfarlane was aware of the taskforce's position and he would convey it to Abbott and the rest of cabinet.

Cropping

Feed options bind

The Land 30/01/2014. Cotton seed dearer than the current price of a bale, southern stockfeed grain increasing in value by the week, and hay, fodder and pasture reserves diminishing quickly – just some of the dilemmas now facing graziers throughout this parched State. "It's getting really, really serious now," says John Webster of Quirindi Grain Trading Pty Ltd. "This dry is covering such a big area and everything is going through the roof." He says barley was selling at \$300-plus a tonne and there was not much hay left down south. "You can't **buy** corn until the new season comes in, and I paid \$470/t delivered for last year's white corn going from Toowoomba, Queensland, to Goodooga," he says. "But the new season corn is still going to be about \$340/t to \$350/t." Webster says cottonseed was selling for \$580/t at Moree and an order he had from Longreach, Qld, may not eventuate even if he could get a contract for the proposed \$610/t delivered, because the Moree gin had no more to sell until they filled their own orders.

Northern demand strong

The Land 30/01/2014. The spread between grain prices in northern, western and southern Australia continues to sit at in excess of \$60 a tonne despite patchy rain over the summer cropping belt as buyers look to address regional shortages. Matthew Pattison, trading manager for PentAg Nidera, based at Toowoomba, says the rain was relatively widespread across the Darling Downs, but more follow-up rain was needed for dryland crops. Nathan Cattle, ProFarmer chief analyst, says the rain was useful, but added the planting window was finished for southern Queensland. "They virtually have all the crop in the ground they will put in." He says the north continued to act as a vacuum for feed grain. "That vacuum is getting bigger and grain is coming in from further afield all the time." Cattle and Pattison had different ideas about how far away the grain would come from. Pattison says the fact some sorghum was still likely to be exported meant there must be still stocks of feed grain around that could be moved by road or rail. "I don't think this talk of boats coming from South Australia is right."

Beef

## Aus dominates China market

The Land 29/01/2014. Australia was the largest red meat supplier to China in 2013, with a 48% market share. This is according to figures released by China Customs, Global Trade Atlas, which reports Chinese red meat imports during 2013 surged 194% on 2012, to 543,105 tonnes shipped weight, comprising 294,223 tonnes swt of beef and 248,882 tonnes swt of sheepmeat. A total of 94% of red meat imported into the Chinese market was supplied by Australia, NZ and Uruguay. China imported 294,223 tonnes swt of beef during 2013, up 379pc year-on-year, with imports from Australia reaching 154,777 tonnes swt, up 467pc. Meat and Livestock Australia reports that Australia's market share has increased steadily since 2010 when it sat at 24pc, with a further rise from 44pc in 2012, to 53pc in 2013. While the volume from Uruguay and NZ lifted to 70,334 tonnes swt (up 385pc year-on-year) and 35,375 tonnes swt (up 374pc), market share of both countries remained steady year-on-year, at 24pc and 12pc respectively.

## Finding a niche in the US

The Land 27/01/2014. American beef producers continued to sell off the US herd through 2013, establishing conditions for beef consumption in the United States to come under increased price pressure from chicken and pork. The depletion of the US herd, now at 60-year lows after a long spell of adverse weather and cattle prices, coincides with a bumper corn crop and falling corn prices. This will see increased chicken and pork production, MLA's North American regional manager David Pietsch reports, driving down prices for those proteins at a time when beef prices are rising. "We now have to see at what point US consumers begin to resist paying more for beef as chicken and pork get cheaper," Pietsch says. This is already playing out on restaurant menus, where new items tend to favour price-competitive chicken or pork. The vast US manufacturing beef industry is Australia's second-largest beef export market. Manufacturing beef accounts for 70% of Australia's beef exports to the US - the lean Australian product is combined with the fattier lot-fed local product to make the 78CL burger pattie. Ground beef constitutes 55-60% of US beef consumption.

## Health

### Wrong picture painted over antibiotic use

The Dairy Site 29/01/2014. The animal agriculture industry has wrongly been painted as being irresponsible in its use of antibiotics, writes Chris Harris from the International Production and Processing exhibition in Atlanta. Dr Richard Raymond, the former Undersecretary for Food Safety at the US Department of Agriculture speaking at a USPoultry seminar on pathogen reduction says the current uses and doses of antibiotics for animals have been approved by the Food and Drug administration as appropriate. Dr Raymond hit out at the critics of the use of antibiotics in animal feed and says they had exaggerated the reported overuse of antibiotics as growth promoters. He specifically attacked the campaign led by Congresswoman Louise Slaughter that said 80% of all antibiotics sold in the US were given to perfectly healthy animals raised for food. He says the campaigners failed to mention the antibiotics are also used to protect animals from diseases and others are given to companion animals, which the official figures from the FDA show.

### Rotting zebra bacteria can kill anthrax

The Dairy Site 29/01/2014. A Zebra carcass has yielded a team of bacteriologists with a possible solution to anthrax bacillus. Bacillus phage Tsmamsa was discovered in a Zebra carcass on the plains of the Etosha National Park in Namibia and was found to invade and kill bacillus anthracis. The phrase 'bacteriophage' literally means 'bacteria eater', which University of California researcher, Dr Holly Ganz said it can do 'voraciously'. Tsamsa is one of the largest ever bacteriophages to be discovered. During the study, which was published in the journal PLOS One, the team found Tsamsa would also infect closely related bacteria, including food poisoning bacteria Bacillus cereus. Furthermore, by sequencing the genome, the team was able to identify lysin, an enzyme used to kill bacterial cells as an antibiotic of disinfecting agent.

## Poultry

### New poultry inspection rules could improve safety

The Meat Site 29/01/2014. US - New moves by the USDA to change the system of poultry meat inspection will place more inspectors at the sharp end of detecting food safety issues rather than quality issues. Dr Richard Raymond, the former USDA Undersecretary for Food Safety speaking at a seminar on pathogen reduction during the International Production and Processing Exposition in Atlanta said that the new regulations will also help to save money while improving the service. He says a modernisation rule on inspection is expected shortly. Dr Raymond says at present too many inspectors are based on the line looking for blemishes in the poultry meat, broken legs and other quality issues rather than testing for pathogens and other food safety issues. Typically, he says, four inspectors are on the line looking at

quality issues and just one at the end of the line is testing for food safety problems. He says the changes could free up 1,500 inspectors looking to pathogens and other similar problems, which employees of the processing companies should be searching for quality defects.

## Policy

Canada, Mexico play huge role in US pork, beef markets

The Meat **Site** 29/01/2014. US - The timely completion of US farm legislation (ie. The Farm Bill) appears to be in grave doubt. The houses of Congress had passed different versions of the legislation and a conference committee was charged with reconciling those differences and arriving at a final bill that would then go back to each chamber for a simply yes-no vote. No further modifications would be allowed, write Steve Meyer and Len Steiner. But the conference committee report completed yesterday and filed last night omitted two key provisions sought by livestock and meat groups:

- A “fix” for mandatory country-of-origin labeling (MCOOL) that would avert retaliatory tariffs on a broad range of US products by Canada and Mexico.
- A prohibition on the Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) from enforcing and completing regulations it proposed pursuant to the 2008 Farm Bill and a prohibition from adopting policies similar to those proposals. The 2008 Farm Bill authorised GIPSA to write rules to clarify “unjust discrimination” and other terms in the Packers and Stockyards Act. Many industry groups and participants believed GIPSA badly overstepped the intent of those provisions and, perhaps, its authority under the act.

## Technology

Filleting robot to help the Norwegian fishing industry

The Meat **Site** 29/01/2014. Norway - A newly developed white fish filleting machine could give the Norwegian fish industry a much-needed boost. Unlike farmed salmon, white fish varies greatly in size and weight. This means that until now, no one has been able to develop a machine which can fillet these fish. However, there is now a filleting machine which could result in a positive upturn in the Norwegian fishing industry. The machine is a result of a development project run by Nordic Innovation, in which Sintef, Marel, Faroe Origin and Norway Seafoods have been working together. White fish is complicated and time-consuming to fillet, because the bones are difficult to find and remove. As a result, three to seven percent of the most valuable part of the fish is currently cut away unnecessarily. Researchers at SINTEF ICT have conducted X-ray tests in the laboratory, and have used CP scanners at Oslo University Hospital to learn more about where fish bones are located. The technology focuses on image analysis and recognition. The new machine locates the fish bones using X-ray technology, and fillets the fish quickly and precisely with a powerful jet of water. This means that the fish is guaranteed to be boneless, with considerably less wastage than with manual filleting.

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