



HD Barnaby 'bulldozer' Joyce on the future of agriculture

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Federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce was typically blunt about some sensitive issues in an address to the NSW Farm Writers gathering in Sydney.

Asked to outline his vision for Australian agriculture ahead of the release of the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, he described his own approach to policy making as 'bulldozing through', and he did just that as he dealt with issues relating to animal welfare groups, foreign investment and the environment.

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On PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), he described its campaign against cruelty in the shearing industry as 'unethical' and 'inadmissible in court' and he warned they are 'not the police, not the RSPCA', but a 'quasi vigilante **group**... who want to close down the industry'.

On dams, and in the context of widespread concern about their impact on the environment, he listed several that he considers the most likely to get approval.

Mr Joyce warned that the amount a water held in storage per person in Australia has been declining.

"We are going to build dams," he said.

"The Prime Minister doesn't put you in charge of the dams committee if he doesn't want you to build dams...but making the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the dams committee is a very dangerous thing", he joked.

He was scathing of the previous Federal Government's decision to suspend the live trade.

"The idea that overnight you cease trade to your nearest neighbour, which they rely on to keep food inflation down in Jakarta...you couldn't have done something more silly."

Under his stewardship, the live trade has been re-opened in Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

"We have to go back and mend all these bridges to get these relations going and get the product moving again."

Mr Joyce summarised his approach as fundamentally about doing things that produce a better return at the farm gate.

That includes resuming the live cattle and live sheep trade, signing free trade agreements with Japan and Korea (and working on another with **China**), and developing the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper to identify more ways of boosting agriculture's contribution to the economy.

Despite the importance of foreign investment in developing agriculture in Australia, Mr Joyce is firmly in favour of Australians owning farming land.

"12 per cent of Australia's land is foreign owned. In NSW, 12 per cent of the state's agricultural land is foreign owned.

"That's 2.2 times the size of Victoria in agricultural land, so we have every right to ask questions.

He wants to see tighter controls on foreign investment and remains a **firm** believer in the family farm.

"I truly believe the family farm is still the fundamental unit of economics in regional Australia because it has the capacity...to survive the long haul, and because of the core belief.. that the Australian farm needs to belong to the Australian people."

Mr Joyce highlighted some strong returns in a number of commodity sectors, including the sheep industry, citing one farmers comment that he'd **sold** a **B**-Double of sheep recently and pocketed a cheque for \$100,000.

He said there is a rising trend in cattle prices overseas that he predicts will translate to the Australian market within a few months, as well as strong **milk** prices, with some very profitable emerging markets for **dairy** such as the fresh **milk** market in **China**, but he warned that the country had to stay focussed.

"Our nation has a great chance, but it's not set in stone, it's not our birthright. We have to become really focussed.

"Brazil and Argentina are out there waiting in the wings to come in.

"We have a real advantage because of our proximity and our relationships but we have to be focussed."

Mr Joyce is looking well into the future, beyond the term of the current government, which he joked could be short if recent polls are an indicator, and he's working with his Labor counterpart.

"We've got to make sure that agricultural policy in this nation is not [making] these wild oscillations, that you can hand across the manual to the next minister and say if you follow this you're going to be pretty right...so that we look after our people whoever is in government, so we can bring real prosperity back."

For Mr Joyce, the key is 'making a lot of money...to get a better return back through the farm gate'.

CO pletam : People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals | rspca : Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

IN i5020011 : Dam Construction | i01001 : Farming | i0 : Agriculture | i502 : Heavy Construction | iconst : Construction | icre : Real Estate/Construction

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RE austr : Australia | nswals : New South Wales | sydney : Sydney | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

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