29th November 2015

To:

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry
Agland.reps@aph.gov.au

INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN AUSTRALIA.

Dear Secretary,

We are a family owned 13,000 ha farm and business in the Upper Great Southern of WA and producers of Canola, Wheat, Barley, Oats, Oaten Hay, Fine Merino Wool and Meat. It is pleasing to see the government initiative of this enquiry and we submit the following comments.

Technology in the areas of the mechanics of farming has made rapid progress and Australian farmers are implementing and applying these as fast as they can afford, with great success. GPS tracking systems, auto steering, weed seed destructors and the like are immensely helpful.

Where we are challenged and lacking support is in the development of regenerative agricultural systems that can feed the nation well now and far into the future. It is alarming to hear that today's wheats have also been bred for volume and that around twice the amount has to be eaten to gain the same nutrition as was available fifty years ago. In addition the amount of phosphorous in plants has increased dramatically at the expense of balanced uptake of other minerals and trace elements since the introduction of sulphured soluble phosphate. This and other applications are acidifying both soils and humans, very concerning, and all we can do to counteract is apply copious amounts of lime, from non renewable resources.

We need R&D to be focused on systems that will build and sustain soil biology in our fragile landscapes while supporting crops that are valuable to human health. Chemical farming and artificial fertilisers are showing distinct signs of collapse in efficacy along with shrinking areas of productive soil and huge increases in expense. The practices of GMO's and dessicating food crops with herbicides and so on are repugnant to all who have a discerning interest in food quality and nutrition.

It makes economic sense to maintain, or even reduce volume while improving quality and nutrition rather than increasing production, as in volume. There is already enough food in the world to feed the population, it's the politics of some countries that prevents distribution according to need and prevents the development of sustainable local agriculture based communities.

Some individual famers and small initiatives from DAFWA are showing promise and encouragement such as the Biological farming trials. The improving telecommunications are helping that knowledge to spread. However much more research is needed to save our agriculture and make it sustainable in Australia and we encourage you to channel more R&D technology dollars into departments that have this bigger picture in practice and mind rather than into partnerships with quick fix 'patent for control of production profit' driven organisations.

We have no doubt that the scientific brain power to achieve better quality more nutritious agricultural production exists in, or is obtainable, for Australia. It is a matter of channelling the funds towards the individuals and organisations that can focus on these goals and deliver the outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to input to this enquiry

Yours Faithfully
Jamie and Jo Fowler