To the Committee Secretary,
House of Representatives Standing Committee of Agriculture and Industry
P.O. Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra. ACT. 2600.

Terms of Reference "scope for further improvements"

Agricultural Science Innovation in Education to start in Primary School.

Young children soak up knowledge and learn very quickly when their lessons are outdoors and interesting. Research shows that there is a deficit in children who lack contact with the natural environment.

Agricultural science affects every aspect of a young child's life - cereal and milk and eggs and toast and honey for breaky - cheese and yoghurt and apple and orange juice in their lunchbox. And yet when their capacity to learn is at its greatest, the connection between their basic foods and the farm is not made.

Country children may make these connections but city children may go through primary school and never have a teacher or parent who connects the cow to the milk in the fridge.

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program has shown what can be achieved when primary schools e.g.The King Valley Cluster in NE Victoria got together to build a kitchen , set up vegie gardens and orchards for the children to learn to grow their food and cook and eat it. This has developed to chooks, rearing calves and going to the saleyards to see the calves sold.

How can we extend this wonderful agricultural program to all primary schools?

We need to go further. Some suggestions.Prep to Grade 6 curriculum.

1.Care of farm animals...calf, pet lamb, chooks, pigs.

2.Visits to farms, ag. show animal nurseries, saleyards

3. Teachers may need training.

4.Parents involved with ag. workshops and encouraged to accompany children on excursions

5.Growing food, cooking and eating it. Parents to volunteer.

6. By Grade 5 and 6 be able to measure rain, wind speed and direction and maximum and minimum temperature.

7.Agricultural camps.

8.All this basic general knowledge of agriculture will be known by end of Grade 6.

9.Children to choose healthy local food for tuckshop.

!0.These Agrinauts will be ag-ready for Year 7.

Could we run a pilot project at a small country school e.g Carraragarmungee and a larger city school like Yarrunga in Wangaratta?

It is especially important that children at disadvantaged schools get encouragement from mentors, work experience and sponsorship for agricultural jobs as they move to Year 7 with a good general knowledge gained with the new innovative curriculum.

And now to Year 7.

By now all students will have a good practical grounding in agriculture. They are our industry of the future and we must nurture them.

Some suggestions.

1. Agricultural science MUST be a core subject in year 7,as important as maths and English.

2. Teachers may need training.

3.Parents brought up to date with workshops. Discuss options for their children.Encouraged to come to open days and farm tours.

4.Work experience in dairies, saleyards, orchards, sheepfarms with good supervision.

5.Careers teachers to continually update children on local work experience, scholarships, traineeships, studentships, holiday jobs, and TAFE and Uni options for courses in agriculture.

6.Sponsorships from local businesses e.g. green Tshirts for the Ag Sci students.

7.School farms set up with help from stock and station agents.

8.Agriculture is interesting and "mum , can I swap to Ag science as they are always away on excursions and did you know that Sally has a paid weekend job feeding calves on Bill Smiths dairy farm?'

Blocks of study in the classroom combined with work experience, supervision and mentoring on farms and in businesses associated with agriculture.

A chance to walk in the shoes of the workers in agriculture who turn the wheel into our food and understand the science and innovation that feeds us all.

Tallangatta Secondary College as part of Alpine Valleys Dairy Pathways has set a benchmark for excellence in agricultural education as students transition from school to a dairy farm where innovation in technology has created career choices that these students may have only dreamed of in science, ecotourism and biotechnology.

Education must be relevant to the future of our young people.

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