

STANDING UP FOR OUR AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Position:

- FAMILY FIRST supports the agriculture industry, particularly family businesses like family farms. FAMILY FIRST recognizes that farming is also important to maintaining regional communities and ensuring Australia's food security;
- FAMILY FIRST is concerned that despite the mantra of free trade, many Australian farmers are competing with farmers in overseas countries who do not have same health and safety requirements imposed on them. These requirements are important, but make it difficult to compete with some prices offered by overseas farmers;
- FAMILY FIRST believes that water is a major environmental issue and 70 per cent of water use is accounted for by irrigated agriculture. We need to help farmers use water more efficiently without threatening their livelihood. There are good arguments that we can save huge volumes of water by investing in agricultural infrastructure to make water systems more efficient;
- FAMILY FIRST is uneasy with the concept of water markets. What happens to farming families when they sell their water rights and their land is separated from water? Does the trading of water rights undermine the family farm? Does it mean that big business farms that can afford to buy water will survive, while family farms will not?
- FAMILY FIRST is very concerned fire blight could enter Australia, following the Government's decision to overturn an 85-year-old ban on the importation of apples from New Zealand, which has been ravaged by the bacterial disease. FAMILY FIRST supports fair competition but the Government must not allow any risk of fire blight to enter Australia. An outbreak could wipe out our \$4.5 billion apple and pear industry;
- FAMILY FIRST supports retaining the wheat export single desk as the best way for Australia to market its wheat to the world.

Actions:

- FAMILY FIRST supports fair competition in the international agriculture trade, but will advocate for Australian farmers who are disadvantaged by over-regulation, or those whose livelihoods could be threatened due to the danger of disease;
- FAMILY FIRST supports a major investment by the government in irrigation infrastructure, to make the most of the precious resource of water;
- FAMILY FIRST supports Apple and Pear Australia's campaign to keep fire blight out of Australia. FAMILY FIRST wants a tougher inspection regime with an extra pre-harvest inspection in New Zealand orchards and a particular focus on orchards with a history of fire blight. Everything possible must be done to protect our farmers.