



Muntadgin Farming Alliance

**PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release.**

**APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup> 2013**

**More than 1000 people attend Agriculture in Crisis meeting yesterday in Merredin.**

Over 1000 growers, business people, industry representatives and politicians gathered in Merredin yesterday in what is the largest meeting of its kind ever to be held in rural WA.

After listening to several speakers, the meeting was asked to vote on 12 resolutions aimed at securing the short and long term future of Agriculture in WA and Australia. All 12 resolutions were carried by the meeting with the vote being unanimous on all but one.

The group will now take these resolutions through the appropriate channels to government knowing they have the support of over 1000 people behind them.

Co-Spokesman for the group Jeff Hooper said “We couldn’t have asked for a better outcome from yesterday’s meeting. To have over 1000 people from various sectors of the industry, in the same room, agreeing on what needs to happen is a big step forward. We can now go to the government with a united voice and some very strong solutions for them to put into place.”

Hooper continued “We look forward to working with government, relevant industry groups and agencies to make these resolutions a reality. “

All 12 resolutions are listed below;

- 1.) That the recent WA drought pilot program is a failure and this approach is rejected outright by the meeting.
- 2.) The state and federal government commit to an Assistance Scheme for agricultural businesses providing;
  - a. Drought assistance
  - b. First start loans
  - c. Exceptional circumstance provisions
  - d. Low interest loans
  - e. This would be administered by the Rural Business Development Corporation
  - f. This needs to be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2013
  - g. This Assistance Scheme would take a form similar to the QRAA model.
- 3.) The meeting calls on COAG to convene an inclusive working group (within a month) to develop a new approach to drought and other periods of natural disaster consistent with WTO Agreement on agriculture framework.
- 4.) That the federal and state governments increase the number of Rural Financial Counseling and other support services in the state of WA to be proportionately fair and equitable to the other states.
- 5.) The state government to provide affordable Risk Mitigation Insurance to give effective cover against natural disasters.

- 6.) That interest rates are excessive and incompatible with sustainable production, industry profitability and international competitiveness. The Federal Government to work towards reducing interest rates.
- 7.) That the Federal Government commit to the provision of a reconstruction model capable of financial stabilization of rural Australia and reduction of rural debt.
- 8.) Australian dollar is un-competitively high. We call on the federal government and the Reserve Bank to put in place methods to compensate Australian industries and reduce the dollar.
  - a. For example - that the central bank shall reduce interest rates to be internationally comparable.
- 9.) In the interim the Federal Government instates a floor price of \$300 a tonne for wheat or some other means to ensure sustainable profitability.
- 10.) That governments and banks immediately enact a moratorium on forced farm sales until effective action is taken on the resolutions above.
- 11.) The meeting supports the Muntadgin Farming Alliance in its efforts to advance these issues and relevant other issues subsequently raised with appropriate industry and government representatives and agencies.
- 12.) In the event of financial foreclosure, when carry on finance is unattainable, temporary financial assistance, through relevant agencies, be implemented until assets tests and foreclosure notices are available.

## **ENDS**

### Background –

The Muntadgin Farming Alliance was set up with the aim of influencing government policy on agriculture. At the initial meeting, 100 members of the Muntadgin community gathered to discuss how best to tackle some of the problems affecting the local region including high farm debt, low community morale and no certainty as to the future of farming in the region.

The Alliance was set up by two local men, Scott Stirrat and Jeff Hooper who both operate farms between Merredin, Bruce Rock and Naremben. For more information about the Muntadgin Farming Alliance please contact.

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