



The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP

M E D I A R E L E A S E

Minister for Agriculture

4 November 2013

Possible Senate Inquiry into beef levies

Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, will today request the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs Legislation Committee consider conducting an inquiry into the collection and disbursement of levies in the beef cattle industry.

“The beef cattle industry has primary responsibility for its own affairs and strategic direction - the government supports this through the collection and disbursement of levy monies,” Minister Joyce said.

“It is vital the beef industry has the right systems and structures in place to capture the opportunities in the coming decades in Asia and elsewhere. Australia is a major player in the global beef trade, but as with anything, there is always room for improvement.

“I want to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place for the benefit of the whole industry. This is part of the government’s commitment to work with industry to reinvigorate agriculture and help farmers,” Minister Joyce said.

Minister Joyce said he understands the difficulty of establishing a system that satisfies every producer and acknowledges that some producers will always want more control over the statutory levies.

“A Senate Inquiry offers the best avenue to open the issue up to a debate, and provide opportunity for groups on all sides of the issue to lay their cards on the table. Such an inquiry would be a fair and transparent way forward, it would be at arm’s length from the government,” Minister Joyce said.

“For a number of years there have been concerns that some producers, particularly grass-fed producers, believe they do not have sufficient influence on how levies are invested in research and development and marketing for the beef industry.”

The terms of reference of any inquiry are a matter for the senate, but Minister Joyce recommends the inquiry be specifically focused on the collection and disbursement of levies for the beef industry.

The beef industry is Australia’s second largest agricultural industry with a gross value of production at farm gate of \$6.8 billion, with \$4.9 billion of this being exported. The government assists the industry by collecting more than \$100 million in statutory levies for various purposes. The government also provides matching funds for research and development on a dollar-for-dollar basis. In 2012-13 this amounted to \$37.4 million.