



6 February 2013

## Rural revival in politicians' hands

---

### **CHICK OLSSON** explains what Australian agriculture needs from Canberra

Australia has two big things going for it. One is mining, the second is agriculture. We do these things very well.

No one can touch us, yet agriculture receives very little support even though our farmers offer world-class produce and clean food security.

Coalition forces take it for granted that they will get agriculture's vote as there has been very little choice for our farmers, most of them being hung out to dry by successive governments.

Labor has no idea - the Coalition should be all over this, but isn't.

As much as I love the Nationals, they are waiting for Labor to lose the election, rather than formulating and marketing a cracking plan aimed at a revolution in our farming sector, which will win an election by a landslide.

At the start of the election year, farm plan details are sketchy, with the Coalition promising to delete the carbon tax and cut red tape.

This is a great start, but doesn't truly help agriculture to build wealth in any sense. It is hard to understand why politicians can't understand the need to have a strong and long-term viable farming sector.

Returns on capital are woeful, with most farmers living or dying by rainfall. There are simple solutions that won't need bus loads of economists cranking out heaps of figures:

**TAX** breaks are critical. Give farmers the tools to return to profit, not handouts. There should be 150 per cent tax deductions on a raft of many farm inputs that would encourage industry best practise and on-farm productivity in all sectors.

**RE-ENERGISE** the Bradfield water scheme, an idea that would set up our farming community for the next century, allowing a flood irrigation system in the arid zones of Australia.

Some say Australia can't afford it. I say, how can we afford not to?

**SHUT** down most research development corporations, all levy bodies, state farming bodies and those outside government who pretend to represent farmers.

**CONTROL** and direct world-class research and Aussie produce promotion for free, because farmers already pay tax and get very little in return.

**ENSURE** the government makes farming viable and provided a market return on capital.

**PREVENT** farming loans from being so easily foreclosed due to bank revaluations.

**MAKE** school and university fees for farmers' children fully tax deductible, allowing country children excellent education at all levels.

**MAKE** hospital travel and sundry costs with specialist travel to major cities for farmers fully tax-deductible.

**MAKE** health treatment and diagnosis a priority.

**ABOLISH** taxes for farmers' wives working in an outside job to support their farming enterprise.

Although the recent Coalition document is a very good document overall, agriculture only gets a few small paragraphs.

It needs to do much more than this and show more detail if they want to woo farmers and protect our food security.

- Chick Olsson is a director of the Australian Woolgrowers Association



Intensive care needed: Rural health must be a priority for governments too