

Media Release



Wednesday 20 February 2019

Climate Proofing Australia: A whole-of-landscape approach to tackling climate change

Agriculture, forestry and ecological restoration leaders call for allied front on climate policy

20 February 2019, Canberra – Representatives from the agriculture, forestry and ecological restoration industries have today launched an unprecedented cross-sector alliance and collaborative land management approach to Australia’s climate change mitigation strategy.

The Climate Proofing Australia (CPA) alliance advocates for a whole-of-landscape approach to tackle climate change aimed at integrating trees and improving soils across the landscape to store carbon, improving biodiversity, generating income for farmers and landholders, and moving towards carbon neutral farming and forestry supply chains by 2030.

“We are calling for public policy and political parties to embrace the significant role our sectors can play in Australia’s climate change mitigation strategy. This is supported by a number of Climate Change Authority (CCA) reports recommending a greater uptake of land and agriculture-based carbon sequestration projects and better recognition of the co-benefits,” said Brendan Foran, CEO, Greening Australia.

“As managers of nearly 50 per cent of the Australian landmass, farmers and other landholders across the food, fibre and conservation sectors play a key role in protecting Australia’s natural environment. With land-based activities also accounting for around 20 per cent of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions, it’s no longer viable to ignore a whole-of-landscape approach.”

CPA recognises the critical importance of carbon emissions measures, but also suggests a new approach to land management that encourages farmers to earn carbon credits on their land, sequester carbon from the atmosphere and create more habitat for Australia’s native plants and animals, while increasing resilience and productivity.

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The CPA's key principles are:

- The continuation and enhancement of the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) – around which the Emissions Reduction Fund was built – to maximise biodiversity, and food and fibre production benefits alongside the scheme's carbon sequestration objectives.
- The development of new mechanisms and incentives for carbon abatement on land projects that brings together institutional, private and public capital.
- The need for new and improved national environmental datasets and mapping to guide best practice and whole-of-landscape policy making that integrates forestry, farming and conservation outcomes.
- Improving the Australian landscape by balancing native biodiverse plantings with agricultural production and forestry.
- Primary industries working towards carbon neutrality by 2030.

“The current Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) conditions limit the land sector's capacity to generate co-benefits associated with carbon sequestration, such as reinstating wildlife habitat, supporting sustainable agriculture, increasing the plantation forestry estate, and cleaner waters in our rivers,” said Ross Hampton, CEO, Australian Forest Products Association.

“Removing these barriers in the ERF will not only boost the agriculture, agroforestry and conservation sectors' role in meeting our Paris agreement targets, but also realise these significant co-benefits, including regional economic and social benefits for landholders and surrounding communities through increased productivity and job creation,” he said.

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Quotes attributable to Anna Campbell, CEO, Red Meat Advisory Council

“The Australian red meat and livestock industry has set an ambition of being carbon neutral by 2030. Our industry produces greenhouse emissions, but it also stores carbon in the soil and vegetation on farms covering a vast area of the Australian continent.”

“By working to reduce emissions and increase carbon sequestration, there is a huge opportunity to dramatically change the perceptions of the climatic impact of cattle and sheep in Australia. Increasing soil carbon stocks on farms has the potential to sequester a significant portion of Australia’s annual GHG emissions and increase farm land condition. That is truly great news for the environment and for farmers.”

“We can’t achieve this outcome by working in isolation though. That’s why cross-sector alliance and collaboration, through initiatives such as CPA, is so important and exciting.”

Quotes attributable to Verity Morgan Schmidt, CEO, Farmers for Climate Action

“Australian farmers are on the front line of climate change, but with the right policy settings and support structure, agriculture and the land use sectors will form a critical component of our climate solutions.”

“It’s time for all industries and Government to step forward to address the challenges of climate change, and embrace big picture solutions and collaborative approaches. The launch of the CPA demonstrates the power and opportunities presented by cross-sectoral approaches.”

*Climate Proofing Australia is an initiative of AFPA, Greening Australia, The Red Meat Advisory Council and Farmers for Climate Action.

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