

Seizing the Opportunity: AGRICULTURE

“The Nationals WA delivered a record funding commitment in agriculture over the last four years, now we’re continuing our investment to build on one of WA’s most important industries.”



Our Commitments

Expanding Water for Food	\$87 million
Increasing Grower Group Grants	\$35 million
Local Government Commodity and Lime Routes	\$63 million
Developing an Animal Research Institute	\$40 million
Crop Innovation and Improvement Initiative	\$50 million
Allowing Muresk to promote their courses	\$2 million
Examining the BAM Act to ensure NRM in all areas of WA functions appropriately.	
Exempting insurance duty payable on multi-peril crop insurance premiums for 3 years.	
TOTAL	\$277 million

Background

The Nationals WA recognise that agriculture is a vital part of the State’s economy. WA is well placed to meet the increased demand for food and fibre from the world’s growing population, particularly in China and India.

The Nationals WA in Government have allocated over \$600 million to agriculture projects – a record investment that shows our commitment to this sector.

We are supporting grower groups to increase productivity as well as develop supply chains and export markets. We are upgrading vital infrastructure, including commodity roads and Doppler radars and improving biosecurity. We have invested into developing WA’s irrigated agriculture sector – an industry with huge potential to grow.

Muresk Institute has received \$20 million to develop new courses and upgrade facilities. We are also working hard to promote WA’s agricultural produce both at home and overseas, launching the WA Worth Sharing brand.

Water for Food

The aim of the Water for Food program is to significantly increase the irrigated agriculture footprint and productivity of the sector across Western Australia. There are currently 12 projects underway across the State from the Kimberley to the South West.

The National are committing to expand the project, already achieving promising results, with an additional \$87 million to support further work:

- » \$37 million to address rising salinity levels at Wellington Dam and expand agricultural irrigation in the South-West.
- » \$20 million competitive grants program to drive investment in innovative water use for irrigated agriculture.
- » \$19 million to further develop an irrigation scheme around Manjimup and Pemberton.
- » \$11.5 million to undertake further groundwater investigations

The Nationals have committed to expand the \$40 million Water for Food program, increasing funding by \$87 million for infrastructure, innovation grants and groundwater investigations.

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Grower Group Grants

In 2015, *Royalties for Regions* began providing grants of \$50,000-\$500,000 to grower groups to undertake research and development into innovative solutions to promoting Western Australian agriculture.

These grants are focussed on innovation along supply and value chains, so we can grow our share of international markets. The Nationals WA will expand these grants to allow grower groups to continue to undertake research and development by investing \$35 million over four years from *Royalties for Regions*.

Lime Routes and Local Government Commodity Routes

Movement of lime for agricultural purposes from the Mid-West through the Wheatbelt has more than doubled since 2010, putting additional pressure on local road networks which are now becoming strategic commodity routes.

The responsibility for the upkeep of these roads often falls to local government and the additional haulage means maintenance is becoming more expensive. The Nationals want to ensure we have a safe and reliable road network that accommodate the size and number of trucks using these roads.

The Nationals WA have committed \$15 million to the highest priority lime route and \$48 million to key local government commodity routes.

Establishment of an Animal Research Institute for Western Australia

The animal industries in Western Australia are currently experiencing unprecedented interest, investment and growth. Growing consumer expectations coupled with international pressure means the market is changing.

For Western Australia to capitalise on the opportunities we must continue to be flexible and adaptable. We need new information and management options, a coordinated approach across the supply chain, and a critical mass of researchers across our institutions to support the industry and prepare it for the future.

To achieve this The Nationals WA will commit \$40 million of Royalties for Regions funding to the establishment of an Animal Research Institute for Western Australia.

Crop Innovation and Improvement Initiative

New technologies being developed by government and private researchers could result in an increase in WA's cropping productivity. A great difficulty is faced in getting existing technologies to commercial scale. The Nationals want to assist Western Australian farmers to have world first access to new drought-tolerant crops.

The roadblock to these new technologies is the immense cost of bringing new products to market. The Nationals want to invest \$50 million to target the critical 'post proof of concept' stage of the R&D pipeline to assist in progressing the most prominent research projects towards commercialisation.

The Nationals WA will deliver a \$50 million Crop Innovation and Improvement Initiative, available to partner with public and private research organisations and assist WA farmers to get world first access to drought tolerant crops.

Muresk

Total enrolments at Muresk have increased from 44 students in 2013 to 1025 in 2015. In 2016, there were 54 students enrolled in first and second year of the Bachelor of Agribusiness Management. While these numbers are increasing, the Bachelor degree is still in its infancy and requires more assistance. Presently, students leaving school do not see Muresk advertised in the Tertiary Institution Services Centre (TISC) handbook – often the first exposure they have to university courses on offer.

The Nationals WA commit \$2 million over four years to ensure a comprehensive communications and marketing strategy is implemented to attract students from across the State to study agriculture.

Review of BAM Act

The Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAM Act) is the principal legislation for the management of pests within Western Australia.

Where the Act might operate well in some areas of the State, the 'one size fits all' approach means others are not being delivered the full benefits of pest management schemes.

The Nationals WA propose the pest management sections of the BAM Act be reviewed, including the following as points of reference:

- » Determine the effectiveness of Regional Biosecurity Groups;
- » Ensure all parties are shouldering the responsibility for pest management; and
- » Review the funding model to provide more certainty.

This review will ensure the BAM Act appropriately services all areas of the State and ensures pest management is properly undertaken.

The Nationals commit to ensuring the BAM Act appropriately services all areas of the State.

Multi-peril Crop Insurance

Cereal crops in Western Australia make a huge contribution to the State's economy, with an export value of more than \$3 billion per year. The Nationals in Government have supported a number of investments and projects to assist farm businesses manage risk as part of the Seizing the Opportunity in Agriculture suite of initiatives. Multi-peril crop insurance (MPCI) is one tool that businesses can utilise to manage risk and offers protection against drought, excessive rainfall, frost, wind and pests, however, there is still a very low take up of MPCI.

Insurance duty (or stamp duty), calculated at ten per cent of a policy's premium, on MPCI has been cited by WAFarmers as one of the biggest barriers to farmers taking advantage of their availability.

The Nationals WA propose, in order to increase the uptake of MPCI, that multi-peril crop insurance products be exempt of insurance duty for a period of three years. This trial will allow time for farmers to understand products, and whether it is appropriate for their circumstances.

The Nationals WA welcome your feedback on this policy:

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