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President Inspects North Coast Flood Damage

The NSW Farmers Association President, Jock Laurie has visited some of the areas worst hit by the recent North Coast floods, including the Kalang and Nambucca Rivers, to see first-hand the damage caused to Oyster farms in these regions.

Parts of the North Coast of NSW have received well over one metre of rain, setting many rivers in this region on a course of destruction that has damaged costly infrastructure and caused huge stock losses.

The Association's Oyster Committee has been working closely with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Minister for Primary Industries to highlight the industry's plight on the North Coast. The Association has provided briefing notes to the DPI seeking assistance for Oyster growers in flood affected areas.

Following the third flood to hit the region this year, Government has decided to provide grants of up to \$15,000 for producers in Natural Disaster declared areas. Please see the assistance guide in this newsletter for more information on these grants.

As the flood waters are receding after yet another flood on the North Coast this year, the Oyster Committee would again like to stress the importance of registering any damage that has occurred with the NSW DPI. To enable the Association to effectively represent Members on this (and any natural disaster related issue) it is essential that Government is provided with a clear picture of the damage that has occurred. This can only happen if farmers report this damage directly. To report damage to the NSW DPI call- 1800 814 647.



'Michael and Jodi Wright from the Kalang River, pointing to where the flood waters came up to during the peak of the floods'

Shellfish Program Funding

As Members would be aware, the funding arrangements for the NSW Shellfish Program has been one of the major wins the Oyster Committee over the past decade and as an issue has represented a large portion of the Committee's focus.

The cost-sharing arrangement for the NSW Shellfish Program between the NSW Food Authority and industry was last adopted in 2006 following a Government funding review of the NSW Shellfish Program. For the period from July 2006 until June 2009, a 46%/54% government/industry cost-sharing arrangement operated. As per the 2006 funding review, the cost-sharing arrangement is recalculated every three years. The process is informed by the past three years' closure data.

The Oyster Committee can now confirm that the NSW Food Authority has undertaken a recalculation for the next three years and a 47%/53% government/industry cost-sharing arrangement will be adopted by the NSW Food Authority for the period from July 2009 until June 2012.

This represents a slightly increased contribution by Government and provides industry with secure funding for this critical program.

Oyster Committee Meeting

The Oyster Committee held its first face to face meeting for the year on 6 April 2009. Major issues discussed at the meeting included:

- **North Coast Floods**

The Committee discussed the implications for industry of the recent flood events on the North Coast of the State.

This has been a major issue of focus for the Oyster Committee in 2009 with a lot of work being done behind the scenes in an attempt to improve access to existing assistance schemes and provide the case to Government that some form of assistance is also required.

The Committee heard that the Bellinger, Kalang and Nambucca rivers were the areas worst hit by flooding. These areas were affected by two separate flooding events. However, widespread damage has also been seen in many other areas,

with the Hastings reporting average stock losses of around 50%.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie visited oyster farmers in flood affected areas during May.

The Committee holds concerns about the impact of these flood events on the availability of wild caught oyster spat for the coming year as much of the State's spat is produced in flood affected estuaries.

The Oyster Committee reminds affected Members that they can apply for fee waivers through the NSW DPI; these waivers are based on financial hardship and require assessment on an individual basis. For more information, call DPI on (02) 4982 1232.

Note- the NSW DPI has an MOU with the NSW Food Authority whereby farmers approved for fees waivers with one department will automatically be given exemption from both departmental fees.

- **Caring for our Country**

The Oyster Committee has been working in conjunction with the NSW Food Authority, NSW DPI, Catchment Management Authorities, and Oceanwatch Australia in putting together a project proposal aimed at securing funding from the Federal Government's Caring for Our Country program.

After much deliberation regarding the programs targeted outcome criteria, the group has decided that the scope of this year's Caring for Our Country program is not broad enough to allow for their targeted aims to be incorporated. Therefore the group has decided to write to DAFF seeking an expansion in the target criteria, prior to the commencement of the next round of funding applications.

The Oyster Committee believes that the Oyster industry is well positioned to lead the type of environmentally focused initiatives that DAFF is seeking for the Caring for Our Country program and we hope to be in a position to apply for funding under this program in the years to come.

More information on the guidelines surrounding the Caring for Our Country program can be found at www.nrm.gov.au

- **Shellfish Data Sharing**

The Oyster Committee was approached by the

NSW Food Authority to provide feedback on a request by DECC to utilise the oyster industry shellfish program data on Phytoplankton.

The DECC proposal was for the data to be provided at no cost. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of this proposal before deciding to agree in principal that the data should be provided.

While the Committee acknowledged that the industry has paid a large proportion of the data collection costs, the Committee concluded that the potential benefits of the project to industry and additional value that would be added to the data sets outweighed any potential negatives associated with the data use.

- **Kalang River**

The Kalang River continues to remain closed for harvest due to a norovirus outbreak that first occurred in mid 2008. Anthony Zammit from the NSW Food Authority attended the meeting to provide the Committee with an update on the situation as it stands.

Anthony explained that the Food Authority has been through a process of highlighting potential contamination points and conducting detailed assessments of each to help determine the source of the contamination. To date no one pollution source has been determined and the search continues.

Anthony explained that the next step in the process will be a full scale audit of septic systems across the Bellinger Shire. The Oyster Committee would like to stress to Members in this area that it is essential that oyster farmers are shown to lead the way in terms of sewage system management. If the results of this audit process come back with a list of fails for oyster farmers septic systems it will be very hard for industry to continue to apply pressure on councils on this issue.

The Kalang River is only the latest example in a long line of continued diffuse source water pollution events which have continued to effect oyster production in NSW. This is an issue of great concern for the Oyster Committee and one that has been a major focus of the Committee's time.

The Association is still awaiting DECC's release of the Diffuse Source Water Pollution Strategy, a document that aims to address the causes of these

pollution events and bring together a more coordinated response process to deal with them where they arise. The Oyster Committee is concerned that the document is still to be released, over twelve months after the Association commented on the 'final draft'. This has been raised on number occasions with DECC.

In response to the Kalang River event the Association has written to the Minister for Local Government calling for an audit of all septic management programs of coastal councils in NSW. As yet the Committee has not received a response.

- **Oysters in the House Review**

The Oyster Committee discussed the 2008 Oysters in the House (OITH) event which was held on November 13, 2008. Kirsty John, the event manager for Oysters in the House attended the meeting and the Committee discussed plans for the 2009 event.

In general, all feedback on OITH 2008 was extremely positive and the Committee was keen to commence plans for an event along similar lines for 2009.

The Committee decided that the event would be held sometime in November 2009 with an added focus being placed on the restaurant sector.

The Oyster Committee is keen to hear from any Members that are undertaking oyster promotional events in their local areas. Please provide details of such events to Richard Widows via email- widowsr@nswfarmers.org.au

The Oyster Committee are aware that there are a wide range of events held up and down the coast and the Oyster Committee is keen to promote these events wherever they are held. See the Slow Food Shoalhaven article later in this newsletter as an example of a recent oyster promotional event.

- **Field Days/AGM**

The Oyster Committee will again be hosting two oyster industry field days in 2009. The theme for this year's field days will be 'the Future focus of Oyster Farming' and will look to include technical information on the latest research and production techniques. The Oyster Committee will be working closely with the NSW DPI and the Oyster CRC in

organising these events.

At this stage the Committee is looking to hold two field days, one in Batemans Bay and the other in Forster, with the Forster event to include the NSW Farmers Association Oyster AGM.

The dates for the field days are yet to be finalised but at this stage we are looking to hold both field days within the same week, sometime towards the end of August- beginning of September 2009.

As with previous years, there will be opportunities for oyster related businesses to be involved with the field days. Any Member or business that is interested in being directly involved with the 2009 Oyster Industry Field Days is encouraged to contact Richard Widows on

Phone: (02) 8251 1808.

Email: widowr@nswfarmers.org.au

Summary of Landbased Lease issue

As you would be aware, the last couple of years have seen the Oyster Committee engage in an extended period of discussion with the NSW Department of Lands about the development of a fair and equitable method for the determination of land based oyster lease charges.

The major problem that the Committee faced in this process was the lack of consistency that had been used in the past and the corresponding differences in rental charges between the various regions on the NSW coast. The Department of Lands wanted to apply a uniform method for rental determination across the entire NSW coast, with the result being an unavoidable situation whereby some regions will inevitably see significant increases in land based rents.

After extended industry consultation and many significant changes to the Department of Lands method, the Oyster Committee has finally reached an agreed outcome with Lands on this issue. The process that Lands used to come up with the rental formula can be explained as follows:

In consultation with industry representatives a typical oyster farming site was defined as land with road and water access.

The Department provided this description and

outlined the limitations on use of oyster sites to professional valuers who reported valuations and rental returns for sites at Wallis Lake and Batemans Bay.

The rental value of these sites was considered to be fifty percent of the value of industrial land. A rate of return on ground rental was set at the low end of industrial land, at 6%.

Sites without road access (island sites) were reduced in value by a further 50%.

The reports indicate that as the area of the site increases the rate for the extra land decreases. These valuations were used as a basis for negotiations between Crown Lands and the oyster industry.

Based on this process the following agreed outcome was reached. This represents the culmination of discussions between the Oyster Committee and the Department of Lands:

1. The rent for all Oyster Leases will be \$3.50 per square metre, where there is road access to the site. These sites are considered 'typical sites'.
2. The rent will be further reduced by 50 percent (\$1.75 per square metre) where no road access is available.
3. Where a site, or the use of a site, varies significantly from a typical site the Department of Lands will negotiate an appropriate rent.
4. Rents will be redetermined on a commercial basis every 5 years
5. Rent increase from current rents will be phased in over 3 years, at a rate of one third of the increase rent per year. All users of Crown land for oyster farming will be charged the full rent by 1 July 2011.
6. Tenure of leases will be for a term of 25 years with an option to renew at any time. The Department will contact the lessee within five years and not less than two years of the pending expiry of a lease and commence negotiation of a new lease.
7. CPI will be applied to rents annually.
8. Where rents increase by more than 200%

on the current rent, the Department of Lands agrees to work with the affected farmers and where necessary the NSW Farmers' Association Oyster Committee to determine a fair outcome for sites with unique circumstances.

9. The Department of Lands has agreed to establish a mediation process, involving Departmental and oyster industry representatives to resolve any issues that cannot be resolved between the oyster farmer and the Departmental officers

National Aquaculture Council (NAC) Report

Australasian Aquaculture 2010

The 2010 Australasian Aquaculture Conference and Trade Show will be held on 23 – 26 May in Hobart, Tasmania.

Given the strength of the Tasmanian Oyster Industry, growers can expect a very strong focus on oysters at the conference. This is definitely something to mark on the Calendar for next year, and there will very likely be many other opportunities for growers in conjunction with the event.

National Modernisation of Awards

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission under direction from the Minister for Industrial Relations, Julia Gillard, is in the process of Nationalising a number of Awards across all industries in Australia.

There has been a push by the Australian Workers Union for an Australian Award for Fishing and Aquaculture, which has been flatly rejected by the NAC.

NAC and a number of member bodies pushed for what would effectively be exemptions from this process, arguing that many of the industries within the industry are too different to put under a single award and given the complex nature of the industry, it would restrict flexibility needed for effective workplace operations.

The problem for the SA Oyster industry is that the NSW and TAS Oyster industries are already covered by State Awards, leaving SA as the odd one out.

A decision on this has been put back by the AIRC, as originally aquaculture was in the 2nd round, but has been deferred by the AIRC to the 4th.

AQIS Fees Rising

The NAC is currently lobbying the Government over the proposed 40% rise in AQIS Export Fees. The recommendation was made in the Beale review into Australian Biosecurity citing that full cost recovery drove greater efficiency and accountability. The previous Government introduced the 40% subsidy for export certification in 2001 and it was due to expire in June 2009.

Slow Food Shoalhaven

The Shoalhaven Slow Food Association held a "Taste Education Workshop" showcasing local oysters with matching local wines from Cupitt's Winery in Milton on Valentine's Day 2009.

The event was held between 4 – 7pm in Shoalhaven Oyster Service's shed on the shores of the Crookhaven River allowing people to have a view of oyster leases, infrastructure, DP tank, equipment and new poly technology.

The workshop was well attended with guests including the Mayor of Shoalhaven City Council. No extra advertising was needed to fill the 50 places as all tickets were snapped up quickly.

Features of the event included:

- A presentation on how single seed oysters are grown and the sampling and quality assurance obligations of oyster producers by Lyn Desoto.
- A demonstration on shucking oysters with the river liquor retained for the true oyster eating experience by Rob Desoto.
- A presentation on the environmentally friendly and sustainable recycled poly infrastructure that is being used by 95% of oyster farmers in SRO Inc by Barry Allen.
- Feedback from participants was all positive. They said they had learnt an enormous amount, had a new appreciation of oysters and their environment.

Reporting Oyster Diseases

The Oyster committee reminds Members of the importance of reporting signs of Oyster Disease to the NSW DPI. If a pest or disease population is discovered early and reported to DPI, there is a greater chance it can be brought under control.

Unusual disease signs, or unexplained deaths in Oysters, should always be reported to NSW DPI.

To report suspected diseases or pests in NSW, contact:

Manager

Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management

Port Stephens Fisheries Centre

Ph: 02 4982 1232

More information on this subject can be found on the DPI website-

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/pests-diseases

Regional Food Producers Innovation and Productivity Program

Round 2 - Now Open

This is the second round of this new program that will help food producers become more productive and profitable through innovation in processing and value-adding, with a regional focus. Total funding available is \$35 million, of which \$10 million is allocated to the seafood industry. The program will award grants of between \$50,000 and \$2 million for projects up to three years. This is a matched-funding program requiring the grant recipient to provide 50% of the total project cost.

The program will fund project activities aiming to deliver one of the following outcomes:

- Design of new technologies to proof of concept through to implementation and commercialisation to meet a market need
- Adoption of technologies, with regional spill-over benefits
- The innovative re-design of existing production/processing lines to create efficiencies and boost productivity.

Expressions of interest are now invited.

If you are interested this funding opportunity you need to register your details and proposed project with DAFF by 5:00 PM on Monday 22 June 2009. Once your eligibility has been checked the department will send you an expression of interest form to complete and return by 5:00 PM on Monday 6 July 2009.

For more information see the DAFF web site - www.daff.gov.au/foodinnovation

Climate Ready Funding Program

Round 4 - Open till 25 June 2009

The \$75 million *Climate Ready* program is open for applications. *Climate Ready* supports small and medium-sized businesses. It provides grants from \$50,000 to \$5 million on a matched funding basis to support projects that address the effects of climate change. A broad range of project applications are expected. For example:

- water recycling, waste recovery or small scale renewable energy technologies
- technologies that reduce the energy used by appliances or increase the efficiency of industrial processes
- products, processes or services to monitor emissions or power usage
- using biotechnology or nanotechnology to address the effects of climate change on humans and the environment
- information systems for businesses or consumers to compare the carbon footprints of different activities.

Potential applicants may complete a *Climate Ready* customer enquiry form to assist them to determine suitability. This form, plus all the details of this new funding program, are located on the AusIndustry website - www.ausindustry.gov.au.

Re-tooling for Climate Change Program

Round 3 - Open till 1 June 2009

The *Re-tooling for Climate Change* program (\$75m over 4 years) will help small and medium sized Australian manufacturers reduce their environmental footprint, through projects that improve the energy and/or water efficiency of their production processes. The program provides grants of between \$10,000 and \$500,000, up to a maximum of one third of the cost of each project.

Applicants must submit their application on the AusIndustry form, a sample of which is provided at www.ausindustry.gov.au. To access the Word fillable application form, please contact the AusIndustry Hotline on 13 28 46. Applications must be completed in the correct format. A guide to completing the application form is provided at the back of the form.

North Coast Floods

March/April 2009 May 2009

Following the recent storms and heavy rain across North Coast regions of NSW, flooding has caused significant damage and losses to individual farming enterprises.

The NSW Farmers' Association is aware of damage and losses to fences, livestock, farm infrastructure and roads. The Association has been working closely with the NSW Department of Primary Industries since the onset of the floods.

On 22nd May 2009 the Premier, Nathan Rees, declared a natural disaster following major wind damage and extensive flooding on the State's North Coast. The State Government extended the declaration of a natural disaster on 23rd May and again on 28 May 2009.

The natural disaster declaration now covers the following Local Government Areas:

- Tweed
- Byron
- Ballina
- Lismore
- Kyogle
- Richmond Valley
- Clarence Valley
- Kempsey
- Coffs Harbour
- Bellingen
- Nambucca
- Port Macquarie-Hastings
- Tenterfield
- Glenn Innes

Following the declarations a range of assistance measures have become available. Standard Natural Disaster measures of low interest loans, transport subsidies and hardship assistance are now available. Furthermore, the Federal Government announced on 25 May that additional flood assistance measures of recovery payments

for individuals and recovery grants for primary producers and small businesses. Information on these measures is available on the Assistance Guide – North Coast Floods fact sheet- included as a lift out in this newsletter.

The State Government has set up four Disaster Recovery Centres to provide centralised points of contact for communities, drawing together a range of government agencies and welfare services to provide residents with support and assistance. The centres operate from:

- FAR NORTH COAST - 40 Carrington St, Lismore. Phone: 6621 2223
- CLARENCE VALLEY - 77 Victoria St, Grafton. Phone 6642 1333
- MACLEAY VALLEY - 42 Smith St, Kempsey. Phone: 6562 1736
- COFFS COAST - 25 Gordon St, Coffs Harbour. Phone 6648 4111 (the existing centre opened after the April floods).

More information on the current north coast floods situations including importance contacts is available from the NSW Emergency website.

<http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/content.php/781.html>

Important contact numbers:

- **State Emergency Service - 132 500** for emergency help in floods or storms
- **Public Information Inquiry Line - 1800 227 228** to provide information regarding displaced families, road closures, welfare assistance and all other general enquiries.
- **RTA Road closures - 132 701**

Farmers affected by the floods but located outside the current Natural Disaster Declared areas are urged to contact the Department of Primary Industries Flood Hotline phone 1800 814 647 to report the damages and losses. This information will be used to ensure that appropriate assistance is provided and determine the need for a Primary Producer disaster declaration.

Classifieds

- **FOR SALE**

We have 08-09 single seed for sale at different sizes. All have started through tumblers since August and September 2008. If you are interested now, or later in 2009, please call to find out more.

Bruce & Wendy Fairhall

Po Box.293, Port Macquarie.2444.

Work 0417 841049.

AH.65841049.

Fax.65846049.

E/Mail.advancedoysters@bigpond.com.au

- **FOR SALE**

Oysters leases for sale in Wallis Lake as whole business or individual leases. 13 Leases in total, 12 of which are stocked with 3 crops of 2 to 3 thousand 40 Ltr bags per crop. Large leased land base, all necessary equipment. Farm can be tailored to size as package to suit interested parties. Contact ph 0421 498 188

- **FOR SALE**

Single Seed. 2008 caught, top of the line. Negotiable on quantity.

East Coast Oysters 0418656072

- **FOR SALE**

3 leases for sale Clyde River in direct harvest zone call Kevin 0405 232 262

- **GROW-OUT INFRASTRUCTURE FLOOD LOSS?**

WE HAVE A QUANTITY OF OLD STOCK OF AQUATRAYS, LIDS AND AQUAPURSES (VARIOUS MESH SIZES) FOR SALE AT GREATLY DISCOUNTED PRICES.

For further details please contact

TOOLTECH PTY LTD

TEL- (07) 3271 1755 FAX- (07) 3271 1755

Reg Breakwell: Marketing/Export Manager

Mobile- 0408 740 883

Email- rbreakwell@tooltechservices.com.au

- **FOR SALE**

Single Seed Oysters for sale

Hastings River - Caught 2008

All sizes, good count

Contact Tony Deland 02 6582 3771

- **WANTED**

6 METRE ALUMINIUM PUNT MOTOR AND TRAILER NOT NECESSARY BUT WILL CONSIDER ALL OPTIONS.

WILLING TO PAY CASH.

PLEASE PHONE RAY ON 0414884274 OR

EMAIL oysterman1@optusnet.com.au

WITH DETAILS OR PICTURES.

- **WANTED**

Feedback on grading sizes and names to

Email: widowr@nswfarmers.org.au

Mail: R Widows NSW Farmers Assoc

GPO Box 1068 Sydney 2001

