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Coal dust won't feed voters in NSW!

Farmers are warning voters in NSW that food production in this State will be compromised if the Labor Government continues to put mining and coal seam gas first, following the release of its 10-point coal and gas plan announced by Premier Kristina Keneally today.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong said this 10-point plan is a plan for the mining and gas industry and shows little regard for protecting the critical agricultural land and water resources that are essential for feeding families across the State.

"Today's announcement by the Premier does very little to set a statewide strategic plan for achieving balance between our major land uses – from agriculture to mining to housing," Mr Armstrong said.

The 10 Point Coal and Gas Plan outlines a series of measures to facilitate a successful coal and gas industry, without any plan in place to facilitate a successful future for food production.

Whilst commitments to initiatives such as exclusion zones, a Coal and Gas Ombudsman, audits of gas wells and drill sites, and siting gas pipelines on public lands are welcomed by the Association, it must be recognised that these are more than a decade too late and will not be enough to give farmers confidence about their ability to continue to produce food into the future.

"In unveiling this 10-point plan today, the Labor Government has failed to engage the food sector - which is in stark contrast to the process undertaken by the Coalition over several months.

Mr Armstrong said Labor had numerous opportunities to get this plan right, having had the same chance to consult with landholders – with NSW Farmers' Association, which is a member of its own NSW Coal and Gas Strategy Reference Group.

"Food production is not a choice - it is essential, and Labor has today ignored the needs of agriculture and ultimately consumers in NSW," Mr Armstrong concluded.

NOTE: Charles Armstrong will be available for interviews in Sydney this afternoon.

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11 days to go until State Election 2011