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Delungra disappointed with EC rejection

The NSW Farmers' Association is extremely disappointed with the decision not to grant an Exceptional Circumstances declaration in the Delungra area.

The Federal Government has accepted the National Rural Advisory Council's advice to oppose the application.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says farmers in the area did fear this outcome.

"The Association questioned the Federal Government's intentions late last month, when prima facie EC was granted *after* an NRAC area inspection," Mr Armstrong said.

"With the inspection process complete the Association questioned what further information would be needed to grant the area full EC support," Mr Armstrong said.

"Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig said there was a lack of evidence to support the claim that a rare and severe downturn in farm income had occurred over a prolonged period," Mr Armstrong said.

"I question what further evidence NRAC needed from farmers who had been receiving EC for three years to June 2009, and were yet to recover from the financial impact of the drought," Mr Armstrong said.

"Furthermore, were farmers given a chance to provide the additional information?" Mr Armstrong said.

The uncertainty highlights the need for a transparent assessment process to outline what constitutes a rare and severe downturn in farm income, to understand how farmers can qualify for EC," Mr Armstrong said.

Delungra farmers are reminded they are still eligible for interim income support until the 28 April 2010.

For more information farmers should contact the Centrelink Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16.

Contact: Olivia Suzanski (Media Officer) 0429 990 218

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