

Thursday 20 May 2010

PR/089/10

Farmers on drought knife edge

The Association is dismayed that the Federal Government has not extended the Hume Exceptional Circumstance (EC) area following a review of its decision in February.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says today's drought figures show an increase on last month's figures and recovery for many farmers is far from over.

"Almost half the State is still classified as marginal and has many farmers extremely worried as they head into winter," Mr Armstrong said.

"What our Members can't understand is that areas to the north, south, east and west of the Hume EC area were all extended but Hume was not.

"If you take a drive down the Hume Highway it looks exactly the same on the east and the western sides," Mr Armstrong said.

"If the Federal Government is following the previous convention with Exceptional Circumstances, support should be provided for a timeframe to allow farmers to recover from the event. At this stage the southern half of the State, despite some early rain is still on a knife edge for this coming season," Mr Armstrong said.

The Association is also disappointed that the Federal Government has not granted EC status to the Dunedoo area.

Information from NSW Industry and Investment shows that a significant part of the application area experienced extremely low (0-5%) relative rainfall during the December 2008 to November 2009.

"It is disappointing that the Government appears to be taking time to allow an area to receive rainfall and remove the reason for an EC declaration," Mr Armstrong said.

The Association is also concerned that farmers in the Bundarra and Eurobodalla areas are still waiting for the Federal Government to make a decision.

"The Bundarra area resubmitted a revised application a month ago and the farmers in the area have still not received a response from the Federal Government.

"This follows their original application in December 2009 which showed that for the period between December 2008 and November 2009 the area suffered a severe deficiency in rainfall," Mr Armstrong said.

The Association calls on the Federal Government to consider the whole Bundarra application, including buffer areas and to make a decision.

Recent State drought figures show a slight increase in drought affected area in NSW with 9.4% of the State in drought, including the Bundarra area.

Contact: Amanda Barwick (Media Manager) 0428 400 736

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