

Media Release



20 March 2020

“Calm your farm people” says the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) leadership and representatives in horticulture, livestock, dairy, grains, chicken, egg and pork industries want to reassure Victorians that we will not run out of food.

VFF President David Jochinke urged Victorians not to panic about running out of food.

“We understand that there is panic and fear. Victorian farmers are well placed to meet the demand. We feed you and we will continue to feed you,” Mr Jochinke said.

“It’s timely that we reflect on the remarkable scale of food that we produce right here.”

“We produce more than we consume. We are a nett exporter. At the moment, we are experiencing an unrealistic urge in demand. That means, if Victorians continue to purchase in bulk, it might take a few days to get things from paddock to plate.”

Victoria accounts for:

- 23 per cent of Australia’s total gross value of agriculture;
- 42 per cent of Australia’s sheep and lamb meat;
- 62 per cent of Australia’s milk and
- 32 per cent of Australia’s horticultural products.

Mr Jochinke said Victoria has a strong competitive advantage across multiple agricultural industries including a global reputation as a source of clean, safe food and fibre and diversity of food we produce.

“Undoubtedly, there will be some challenges going forward,” Mr Jochinke said.

“We are keeping a close watch on workforce, labour and supply chain issues as well as the reactions from our trading partners. The VFF continues to work closely with the federal and state governments to map these issues, plan for them and address them,” Mr Jochinke said.

Mr Jochinke said COVID-19 may affect the movements of seasonal, casual and permanent workers and that may have an impact on the ability of farms to secure much-needed workers.

“Similarly, there may be attendant supply chain issues associated with transportation including road, air and freight,” Mr Jochinke said.

“In terms of our trading partners, we are seeing product being redirected away from China to other markets including Japan, USA and South East Asia.”

“Agriculture has proven time and time again to be able to withstand many of the economic shocks that often decimate other industries and we anticipate this pandemic will be no different,” Mr Jochinke said.

This was highlighted just this week with the release of Rabobank’s quarter one Rural Confidence Survey which found that 41 per cent of Victoria’s farmers expecting conditions to improve in 2020.

The Survey found that confidence surrounding strong incomes this year is feeding into investment planning for the year ahead, with more than a quarter of farmers (27 per cent) looking to increase their business investment.

“We applaud the stimulus packages, the work of the banks and corporate Australia. We are in this together and we are working in close partnership with Government.”

“We know these are unprecedented times. As always, we have got your back,” Mr Jochinke said.

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