

Media Release



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Councils sent warning on farm rate hikes

Farmers in Western Victoria are warning their local councils to avoid inequitable rate rises as they finalise rating strategies and draft budgets for the year ahead.

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) President Emma Germano said soaring land prices in the western parts of Victoria continued to be top of mind for farmers who are fearful of more unfair rate increases.

“Booming land sales continue to threaten farmers with yet another year of unfair rate increases expected in 2022/23. Instead of blaming rate increases simply on land value increases, local councils need to use the tools at their disposal to ensure the rate burden is not shifted further onto the farming sector.”

“The VFF will be vocal in calling out councils who do this, whilst acknowledging and publicly commending councils that strike balance in their rating strategies,” Ms Germano said.

In response to farmer concerns, VFF Wimmera Branch has taken action with Minyip grain grower and Branch President Ryan Milgate writing to the Horsham, Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh and Northern Grampians councils on behalf of farmers in the district.

“We have formed a working group of local members who are committed to leading the charge at a local level, and we have written to the councils setting out our expectations for fair rate increases this year. Once the councils release their budgets, we’ll be actively encouraging all farmers to have their say.”

“It’s really important that we make the effort and be vocal in opposing unfair rate increases. The VFF stands ready to support farmers in preparing submissions and questions to their council when the time comes later this April and May,” Mr Milgate said.

Ms Germano said that unlike other ratepayers, farmers are not being protected by the Victorian Government’s rate capping policy due to the way it is calculated.

“Victoria’s rate cap is not working and is leading to worse outcomes for farmers. The VFF has repeatedly said the cap is flawed, given it is determined by dividing rate revenue by the total number of rateable properties. That means councils can ratchet up farm rates beyond the cap, while keeping the overall “average” increase for all ratepayers at or below the cap each year.”

“Irrespective of the cap however, councils have it in their power to set fair rates for farmers by using differential rates and the farming communities’ expectations on this is clear,” Ms Germano added.

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