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## COPENHAGEN '09

**AUSTRALIA'S agriculture delegation at the climate change talks in Copenhagen, led by NFF President David Crombie, reports on developments...**

**Day One:** Australian negotiators spoke for the Umbrella Group (including Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States), supporting a limit of 2 degrees Celsius on global temperature rise and a 50% reduction in global emissions by 2050.

All Umbrella Group members are prepared to propose individual reduction targets to substantially reduce emissions by 2020, with actions being subject to robust monitoring, reporting and verification.

Australia also supports quick, substantial and high-impact financing to assist the most vulnerable developing countries, particularly Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. There is also an emerging consensus that the Copenhagen accord should mobilise US\$10 billion-a-year by 2012 to support adaptation and mitigation in developing countries.

Australia asserted the aim in Copenhagen was a political vision to guide global actions and lead to a new single legally-binding treaty – the Copenhagen accord – as soon as possible – that is, instead of the Convention track (developing and developed countries) and Kyoto Protocol track.

**Day Two:** Prior to Copenhagen, New Zealand instigated a Global Alliance on agricultural research and development (R&D) to ensure that global climate change mitigation and adaptation research is coordinated.

This Global Alliance has been strongly supported by 20 countries, including Australia, who are looking to commit to a statement of intent. Funding commitments are not required at this stage. This is expected to change as the Global Alliance gains momentum. The Global Alliance will be officially launched by the US Under-Secretary for Agriculture Thomas Vilsack on 16 December in Copenhagen.

Of note, Australia's CPRS Bill provides for an additional \$50 million in R&D, explicitly listing the Global Alliance as a benefactor. The recent rejection of the CPRS Bill in the Senate means Australia is not in a position to commit finances to the Global Alliance (at this time).

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) of which the NFF is major member, made a minute statement and, at IFAP's request, NFF delegates assisted in preparing the statement. The key points were:

- A program of work to take account of the specific complexities faced by the sector in relation to GHG mitigation.
- The statement expressed the need for greater R&D, a revised measurement, reporting and verification methodology for the sector, productivity growth in the face of global food security and reward for carbon sequestration.
- The need for global technology transfer between farmers to contribute to carbon mitigation and adaptation.

**Australian Delegation Briefing:** Almost 100 people crowded into the small briefing room to hear an update on negotiations. In addition to these daily briefings, Australian delegates are attending daily IFAP briefings and informal discussions with the Australian negotiators, the Danish Agriculture and Food Council and discussions with the US Farm Bureau.

**IFAP Briefing:** Various farm delegations provided insights into the negotiations. Of interest, the US farm delegation said that the Kerry Boxer ETS legislation will go through significant amendments before a vote in the US Senate and that the reworked Bill will have additional concessions for the farm sector.

They stated concerns that natural gas (instead of nuclear) is being touted as the optimal low carbon energy solution. This will increase the price of farm inputs such as fertilisers. US farmers interest in Copenhagen appears to be defensive – keeping across key international policy issues. They have demonstrated very little engagement in the issues surrounding the international carbon accounting rules and see it as an insignificant part of the negotiations for the US.

**Day Three:** Developing countries are resolute that developed nations should be held accountable for climate change. They will not support changes to the rules that allow developed nations to benefit from this agreement.

This is detrimental to Australia's position on 'natural disturbances'. Developing nations are disinclined to allow anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic GHG to be treated separately under Article 3.4. Without being able to exclude changes due to natural disturbance (such as bushfire) it would be very difficult for Australia to voluntarily include soil carbon in national accounts.

We are currently in discussions to understand the position Australian negotiators are taking on forest management.

This relates to accounting carbon sequestered in managing forest, particularly commercial forests. There is potential for this activity to have impacts on Australian grazed woodlands. We need to ensure that producers can be credited with carbon sequestered in regrowth and other trees on-farm.

It is rumoured that there is a non-paper (a paper that has not been accepted as draft text) regarding agriculture.

The early version of the non-paper said that efforts to enhance mitigation in the agricultural sector should improve efficiency and productivity in a sustainable manner and take into account the link between agricultural productivity and food security. It also supports promoting R&D including transfer of technologies and knowledge.

It supports a cooperative sector approach for agriculture that does not distort or create barriers to trade. However, we are concerned about the 4<sup>th</sup> provision of the earlier version of the non-paper that enhanced mitigation for agriculture shall not lead to carbon offsets that adversely impact forest land.

On a lighter note, it has been announced that the next COP, COP 16, will be held in Mexico and then followed by COP 17 in South Africa. COP 18 is to be held in Asia.  
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