



from the

# PRESIDENT'S DESK

FOREIGN investment into Australia's farmland and agricultural businesses has recently gained a great deal of media attention.

Much of the community and political debate has centred around criticism of foreign companies "buying up the farm" and threats to Australia's food security leading to the destruction of rural communities, the end of the family farm and threatening Australia's food security.

It is hard to see why the risks associated with foreign investment are higher in agriculture than in other sectors of the economy.

According to ABARE, since 1984 the amount of agricultural land owned by non-Australians has increased by 5.4 %. This is less than 0.19 per cent per year, which equates to 19 hectares for every 10,000 hectares – mostly made up of Northern Territory cattle stations.

Mining, oil and gas, airlines, ports, supermarkets, department stores, car manufactures, food companies – all have significant amounts of foreign investment. All survive because of foreign investment.

There is no reason to believe foreign investment is somehow less beneficial if it occurs in agriculture. In fact if we look at the past, if it wasn't for foreigners, there would be no agriculture in Australia.

Concerns about food security present tremendous opportunities to attract foreign capital, maintain access to markets and improve productivity.

All of these will be critical if Australia is to reap the benefits of predicted increases in demand for food over the coming decades.

The question that we should be asking is not just who should be allowed to invest in the agricultural sector but how we can work with foreign investors and participants to secure our long-term national security and prosperity?

But in the end, the issue over foreigners buying up Australian farmland is handled very simply on an individual basis.

If you don't want to have foreigners buying your land, then don't sell it to them.

*Rob Gillam*



THE PGA REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF FARMERS AND PASTORALISTS FROM ALL AGRICULTURAL AREAS OF WA, FROM ESPERANCE TO THE KIMBERLEY. PGA MEMBERS ARE MAJOR PRODUCERS OF AGRICULTURAL EXPORT COMMODITIES – INCLUDING GRAIN, BEEF, SHEEP AND WOOL – AND BELIEVE IN FREE TRADE, OPEN MARKETS, PROPERTY RIGHTS AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.



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