



Senator Malcolm Roberts
One Nation Senator for Queensland

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MEDIA RELEASE

COVID-19 Stimulus Package must include water for farmers

The Federal Government's COVID-19 stimulus packages must address how Australia can be more self-reliant in food production, and calls for a guarantee of water for farmers to plant essential crops this month.

Senator Roberts said, "COVID-19 has changed our world forever as nations like Vietnam ban exporting their home-grown rice to us, and now more than ever, we need government to prioritise food production in Australia because our basic food security is threatened."

"Nations are now prudently keeping their own food for themselves while stupid government policies mean we are dependent on the importation of food staples that we can grow here in Australia."

While recent rains across the Murray Darling Basin have been welcomed, farmers need the certainty of a water allocation during the season to have the confidence to plant crops.

"When harvested, not only would this winter crop create a regional monetary stimulus but would also protect us from new food shortages caused by countries' COVID-19 export restrictions," stated Senator Roberts.

Absurdly, Australia already relies on importing cereals like wheat and rice and now COVID-19 trade restrictions means even durum wheat used for pasta has become impossible to source.

"It is in Australia's national interest to prioritise water to farmers to improve our farming productive capacity, that has been damaged by successive Liberal and Labor governments who have given our competitive advantage away to overseas," added Senator Roberts.

Queensland, New South Wales and Victorian farmers have received zero general security water allocations for irrigation in the last 3 years. The Murray Darling Basin Authority has chosen instead to water forests unnecessarily and send irrigation water out to sea in South Australia.

"I call on our Governments to guarantee the release of 1000gl of water for irrigation, to give our farmers confidence to plant a full winter cereal crop."

"The COVID-19 crisis has given yet another reason to reset the Murray Darling Basin plan, with a focus on sensible environmental practices and on growing and protecting the productive capacity of regional Australia," declared Senator Roberts.

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