

BUDGET FOCUS ON FOOD SECURITY A MUST

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The Federal Government must use the May Budget to provide Australian grain growers the support they need to continue production in the interest of national food security, according to GrainGrowers.

The conflict in the Middle East is causing havoc for growers as they navigate sky-rocketing input costs and uncertainty of supply of fuel and fertiliser while preparing to plant.

These crops are essential for domestic and international food production and feeding the nation's livestock, while others are exported and used to manufacture renewable fuels overseas.

As a result, GrainGrowers CEO Shona Gawel said the industry body had revised its list of budget priorities to address the immediate challenges facing growers, as well as future measures to improve national food security by increasing sovereign domestic manufacturing capability of fuel and fertiliser.

"Investing now in sovereign capability is an investment in resilience, protecting our economy and our ability to respond when global systems falter," Ms Gawel said.

"The current crisis has again demonstrated Australia's over-reliance on imported fuel and fertiliser. We cannot afford to be in this position again the next time we are faced with global supply chain interruptions.

"We're calling on the government to assess immediate pathways to increase the domestic manufacturing of ethanol, support a low carbon liquid fuels industry and provide additional support to expedite the Perdaman Urea Project to shore up our domestic capabilities."

"This crisis is also causing tremendous emotional and financial stress across regional Australia, and we'd like to see government commit funding to a national, agricultural-industry led approach to support farmer mental health."

GrainGrowers' revised budget asks are:

- \$50 million over four years for a national, agricultural-industry led approach to support farmer mental health.
- Assess immediate pathways to leverage domestic ethanol production to contribute to short-term fuel supply resilience and reduce import exposure.

- Expedite completion and start-up of the Perdaman Urea project, and support other projects that build Australia's domestic production of critical agricultural inputs.
- Improve gas supply for east coast urea manufacture.
- Support the use of Australian agricultural feedstocks in low carbon liquid fuels and to underpin grower participation.

Ms Gawel said the grains sector was one of the largest contributors to the nation's food security and the time to secure it for future generations was now.

"As this crisis continues to play out, we must be learning the lessons and making decisions to futureproof our supply chains," Ms Gawel said.

"We need to build targeted, strategic domestic manufacturing capability to reduce vulnerability and manage risk where supply disruptions would have the greatest impact.

"If grain production volumes reduce, the impacts flow right through the supply chain from the small businesses providing freight or repair services through to restaurants and cafes and ultimately Australian households."

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