

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Food security or drink more coffee?

With calls from rural coalition MPs for a policy to deal with the challenges threatening food production in Australia, the Opposition leader Tony Abbott has told Rural Press that committing to such a policy would just be a "gimmick".

"It's very important to have a comprehensive agricultural policy and a component of that may include food security" Mr Abbott said "I don't want to commit to a food security policy as such although obviously I would want our policies to give food security."

This year, Australian Government spending on built infrastructure was \$22 Billion with \$500 million in natural infrastructure through the Government's Caring For Our Country grants.

"That's less than \$2 per hectare across the Australian continent." Greening Australia's Director of Science Dr David Freudenberger said "Australians spend more on coffee than on nature conservation and land repair."

"There is no doubt that ensuring food security for a growing population requires sustainable agricultural land which is in need of large scale restoration projects to reduce soil erosion and salinity" he said.

Greening Australia's Whole of Paddock Rehabilitation (WOPR) program offers farmers a native vegetation approach to combating land degradation by restoring paddock health and providing multiple production benefits including drought fodder and better livestock health.

"The use of WOPR in sustainable farming costs one-third less than the traditional wildlife corridor model of revegetation but to continue this large scale repair work and research will require incentives for farmers in the form of fixed-term stewardship payments and native revegetation services" Dr Freudenberger said

"A WOPR pilot project by Greening Australia in the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Catchments to date has averaged site sizes of 24 hectares – a significant scaling up of previous corridor activity - and assisted land managers to better address climate change, biodiversity losses, paddock tree decline, salinity, soil erosion and declining productivity in the paddock and on the whole farm."

"Greening Australia has a growing list of farmers waiting for further WOPR incentives funds to be made available"

Greening Australia is Australia's largest not-for-profit environmental NGO working on projects to increase sustainable agriculture, restore native vegetation, create vegetation and wildlife corridors, improve river health and maintain biodiverse carbon forest sinks.

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