

MEDIA RELEASE

Cotton export ban proposal a case of misinformed debate

09/04/2019

The Centre Alliance plan to ban Australian cotton exports does not give any more water to the environment or fish but would kill an industry and cost jobs, according to the NSW Irrigators' Council.

In a submission lodged this week to the Senate References Committee looking into the proposal, NSWIC said the idea showed a lack of understanding of how water allocations and the water markets work.

Chief Executive Officer, Luke Simpkins, said water licences are not crop specific and if cotton was not an option, farmers would grow another crop with their same allocated water.

"This would have **no impact on the amount of water in the system,**" he said.

"Farmers are already the last in line to be able to access water after critical human needs, base flows and environmental needs are met."

"The idea that banning cotton, a single crop already at the bottom of the pecking order, would have any impact on water availability for higher priorities, shows a lack of understanding."

Mr Simpkins explained cotton is an annual crop so farmers can choose to grow cotton in a wet year, and not grow cotton in a dry year – meaning farmers can match water demand with water availability. Other summer crops, like corn and soybeans, use similar amounts of water per hectare.

"For example, this year is so dry we have had less than one percent of average inflows, there has been very little irrigated cotton planted in the northern valleys and those who have planted are using either groundwater or water stored from previous seasons."

"Rural communities are doing it exceedingly tough at the moment, and do not need the added stress of unwarranted blame or job insecurity. In a good year, the cotton industry employs 10,000 people, and has numerous multiplier effects through communities, schools, sporting organisations and local businesses."

"We are facing major water challenges, there is no doubt about that. But that is exactly why we need all people to better understand where their food and fibre comes from, and for all Australians to work together to get the best possible outcomes across the system."

"We can't fall into the trap of letting misinformation and misunderstanding lead to misinformed policy," Mr Simpkins said.

For further information:

Luke Simpkins – CEO NSW Irrigators' Council

0410 976 919

Approved JC/TN