

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA, ACT 2600  
TEL. 72 1211

16 November 1982

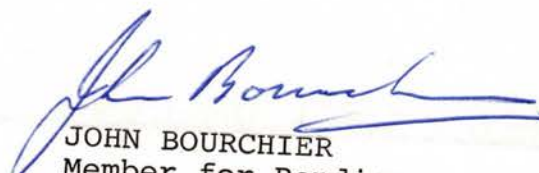
Mr K. Fitzgibbon  
Secretary  
Commercial Egg Producers" Assn  
of Victoria  
Central Council  
STRATHFIELDSAYE. VIC. 3551

Dear Mr Fitzgibbon,

I refer to your letter of 10 November in which you express concern on several matters relating to the importing of wheat and the suggestion that corn could possibly be imported from America.

Please be assured that I will forward a copy of your letter to the Minister for Primary Industry and shall endeavour to have a response from him for your meeting on 3 December.

Yours sincerely,

  
JOHN BOURCHIER  
Member for Bendigo

ACTING MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRY

Parliament House,  
Canberra, A.C.T., 2600

Telephone (062) 731711

27 NOV 1982

Dear Mr Bouchier,

Thank you for your letter of 16 November 1982 seeking my assistance in respect of a number of questions put by the Commercial Egg Producers' Association of Victoria, concerning the supply of grains to the local poultry and pig industry and the export of meatmeal.

Estimates of the current grain situation suggest that supplies for stockfeeding purposes are adequate on a national basis. Western Australia should harvest a record cereal crop and the Australian Wheat Board has shipped 26,000 tonnes of wheat from Western Australia to Victoria, for use by the intensive livestock industry.

In addition, both Western Australia and South Australia should shortly have supplies of feed barley available for shipment to Victoria and other Eastern States affected by the drought. Given good early summer rainfall to make up for the moisture deficiencies resulting from the drought, sorghum plantings in Queensland and New South Wales are expected to be a record; harvesting commences in March.

Legislation empowering the Wheat Board to import wheat is currently before Parliament. However, the Board has as yet not put forward a definite proposal to import wheat, and has in fact stated that the recent demand for feed wheat has been much lower than expected.

Any proposal to import grain, including maize, for stockfeed purposes must meet the following basic quarantine requirements:

- grain for stockfeed may only be imported from countries free of foot and mouth disease (eg. Canada, USA and New Zealand);
- the grain may not be fed directly to stock and must be processed in the urban area of the port of entry at registered premises to devitalize all seeds including any weed seed;

- the grain must be free of disease, insects, soil and prohibited weed seeds; ships carrying the grain must also be free of these contaminants prior to loading; and
- precautions must be employed to avoid spillage during unloading, transport and storage (in registered premises) prior to processing.

Because of the risk of introducing diseases, pests or weeds with imported grain, despite the strict quarantine restrictions, plant quarantine authorities are reluctant to issue permits unless a particular need exists for that grain.

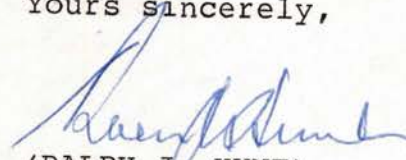
The current maize crop in USA is estimated to be a record with stocks at record levels. Despite this, there have been no applications for quarantine permits to import substantial quantities of maize into Australia and the Commonwealth Government would not consider directly importing maize, this being a commercial matter.

There have been requests for the import of sorghum, which could be used as a substitute for maize, but the quarantine authorities have indicated that a case for particular need has not yet been made.

Although production of meatmeal has fallen by 10% over the last 3 years and exports have risen from 14% to 25% of production, the stocks held at the end of June have remained steady in percentage terms at 5-6% of annual production. Earlier this year, when the Government removed meatmeal from the Third Schedule of the Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations, the Minister stated that he could see no reason why the industry could not ensure adequate supplies of meatmeal for the domestic market without Government intervention.

If, however, the Association considers that export controls should be re-introduced, then I would propose that they make separate representations to me substantiating their case.

Yours sincerely,

  
(RALPH J. HUNT)

Mr J.W. Bourchier, CBE, MP  
Member for Bendigo,  
PO Box 473,  
BENDIGO VIC 3550