



WAFarmers is the largest and most representative rural lobby group in Western Australia.

With more than 4,000 members, WAFarmers represents the collective opinion of Western Australia's primary producers to help ensure a viable long term local future for agriculture.

Media Release

Friday February 18, 2011

FOOD SECURITY NEEDS BEE SECURITY

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) is urging all Australian Beekeepers to attend a protest at Parliament House in Canberra on Wednesday March 2, 2011 in response to the Federal Government's decision to name the Asian bee (Apis Cerana, Java Strain) prevalence as endemic; a decision that would result in funding to its eradication program ceasing. The campaign also seeks a commitment of \$10million by the Federal Government to eradicate Asian bees in Australia, and calls for greater research funding into bees and food security.

In early February, the Asian bee, which is not an effective honey producer, was declared endemic by the Federal Government appointed Asian Bee National Management Group (AB NMG) without wider industry consultation. Funding to the eradication program is planned to cease effective March 31, 2011.

WAFarmers Beekeepers Section President, David Leyland, said that beekeepers believe that the decision to stop the eradication program was premature.

"Beekeepers did not cause the problem and they have punched well above their weight in trying to control the incursion, but a decision to terminate the eradication program should not be driven by the financial plight of beekeepers," said Mr Leyland.

Mr Leyland added that a declaration that the Asian bee prevalence is endemic will destroy Australia's live bee export market, currently worth \$5 to 7 million per annum and growing.

"The spread of the Asian bee will have a major adverse effect on paid pollination services and have a drastic impact on honey production."

The impact of the Asian bee will not only affect food security, but will also have far-reaching environmental effects.

"Additional effects include a population reduction of native birds, insects and animals, a higher likelihood of stings from the Asian bee, and an estimated related national health cost of \$16 to 18 million annually," he added.

"Although it may take a financial commitment to control the Asian bee, it will save millions of dollars from being spent at a later date to control the problem," Mr Leyland concluded.

More information on the campaign can be found at www.securefoodssavebees.com.

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