EMPOWERING AUSTRALIANS to value-add the AUSTRALIAN FOOD INDUSTRY

"TUCKETT SOLUTION" to a sustainable Murray-Darling Basin

(Part 2 of 2 – 1st part tabled 17th November 2010)

A CONCEPT TO FURTHER THE KNOWLEDGE & SKILL BASE OF AUSTRALIANS

VISION: That farmers within the Murray Darling Basin and elsewhere in Australia progressively change to being integrated processer and packaged food producers/suppliers to the worldwide market, and that associated with this transition will be a gradual reduction in demand for the volume of irrigation water as wealth generation to the farmer is progressively contributed by the farmer/community's post-harvest activities, and that a voluntary annual reduction in water allocation be fully compensated by Gov't.

I confirm my initial projection that the solution to the Murray Darling debate is dependant primarily on cleverness and timing of future food business capability and ownership by farmers and entrepreneurs.

It may well be that water availability could be reduced by 1.5% or less per year long term such that greater security of water supply can then be given to communities, farmers and environment. Strategic change is necessary to enable the longer-term empowerment of Australians in commercialised food expertise.

SUCCESS will depend on the provision of PUBLIC SECTOR "PILOT FOOD" PROCESSING FACILITIES:
Tuckett proposes that Australia through the provision of specialised public sector, food process facilities; support further tertiary education and technology training programs. That these programs offer food engineering/science/technology and associated graduates and technicians the opportunity to develop extensive applied process systems and business knowledge in the conversion of each and every farm/harvest food commodity into high quality, competitive consumer food products.

- The desire is to generate an on-going pool of food professionals with specialised food product conversion knowledge, operational capability and business application competence who are then available to contribute to specific sectors of the food industry. *Let's look outside the square!*
- To supply available experts to Small/Medium sized food businesses where start-ups, facility expansion, re-developments and process performance & outcomes are severely restricted due to minimal availability of specialised food industry expertise in Aust. *Big business will also benefit.*

I consider that the development of such specialised food engineering & food business knowledge and skills can be best achieved in association with current University graduate, post-graduate & associated Technology Institute programs through the provision of public sector, specialised food conversion facilities located throughout Australia to be provided as a learning, training & experience development tool (*must be public sector open to all with research outcomes published and accessible at no cost to Australians).*

- The concept is based on the provision of a limited number of specialised food handling, storage, processing & packaging facilities within the public sector that are to be utilised in the development of food business knowledge and skills. In my opinion, the commercial use of such facilities is not desirable (conflicts with training concept). *Facility to always be learning/training/experience centres*

- Typically a facility could be a grains or horticulture focus whereby full scale handling, storage, drying, process & packaging facilities maybe installed & used by students, researchers, teachers.

- Typically such a facility maybe suited to the processing and/or dehydration of onions, garlic, tomatoes, fruits and vegetables. Alternatively a composite legume facility whereby 30/40% of initial-activities and 20/30% of end-activities are likely to be common to all legumes (specialised mid-process conversion facilities). *The concept is to provide public access educational facilities!!!*

- The science of food commodity storage, processing, dehydration and packaging is highly academic in Australia through University and CSIRO research/capability - *but business extension is ineffective!*

- Strategically the application knowledge and skills base needs to be communicated and applied in total through/onto a core group of non-aligned food professionals that compete to service industry.

- Given the common nature of activities in the handling, storage, pre-process and pre-packing, and packaging of various grains, fruit and vegetables products, such facilities could be cleverly set-up, assembled and operated such that a number of different specialised production lines could function at different scheduled periods to suit education and training programs. *All guided by Universities!!!*

The concept is to provide a small number of public sector facilities and resources within Australia located at strategic locations in association with well provided analytical laboratories. This would provide specific facilities to complement the tertiary, technology, training and education sector resources and programs.

- Such facilities would be better suited to the further development of graduates and post-graduates at all levels, with a more complete knowledge and understanding of specific sectors within the food conversion industry. *These professionals can effectively contribute to food businesses at all levels!*
- Other developed countries have applied this type of approach for years and continue to invest substantially in commercial sized facilities at University campuses. This occurs typically in the USA at Uni Florida (Tampa – citrus); Uni Kansas (flour milling, feed milling); UC Davis (Wine, Olive Oil, Vegetables); Texas A&M (Extruded foods); others in US States. Also Japan & China (Wuhan Technology Uni – rice & cereals).
- Well skilled professionals with an intense & total knowledge and understanding of specific food businesses would undoubtedly contribute more effectively to the establishment, growth, efficiency, viability and confidence within the food industry. *SME's would become more widespread & viable.*
- This in turn will potentially provide greater food industry efficiencies, cost effectiveness, competitiveness, and market outcomes benefiting all Australia.
- Greater diversity and growth in speciality food manufacture within Australia is a likely outcome and potentially cause positive changes within the food industry generally.

In summary, Australian Universities within Australia already offer speciality post-graduate courses in food engineering, science and technology. Through the provision of public sector commercial sized, production facilities strategically placed around Australia, speciality courses could enable Australia to match the level of knowledge and skill transfer now being achieved and subsequently applied in the USA/Japan/China and other countries. Australia needs totally prepared **FOOD BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS** flowing from our Univ.

You can test to the above proposition by selecting anyone grain/fruit/vegetable that is currently produced (farm-gate) to highest world standards in Australia. Then assess who/where would you source in Australia, a person with the specific knowledge capable of undertaking and/or over-seeing all stages of the food business assessment, development, production, performance audit, marketing and management to international best practise. *We don't have professionals to create viable & sustainable SME food business.*

In my opinion, by not preparing capable food professionals for the conversion sector of the Australian food industry (exception being big business & some others) we are inhibiting the broader growth and success of the overall food sector within Australia and specifically the more extensive use of the Murray Valley Basin. **Value growth NOT volume growth is the correct strategy for the more productive use of available water.**

GEOFF TUCKETT 14th December 2010