

# editorial

Dear Readers,

*Free Trade - ecological warning lights are flashing!*

The recently concluded US Australia Free Trade Agreement poses some important environmental questions. The conventional economist's view is that the FTA will bring a benefit to Australian farmers based on modelling, which suggests that increased competition lifts productivity. However one might question reliance upon modelling studies, when there has been real life experiment in trade liberalisation going on for 20-30 years in most western countries. A recent report by the Canadian National Farmers Union titled the 'Myth of Competition and Efficiency' (available at [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca)), provides real data to show the result of global competition amongst farmers in the past has been growing more but earning less. In fact Canadian farmers have elevated their productivity impressively over recent decades but net farm income has stagnated. The CNFU argues that the explanation for this curious result is that most farm inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, machinery, fuels and vehicles) and most farm produce distributors are not subject to the same brutal competition. The small band of multinational corporations who deal with the millions of farmers worldwide have taken massive profits over this period of increasing productivity. Farmers see only two futures – get big or get out. Thus they strive for increased production, inevitably using new chemicals and new technology – and even more natural resources such as water, forests and soil. Recent new water diversion projects like the Nathan Dam in Queensland and the Meander Dam in Tasmania are symptoms of the increasing pressure that globalisation exerts upon the environment.

## *Changes to State Editors*

In this issue, our team of State Editors has undergone several changes. The Commonwealth/National Editor, John Ashe and our Queensland Editor, Leanne Bowie, are both moving on, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their valuable service to the journal. The Commonwealth/National contributions will now be provided by Elizabeth Marsden whilst Queensland developments will now be contributed by Chris McGrath. I am also very pleased to advise that Tom Baxter will take up the role of Tasmanian editor, which has been vacant for some months.

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National Editor

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