

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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POLICY

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Australian Federal Election 2013 - Outcome and Appointments

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

On September 19th 2013 Tony Abbott was sworn in as the 28th Australian Prime Minister. The Deputy Nationals Leader Barnaby Joyce was appointed as Minister for Agriculture and Senator Richard Colbeck was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture.

On September 7, 2013 the Liberal-National Coalition, led by Tony Abbott, won the Australian Federal election with 90 of 150 House of Representatives seats. On September 19th Tony Abbott was sworn in as Prime Minister. The Deputy Nationals Leader Barnaby Joyce was appointed as Minister for Agriculture and Senator Richard Colbeck was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture.

Joyce is the member for New England in northern New South Wales but was previously a Senator for Queensland from 2005 until resigning the position to run for a House of Representatives seat prior to the 2013 election. In opposition Joyce held the shadow portfolio for Regional Development, Local Government and Water and briefly the shadow Finance portfolio

Joyce has close ties to Australian agriculture having been raised on a family farm in the same electorate for which he is now Member. Prior to entering politics he ran an accountancy practice whose clients were predominantly agriculture enterprises. During his term as Senator Joyce was a strong advocate for rural and regional affairs, for Queensland in particular but also nationally. He has consistently been a strong supporter of the live cattle trade and nominated restoring confidence in the trade as a key issue of his election campaign. The Minister is expected to visit Indonesia in the coming weeks as part of this commitment. He has also flagged completing outstanding free-trade agreements with South Korea as a priority to support ongoing growth in beef exports.

Previously Joyce had expressed concern about foreign investment in Australian agriculture however since the election has said he would not advocate blocking investment such as the takeover of Graincorp by U.S. company, ADM.

Joyce has a reputation as an independent thinker and as a Senator crossed the floor 28 times in line with his own political beliefs. As Minister Joyce can be expected to be visible and available to all members of the agricultural industry. This was demonstrated by his keeping his commitment to speak at the State Conference of Queensland's peak agriculture lobby group only the day after his formal appointment as Minister.

Senator Colbeck has been a Liberal Senator for Tasmania since 2001 and previously held the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under the Howard Government from 2004 to 2006. More recently he has held the positions of Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry and Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

On September 19th, the Prime Minister also announced that Dr Paul Grimes would be appointed Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, replacing Andrew Metcalfe, AO who had been in the position since January 2013. Dr Grimes was formerly Secretary of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. Dr Grimes holds PhD and Masters degrees in economics and has extensive experience in Treasury and Finance departments at the State level. Minister Joyce stated that he had not been consulted on the removal of Mr Metcalfe and the appointment of Dr Grimes. The Coalition has committed to reducing the size of the Australian public service but Minister Joyce has not yet commented on what impact this may have on DAFF staff.