



Alpine Valleys

agribusiness forum

Australian Alpine Valleys - Where the Best Grows to Perfection

media release

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2011 Agribusiness Summit Beechworth

Population Change and Regional Communities

The Federal Government's 2010 Intergenerational Report has identified that Australia's population is expected to expand to 35.9 million by 2050, up from 22 million, with regional Australia expected to provide for the additional people commensurate to the growth expected.

The 2011 Agribusiness Forum to be held in Beechworth will explore the potential growth and what it means for regional economies, how best to manage the growth in the context of infrastructure, land use, planning, economic growth and an aging population, ensuring the amenity value of the region is locked up and that the growth is sustainable social, environmental and economic model.

With some parts of regional Australia already feeling the burden of a fast growing population, the Summit aims to provide participants with a snapshot of how lifestyle, climate, natural amenity and relative closeness to education, health and affordable housing will be affected by a faster rate of population change. Our natural amenity landscape attracts thousands of visitors to the region each year. This will have considerable pressures placed on it.

The regions ageing population, particularly in the farming sector, could mean an increased fragmentation of our fertile and productive agricultural land is sold by existing farming families. How will this reflect on the availability of food on a national and global level with the world population expected to peak at 9 billion by 2050?

The provision of services to regional centres, particularly in the areas of health, aged care and transport will be critical key requirements of managing the projected growth in populations throughout regional Victoria. How will Australia, the driest continent in the world, manage with limited water availability and the foot print of an increased urban sprawl?

Of the positives, higher land values could enable farmers to sell out and cash in their super. Higher commodity prices may flow through to the agricultural sector due to increased market demand driven by reduced agricultural land and food production. Wealthier global consumers increased demand for higher value food stuffs could enable farmers to divert their land use into providing environmental benefits for the broader community ie protecting rare and endangered biological communities. This concept will become clearer as some form of carbon trading system is introduced and land managers are in a good position to sequest carbon.