***Media release – Wednesday, 22 November 2017***

**Red meat industry can be carbon neutral by 2030**

Australia’s red meat industry can be carbon neutral by 2030, Managing Director of Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) Richard Norton told the company’s annual general meeting in Alice Springs today.

Mr Norton said achieving the goal would put Australia head and shoulders above its competitors, giving consumers even more confidence in the quality and integrity of Australian red meat and turning environmental criticism of the industry on its head.

He said Australian red meat’s reputation was second to none amongst global consumers, but the industry must keep focus on changing consumer demands and act on emerging threats and market disruptors to prosper into the future.

“With industry commitment, the right policy settings and new investment in research, development and adoption, the Australian red meat industry can be carbon neutral by 2030,” Mr Norton said.

“And we can be the first red meat exporting nation to do so.”

To this end, Mr Norton reported that MLA had initiated a project with CSIRO\* to identify pathways for the red meat industry, farm and processing sector included, to become carbon neutral.

The project has identified a series of innovation and farm management options including the expanded use of legumes and dung beetles in pastures, savannah fire management in northern Australia, feed supplements, feedlotting and vegetation management. Genetic selection and a potential vaccine to reduce methane production in the rumen were other opportunities, he said.

“These pathways don’t require the heavy hand of regulation,” Mr Norton said.

“What they do require is the commitment of industry, the right policy settings from federal and state governments, and a continued investment in research, development and adoption of innovation within industry.”

Mr Norton said the dividends from setting a carbon neutral goal would include:

* increased productivity in the red meat industry,
* additional farm income from carbon mitigation projects,
* a major contribution to government targets on emissions reduction, and
* another strong assurance for consumers of the quality and integrity of our naturally produced, great tasting Australian red meat.

Mr Norton reported that MLA was gathering more consumer insights from export markets than ever before, which was directly informing where and how MLA invested the industry’s marketing levy.

“There are clear market signals in our high value international markets that emissions from livestock production are an issue for consumers who are also increasingly interested in the provenance of their food,” Mr Norton said.

“At the same time, global companies and billionaire entrepreneurs are investing big dollars in projects to manufacture cultured and synthetic beef to try and lay claim to having zero environmental and welfare impact.”

“There are other signals as well. Both sides of federal parliament have committed to further reduce national carbon emissions by 2030 and most state governments have set carbon neutral targets.”

Mr Norton said the Australian red meat industry had already done much of the heavy lifting in the reduction of Australia’s total emissions to date and had an opportunity to create an even better story about its product in the years ahead.

“The red meat industry has already reduced its share of Australia’s total emissions from 20 percent of Australia’s 600 million tonnes total emissions in 2005 to just 13% in 2015, while also helping to reduce Australia’s overall emissions to 525 million tonnes over the same period,” Mr Norton said.

“Further demonstration of our industry’s willingness to engage is the beef industry’s commitment to reducing emissions by nominating ‘managing climate risk and ‘the balance of tree and grass cover’ as two of the six key priority areas within its Sustainability Framework.

“MLA now believes our industry can achieve a carbon neutral goal, while driving productivity gains and further differentiating Australian red meat from low cost competitors and artificial alternatives.

“This will ensure Australian red meat remains the natural choice in the high value international markets that reward quality, product integrity and ethically and environmentally sustainable production systems.”

**\* About the project: ‘A Carbon Neutral Red Meat Industry’**

An MLA commissioned project conducted by CSIRO into how the red meat industry (defined as the farm and processor sectors) could become carbon neutral by 2030. Becoming carbon neutral means the industry captures or removes carbon from the atmosphere, at the farm and processing levels, as recorded annually by the Australian Government. The process for the project has been:

1. Collaboration with the Australian Department of the Environment and Energy to establish the 2005 industry baseline in alignment with federal government emission baselines.
2. Establish contributions from the beef, sheep grazing, feedlot and processing sectors to overall industry greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).
3. Assume national herd numbers of 28 million cattle and 70 million sheep (10 year averages).
4. Explore options for reducing GHG emissions from animals, processing and carbon capture from trees and soil and then quantify their impacts (applicability, practicality and cost effectiveness).
5. Identify pathways based on various combinations of these practices to gain carbon neutrality by 2030.
6. Determine what research, development and adoption is needed for the industry to achieve this target, along with associated financial returns in productivity gains and potential carbon credits.
7. The final report will be published in December 2017.

**To view Richard Norton’s report to the MLA AGM click here:** [**https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/red-meat-industry-can-be-carbon-neutral-by-2030/**](https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/red-meat-industry-can-be-carbon-neutral-by-2030/)

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***About MLA:***

*Meat & Livestock Australia Limited (MLA) delivers marketing and research and development services for Australia's cattle, sheep and goat producers, creating opportunities from their combined investments to build demand and productivity across the supply chain. Most of MLA's funding comes from transaction levies placed on the sale of livestock, with the Australian Government providing matched funding for levy investment in most R&D.*