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National Food Security Strategy Team
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Via online upload

Submission: National Food Security Strategy Discussion Paper

Dear National Food Security Team,

The Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association (ALRTA)—the national peak body for rural and livestock road-freight operators—welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry’s National Food Security Strategy Discussion Paper. Reliable freight underpins safe, affordable food. Our members move food animals and products between producers, saleyards, feedlots, processors, distribution hubs and retailers in every state and territory, and deliver essential inputs to regional communities.

This submission targets three priorities where decisive action will have the greatest impact: resilient supply chains; productivity and innovation; and competition and cost of living, alongside system-wide settings. We urge government to make key routes more reliable, lift cold-chain performance, simplify and align rules (including digital traceability), support a flexible regional workforce, and improve supermarket transparency—so households face fewer shortages, less waste and fairer prices.

Q1. What other principles should government, industry and community prioritise to support the development of the strategy and why are these important?

DAFF’s current principles are appropriate. We propose adding the following five principles:

1. **Measured and transparent:** Publish a small, fixed indicator set with annual regional reporting so transport performance is directly tied to food security outcomes.

Measure:

- Corridor uptime (% days priority food routes are open to heavy vehicles).
- Disruption recovery time (median days to restore pre-event volumes after closures).
- Cold-chain integrity (temperature-excursion rate across legs/nodes on perishable lanes).
- First/last-mile bottlenecks (count of active mass/height/curfew constraints on food freight).
- Retail availability rate (% of items in a standard nutritious basket in stock).
- Food basket price index (regional cost of a nutritious basket) and freight cost share (modelled % transport/handling component).

Use existing sources (National Freight Data Hub, state road access data, retailer stock/price feeds, cold-chain loggers, ABS/NIAA splits) and publish an annual scorecard with a rolling two-year fix list for bottlenecks and cold-chain upgrades. (HLPE 2020; CSIRO 2023)

2. **First Nations partnership and governance:** co-design and shared oversight consistent with the national remote food security strategy. (NIAA, 2025)
3. **“Just-in-case” resilience:** plan for redundancy at chokepoints (critical-input buffering; multi-route/multi-modal options; stress-testing). (Lang et al., 2025)

4. **Open, rules-based trade:** preserve predictable market access for food and critical inputs to stabilise supply and prices. (ABARES, 2025)
5. **National-security alignment:** treat food-system resilience as part of whole-of-nation preparedness (civil contingencies, protected inputs, surge logistics). (Department of Defence, 2024)

Q2. What timeframe should the strategy work towards – short (1 to 2 years), medium (5 to 10 years) or long (10-plus years) term, and why?

Adopt a 10-year horizon aligned to DAFF's buckets — short (1–2 years), medium (5–10 years), long (10+ years) — with annual public reporting and a rolling 3-year independent review (DAFF, 2025). This lets government deliver quick, low risk wins now, plan and fund structural shifts over the medium term, and build enduring preparedness over the long term.

- **Short (1–2 years):** fix delay hotspots (use the National Freight Data Hub evidence base); co-fund backup power/telemetry at regional cold-chain nodes; implement supermarket transparency reforms (unit pricing, mandatory online price publication); publish a core indicator set. (DITRDCA, 2025; ACCC, 2025)
- **Medium (5–10 years):** climate-harden bridges/causeways on food routes; complete end-to-end digital traceability in priority chains; lock in biosecurity funding baselines; deliver place-based workforce solutions in regional hubs. (IPCC, 2019; DAFF, 2023)
- **Long (10+ years):** build multi-route redundancy to major hubs; protect access to critical inputs (e.g., diesel/DEF); exercise surge-logistics arrangements consistent with the National Defence Strategy's supply-chain resilience plank. (Department of Defence, 2024)

Q3. Are there examples of current or planned initiatives by you or your organisation to improve food security in your sector?

1. **Livestock Effluent Code (NHVR-registered)**

ALRTA co-developed the NHVR-registered industry code *Managing Effluent in the Livestock Supply Chain*. It sets practical controls for producers, depots and carriers to cut spills, reduce delays and avoid compliance disputes that can affect animal welfare and perishable freight. (Big Rigs, 2023; NHVR, 2022)

Awareness and uptake: NHVR's "Mind Your Pees & Poos" campaign—delivered with ALRTA—promotes the Code across transporters, saleyards and producer groups. (Australian Truck Radio, 2024)

2. **National effluent and food safety management plan for transport**

ALRTA is developing a national plan that links effluent management with food-safety and biosecurity outcomes, supported by our CRC-P proposal. The work will map current wash-down and disposal facilities, set simple operating protocols and site designs, pilot a small number of sites with clear service levels, and publish a practical approvals guide for states and councils. The aim is fewer spills, faster clean-ups, better amenity and stronger export integrity.

3. **Heavy Vehicle Rest Areas**

We advocate for rest-area upgrades on livestock and food routes. Rest areas cut fatigue, improve safety and lift productivity, and the Commonwealth has committed about \$140 million to 2031–32. To speed delivery and reduce upkeep burdens on

road managers, we support joint-venture models with fuel depots and service-centre operators to build larger “mega” truck stops with expanded rest areas, toilets, showers, lighting, secure parking and basic maintenance services. These facilities directly support reliable and affordable food freight. (DITRDCA 2025)

4. Digitisation for speed and traceability (eNVD)

We support practical digitisation, including the electronic National Vendor Declaration (eNVD) app with offline capture and QR transfer, to reduce errors and re-keying and cut dwell time. Independent evaluation shows mixed uptake among transporters, so targeted education and platform improvements are needed. We also recommend aligning traceability with animal-welfare requirements by capturing time of feed and water, fit-to-load status and animal weights in the NVD, supporting downstream Chain of Responsibility compliance and better outcomes in transit. (Integrity Systems Company 2025; MLA 2024)

5. Safe loading ramps and yards

ALRTA’s *Guide for Safe Design of Livestock Loading Ramps and Forcing Yards* informed national standard AS 5340. The standard improves worker safety, animal welfare and turn times at saleyards and processors, which supports availability and cost. We recommend national adoption by referencing AS 5340 in legislation or model instruments and aligning with uniform hygiene and effluent standards at loading points so requirements are consistent across jurisdictions. (Standards Australia 2020)

6. Truck-wash and cleaning infrastructure (biosecurity)

Gaps in heavy-vehicle washing infrastructure pose a biosecurity risk, highlighted by recent site closures. We are working with partners on practical solutions and seek explicit national support for ALRTA’s plan—in principle and in funding—to map the network, address corridor gaps, pilot priority sites and publish a simple approvals guide for states and councils. This will reduce contamination risks, shorten clean-up times and improve amenity on key food routes. (OwnerDriver 2025; Trailer Magazine 2025; ALRTA CRC-P proposal 2025)

How this improves food security: Together these initiatives reduce disruption risk (fatigue, spills, biosecurity), improve throughput and traceability (eNVD where fit-for-purpose), and lift safety and welfare (ramps standard)—supporting availability, reliability and affordability, especially in regional and remote communities.

Q4. Do the proposed key priority areas and whole-of-system considerations adequately represent the actions needed for an effective food security strategy? If not, what is missing?

The three priority areas and five whole-of-system lenses in DAFF’s discussion paper provide a solid base. (DAFF, 2025) We suggest the following enhancements to make the framework deliver for freight-dependent food security:

- 1. Corridor reliability program with shared data:** Formally name “designated food and commodity corridors,” publish delay/outage metrics, and target upgrades at bridges, flood-prone links, first/last-mile constraints and rest-area gaps, using the National Freight Data Hub and the National Freight & Supply Chain Strategy evidence base. (DITRDCA, 2019; DITRDCA, 2025) (See Annex Action 1 for the implementation approach and governance for designated food corridors.)

2. **Concise national measurement framework:** Report annually on a small set that ties transport performance to food outcomes:
 - **Corridor uptime** (% of days priority routes are open to heavy vehicles): indicates physical access.
 - **Disruption recovery time** (median days to restore pre-event volumes): indicates resilience.
 - **Cold-chain integrity** (temperature-excursion rate across legs/nodes): indicates reliability for perishables.
 - **Retail availability rate** (% of items in a standard nutritious basket in stock): indicates on-shelf availability.
 - **Basket price and freight cost share** (regional nutritious basket price and modelled transport/handling share): indicates affordability and pass-through.

Keep the set small and stable, with an annual public scorecard and a rolling two-year fix list.

3. **Regulatory agility for innovation and traceability:** Complete the FSANZ Act Review to improve the efficiency and agility of standards-setting, and align with end-to-end digital traceability so compliance lifts productivity rather than duplicating audits. (FSANZ, 2025)
4. **Cold-chain performance as a reliability lever:** Co-fund backup power and temperature telemetry at regional nodes; apply recognised Australian Cold Chain Guidelines as the baseline for funded sites. (AFGC, 2017; AFGC, n.d.)
5. **Competition settings tied to price transparency and pass-through:** Implement the ACCC supermarkets inquiry package (mandatory online price publication, stronger unit pricing, shrinkflation disclosure) and monitor how fuel/freight cost changes flow through to shelf prices. (ACCC, 2025)
6. **Biosecurity delivery clarity:** Hook Strategy actions into the National Biosecurity Strategy Implementation Plan (governance, action planning, progress tracking to 2032) and exercise surge-logistics so emergency movement controls don't become avoidable bottlenecks. (DAFF, 2024)
7. **Food-waste reduction with metrics:** Use the National Food Waste Strategy Feasibility Study (hotspots, data, investment roadmap) to prioritise low-cost supply and affordability gains. (FIAL/WRAP/3Keel, 2021)

Q5. What actions could the strategy take to address challenges under each key priority area?

1) Resilient supply chains

- **Harden priority corridors:** fund bridges/causeways, flood bypasses, first/last-mile fixes, rest areas and compliant effluent infrastructure on designated food routes.
- **Protect critical inputs:** set minimum/rapid-replenishment arrangements for essential logistics inputs (e.g., diesel/DEF in emergencies), and publish stock visibility triggers. (Lang et al., 2025; Department of Defence, 2024)

- **Keep perishables moving during shocks:** co-fund cold-chain back-up power and telemetry at regional hubs; pre-agree nationally consistent emergency movement permits and digital documents for outbreaks.
- **Share disruption data:** stand up a practical freight-data sharing protocol to coordinate detours, border controls and priorities during events.

2) Productivity, innovation & growth

- **Regulatory efficiency:** complete FSANZ Act reforms for risk-proportionate, time-bound decisions; recognise interoperable digital traceability/e-docs to cut duplicate audits.
- **Tech adoption in logistics and on-farm:** scale telematics/on-board mass, fatigue-friendly scheduling and smart refrigeration; back farm-level water/energy efficiency and climate adaptation. (IPCC, 2019; CSIRO, 2023)
- **Workforce capacity where it bites:** target regional shortages with training, licensing progression and place-based housing/childcare solutions tied to freight and processing hubs.
- **Stable biosecurity baselines:** lock in funding for surveillance/readiness so movement controls are faster and more predictable.

3) Competition & cost of living

- **Implement the ACCC transparency package:** mandatory online price publication, stronger unit pricing, and shrinkflation disclosure to sharpen competition and enable monitoring of pass-through. (ACCC, 2025)
- **Track pass-through:** publish correlations/lag between fuel/freight cost indices and shelf prices by category.
- **Widen competitive constraint in regions:** enable entry/expansion of independents and alternate distribution where feasible. (OECD, 2021; Clapp, 2021)

Q6. What actions could the strategy take to address challenges under these whole-of-system considerations?

Focus on five transport actions that directly support food security:

1) Corridor resilience (washouts and recovery).

Name priority food corridors, harden flood-prone links and bridges, and close first/last-mile constraints. Publish corridor uptime and days to recover annually and target the worst hotspots. (IPCC 2019; DITRDCA 2025)

2) Effluent and food safety.

Endorse and fund ALRTA's national plan: map wash-down and disposal sites, set simple operating protocols and site designs, and pilot priority locations. Track spill incidents per 1,000 movements, clean-up time, and facility uptime. (NHVR 2022)

3) Digital traceability aligned with animal welfare.

Accelerate eNVD (offline capture, QR transfer) and add time of feed and water, fit-to-load status, and animal weights. Set a target of $\geq 80\%$ eNVD use on priority corridors within 24

months and report dwell time and re-keying errors. (Integrity Systems Company 2025; MLA 2024)

4) Truck-wash and cleaning infrastructure (biosecurity).

Co-fund priority truck-wash and cleaning sites on food corridors. Set service standards (hours, access, payment, queue times) and publish a practical approvals guide for councils and states. (OwnerDriver 2025; Trailer Magazine 2025)

5) Cold-chain continuity.

Co-fund backup power and continuous temperature telemetry at regional cold-chain nodes, using the Australian Cold Chain Guidelines as the baseline. Report temperature-excursion rates and site uptime. (AFGC 2017)

Conclusion

ALRTA would be happy to provide additional background or detail on all initiatives and proposals discussed in this submission as may be required.

Yours Sincerely,



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ANNEX: Priority Actions, Owners, Timeframes & KPIs

Action 1: Designated food corridors (reliability first)

- **Action:** Map and rank “designated food corridors” using National Freight Data Hub datasets; prioritise fixes with the biggest disruption-days avoided (bridges/causeways, flood bypasses, first/last-mile constraints, rest-area gaps).
- **Implementation note: Evidence-first sequencing:** publish the corridor list and quarterly delay/outage metrics via NFDH **before** capex decisions.
- **Owner(s):** DITRDCA with states/territories; LGAs; industry data partners.
- **Timeframe:** 1–3 years (evidence map and quarterly reporting); 3–7 years (upgrades).
- **KPI:** Corridor outage days; median time-to-recover; delay minutes/100 km; projects ranked by disruption-days avoided.

Action 2: Rest areas and livestock effluent infrastructure

- **Action:** Scale Heavy Vehicle Rest Area delivery on livestock/food routes and co-fund compliant effluent disposal points aligned to the NHVR Registered Industry Code of Practice (RICP).
- **Implementation note: Spacing and amenity standard:** set target spacing and require effluent facilities on livestock corridors where risk is highest.
- **Owner(s):** DITRDCA/states/LGAs; site operators; industry.
- **Timeframe:** 1–5 years staged delivery.
- **KPI:** Average rest-area spacing on priority routes; fatigue/incident proxies (delay minutes); number of operational effluent facilities on mapped corridors.

Action 3: Cold-chain resilience at regional hubs

- **Action:** Co-fund backup power and continuous temperature telemetry at regional DCs/saleyards/transfer nodes; require adherence to Australian Cold Chain Guidelines at funded sites.
- **Implementation note: Performance-tied grants:** make funding conditional on reporting temperature-excursion rates and maintaining backup-power uptime targets.
- **Owner(s):** States/territories; CEFC-style co-finance; logistics firms/retailers.
- **Timeframe:** 1–3 years rollout.
- **KPI:** Temperature-excursion rate (% consignments); cold-store uptime (%); food-waste avoided (t).

Action 4: Digital traceability aligned with animal welfare (eNVD)

- **Action:** Accelerate deployment of the electronic National Vendor Declaration (eNVD) with offline capture and QR transfer; add time of feed and water, fit-to-load status, and animal weights to support Chain of Responsibility and welfare compliance.
- **Implementation note:** Set clear adoption and performance targets on priority corridors; provide targeted training and simple integration tools for depots/processors.
- **Owner(s):** DAFF; Integrity Systems Company; NHVR; state departments; industry.
- **Timeframe:** 6–18 months staged rollout.

- **KPI:** eNVD uptake on priority corridors ($\geq 80\%$ within 24 months); average dwell time at receipt; re-keying error rate; welfare compliance incidents linked to documentation.

Action 5: Emergency movement & biosecurity surge logistics

- **Action:** Pre-agree nationally consistent emergency movement permits (incl. livestock) and digital documentation; run annual “surge logistics” exercises (border controls, detours, staff redeployments) with public lessons learned.
- **Implementation note: Exercise–codify loop:** use each annual exercise to refine permit protocols and publish target improvements for the next year.
- **Owner(s):** DAFF/National Biosecurity Committee with states/NHVR.
- **Timeframe:** Protocols in 1–2 years; exercises annually.
- **KPI:** Time to issue permits; essential-freight lanes stood up; exercise KPIs achieved.

Action 6: Competition & price pass-through

- **Action:** Implement ACCC package—mandatory online price publication, stronger unit pricing, shrinkflation disclosure—and monitor pass-through from fuel/freight indices to shelf prices.
- **Implementation note: Dashboard discipline:** publish correlations/lag by category quarterly and flag persistent “rockets and feathers” asymmetry for investigation.
- **Owner(s):** Treasury/ACCC/Parliament; retailers; ABS/BITRE (data).
- **Timeframe:** 6–18 months for reforms; monitoring from 6–12 months.
- **KPI:** Coverage of online publication & unit pricing; shrinkflation disclosure rate; correlation/lag between diesel & freight indices and category shelf prices.

Action 7: Core measurement set (publish annually)

- **Action:** Stand up a concise, public indicator set and dashboard.
- **Implementation note: Single front door:** host indicators on a DAFF page drawing from ABS/ACCC/JSA/BITRE/NFDH, with a 3-year independent review to adjust targets.
- **Owner(s):** DAFF with ABS/ACCC/JSA/BITRE/DITRDCA/NFDH.
- **Timeframe:** 6–12 months to first release; annual thereafter.
- **KPI set:** Corridor uptime; disruption recovery time; cold-chain integrity (temperature-excursion rate); retail availability rate (standard nutritious basket); basket price and freight cost share; eNVD uptake on priority corridors; dwell time at receipt; re-keying error rate.

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