

Response from Aaron Patrick, Senior Correspondent, The Australian Financial Review:

Since my column was published, I've received many messages describing the hardship faced by farmers during the drought, which hasn't ended for many, even though it may have faded from the front pages and TV screens. Their stories are honest, heartfelt and moving.

If I was writing the column again, I would not use the term "sob stories".

I would not change my analysis, which is that the drought isn't a crisis for national agricultural production, which is what I was referring to as a "farming crisis" in the headline. With \$5.7 billion deposited in farmers' legal tax shelters, the industry should be able to get through this difficult period.

As Australia becomes drier, more farmers are going to struggle to survive. We need to have a national debate about their future.

I have been consistent on my approach towards farm subsidies for many years.

See: <https://www.afr.com/companies/agriculture/scott-morrison-discovers-his-own-greta-thunberg-20190929-p52vzw>; <https://www.afr.com/politics/nsw-farmers-dont-deserve-1b-in-drought-aid-20180731-h13dnm>.

In the past the National Farmers Federation and other agricultural groups have agreed with me that farm numbers need to fall.

See: <https://www.afr.com/companies/agriculture/farmer-numbers-will-continue-to-fall-says-nff-president-fiona-simson-20180813-h13wna>; <https://www.afr.com/companies/agriculture/agricultural-leaders-push-back-against-drought-panic-20180815-h140uv>; <https://www.afr.com/politics/experts-question-drought-severity-farmer-subsidies-20180803-h13iws>; <https://www.afr.com/companies/agriculture/we-are-not-all-welfare-cases-farm-backlash-grows-towards-drought-charity-20180810-h13s50>

I have criticised subsidies in other industries too, including childcare, automotive manufacturing and films: <https://www.afr.com/companies/manufacturing/holden-and-the-great-car-con-20200218-p541sf>; <https://www.afr.com/policy/if-australian-films-are-so-good-why-do-they-need-subsidies-20180416-h0yu9r>; <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/when-policy-is-child-s-play-20190502-p51jj4>

Alan Jones is entitled to his opinion. So am I.