

## THE AUSTRALIAN

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# Call to set up ministry of food

**ANDREW WHITE** THE AUSTRALIAN APRIL 19, 2013 12:00AM

**AGRICULTURE issues needed to be elevated in importance in the government and given a broader appeal, with the suggested creation of a ministry of food endorsed by political and business leaders at the Global Food Forum.**

Major General Michael Jeffery said responsibility for regenerating land to meet the challenge of increased food production for Asia needed to be elevated to the level of deputy prime minister and deputy premier.

The former governor-general said Australia needed to "fix its own back yard" by regenerating land and waterways and better co-ordinating their management before it could increase production.

Business and political leaders heard repeated calls for Australia to focus attention and resources on agriculture to develop a larger and more efficient industry and emulate the success of countries such as New Zealand.

Following a question from the audience about changing ministerial titles from agriculture to food, opposition finance spokesman Andrew Robb said the proposal had merit.

Mr Robb said a call for the government to allow accelerated depreciation for farmers to improve their returns was actively being considered by the opposition.

Trade Minister Craig Emerson said it was "not an idea that should be dismissed" but that the priority remained to get the budget back into surplus.