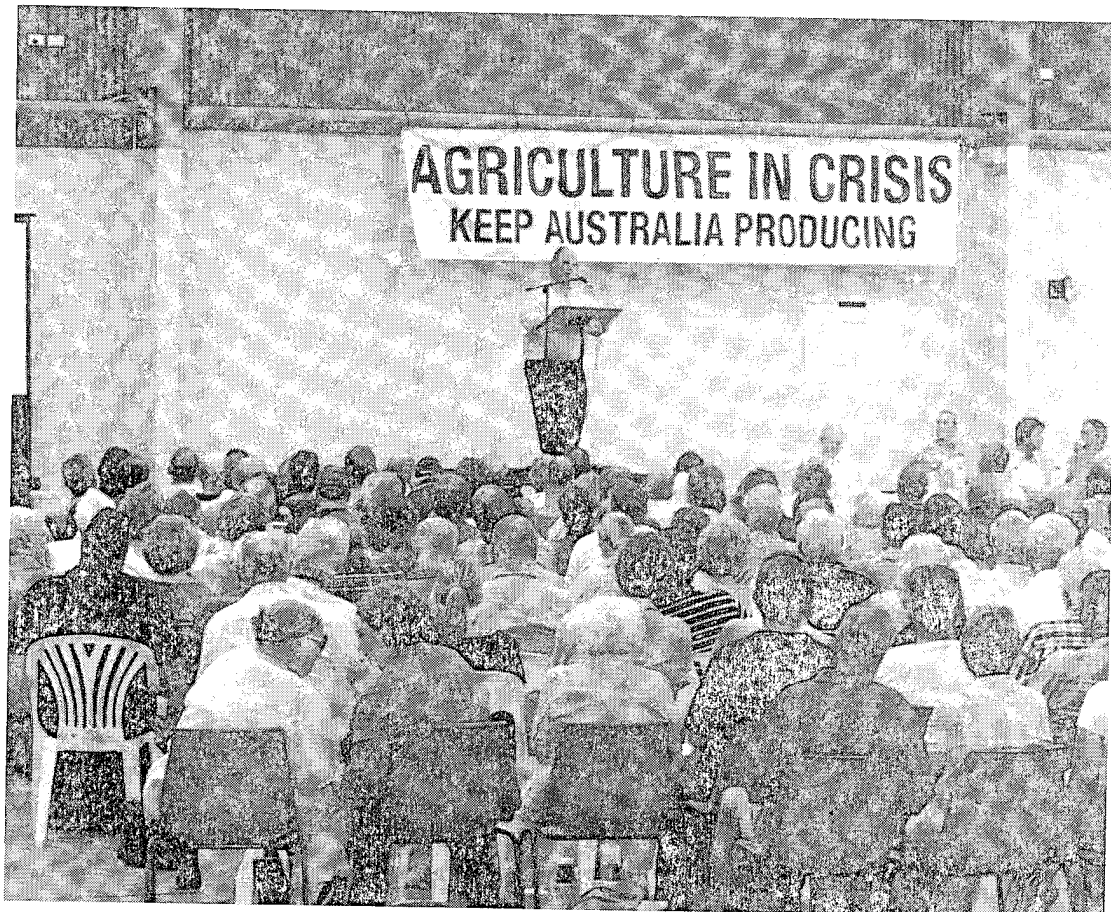


# Hundreds of people gather for agriculture crisis meeting in Merredin

April 15, 2013, 3:35 p.m.



Close to 1000 farmers attended an agriculture crisis meeting in Merredin.

MORE than 900 people gathered in Merredin today to attend an agricultural industry crisis meeting to look at changing agricultural economic policy to address increasing farm debts and famers' difficulty in gaining bank finance.

Organised by the Muntadgin Farming Alliance, which was formed by local farmers Jeff Hooper and Scott Stirrat, the group invited economists and state and federal politicians to speak at the meeting today and provide policy based solutions to protect the future of agriculture in WA.

Farmers, business owners and communities members from across rural WA turned out to hear their resolutions.

DAFWA chief economist Professor Ross Kingwell spoke on adapting to climate change and economists Mark McGovern and Ben Rees discussed the merits of rationalisation and reconstruction in farming.

Senator Chris Back and federal MP Bob Katter also addressed the crowd and showed their support for the industry.

Last week, the Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) called on the State Government to invest in the Rural Business Development Corporation (RBDC) to assist struggling farmers in Western Australia.

WAFarmers president Dale Park said the RBDC was established under the Rural Business Development Corporation Act 2000, which administers financial support for Approved Assistance Schemes on behalf of the State and Federal governments.

"The biggest issue I am hearing from farmer meetings is that carry-on finance is the key issue for farmers who may be agonising over whether to put this year's crop in," he said.

"What we need is an Approved Assistance Scheme that recognises the need for carry on finance for the agricultural sector.

"So the big question is we have an existing mechanism in the form of the RBDC, why isn't it being utilised?"

Mr Park said now was the time for the State and Federal governments to step up and assist farmers with a scheme to help get them through the upcoming season.

"Farmers do not want a handout, they want a hand up," he said.

"This is what our members are calling for, this could provide an alternative finance arrangement that will assist them through a tough period and now is the time for the State and Federal governments to act."

The Muntadgin Farming Alliance will now work closely with WAFarmers to try to implement the resolutions that were voted on at the meeting.