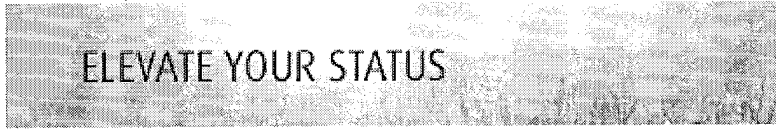


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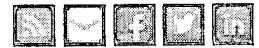
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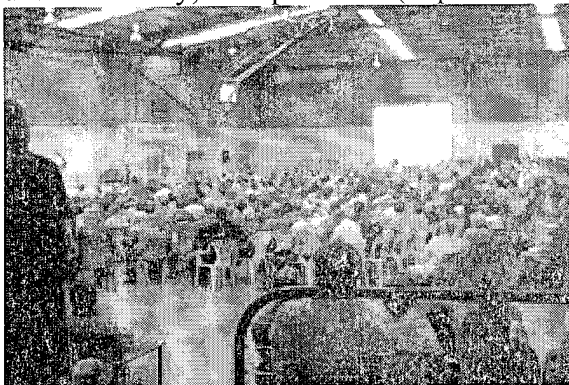
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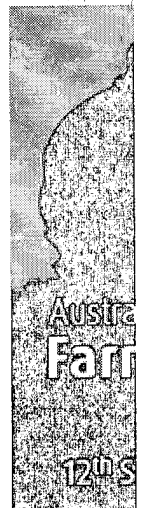
Struggling farmers call for action to secure finance



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Farmers call for action at crisis meeting in Merredin.



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A crisis meeting in Western Australia's Wheatbelt has attracted hundreds of farmers who are looking for solutions to the hardships facing the region. Almost 1,000 growers

A crisis meeting in Western Australia's Wheatbelt has attracted hundreds of farmers who are looking for solutions to the hardships facing the region.

Almost 1,000 growers and producers attended today's meeting in Merredin.

After a series of difficult seasons which included drought and frost, many farmers are struggling to secure finance for the year ahead.

The state's Agriculture Minister Ken Baston did not attend but says a whole-of-government approach is needed to help struggling farmers in the eastern Wheatbelt.

One of the event organisers, Scott Siratt, says many producers are close to walking off the farm but action by government and the banks could help.

"We're certainly not doing this to have another talkfest, we want real solutions," he said.

"We want to get something out of this to ensure that our communities and our farms are going to move forward and are going to be safe into the future."

Mr Baston toured the area earlier this month and says he hopes to be able to announce some assistance measures soon.

"I'm not going to disclose any packages at this stage but all I can say is our meetings we had out there the other day were fantastic, to listen to the issues that are faced by the people out there," he said.

"And, so we need a whole of government approach to come back."

Federal Independent MP, Bob Katter, says the agricultural sector will collapse if it does not receive more government support soon.

"I don't think you've got very long at all," he said.

"I mean I think you will have massive foreclosures and they'll start feeding upon themselves.

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