

## Farmers lash Labor's 'ideological' reforms


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**EXCLUSIVE**

By **JESS MALCOLM**

REPORTER

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Farmers have declared war on Anthony Albanese's "active pursuit of a niche ideological agenda", launching a major campaign attacking a raft of Labor policies they warn are shaving billions of dollars off the economy.

The National Farmers Federation will on Thursday roll out a multimedia campaign calling on federal parliamentarians to block key components of the Albanese government's legislative agenda, including industrial relations, water and environmental reforms.

The campaign – titled Keep Farmers Farming – will also push the government to abandon plans to ban live sheep exports to the Middle East, establish a dedicated visa pathway for agriculture workers and implement a mandatory code of conduct for transmission projects to ensure they do not destroy prime agricultural land.

In a speech to the NFF's national conference in Canberra on Thursday, newly-minted president [David Jochinke](#) will attack Labor for actively pursuing a "niche ideological agenda at the expense of farmers".

Mr Jochinke will declare that food and fibre production is "not a central priority for

the current federal government” and argue that Labor is wilfully ignorant of the plight of farmers.

With the government pushing to abandon live-sheep exports, Mr Jochinke will warn the move risks soiling Australia’s reputation as a trusted food security partner and further test the nation’s relationships in the Middle East.

“We cannot stand by and watch a government slowly erode the basic foundations of our farm sector. If we do nothing, the next three to six months will see decisions made which will reduce our access to farmland, to water, to workers and to overseas markets,” Mr Jochinke will say.

“We need to make ourselves incredibly clear that these are bad ideas that will ultimately drive farmers out of business, harm rural communities and push up the cost of living for everyday Australians”.

Farmers are also outraged at the government’s push to [amend the Murray-Darling Basin Plan](#) and restart water buybacks to recover 450 gigalitres of environmental water required under the plan, with Mr Jochinke calling the move “reprehensible”.

“To turn around now and up the price after we backed the plan in good faith is reprehensible. The minister’s actions will wind back the clock on trust between farmers, environment groups and government by a generation.”

The peak farming lobby is threatening to indefinitely bankroll print, digital and billboard ads and expand its campaign to television networks in a bid to heap pressure on the Albanese government to wind back its reforms.

The Australian understands the NFF will also target voters in marginal Labor seats including Tangney, Bennelong, Higgins, Lilley and Hasluck over coming months to “lay the blame squarely at the feet of the government” ahead of the next federal election.

The attacks come after a survey by the NFF found the majority of farmers (54.3 per cent) thought Labor’s policies were harming industry and 31.2 per cent thought they were doing a good job.

Earlier this year, the NFF joined with peak business groups to denounce Workplace

Relations Minister Tony Burke's [union-backed same job, same pay laws](#), warning they will be “a red tape minefield for farmers”.

Nationals leader David Littleproud on Wednesday accused Labor of turning its back on Australian farmers. “(Agriculture) Minister (Murray) Watt doesn't care about the concerns of farmers. He has shaken the confidence of the agriculture industry in every aspect, which will cost Australian families even more,” he said.

**JESS MALCOLM, REPORTER**

Jess Malcolm is a political reporter in The Australian's Canberra bureau, where she covers a range of rounds including agriculture, infrastructure and regional affairs. She won the Student Journalist of the Year ... [Read more](#)



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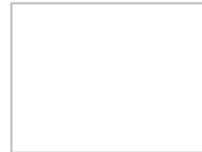
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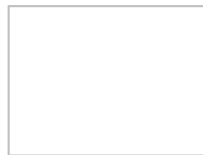
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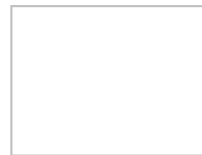
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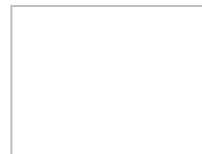
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