

Submission on the proponent initiated EIS referral (including draft terms of reference)

Southern Cross Agri Pty Ltd – Sweetwater Agricultural Development-Stage 1

This submission is made under regulation 53 of the Environment Protection Regulations 2020

Government authority: Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)

Summary: DAF supports the proposed development

Section of Referral	Theme or issue	Comment
	Social, Economic, Environmental Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In respect to social impacts and benefits, the proposed agricultural development, on balance, can deliver more positive impacts than negative. The positive impacts will flow from the anticipated growth, development and skilled employment opportunities. It is understood that the proponent will be prioritising access to these opportunities for First Nations people, access can deliver a range of benefits beyond income. Meaningful employment is foundational to improved health and well-being, empowerment, self-determination and addressing immediate and intergenerational disadvantage. These outcomes are Closing the Gap priorities. <p>It is also understood that the proponent has had positive engagement with the NLC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed agricultural development is expected to deliver economic returns, stimulate regional development and create substantial direct and indirect employment opportunities. Much of this will flow to local and regional economies through increased demand for agricultural inputs, downstream processing and supply chains. • The Sweetwater development (including the proposed Stage 1 application) is the culmination of 10+ years of effort from the NTG to progress the expansion of the Ord River Irrigation Area into the Northern Territory, which includes investing in detailed scientific studies (that have been referenced and relied upon by the proponent), partnering with NT Land Corporation through an Eol process to bring on new agricultural land development and providing facilitation services to the proponent. • There is also related work the NTG is doing (in partnership with WA) on the Intergovernmental Agreement which will facilitate the delivery of water, from Lake Argyle to the Territory, as well as delivery of the Ord River Expansion to the NT Detailed Business Case to enable further sustainable development in the Ord which is likely to have significant economic and regional development benefits for both the NT and WA. This work also includes water efficiency and sustainability principles and much of this work will help to inform future development in the region.

Environmental impact assessment under *the Environment Protection Act 2019*

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many environmental lessons that have been learned from development on the WA side which may help inform sustainable development on the NT side. AAM are also operating pastoral operations in the region at Legune station and are very familiar with the cultural and environmental factors of the region. • The proponent's approach to staging of development is sensible in terms of both environmental impacts as well as long term economic viability and sustainability of the development. Any assessment should be cognisant and commensurate with the development as defined and scoped in Stage 1.
	Approvals required under the Pastoral Land Act	The proponent has acknowledged in the referral that a non-pastoral use permit and a clearing permit are required under the <i>Pastoral Land Act 1992</i> . These permits are administered by Pastoral Lease Management, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, which has confirmed the requirement for both permits for the proposal.
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