

RURAL OUTLOOK

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Senator seeks farmers' input on carbon emissions

Fielding questions

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FAMILY First Senator Steven Fielding got some advice on how a carbon pollution reduction scheme could affect farmers straight from the source last week.

Mr Fielding spent an hour with Irrewarra farmers John and Robert Martin and their wives Jodie and Sandra.

The Martins were impressed with the fact the controversial MP got out to the grassroots. "He just stayed in the dairy he didn't want a cup of tea or anything. He just wanted to talk," Mr Martin said.

"He wanted to get some opinions first hand from people who will be affected by agricultural emissions are included in the emissions trading scheme."

The Martin brothers both farm in the Irrewarra area close to Colac.

They told Senator Fielding including agriculture in a carbon pollution reduction scheme would damage farmers.

"Certainly we told him we are not in favour from the dairy and beef industry in particular," he said.

"We said that Australia should not do anything on agriculture until we see what the America and China and India will do," he said.

"The other problem is how to assess emissions in agriculture.

"There is no one formula. Different types of cows can have wildly differing emissions.

"We (Australia) are such a small emitter in world terms and we will be at a huge disadvantage if we are included."

Mr Martin said Senator



FIRST HAND: Senator Steven Fielding talks to Irrewarra farmers about how a carbon pollution reduction scheme might affect their business.

Fielding had good knowledge of the issue and an understanding of how the issue could hit farmers.

Senator Fielding said he valued his time with the Martins.

"Farmers are already doing it very tough with low farm-gate prices, ongoing drought and skyrocketing fodder prices," he said.

"Australia's agricultural exports are worth more than \$30

billion a year and when you consider the government's current CPRS will introduce a carbon emissions tax of approximately \$25 a tonne that will reduce an average beef farms income by 69 per

cent, it's obvious the agricultural sector is one that needs to be exempt from any CPRS," he said.

The CPRS Bill is due to be presented to Parliament in October.