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Fire ant funding could help turn the tide

CANEGROWERS has welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of an additional \$268 million for the control and eradication of Imported Red Fire Ants, with CEO Dan Galligan calling the funding essential to halting the spread of one of the world's most devastating pests.

"We have repeatedly called on the government to ensure the national eradication program receives proper funding and leadership," Mr Galligan said.

"We have met directly with government ministers and top biosecurity officials at state and national level and shared our concerns about the program and what failure to stop the spread of fire ants could mean, not only for agriculture, but for the Australian way of life.

"Growers in the Rocky Point district have been on the frontline of this battle for two decades, but the truth is, we were losing. Hopefully, this injection of funding from the Federal Government can help turn the tide and we can start winning the war on fire ants.

"I'd like to thank the Federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt and Treasurer Jim Chalmers for listening to the concerns of CANEGROWERS and The National Invasive Species Council and making the decision to fund the program."

State and Territory governments met in Perth earlier this year where they agreed to a new strategy of containment and eradication.

However, the new plan immediately came under fire, with reports that a lack of funding and resources would make the strategy virtually impossible to implement.

"It's a huge relief that the government has decided to fund the first four years of the strategy," Mr Galligan said. "This is a long-term campaign, and we need to throw everything we have at it to eradicate fire ants once and for all."

With funding committed, Mr Galligan is calling on the government to consult with cane growers in the Rocky Point region to ensure they are implementing the most effective strategy.

"There is no point in wasting this money pursuing approaches that haven't worked in the past. Growers in the district have seen firsthand what has worked and what hasn't. The government should use that knowledge to ensure taxpayer money is being used as efficiently and effectively as possible."

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