

Gina Rinehart: Gov'ts have cattle industry tied up in red tape

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From New York, Gina Rinehart addresses a beef industry forum at Yulgilbar Station in Northern NSW last week.

MINING magnate turned cattle empress Gina Rinehart shared a personal story about good friends of hers at a beef industry forum in Northern NSW last week in a bid to get across a message about the damage she believes government red tape is causing Australian agriculture.

Speaking from New York via a video hookup, Ms Rinehart told producers at the Yulgilbar Beef Expo and Forum, held on the Myer family's historic Santa Gertrudis property near Grafton, excessive bureaucracy was not only scaring off investment, it was forcing good people out of the game.

Her friends, on selling their beloved Western Australian station after decades in the business, had told her it wasn't the heat that last months, the isolation, floods, fires, snakes or damaging wet that made them shut up shop.

It was the frustration of red tape and the fact it was working against them investing in advancements, particularly safety measures, that they dearly wanted to achieve.

“They would spend long days on station tasks only to have to work night after night on paperwork,” Ms Rinehart told a captivated audience of around 500 producers and industry representatives.



Beef producers at the Yulgilbar Beef Expo and Forum in Northern NSW on Friday. Photo: Kirra Bogan

She sees beef as an industry on the brink of enormous opportunity emerging from our Asian neighbours.

However, given we export two thirds of what we produce, remaining internationally cost competitive and developing more overseas markets was crucial, she said.

Key to that would be listening to what our customers want, including fresh beef and offal, but we also needed governments to understand the need to make our country attractive to investment and significantly lessen red tape, according to Ms Rinehart.

In an engaging presentation, Ms Rinehart talked about the technology transformation taking place across the 20 cattle properties now in her portfolio, including the recently acquired Kidman holdings.

While it would deliver big efficiencies it was only part of the story, she said.

“What can’t be overlooked is government and its time consuming and expensive burdens limiting the dollars available for advanced technology,” she said.

“What an exciting future our ag industry could have with less red tape.”

She compared Australia’s cattle industry to that of one of our major beef export competitors, Brazil.

The two countries have a similar land mass, yet Brazil has a whopping 210 million head of cattle against Australia’s 23m.

Similarly, Queensland - under a the Bjelke-Petersen investment-welcoming philosophy - built a thriving cattle industry which has delivered a herd size today of 11.3m, compared to WA’s tiny 2.4m herd despite its much larger land area, Ms Rinehart said.



Cattle empire owner Gina Rinehart.

“One example of government regulation in WA that acts to prevent our industry from thriving is that of the Fitzroy River in the Kimberley,” she said.

“Across the wet season, approximately 7000 gigalitres is let flow into the ocean.

“Every year, 14 times the amount of water in Sydney Harbour flows straight past many stations.

“As it stands in 2017, the government only allows one water licence to access water from the Fitzroy. This leaves 99.999 per cent of the water to run out uselessly into the Indian Ocean.

“We all know water is absolutely essential to grow cattle numbers.

“US and Canadian research says cattle can put on between 15 and 20pc more weight over a year just by drinking clean water.

“In short, if governments allowed us to tap into this and other wasted water sources we would be able to increase our cattle numbers and just imagine the benefit to all related industries.”

While Australia lags behind, other countries such as the US and India are leading the way in red tape reduction, Ms Rinehart told the Yulgilbar forum.

President Trump was “taking meaningful and important steps to reduce red tape across many industries including agriculture” and the Prime Minister of India was doing the same.

In India, the time it takes to incorporate a company has moved from two to three months to just 24 hours.

Environmental restrictions on water had also been slashed - “red tape that, although well meaning, did little to assist India’s water problems”, according to Ms Rinehart.

“While India has cut red tape and doubled its economic growth, raising the living standards of its people, Australia is still struggling with excessive tape and record debt,” she said.

“What do you think this doing to Australia’s future jobs?”