

National recognition for ag on November 21

# Save the date and celebrate

BY ANDREW MARSHALL

AUSTRALIA is gearing up to celebrate one of its most culturally, economically and historically important sectors – agriculture.

A suggestion from mining magnate, turned big-scale beef producer, Gina Rinehart, has evolved into a full-throttle national event pitched at fostering a sense of pride in agriculture among all Australians.

National Agriculture and Related Industries Day (Ag-Day), on November 21, is being co-ordinated by the National Farmers Federation, with support from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and a host of farm industry groups.

“This is a day for people who grow food, eat food and move food,” said NFF president, Fiona Simson.

She wants AgDay celebrated in towns and city centres Australia-wide as an annual chance to “rejoice in our primary production prowess”.

“Host a lunch with Aussie produce on the menu, fire up a community barbecue and raise money for a good cause,” she said.

For one of our busiest primary producers of late, Hancock Prospecting group’s executive chairman, Mrs Rinehart, AgDay is about well-deserved recognition of farming’s contribution to our economic and social fabric.

With her own pastoral family history running back generations in North West Australia, she is keen to champion ag’s credentials and growth potential.

Mrs Rinehart has committed plenty of her own money to the sector in the past year, becoming majority owner of the historic S. Kidman and Company business after spending \$386.5 million late

last year (with Chinese partners), and buying three other beef enterprises in Queensland and Northern Territory.

She has also teamed up with others to open the beef live export market to China

and will spend about \$40m on new infrastructure and technology projects across Hancock and Kidman enterprises this year.

“Agriculture is our second largest export industry and the powerhouse behind our regional communities.”

“In 2016-17 agricultural production was valued at \$60 billion –that’s on-farm alone.

“Agriculture’s providing employment for 1.6m Australians and supporting the small businesses keeping our country towns ticking.”

Mrs Rinehart is keen for all Australians to understand how recent free trade agreements with China, Japan, South Korea have opened new markets, turning around commodity values and value-added returns in a host of categories from citrus to

cherries, milk and meat.

“The challenge now is for us to innovate with new technologies to make us internationally cost competitive, improve our processes and increase supply,” she said.

Hancock and Kidman stations were adapting practical solar pump and digital management technologies used in the mining sector.



National Farmers Federation president, Fiona Simson, with the then Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, and NFF chief executive officer, Tony Mahar, at the recent launch of the November 21 AgDay initiative.