

CALCIUM AMMONIUM NITRATE

1088. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

The minister would be aware of attempts by the United Farmers Cooperative to have calcium ammonium nitrate removed from the draft regulations that commit that fertiliser to stringent requirements concerning security measures in a similar manner to those applying to ammonium nitrate. Will the minister support measures to remove calcium ammonium nitrate from the regulations?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

This matter is driven by security concerns. A national arrangement has resulted from various forms of ammonium nitrate being associated with explosives used by terrorists. The Commonwealth has sought a uniform arrangement across all States to limit access to ammonium nitrate generally. Although the State has a few reservations about the adequacy of the program, it obviously wishes to cooperate with the uniform agreement with the Commonwealth and the other States. However, the Government has concerns whether calcium ammonium nitrate, often referred to as CAN, should be included within the general ambit of other ammonium nitrate types. Calcium ammonium nitrate is generally thought not to be capable of being used as an explosive. The difficulty with that view is that the Irish Republican Army on one notable occasion used calcium ammonium nitrate in a terrorist attack. I do not know how that was done as sophisticated chemistry is required to separate the calcium from the ammonium nitrate. However, the Government's view remains that as far as possible it will resist the move to include calcium ammonium nitrate in the general specifications relating to other forms of ammonium nitrate, which includes a wide range of substances. I do not know whether the Government will be successful in that regard. Its primary concern is to meet the security needs of the nation. Beyond that, special consideration should be given to calcium ammonium nitrate's legal status.