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## **MINISTER MACDONALD WARNS OF GRAVE THREAT TO FOOD SECURITY (FROM EXPLORATION LICENCES HE GRANTED)**

In one of the more farcical examples of his conflicting portfolios, the Minister for Primary Industries, Mineral Resources and State Development, Ian Macdonald, has effectively attacked himself over the growing threat in food security.

In a media release this week, the Minister gravely warns: "*Food security is one of the biggest issues facing our planet*" and later adds, "*...farmers in NSW need to consider how they can produce more food in the future using the same amount of resources*" (*MEDIA RELEASE 21/10/2009*)

At no stage does the Minister mention that, as Minister for Mineral Resources, he has recently granted exploration licences to BHP Billiton, Chinese Shenhua, Santos and Eastern Star over hundreds of square kilometres of some of Australia's most fertile and productive farming land on the Liverpool Plains. The NSW Government received more than half a billion dollars for those coal and coal seam methane gas exploration licences.

CCAG spokesman Tim Duddy said the Minister's portfolio acrobatics would be comical if the issue wasn't so serious for the future of Australia's agriculture industry.

"It is always hard to know which side of the bed Minister Macdonald will roll out from. The Mining Minister side where he happily deals out exploration licences across prime farming land or the Agriculture Minister side of the bed where he wrings his hands over the threat to food supplies grown on that very same prime land," Mr Duddy said.

"Will the real Minister please stand up and tell us which hat he is wearing today?"

"The Minister knows full well that prime farming land is disappearing across the globe and yet the lure of hundreds of million of dollars revenue paid by mining companies for exploration licences is too great for him and the NSW Government to resist.

"It is hard to think of a more farming-unfriendly industry that he could have chosen to unleash on this area than the highly water intensive coal seam methane gas extraction industry with its toxic byproducts of saline and heavy metals.

"Food security is a rapidly growing global crisis but the Minister would have a bit more credibility in claiming to be concerned about it if he actually worked to protect and improve prime farming lands rather than allowing mining companies free reign to threaten it," he said.

CCAG said if the Minister was genuine, he would agree to not issue any further exploration licences in the area and urge BHP, Shenhua, Santos and Eastern Star to cease all mining-related activities until a comprehensive water study is completed and the risks posed by mining properly understood.

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**"We must ensure mining does not destroy our environment, agricultural production, people's livelihoods, health and attachment to the land"**