

Dam the government - angry farmers to rally

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Peter Manuel is the organiser of a rally planned at Victor Harbor tomorrow. He has called on city residents to join the farmers at the protest. *Source:* The Advertiser

FARMERS will tomorrow step up their fight against government plans to charge them for water from their own dams.

They will stage a fiery rally planned at Victor Harbor.

Hundreds of SA farmers are expected to attend the rally at the Encounter Bay Trotting Club where they will voice their anger at Natural Resource Management Board plans.

Event organiser Peter Manuel called on city residents to join farmers at the protest.

"We're appealing to our city friends as well because this is going to affect all of us," Mr Manuel said.

"This is about more than just a tax on our dam water. Have a look at the \$30 billion of our water rights being sold overseas and the controls being put on farmers everywhere.

"Our food bowl is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Everywhere you look they have feast or famine conferences ... they are not serious about that because if they were they would not be putting all these controls on our farmers."

Mr Manuel said farmers needed support to ensure future food security.

"Farmers in other countries get helped and subsidised but we are being sent to the wall," he said. "We need a proper balance in this state ... good farming land needs to be kept for farming."

"The green agenda is real. They want all agricultural land returned to natural vegetation and we're not going to have a food bowl."

At the start of this year, when farmers were told they would be required to put meters on their dams, Mr Manuel and others forecast the NRM Board planned to charge for dam water.

In September, the Government announced details of the plan to charge Adelaide Hills farmers for using water from their own dams.

The plan calls for dams and bores used for commercial purposes in the western Mt Lofty Ranges to be metered. Farmers fear the move will open the floodgates to more costly regulation.

The plan requires 2144 existing users to obtain water licences for dams and bores.

Tomorrow's rally will attract farmers from as far afield as WA and Queensland and guest speakers include Family First MLC and farmer Robert Brokenshire and the Opposition spokeswoman for water Michelle Lensink.