



## Position Statement on Fresh Produce Packaging

Food waste is a growing global problem, with significant economic, social and environmental consequences. Fresh fruit and vegetables are perishable, which means they start deteriorating as soon as they are picked and if not handled and stored properly, can lead to wastage.

The purpose of packaging is to reduce fresh food waste and its disposal to landfill, because nobody gains if tonnes of freshly grown, healthy and nutritious food are thrown away because of inadequate or no packaging.

We recognise that waste in all forms presents its challenges and this requires a holistic approach. Therefore the design and application of the packaging we use is also aimed at minimising packaging waste.

Five key things we commit to minimise packaging waste are:

1. Ensuring that the role of packaging is focused on providing consumers with freshly grown, healthy and nutritious food, and minimising food waste.
2. Implementing the agreement by state and federal Environment Ministers in April 2018 that *'100 per cent of Australian packaging be recyclable, compostable or reusable by 2025 or earlier to cut down on the amount of waste we produce'*.
  - a. More than 75% of Alliance members' current retail packaging (by volume) is recyclable, compostable or reusable.
3. Removing any non-functional or surplus packaging by designing it for optimal efficiency to maintain product freshness and maximising the availability of nutritious food.
4. Reducing the amount of packaging through the broader supply chain, and working toward developing a circular economy for packaging (where current packaging is recycled into new packaging) including recycled content.
5. Working with industry, suppliers, recyclers, and retailers to deliver outcomes, and encouraging the development of environmentally sustainable packaging.

Packaging solutions cannot be developed in isolation. Stakeholders including manufacturers, fresh produce growers, recyclers, retailers, wholesalers and every level of government must work together to build and sustain the infrastructure to deliver and promote the use of recyclable and recycled packaging. Only then can we seriously contemplate achieving the goal of a circular economy.

# Supply Chain: Fresh Produce from the farm to the home

Product quality is dependent on optimal time-temperature management, and the use of specially designed packaging is vitally important to minimise fresh food waste and thereby maximising product shelf life for consumers. There are four key stages involved in getting fresh fruit and vegetables to the end consumer for their final consumption and they are all focused on quality retention and reducing waste.

## 1. Harvesting and storage

Considerable care is taken in the harvesting and packing of fresh fruit and vegetables. Post-harvest (post picking) practices are crucial to ensuring that the fruit and vegetables remain as fresh as possible throughout the supply chain and are not wasted. For example, the speed in which the product is cooled and packed is often crucial. Products must be cooled to the relevant set temperature and packed as soon as possible to maintain freshness and nutritional value. Careful design of both inner (consumer) packs and outer packs is essential to enable optimal temperature transfer.

## 2. Transportation

Due to the long distances that the product often has to be transported within Australia, the use of optimal packaging and controlled temperature vehicles allow for the fresh fruit and vegetables to be transported to supermarkets and specialty stores whilst maintaining a level of freshness and minimising deterioration and waste. This is particularly important for high respiration produce, such as mushrooms, berries and most vegetables, where heat generated by respiration from the product must be progressively reduced.

## 3. Purchase

Once delivered to the supermarket or specialty store, the product must be able to withstand differing surrounding temperatures without risk of further undue deterioration. When spending their hard earned dollars, consumers also want to know that they are buying a product of the best possible quality, one that has not been unnecessarily handled and damaged and will not go to waste because it has suffered unnecessary deterioration.

## 4. Consumption

When fresh produce is in the home, they need to last and maintain their freshness and quality. This is for good reason as more often than not the product or at least a part of it, is not eaten on the day that it is purchased. People simply do not have the time or want the inconvenience of having to shop for or order fresh fruit and vegetables every day of the week, therefore packaging plays a crucial role in maintaining product freshness and reducing waste in the home.

**About the AFPA** - The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) is made up of Australia's key fresh produce growers and suppliers. The members include Costa Group, Perfection Fresh, Montague, One Harvest, Pinata Farms, Fresh Select, Mitolo Group, Mackay's Banana Marketing, Driscoll's, 2PH Farms, LaManna Premier Group, Rugby Farming, Freshmax and Fresh Produce Group. These businesses represent half the industry turnover of the Australian fresh produce (fruit and vegetables) sector - \$4.5 billion of the \$9.1 billion total; 1,000 plus growers through commercial arrangements and more than 15,000 direct employees through peak harvest, and up to 25,000 in the grower network.