

Media Release

12 February 2025

Binned Biosecurity Protection Levy a win for fresh produce growers

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) welcomes the Government's decision to discharge the Biosecurity Protection Levy legislation today, confirming that growers will not pay further levies towards Australia's biosecurity system.

"The removal of the Biosecurity Protection Levy is a great outcome for industry, and follows significant feedback from growers nationally that the levy was not the best way to support sustainable biosecurity funding," said Ms Claire McClelland, AFPA CEO.

The Biosecurity Protection Levy as it was proposed would have required farmers to fund a portion of the operating costs of Australia's biosecurity system, on the basis that the "beneficiary" of that system pays. The AFPA has consistently advocated that all Australians benefit from a robust, sustainable biosecurity system that ensures ongoing access to fresh and affordable food.

"The Government's decision to remove this legislation demonstrates an understanding that the biosecurity system benefits all Australians and that creating further cost to farmers doesn't support improved outcomes for Australian consumers," said Ms McClelland.

The fresh produce industry currently contributes to biosecurity funding through existing levies that fund biosecurity preparedness work, research and responses to incursions of exotic pests and diseases.

"Industry already contributes to the biosecurity ecosystem through financial contributions and farm practices that support effective biosecurity management. It's positive that Minister Collins has heard and actioned this feedback from farmers and removed a policy that would place an additional financial impost on industry, particularly during a time of escalating production costs and diminishing returns for fresh produce growers," said Ms McClelland.

Ongoing, sustainable funding for Australia's biosecurity system will still be critical, and the AFPA welcomed the Government's increased investment in biosecurity which included raising fees for importers – who create the risk within Australia's biosecurity system.

The removal of the Biosecurity Levy legislation follows a significant disease incursion of the Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus (ToBRFV) impacting tomato growers in South Australia and Victoria, with costs to industry exceeding tens of millions of dollars in lost product and markets.

"The ToBRFV incursion demonstrates how critical border biosecurity is to the fresh product industry, and the need for whole of government preparedness to support detection of pest and disease and Australia's borders, and the responses when an outbreak does occur. Ongoing, sustainable funding to this often overlooked function of government is vital to protect the future of the fresh produce, and broader agriculture industry," said Ms McClelland.

Media Contact: Claire McClelland - CEO, AFPA: 0400 158 193