

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### PACKAGING KEY TO REDUCING FOOD WASTE IN FRESH PRODUCE

Australia's first independent research into packaging of fresh produce has highlighted its essential role in helping to reduce food waste.

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) today released the research undertaken by RMIT and Empauer that indicates fresh produce packaging can help mitigate the estimated \$20 billion of food lost or wasted in Australia every year.

The research mapped the lifecycle of 10 fresh produce items both with and without packaging. The results show that the benefits of packaging of fresh produce include product protection, extension of shelf life and the ability to communicate product information which assists consumers.

"AFPA recognises that consumers are concerned about the level of type of packaging that is used for fresh produce, what this research demonstrates is there are real practical reasons for using packaging for certain types of fresh produce", said Michael Rogers, AFPA CEO.

"It's shocking to think that an estimated 7.3 million tonnes of food valued at \$20 billion dollars is lost or wasted every year in Australia, while rates of obesity are rising due to poor diet and low intake of fresh fruit and vegetables", said Mr Rogers.

"It is important that consumers better understand why producers utilise particular packaging formats, whether it be to ensure product integrity in the supply chain, extend shelf life and/or reduce food waste".

"A good example demonstrated by the research is the use of punnets to package berries. The environmental impact of the waste generated from damaged, unsellable fruit actually outweighs the impact of utilising the punnet" said Mr Rogers.

However, the report does highlight the importance of working to reduce packaging where reasonably possible and the importance of identifying packaging that provide greater opportunities for recycling.

"AFPA members are focused on delivering the best quality fruit and vegetables to consumers to ensure all Australians have access to fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy balanced diet and are conscious of meeting this goal in the most sustainable way possible" said Mr Rogers

*'The role of packaging for Australian fresh produce'* report and industry summary are both available to download from the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance website.

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#### **About the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (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.*

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