

Media Release

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Government R&D requires a sharper focus on key industry challenges for fresh produce

Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) members are calling for government funded research and development (R&D) to have a sharper focus on key, long term strategic industry challenges.

This call comes off the back of the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Bridget McKenzie, launching a review of agricultural research and development through a discussion paper *'Modernising the Research and Development Corporation (RDC) system'*. The purpose of this review is to *"ensure the RDC system is delivering value for our levy and tax payers into the future"*.

"This review is the perfect opportunity to streamline agricultural R&D, to resolve key industry challenges, reduce duplication and drive innovation to deliver economic growth not only to horticultural producers but through the broader supply chain and regional economy" said AFPA CEO, Mr Michael Rogers.

Currently, the Australian government invests \$316 million of taxpayer money into agricultural RDCs to compliment collected agricultural levies. As a significant investor into R&D programs within the Australian agriculture sector, the Government needs to ensure that their investment into an RDC system is based on a strong strategic framework and the Australian taxpayer gets value for money.

"The RDC system needs to be delivering value to both levy and tax payers who have invested. In order to do this, Australian agricultural R&D needs to be focused on research priorities which provide strategic and public good benefits to farmers and the broader Australian community" said Mr Rogers.

"As a group of the largest horticulture levy payers, we evaluated the long term strategic objectives and challenges within the fresh produce industry and considered these against public good, as a result the key strategic issues that require investment have become apparent. These strategic challenges are sustainability, trade, biosecurity, food safety and pollination, which must be used to establish a framework for fresh produce R&D" said Mr Rogers.

The AFPA have released a White Paper that includes 10 recommendations to grow the value of the fresh produce industry to \$20 billion by 2030. This paper outlines a way forward for the Australian RDC system that will support the R&D and marketing required by the fresh produce industry to meet this ambitious growth target.

"As 14 of the largest horticulture levy payers providing funds to the R&D and marketing functions of Hort Innovation, AFPA members welcome the Minister's review of the RDC system. We propose a way forward that delivers value to both levy paying growers and tax payers by realigning the focus, structure, and systems within RDCs" said AFPA CEO, Michael Rogers.

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