



Media Release

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BUILDING A RELIABLE AND PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE FOR THE FRESH PRODUCE INDUSTRY

As part of its commitment to promote a reliable and productive fresh produce workforce, the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance has today released its 'People in Fresh Produce' position statement.

The position statement is a commitment by Alliance members to the continued development of a permanent local workforce and improving the sector's employment practices and reputation. It is also a call for the further development of the Pacific Seasonal Worker program allowing for the employment of such workers throughout the year, the introduction of an agriculture visa or equivalent and the continuing availability of the Working Holiday Maker Visa to support peak harvest labour requirements.

"The fresh produce sector has some of the best growth opportunities in the Australian economy and needs to attract people of a high calibre who want to pursue permanent career opportunities in regional and rural Australia. The onus is therefore on employers to provide an attractive workplace to demonstrate the benefits of a long term career in fresh produce", said Michael Rogers, CEO Australian Fresh Produce Alliance.

Access to a temporary workforce through the Working Holiday Maker and Seasonal Worker Programs is also an important source of labour for the fresh produce sector as it is crucial to the timely harvesting of fresh produce. This must continue to be developed, including exploring the introduction of an agriculture visa to provide experienced horticulture workers with the ability to move to different employers during the peak harvest times for different fresh produce across diverse geographical locations.

"The fresh produce industry needs to stand up and demonstrate that it is serious about developing a permanent workforce and ensuring the integrity of its employment practices. Employing temporary and seasonal workers is integral to the industry's ability to provide every Australian with locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables", said Mr Rogers.

Attachment - *Position Statement: People in Fresh Produce*

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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.*



Position Statement: People in Fresh Produce

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance is developing a reliable, productive and diverse workforce as part of the long term sustainable growth of the fresh produce industry.

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance is committed to:

- the continued development of a permanent local workforce,
- creating opportunities for young people to establish a career in agriculture through skilled and technology driven jobs, allowing them to live and work in their local regional community,
- improving the sector's employment practices and reputation, including through proactively meeting all health and safety, employment, and duty of care requirements and obligations, and
- developing practical solutions to build a workforce for both permanent and harvest requirements.

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance is seeking:

- Continued development of the Pacific Seasonal Worker program to ensure the integrity of the program and to support the workforce requirements of large employers allowing for the employment of such workers throughout the year.
- An agriculture visa or equivalent to provide experienced horticulture workers with the ability to move to different employers during the peak harvest times for different fresh produce across diverse geographical locations.
- The continuing availability of the Working Holiday Maker Visa to support peak harvest labour requirements in recognition of the importance for growers to be able to achieve optimal harvest outcomes.