

Media Release

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Coalition Ag Plan neglects access to new export markets

The Coalition's Plan for Agriculture and Fisheries acknowledges the growth to date of the agriculture sector, but does not address access to new export markets to enable the ongoing growth of Australia's fastest growing agriculture sector – horticulture.

"Horticulture has ambitions to grow to a \$20 billion sector by 2030 and the only way this is possible is with increased access to high value export markets. The reality is domestic consumption of fruit and vegetables will continue to remain stagnant and the only way to grow the sector and support the ongoing production of fruit and vegetables in Australia is through increased exports" said AFPA CEO Michael Rogers.

While export market access does not feature in the Coalition's plan, measures to reduce red tape associated with exporting and a "tell us once" trade system are investments welcomed by the horticulture industry.

"Anything that makes trade easier, more efficient and more cost effective for farmers is a positive. Again, we need to be clear eyed in understanding that all the improvements in the export process are only valuable if farmers have the technical access to new export markets" said Mr Rogers.

The AFPA's election priorities have outlined industry's immediate need to continue to expand exports through investment and development in technical protocols, support of the National Fruit Fly and Market Access Centre and a reinvigorated whole of government approach to market access.

"We've seen over recent days what oversupply in the avocado sector due to a lack of market access looks like and while there is plenty of support for the sector in the Coalition's plan, we can't forget that farmers need to access more consumers to sustain and grow industry" said Mr Rogers.

Horticulture export success stories like those experienced by citrus and table grapes, where more than 60 per cent of production volume is exported, support growth in the sector, underpin regional communities, create jobs and develop career opportunities for Australians and facilitate investment.

"Members of the AFPA and their grower supplier network represent more than half of the value of the fruit and vegetable industry. These companies have been saying to both sides of politics for some time that the priority for the sector has to be new market access and that without it, there's going to be significant pressure in the industry" said Mr Rogers.

While international market access is critical for the horticulture industry, the AFPA's election priorities also outlined the importance of sustainable agriculture and the development of a productive and returning workforce to support the sector.

"The Coalition's Agriculture Plan reflects the importance of securing and developing a workforce for the horticulture sector. The commitment to both the Ag Visa and the PALM scheme aligns with industry's commitment to these programs, with the horticulture sector currently employing more than 15,000 workers through the PALM scheme" said Mr Rogers.

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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 AFPA represents half the industry turnover of the Australian fresh produce 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.*