

Media Release

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Australian Agriculture Worker Visa on track to deliver for industry

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) welcomes the amendment of Migration Regulations to create the Australian Agriculture Worker Visa (Ag Visa) announced today by Minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud. The visa regulations will enable the Ag Visa to be operationalised with a supporting program administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

“The amendment of Migration Regulations that will enable an Ag Visa is a significant milestone in the development of this visa and certainly sets industry up to be able to work closely with Government and partner countries to operationalise the visa” said AFPA CEO, Michael Rogers.

Amendments made create a new Australia Agriculture Worker Stream in the Subclass (Temporary Work (International Relations)) visa, providing for the entry and temporary stay of workers, enabling industry to recruit short-term seasonal and longer-term worker cohorts.

The AFPA had previously called for a dedicated Harvest Work visa to reduce industry’s reliance on backpackers and better compliment ongoing engagement of Pacific workers and Australians in seasonal harvest roles.

“From a horticulture perspective, our sector has a large number of short term, highly seasonal roles that often see workers move between employers and locations following harvest work. The parameters for the Ag Visa outlined today are positive in enabling visa holders to pursue seasonal roles across the industry and return to these roles year on year.”

“Importantly, the Ag Visa will be critical to both allowing the industry to develop a productive and returning workforce and restructuring the sector’s harvest workforce. We are very clear in how the Ag Visa fits within the horticulture industry’s employment options - that is specifically targeting seasonal harvest work peaks. This perfectly complements the ongoing employment of Australians, Pacific workers and other skilled migration pathways available” said Mr Rogers.

The Ag Visa will be operated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade through a visa program that will be closely aligned to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme. This program will set out management of worker welfare, sponsoring employer standards and is currently under development.

“Industry and Government have been working together closely to develop the program requirements needed to operationalise the Ag Visa. Key to the success of this program is requiring employers to meet high standards and commitments to worker welfare. The AFPA have consistently advocated that this visa must demand high standards to ensure worker welfare and will continue to support this as a key part of the visa’s design” 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.*