



# Submission

## *Consultation Paper on Harvest Labour Services*

22 August 2019

## About

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,
- 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,
- a quarter of the volume of fresh produce grown in Australia - 1 million of the 3.9 million tonne total,
- more than a third of fresh produce exports - \$410 million of the \$1.2 billion export total,
- more than 1,000 growers through commercial arrangements, and
- more than 15,000 direct employees through peak harvest, and
- up to 25,000 employees in the grower network.

The key issues the AFPA is focusing on include:

- packaging and the role it plays in product shelf life and reducing food waste landfill,
- labour and the need for both a permanent and temporary supply of workers,
- market access to key export markets for Australian produce,
- product integrity both within and outside of the supply chain,
- pollination and research into alternative sources, and
- water security, including clear direction as to the allocation and trading of water rights.

The AFPA's aim therefore is to become the first-choice fresh produce group that retailers and government go to for discussion and outcomes on issues involving the growing and supply of fresh produce.

Products grown by AFPA Member companies include:

Apples	Broccoli	Fioretto	Oranges	Strawberries
Apricots	Broccolini	Green Beans	Peaches	Sweet Corn
Asparagus	Brussel	Herbs	Pears	Table grapes
Avocado	Sprouts	Lemons	Pineapples	Tomatoes
Baby Broccoli	Butternut	Lettuce	Plums	Water Cress
Baby Corn	Pumpkin	Mandarins	Potatoes	Wombok
Bananas	Cabbage	Mango	Cucumber	
Beetroot	Cauliflower	Mushrooms	Raspberries	
Blackberries	Celery	Nectarines	Salad leaf	
Blueberries	Cherries	Onions	Spinach	



## Summary

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) welcomes the Consultation Paper on Harvest Labour from the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business.

Members of the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance collectively employ 22,000 people across more than 100 production locations in Australia. Of the collective employment of the Alliance, half of the full time equivalent jobs are held by Australian citizens and permanent residents. Third party growers in the supply chain employ up to an additional 25,000 people.

There are a number of factors affecting employment across different horticultural regions in Australia (Questions 1-4) including the nature of the work, the length of the work opportunity, and the location of the business relative to regional centres and amenities. Horticulture regions and employers in remote locations are examples of parts of industry that experience recruitment difficulties due to the logistics of people travelling to those remote locations. Other horticulture regions and employers face recruitment challenges in regional and metropolitan areas where there are strong employment prospects in other industries which creates strong competition for competent workers.

Job seekers have not been a key source of new employees for fresh produce businesses often due to the nature and type of work. Fresh produce companies are very keen to employ Australians seeking career opportunities in the fresh produce industry. The often physically demanding requirements of fresh produce employment may not be the first choice of job seekers. Individual companies have a range of activities and programs underway to attract people to work in the fresh produce industry.

Feedback from both job seekers and employers in the program is vital to ensure that the program is meeting the objectives of both employees and employers (Question 14). Consulting with industry, and specifically those businesses who are using the program, to better understand the specific employment opportunities is vital to designing programs that work for the people employed and the businesses providing the employment. Targeted engagement with companies and the individuals using the program should be a priority for consultation.

As a Commonwealth Government program, the program should include all employers in a designated region and not exclude employers/locations unless there are specific requirements which aren't being met by prospective employers (Question 4).

With regard to the interaction between different government programs (Q15), the Seasonal Worker Programme and the Pacific Labour Scheme are priorities for the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance. AFPA member companies are significant participants in the Seasonal Worker Programme and expanding their participation. It is important that each Government program have a defined role and objective in meeting business and employee requirements. Overlapping programs without clear articulation of role, objectives and function will lead to confusion and a lack of progress for all parties.

The roll out of the expansion of the Harvest Labour Services program must be clear: in its objectives, who the employers will be, who the job seekers are, and what success looks like for the program.

