

Media Release

10 May 2023

Budget delivers investment in biosecurity and much needed funding relief for DAFF

A strong biosecurity system is essential to protecting our economy, environment, and ongoing access to clean, safe, and healthy food. The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) welcomes the Federal Government's additional investment in biosecurity of over \$1 billion for the next 4 years.

Potential incursions of foreign pests and diseases not only threaten the viability of the fresh produce industry, but also risks impacting Australian households through reduced food security and increased food prices. The AFPA has consistently advocated for increased funding for biosecurity from general revenue to reflect the shared benefits of a strong biosecurity system.

"Farmers should not bear the brunt of the cost of a biosecurity system that ensures that all Australians will continue to have access to fresh food; all Australians benefit from a robust, efficient, and effective biosecurity system. While we would like to see the balance of funding shift further to properly reflect the shared benefits of a robust biosecurity system, the additional funding is welcome and will strengthen Australia's biosecurity to help ensure our nation is better protected," said AFPA CEO Claire McClelland.

The AFPA also welcomes the much-needed funding support for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to ensure it can continue to deliver on its objectives and services, including supporting the management of biosecurity threats and outbreaks should they occur.

"The biosecurity risks facing Australia's agricultural industries are continually evolving, and the Department plays a critical role in mitigating these risks. We encourage the government to continue to increase funding as required to address the new and evolving risks, as we simply cannot afford for Australia's biosecurity system to become compromised," said Ms McClelland.

While this year's funding provides temporary relief for the Department, the Government's must look at viable, long-term funding solutions for the Department that does not over burden industry, which is already supporting the Department through some of the highest cost recovery arrangements in the OECD.

"The fresh produce industry is a crucial contributor to the Australian economy, generating billions of dollars in our economy annually and supporting tens of thousands of jobs. The Government must look to solve the Department's funding shortfall over the long term or risk the industry's growth, sustainability and biosecurity system," said Ms McClelland.

The AFPA also acknowledges the Governments provision of \$370.8 million over 4 years to expand and improve the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. PALM workers are vital to the fresh produce industry's ability to deliver fresh produce to Australian households and international markets

"The rapid growth of the PALM scheme coupled with significant changes the brought into effect and currently under consultation continue to put a strain on the program, risking its ongoing success. While the AFPA supports any additional funding to assure the PALM Scheme's ongoing operations, we need to ensure that the program meets the needs of Pacific partners, workers and employers engaged in the Scheme," said Ms McClelland.

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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.*