

## Media Release

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### Temporary visa extensions will help guarantee supply of fresh fruit and vegetables for Australians

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) welcomes the announcement of temporary changes to visa arrangements to help growers secure the workforce required to keep producing fresh fruit and vegetables for all Australians.

“We welcome the announcement of these temporary visa changes by Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack, Minister Littleproud and Minister Tudge and appreciate the commitment the government has shown to ensuring the ongoing supply of fresh fruit and vegetables during this unprecedented time” said AFPA CEO Michael Rogers.

With more than 80,000 people employed in fresh produce, the current workforce includes significant numbers of Australians, seasonal workers from the Pacific and Timor-Leste, and backpackers from around the world. Many of these workers are in Australia on fixed term visas and without this extension would be remaining in Australia unlawfully.

“The reality is a number of these workers, particularly those from the Pacific and Timor-Leste are unable to return to their home countries due to travel restrictions. The alternative to the extension of their visa arrangements was leaving these people unemployed in regional communities with minimal access to healthcare. Enabling their ongoing employment is a great outcome for workers, farmers and their communities” said Mr Rogers.

The announcement today also introduces new measures to ensure appropriate health controls are in place to manage the health and safety of Australia’s regional communities.

“Members of the AFPA have already instituted policies and procedures to safely manage their workforce and reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission on their farms, packing sheds and in the regional communities in which they operate. Food security in Australia relies on a healthy and safe workforce, so AFPA members and all growers are taking this seriously to ensure the continued supply of produce” said Mr Rogers.

Temporary visa changes announced today include an exemption from the six-month work limitation with one employer for working holiday makers working in agriculture as well as a further extension of their visa if it is due to expire in the next six months.

“These temporary visa extensions provide certainty to farmers that their existing workforce will still be available. Many of the roles undertaken by visa holders underpin fulltime ongoing employment of Australians in regional communities, so these extensions really provide farmers with the certainty that they can keep full time workers employed and keep producing fresh fruit and vegetables for Australians” said Mr Rogers.

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