



Fair Farms

TRAINING & CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Information Sheet

Many of you will be getting requests from your customers to put in place a system to demonstrate that you are fair and responsible employers. The Fair Farms Training and Certification Program will support Australian fresh produce production and packing enterprises to implement fair and responsible employment practices. The program will provide a mechanism for growers to demonstrate to their customers and other interested parties their compliance with Australian workplace relations laws and industry standards. The pilot process for the program commenced in October 2018 and we anticipate that full roll out will commence early in 2019.

The program is being developed by Growcom (the peak body for Queensland production horticulture www.growcom.com.au) to assist growers with meeting their workplace obligations and preparing for an audit that might be required by customers in the future. The program has in-principle support from the Australian Fair Work Ombudsman and leading retailers in the domestic market.

The program comprises:

- An industry owned and developed *Standard* benchmarked against Australian workplace law
- A coordinated system of *quality training* to support growers to understand their obligations

- A pathway to certification, if required, including a mechanism to enable *cost-effective third-party audits* by competent auditors
- A *credible certification* that provides certainty and transparency in the supply chain and that enables businesses committed to fair employment to differentiate themselves from less reputable operators.
- *Data capture* to enable industry and customer reporting in relation to compliance

The program's key objective is to assist growers to manage their compliance requirements and risks in the most cost effective way possible. Our long experience in this area has shown that most growers aim to do the right thing by their workers but may not be 100% across all of their legal requirements and appreciate assistance to identify areas where they need to improve. For that reason the program includes a strong training element which aims to raise the level of knowledge amongst industry members and support a significant improvement in employment standards across fresh produce businesses. The training offered through the program will give growers clear guidance on the procedures and records they must have in place prior to proceeding to audit.

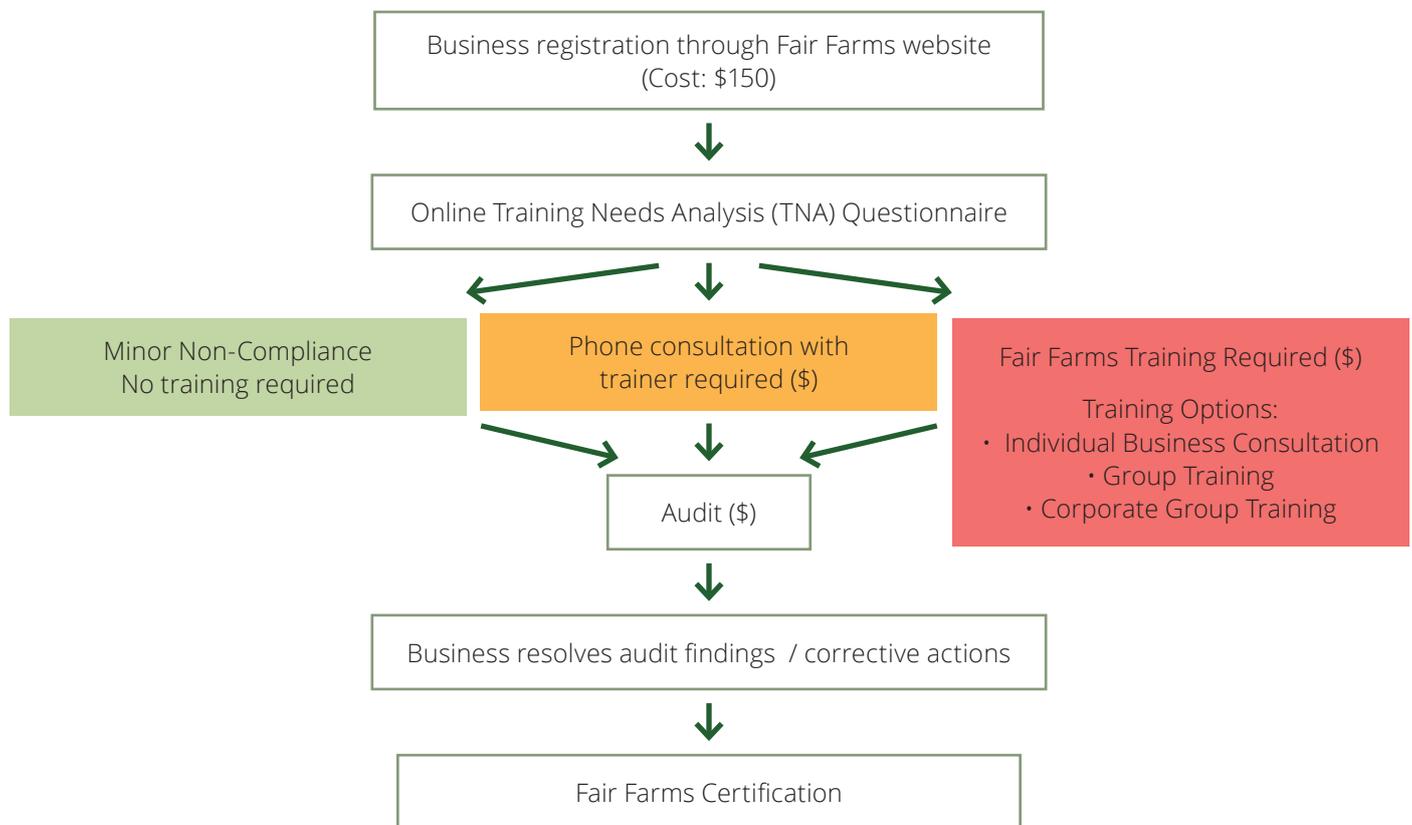
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The pathway to certification is set out below. Participants in the Fair Farms program can proceed to audit and certification if they wish to or if their customer(s) requests it. We recommend that all participants undertake an initial audit within the first two years of joining the program. The ongoing frequency of audits will be determined by the level of risks identified within the business.

FairFarms Program

Training and Certification Pathways



As a grower organisation, our commitment to growers is to

- Provide support in how to meet emerging requirements in the supply chain to demonstrate good employment practices,
- Ensure costs are transparent and kept to a minimum
- Keep the program up to date and maintained to reflect current laws and risks.

We will maintain ownership of the program so there is a responsible entity to manage any concerns, complaints and opportunities to improve. One of our major objectives is that operators who exploit or mistreat their workers are shut out of the supply chain.

The Fair Farms Training and Certification Program is currently being piloted with a small number of businesses. We aim to have the program fully operational and open to all growers by early 2019.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who can join the Fair Farms program?

The program in its initial phase is open to all horticulture farming and packing enterprises in Australia.

Do I have to be a Growcom member or Queensland grower?

No. The program is open to all horticulture businesses in Australia.

How do I benefit from being Fair Farm certified?

Your business will benefit from being Fair Farms certified in a number of ways including:

- You will set yourself apart as an ethical employer. This will make more farm workers want to come and work for you. Labour hire firms are likely to send more workers your way. Overall, a Fair Farms Certification will help you to improve your supply of consistent labour.
- Being Fair Farms certified will improve your ability to sell to the major Australian retailers. It is becoming apparent that the Fair Farms Certification (or a similar work-place compliance certificate) may well become a mandatory requirement for all farmers wanting to remain part of the big retailers' supply chain.
- You will demonstrate to the regulator and any other interested parties that you are committed to complying with the Australian employment laws and ethical standards.

What will it cost?

The pilot process will help us confirm the exact pricing arrangements for the program. Our commitment is to keep program costs transparent and kept to a minimum while delivering value to participating businesses. At this point, we anticipate program costs to include:

Registration/Annual membership fee: In the first year, the registration fee will be set at \$150. Upon registration, the business can access the Fair Farms Standard and undertake an on-line training needs analysis (TNA). This will be regularly updated to reflect legislative changes and best practice.

Training: The specific level of training required by a participant in the program will be determined through the on-line training needs assessment. For those participants with significant gaps in their practice, procedures and records, attendance at a training course will be required – the course runs for 4-5 hours. In most locations, we will aim to offer group training at \$880 (incl. GST) per business. Those participants with less significant gaps in compliance will be able to access a phone consultation for an hourly fee or even move straight to audit if they wish.

Audit: We have entered into an arrangement with AUS-QUAL to provide fixed price audits depending on the number of employees. As we are still in the pilot phase, we can't give a definitive answer but please be assured that controlling audit costs is one of our main objectives. The development of the Fair Farms Standard means the audit costs are lower and the process is more efficient as you know ahead of time what you will be audited against and what documentation you need. Templates and examples will be provided as part of the program. The frequency of audits will be determined by the level of risks identified in your business.

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Will there be training near me?

The intention is to have training options available in all States and Territories. A comprehensive training package has been developed and Growcom is working with our partners in other States to develop a full delivery schedule for 2019.

Does my customer/retailer accept Fair Farms?

At this stage if you supply Woolworths or ALDI they have indicated to us that they will accept findings from the Fair Farms Audit/ Certification process. Woolworths has requested that their suppliers indicate by 31 November 2018 if they intend to participate in the Fair Farms Program. Other retailers have indicated their in-principle support for Fair Farms but we are still negotiating how it will fit within their existing programs. It is up to you to confirm with your customer if they will accept Fair Farms.

Is the Fair Farms Program relevant to me if I use a Labour Hire Company?

Yes. Even if all of your workers are supplied through a labour hire arrangement, you still have significant obligations and responsibilities under the Fair Work Act. The Fair Farms Standard spells out these responsibilities and your business would benefit from participation in the Fair Farms Program.

Can Fair Farms just be added into HARPS?

With its focus on workplace and employment practices and procedures, the Fair Farms program will be distinct from HARPS and other food safety and quality systems. The Fair Farms program will require specialist auditors with specific training and qualifications in workplace relations, employment and social issues.

How do I sign up?

Please register your details following the link below. You will be contacted with updates about the progress of the pilot and will be contacted once the program starts early in 2019.

www.growcom.com.au/fairfarmsinitiative

I'm still unsure. Can I speak to someone?

Please call our Fair Farms team on 07 3620 3844 or email fairfarms@growcom.com.au

**To register your expression of interest, visit
www.growcom.com.au/fairfarmsinitiative**

For More Information

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