



run by growers, for growers



2022 Federal Election Priorities



“We are run by growers, for growers, and the industry is ready to grow to new heights.”

Growers to benefit from going back to basics

AT almost every meal, half a plate is dedicated to us, however we are often forgotten about.

The vegetable and potato sectors are not only an important part of the Australian diet, but we are also a significant part of the Australian agriculture framework.

The AUSVEG 2022 Federal Election Priority document brings together these core concepts of combining broader Australian social benefits of eating vegetables and potatoes with the positive employment and economic benefits that growers generate for their regional communities.

AUSVEG is the national peak body of vegetable and potato growers, representing the industry that is helping to feed Australians and their families.

We are run by growers, for growers, and the industry is ready to grow to new heights.

The priorities outlined in this document will allow the \$4.8 billion sector to not only grow in value, but also help boost other parts of the economy and help secure the next generation of jobs in our regional and rural communities.

These priorities have been developed through extensive consultation and collaboration with AUSVEG’s state members, as well as growers across the country.

The priorities are set around three central themes:

› Driving increased consumption.

› Developing more efficient businesses.

› Becoming a more resilient industry.

Driving increased consumption leads to both domestic and overseas opportunities. Increasing domestic consumption requires bold new thinking to tackle a persistent and worsening problem. Data from the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium (FVC) indicates that vegetable consumption is too low, and declining over time. However, the FVC outlines the benefits of increasing vegetable consumption, with an increase of just half a serve of vegetables per day conservatively generating an incremental increase in industry returns of \$634 million per year. On the export front, the vegetable industry is just getting started. Increasing trade and market access to countries such as Singapore, UAE, Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand will further enhance our selling opportunities for growers.

Developing more efficient businesses starts with access to a more efficient, reliable and competent workforce. While the Australian Agriculture Visa and Pacific Island programs are significant pieces of that complex puzzle, other pieces include affordable and reasonable accommodation options for workers and greater skilled career opportunities for the domestic workforce. Improved business management and negotiation skills are critical for farm businesses to become more prepared to effectively negotiate with their buyers and their banks. While greater market transparency will increase grower knowledge of pricing fluctuations and give them access to the free, timely and accurate market information they need to make more informed decisions for benefit of their business.

Becoming a more resilient industry is about planning for the future. This includes better understanding our customers’ expectations and preparing for the constant challenges that the climate brings. From fires, floods, droughts and COVID, our growers have dealt with a wide range of issues outside of their control, but they can prepare to mitigate the impacts on their businesses and on our future food security. It also includes improved management for food safety and how the uptake in new technology can assist in ensuring Australia’s fresh produce is safe for all consumers.

These central themes are the core of the development of the vegetable and potato sector as it strives to become an \$8 billion sector by 2030.

Bill Bulmer, AUSVEG Chair
Bulmer Farms
Lindenow, Gippsland, Victoria



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Industry Insights

3,600+
Vegetable
Businesses
in Australia

Gross value of Australian
vegetable and potato industry is
\$4.8 billion



Horticulture
employs
more than
130,000
people

3.72 million tonnes
fresh vegetables and potatoes
grown in Australia

In 2019-20,
Australian growers
exported over
210k tonnes
of fresh vegetables
valued over
\$275 million.

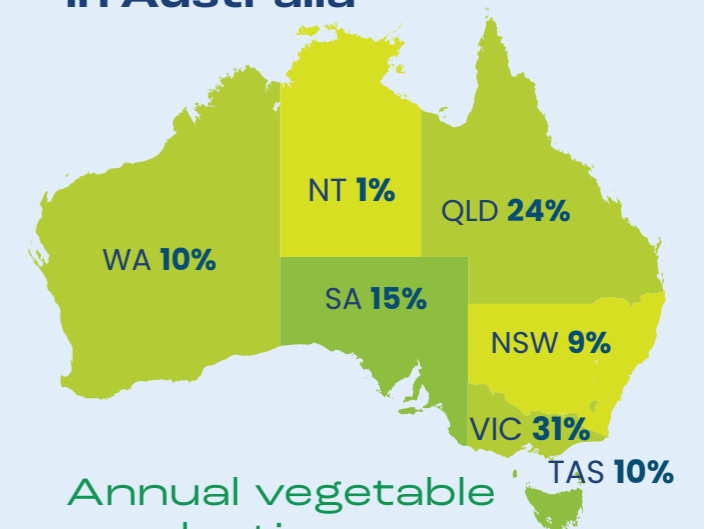
**Top export markets
in 2021 include:**



Average
consumption
of vegetables
and legumes is
2.4 serves
a day.

Australian Dietary Guidelines
recommend 5 serves a day.

**Vegetable Production
in Australia**



Annual vegetable
production:
3,723,506
tonnes (\$4.85b)

Increasing domestic consumption of Australian vegetables

THE issue of **alarmingly low and declining domestic consumer demand** is now a multi-billion-dollar problem that is impacting the economic, health, social and environmental wellbeing of all Australians.

This problem starts at the paddock, threatening operating viability and the confidence of Australian growers and flows right across the fresh food supply chain. It directly impacts the livelihood of our regional communities, with low economic growth, low investment, and the loss of jobs. This flows into Australian homes with poor dietary choices directly impacting our physical and mental health, and on to our health care system with overweight and obesity now the leading cause of chronic disease. This in turn drives our escalating health cost burden and it flows directly back to Australian taxpayers and the Government.

This is a serious problem in need of a serious solution.

With agriculture heralded to lead the economic recovery in early 2022, Federal Government support is urgently needed to stimulate a significant and sustained increase in the daily vegetable intake of Australians.

Unlike wider agriculture where 70% of produce is exported to global markets, the Australian vegetable industry exports just 6.4% of produce, making it heavily reliant on the buoyancy of the domestic market.

Australians today are eating less than half the recommended daily 5 serves of vegetables – and this number is steadily declining – in fact, we are now consuming ½ a serve fewer vegetables per day, equating to 13kg per person per year less than we were in 2001. This equates to staggering **\$1.2 billion of GVP** per year that is lost from the farmgate, and this is felt right through the fresh produce supply chain and directly contributing to our escalating health burden, social isolation, and environmental footprint.

Australia is now the 5th most obese country in the world, with its highest (and rising) rate of obesity ever. In fact, more than 70% of our population is now overweight or obese. The cost of poor health due to low vegetable intake is a relentless burden on our public health system and taxpayers. What's most concerning is that it's our younger generation that are worst affected – that's Aussie kids, teens, and young adults. The need for convenience has driven the meteoric rise of packaged, processed, and fast foods. Sadly, this issue is made worse by the loss of intergenerational cooking skills, social isolation, low food literacy, and perceived affordability.

The solution is driving long-term behavioural change for a healthier Australia and now is the right time to urge consumers back towards vegetables.

Investing to grow vegetable consumption offers a compelling case for investment:

- If Australians consumed just one additional serve of vegetables per day, this would deliver:
 - \$200 million reduction in health expenditure per annum
 - \$1.3 billion increase in returns to Aussie growers and food supply chain operators
- Driving an increase of just a serve per day will lead to improved health and wellbeing – reducing mental and physical health issues, obesity, and other illnesses – generating more than \$1 billion economic value after 11 years to Australian taxpayers and Governments at all levels.
- Every \$1 invested in a behaviour change program to increase vegetable consumption results in a \$10 return on investment.
- Every new job created in the Australian food industry supports an additional job in the regional economy.

What is the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium?

THE Fruit & Vegetable Consortium (FVC) is a collective of organisations led under the auspice of AUSVEG and Nutrition Australia with a unique and powerful membership that starts at the paddock with Australian farmers, and matches this expertise and capability of the food, health, and consumer sectors to collectively drive what's on the plate.

The FVC exists to provide the strategic direction and the collaborative action required to achieve a significant and sustained increase the fruit and vegetable intake of Australians. The FVC acknowledges that with only 7% of Australian adults and 6% of Australian children consuming the recommended daily serves of vegetables, increasing vegetable consumption is the most pressing and urgent task at hand.

The motivations for collaborative action to increase vegetable consumption are:

- To **improve health outcomes** through activating behavioural change to Australian dietary habits.
- To **improve economic and social outcomes** by:
 - Reducing national health costs; and
 - Generating economic activity that flows through to vegetable production regions of Australia.
- To **improve environmental outcomes** through:
 - Reduced wastage in the supply chain and home.
 - More environmentally sustainable food production.

Policy ask:

To deliver a substantial and sustained increase in vegetable consumption, the FVC is calling for funding of a broad-reaching behavioural change strategy and program over 5 years as follows:

Strategy and Program Delivery:

➤ **\$100m to develop and execute a national strategy and behaviour change program***

Addressing the range of interventions required across different cohorts to educate, inform, inspire, and empower Australians to consistently have positive eating experiences with vegetables.

* Behavioural change programs essentially 'stitch together' and coordinate the collective efforts of multiple interested parties around a common framework. The recommendation is for a behavioural change model, rather than a marketing program alone, as there are many factors constraining vegetable consumption, and these vary across cohorts, communities, and meal occasions. Hence, a wide range of targeted and nuanced interventions beyond advertising alone is required.



Carl Walker
Phantom Produce
Bowen, Whitsunday, QLD



CARL Walker runs Phantom Produce with his wife Trudy, and son Troy, in the Whitsunday region of Queensland.

With the help of 20 employees, Phantom Produce turns over just shy of \$2 million per year and sends about 100,000 units of fresh produce including capsicums, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes and truss tomatoes to New Zealand and major cities around Australia.

Phantom produce is a small family run business with three full time employees and 17 casual staff which are made up of Australians and Visa holders.

“As with any business, having a workforce that is committed and takes pride in what they do is the key to a successful business,” Carl said.

“We work as a team and rely on each other to harvest, and process produce when it is ripe.

“A reliable workforce makes a huge difference in our bottom line, ensuring nothing is wasted.”

“Knowing that workers will show up and do the job properly and with care is essential.

“Produce that isn’t picked, wastes money, time, and resources.

“It is money that could have gone to an employee, their family, and money that could have then helped a community locally or abroad.”

Carl is well-known in the Bowen community having served as president of the Bowen Gumlu Growers’ Association for many years.

Carl said he sees the importance businesses like his has on the community by bringing in a workforce which supports other local businesses.

“As with any business, having a workforce that is committed and takes pride in what they do is the key to a successful business.”



Workforce

PROVIDING growers access to an efficient, reliable and competent workforce has been at the center of AUSVEG’s advocacy for many years. It continues to be the single largest issue for growing businesses, no matter whether they are large, medium or small.

The Australian Agriculture Visa is a substantial critical step forward for vegetable and potato growers across the country. However, like any new visa, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure the newly created visa meets the needs of those growers. Workforce is about 30-40% of the total cost of production for growers, so it is critical that they can access the efficient workforce they need to compete across the world.

Labour Hire contractors also play a significant role in the sector, particularly for harvest labour, which is why growers are calling for all labour hire businesses to be licensed, so growers can have confidence that the labour hire is operating appropriately.

As the vegetable and potato industry embraces new technology and advancements both in the field and in the packing shed, it is also critical that the skilled labour required are meeting growers’ needs. It is for this reason, industry is calling for greater investment in the tertiary and vocational education pathways for the industry.

Policy asks:

International:

- Deliver a fully operational Australian Agriculture Visa.
Ensure all growers are able to access a competent and efficient workforce via the Australian Agriculture Visa by July 2022.
- Deliver an affordable National Quarantine facility for an agriculture/horticulture workforce.
Ensure growers are able to not be overburdened by significant cost or limited by quarantine capacity, to bring in workers to meet their business needs.
- Add harvest occupations to the Horticulture industry Labour Agreement (HILA).
Allows growers to access an efficient and reliable harvest workforce for full-time employment.
- Grow the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme.
Continue to expand the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme to ensure benefits for growers and workers.

Domestic:

- Implement a National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme.
Ensure all growers have confidence to use labour hire companies and ensure their workers are being paid properly.
- Develop an Agriculture Unit within the Fair Work Ombudsman
Properly resource the Fair Work Ombudsman with a dedicated team which can support the horticulture sector through education, assistance, advice and compliance.
- \$20m to better develop vocational and tertiary education pathways for horticulture.
Ensure the long-term investment in a domestic workforce, supporting pathways for Australians into agriculture.
- \$3m each year to develop a National Agriculture Workforce Network.
The network will support growers across the country in accessing a range of workers either locally or overseas, and bring together an understanding of the many programs available to them such as visas and study pathways.

Adam Schreurs
Schreurs & Sons
Clyde, Melbourne
and Middle Tarwin,
Gippsland, Victoria



VICTORIAN vegetable grower Adam Schreurs, Schreurs & Sons, is leading the way in regenerative vegetable farming.

He was one of the first vegetable farmers in Victoria to implement Integrated Pest Management (IPM) on his property.

With the help of about 150 employees Schreurs & Sons farm grows more than 200,000 kilograms of celery each week, alongside 30,000 kg of leeks, baby spinach, and rocket. The business supply's all major supermarkets and wholesale markets throughout Australia. They also export produce to Singapore, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates.


Adam is a firm believer that it is possible to work with nature whilst maintaining a profitable thriving business.

At Schreurs, its major focus is around sustainable growing methods which help to sequester carbon through cover cropping, minimum tillage, boundary planting and protecting native vegetation.

It is important to Adam that we share knowledge about regenerative practices and natural resource management.

"The whole world is heading towards a sustainable future, and we need to be a part of that shift," Adam said.

"Our customers are seeking fresh produce that has this in mind."

A photograph of Adam Schreurs, a man with a beard and a baseball cap, wearing an orange polo shirt, kneeling in a field of green celery plants. The background is a dense field of similar plants under bright sunlight.

"The whole world is heading towards a sustainable future, and we need to be a part of that shift."

Regenerative Farming

THE success of a grower's business largely depends on the success of its soil management. Australian growers have been leading the way with soil management and soil health globally for decades. And while much of the public discussion is made around farmers behaving sustainably, growers are clear that they have always and will always look for practical solutions to improve their farm business.

The agriculture sector contributes 14% to Australia's emissions. Of the total agriculture emission, horticulture emits just 1%. Whilst horticulture emits a very small amount, it has an enormous capacity to sequester emissions. Growers play a key role in reducing Australia's emissions, but the industry requires further investment and support to make greater changes. Funding to transition their fuel and electricity to renewable sources will help to remove as much as 70% of horticulture's emissions.

Much of agriculture's net zero emissions challenges are in the livestock sector, however fertiliser is posing a significant future challenge for vegetable and potato growers. Fertiliser is posing a significant future economic and environmental challenge for vegetable and potato growers.

Creating fertiliser is highly energy-intensive, so if energy costs continue to rise, growers' margins will tighten, meaning alternative options need to be found. The industry needs to begin regenerating systems for the long-term, including building back lost soil, moving into renewable energy, investing in local communities, and creating circular economies while making it costs effective for growers to do so.

Policy asks:

Innovation and Education:

- \$30m for R&D into sustainable packaging and plastics that can be recycled, reused, or decomposed easily.
Provide sustainable affordable alternatives to single use plastic packaging, helping to answer consumer and investor demands.
- \$30m for R&D to extend shelf life of fresh produce such as improved cold chain management.
To reduce food waste of products at the consumer and market end of the supply chain.
- \$20m for on-farm workshops and trainings to educate and share regenerative farmer experiences to promote implementation.
Promote better on farm practices that will protect and improve agricultural land over the long term.
- Initiate market-based incentives to encourage the adoption of improved natural resource management practices.
Encourage growers to take up better on-farm practices that promote and protect the health of the environment.

Renewable Energy:

- \$100m in Renewable energy grants for growers to drive energy efficiency.
Ensure all growers have the opportunity to reduce their emissions, and access clean, affordable energy.
- \$20m to educate growers on emissions reduction and Australian Carbon Credit Unit opportunities.
Ensure all growers have equal opportunity to participate in being rewarded for reducing their emissions and helping to repair the environment.

David Addison
*Addison Farm Produce
 and Charlton Farms*
 Moriarty, North-West,
 Tasmania



DAVID Addison is a vegetable and potato grower in Moriarty, Tasmania. David and his sons Mark and James run two separate businesses, Addison Farm Produce which produces, potatoes beans, peas, broccoli, carrots, poppies, onions and livestock and Charlton Farm Produce which is an onion packing business.

Their produce goes to supermarkets, wholesale markets and major food processors Simplot and McCain.

The family business also exports onions to 16 different countries across Asia and Europe. Between the two businesses, Addison Farm Produce produces 5,600 tonnes of produce and Charlton Farms packs 10000 tonnes of onions (includes produce from other suppliers) and turns over roughly \$7 million a year, employing about 20 full time employees.

Managing pests and diseases are a major part of David's businesses and has a significant impact on his bottom line.

"Any new pests and diseases require new practices to control and manage, taking up time, money, and resources," David said.

Well-resourced and managed biosecurity programs by the Federal Government are crucial to ensure that growers are not impacted by new pests and diseases.

"Movement of people, consumables and equipment are the biggest biosecurity threat to the agricultural industries, the more things move, the more pests and diseases spread, increasing the risk of new incursions," he said

"We can't stop this activity but need to ensure that the best systems are in place to enable the biosecurity threats are well managed and pests and disease incursions are limited."

Properly resourced biosecurity is essential for David's businesses, to protect his farm, the livelihood of his family, workers, and the greater community.

**"...the more things
 move, the more pests
 and diseases spread,
 increasing the risk of
 new incursions."**



Biosecurity

BIOSECURITY is everyone's responsibility.

Any person who travels into the country carries an amount of risk of spreading harmful pests and disease. Often, they are unaware and oblivious of the consequences of their actions. But growers bear the cost of these mistakes from chemical management on-farm to paying for the mistakes of others through their own Biosecurity levies.

A strong biosecurity regime supports a range of industries that are vital to regional communities, including agriculture, tourism and hospitality.

Therefore, a more balanced, long-term approach is needed to biosecurity funding and resourcing. The recent \$371 million budget allocation is great for the short-term, but on-going funding is needed. Each traveler and importer carry a level of biosecurity risk and must pay the appropriate amount for that risk.

Whilst Australia has a strong border force that has prevented the entrance of many disastrous pests and disease, there are still biosecurity risks entering. Each year new pests such as the tomato-potato psyllid, serpentine leafminer, brown marmorated stink bug, and fall armyworm threaten our industry. In addition, endemic pests such as the Queensland fruit fly still cause consistent damage to crop.

Fruit fly is a significant pest for the horticulture sector and much of our trading relationships rely on the management of the Pest Free Areas (PFA). At the moment there is significant crossover in spending states and state and federal funding. Australia could generate significant cost savings and generate better outcomes with a more coordinated approach to fruit fly management.

Policy requests:

Funding:

- Introduce a biosecurity imports levy charge.

Equally distribute the responsibility of biosecurity risks of travellers and goods, to protect and help manage those businesses that are adversely impacted.

- Introduce a passenger travel biosecurity levy charge.

Ensure growers are not burdened with the cost managing biosecurity breaches, by distributing the responsibility and cost.

Management:

- Ensure a 0% non-compliance rate of imported cut flowers and foliage.

There needs to be a zero-tolerance approach when there is regular high-levels of non-compliance to biosecurity protocols.

- \$5m to review the current Fruit Fly activities and develop a national approach to fruit fly which all states adopt and protect trading relationships.

To better manage fruit fly and ensure all growers and trading relationships are protected and ensure greater value of taxpayer and grower money.

Education:

- \$10m to support urban and peri-urban biosecurity networks to assist pest and disease identification.

Ensure all growers are able to identify pests and disease to detect risks early in urban areas.

- \$5m to Increase grower awareness and capability to manage pests, weeds, and disease.

Use Growcom's Infopest product as a national biosecurity, pest and chemical reference source.

Andrew Moon
Moonrocks
Saint George,
Western QLD



ANDREW Moon is a fifth-generation farmer running Moonrocks, with his brother David, in St. George, Queensland. Moonrocks is an Australian company employing up to 120 workers to process their range of onions, garlic, pumpkin, and broccoli.

The family business sends their produce to the major supermarkets, wholesale markets, and exports to Taiwan, Thailand, Japan and Singapore.

Like many vegetable companies, Moonrocks also processes and packages their own produce for market. This key step in the process is heavily regulated with food safety laws to ensure the produce they send to market is safe. The challenge is that the infrastructure and handling of produce at scale.

“Food safety infrastructure is critical for our business, to ensure compliance with the law and regulations.” Andrew said.

The high standards at Moonrocks has built them a reputation of consistent high quality produce.

Moonrocks produces produce all year, so it is essential they have a year-round supply of water. On the property there are several dams which allow Moonrocks to have secure undisturbed access the amount of water required.

“St George is a dry climate which is great for growing veggies but also means they can’t rely on rain fall alone,” Andrew said.

“Weather extremes including long dry spells are common place out here, so water storage is a critical part of our on-farm infrastructure.”



“Weather extremes including long dry spells are common place out here, so water storage is a critical part of our on-farm infrastructure.”

Emergency Preparation & Prevention

GROWERS are experts at managing what is within their control, but they take on the biggest business risk in the world each day – the weather. Droughts, floods and fire are all significant weather events that farmers across the country know all too well. Growers understand the importance of emergency preparation and prevention and to be prepared for the unexpected.

Many of the significant impacts of these risks can be prevented by good farm management, which includes protecting its number one asset – water. Water infrastructure in storage and delivery is critical to the ongoing protection for growers.

Growers can prepare and prevent some risks through better infrastructure and access to improved technology. However, it’s not just weather which can create risk. As the horticulture industry saw with the needle in strawberry incident and the E. Coli outbreak in lettuce, food safety poses a significant area of risk which needs to be considered.

Food safety incidents can lead to drastic decline in consumer demand and result in much of the crop being put to waste. Growers need support to implement on-farm infrastructure to ensure the food is safe before it leaves the farm gate.

Food safety and weather incidents can have a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of growers, their families and their employees. It is important that mental health services are available to those businesses in the regions.

Policy asks:

Food Safety:

- \$50m to help growers implement food safety infrastructure on-farm.

Ensure all growers can improve the quality and safety of their produce, cementing their reliability with consumers and markets.

- \$2m per year for 5 years for an industry-led program to connect growers to latest international agricultural innovations and tech solutions.

Promote knowledge sharing between growers to improve practices and find solutions that create more efficient and resilient businesses.

Mental health:

- Increase the mental health and wellbeing of workers in rural and regional areas by establishing an incentive scheme to attract and retain mental health service workers.

Ensure all growers have access to affordable, reliable mental health resources, to promote wellbeing.

Water:

- \$20m to modernise water delivery and storage infrastructure and promote uptake of existing schemes.

Ensure all growers have reliable and secure access to water to create resilient businesses in times of drought.

- Commitment to maintain and protect existing water allocations and entitlements for vegetable and potato growers.

Ensure all vegetable and potato growers have continued access to their water allocations to ensure business continuity.

- \$20m to educate growers on farm water efficiency.

Promote positive long-term management practices which will reduce on-farm water use and costs.

Ed Fagan
 Mulyan Farm Est. 1886
 Cowra, Western
 New South Wales



GROWER Ed Fagan runs a diverse multi-million dollar business of sheep, grains and vegetables. The business, Mulyan Farm, has 16 full time employees who help run the year-round production. At Mulyan farms they grow popcorn, beetroot, asparagus, onion, spinach, and lettuce.

Mulyan farms supplies direct to restaurants, wholesalers such as Product Distribution, White Prince and Countrywide, and to food processors like Simplot, Fresh Fodder, Three Threes and One Harvest.

The diversity in his business means that Ed is involved in multiple organisations and marketplaces. Each product is handled very differently in the marketplace and uses different systems to grade and sell products.

Currently the grain and livestock industry have a high-level of market price transparency allowing growers and the supply chain to track products in real time.

“The prices and data are accurate and available to everyone in the industry,” Ed said.

For Ed this brings ease when he is ready to sell his grain and sheep, allowing him to have greater knowledge and understanding of the market before choosing to sell his product.

“The vegetable market is an ‘archaic’ paper and verbal system, where the quality standards are done by visual inspection and are highly variable from person to person,” he said.

Having a free, transparent, accessible, and accurate market price system would allow Ed to track the market, identify consumer and market trends and plan accordingly. This will keep Mulyan Farms competitive and allow for easier business.

“The vegetable market is an ‘archaic’ paper and verbal system, where the quality standards are done by visual inspection and are highly variable from person to person.”



Competition & Business

DATA and knowledge are critical for any market – the vegetable and potato markets are no different.

As highlighted in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Perishable Goods inquiry, there are clear gaps in information and understanding throughout the horticulture supply chain.

A greater understanding of supply and demand trends that is accessible, free, timely and accurate is essential for the industry to have the market knowledge it requires to progress and bring it in line with other agricultural commodities.

Growers are also under increasing pressure with rising input costs and challenges with global shipping. Growers need to have confidence that they have access to critical inputs such as fertiliser and chemicals and are not being subject to any unnecessary price gouging along the fresh produce supply chain.

Data can help give businesses a competitive edge, assisting them in identify trends in consumer behavior. Current trends are showing consumers, investors, banks, and markets have become more conscious of the impact businesses have on the environment. They are actively looking for businesses that are stewards of the environment and are undertaking best practice.

Meanwhile, greater pressure is being put on growers and their businesses to demonstrate their ability to be sustainable. Both consumers and banks are now asking questions regarding their sustainable practices, with many growers already do in the day-to-day management of their business.

However, many are looking to upskill their ability to have these conversations with their banks and their consumers and be able to better share their story about what is being done on their farm to ensure their business is sustainable into the future.

Policy asks:

Market information:

- Introduce freely available and accurate real-time market price reporting in vegetables and potatoes.
 Ensure a more transparent market which allows growers to make more informed decisions for their business.
- Introduce freely available customer purchase data.
 Ensure all growers have the opportunity to track trends and behaviors in consumption to take advantage of new market opportunities.

Farm Inputs:

- Increase penalties for businesses found to be price gouging in the agricultural supply chain.
 Ensure there is no anti-competitive behaviour across the fresh produce supply chain in the sales of goods, services or commodities.
- Invest in domestic production facilities for farm inputs such as fertiliser, agri-chemicals, potash and wood.
 Ensuring Australia’s food security is not put at risk due to an over reliance of imported farm inputs.

Farm Business:

- \$3m to help build grower capability in preparation to have sustainability conversations with their banks and their consumers.
 Promote the uptake of sustainable practices in business to ensure growers keep up with market demand.
- \$4m for business benchmarking for vegetable and potato farms across Australia.
 To assess the performance of vegetable and potato businesses against others in the sector to identify areas of improvement.

Pennie Patane
Patane Produce
Myalup, South West,
Western Australia



THE Patane family has been growing high quality fresh produce in the South West of WA for the past 70 years.

Pennie Patane and her husband Michael, went out on their own in 1999 and set up Patane Produce and with the help of up to 80 employees has diversified their business to incorporate export markets.

Each year Patane Produce grows, harvests and processes more than 23,000 tonnes of carrots, potatoes, onions, and broccoli.

Like many Australian farms, Patane Produce produces significantly more than the domestic market can consume meaning they are heavily reliant on export sales to maintain the scope, productivity, and profitability of their business.

Exporting allows the Patane family farm to be more efficient and productive and create jobs for local community.

This supports local businesses and allows their products to be marketed at a competitive price domestically.

“As with any business model, size of scale is a fundamental to the industry, and Australia just doesn’t have the population to create the scale required,” Pennie said.

“In an ever-changing global market, there is a need to be able to understand, access, and pivot when changes to international market conditions occur, something that is difficult for producers to manage without assistance.

“It is even more important that this is done in a timely manner when you are dealing with fresh produce.”

The intricacies of these negotiations are far and beyond the capacity of vegetable growers to address individually in their own right.

The knowledge required to navigate, what are nearly always difficult and convoluted, pathways within a foreign government’s corridors is intrinsic to the success of our business’s ability to trade globally.

Assistance in ensuring the implementation of market access arrangements is crucial to the integrity of these agreements.

“We need to have confidence that we have the knowledge and diplomatic, political advocacy backing us when venturing into global trade,” she said.

“We need to have confidence that we have the knowledge and diplomatic, political advocacy backing us when venturing into global trade.”



International Trade

INTERNATIONAL markets and export development is critical for the future growth of the Australian vegetable industry.

Over recent decades we have built a reputation for high-quality and consistent supply of fresh vegetables and potatoes to international markets. Quality Australian fresh produce is recognised by international customers, and export demand is increasing. This presents opportunities for Australian growers to increase their production and expand into foreign markets.

With persistently low levels of vegetable consumption in Australia, industry growth must come from exports to reach the target of an \$8 billion vegetable sector by 2030.

Opening up new markets and supporting industry-led market development and international promotion activities is critical to achieve growth in fresh vegetable exports..

Policy asks:

- \$5m to support for international market development initiatives to promote fresh vegetables and potatoes in export markets.

The vegetable industry does not have marketing funds to undertake international promotional activities. Government funding to undertake promotional activities in export markets to assist industry to raise the profile of Australian vegetables is required to drive export growth.

- Resolve trade barriers with Indonesia that are stifling trade in fresh vegetable exports under the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Ensure that barriers to fully utilising the IA-CEPA are addressed through high-level representations from the Australian government to the Indonesian Trade and Agriculture Ministries.

- \$5m for additional resourcing to support a reinvigorated whole-of-government approach to negotiating horticulture market access and seeking improved market access conditions.

Ensure that the appropriate government agencies are responsible and sufficiently resourced to negotiate technical horticultural market access and market improvements.

Renee and Mark Pye
*Parilla Premium Potatoes
 and Zerella Fresh*
 Virginia, Northern
 Adelaide and Parilla,
 Murray and Mallee,
 South Australia



FATHER and daughter team, Mark and Renee, together with their incredible management team run Zerella Fresh and Parilla Premium Potatoes in South Australia's Virginia and Mallee region.

Each year they grow and supply approximately 210,000 tonnes of potatoes, carrots, and onions, including the well-known brand Spud Lite, low carb potatoes.

The family owned and operated business employs about 450 workers to harvest, process, pack, and distribute more than \$100 million worth of produce each year.

The majority of their produce ends up on the domestic market on supermarket shelves with about three per cent of their produce exported to East Asia.

The team is currently in the process of building a new \$40 million packing and processing facility in the Mallee. Renee said it was pivotal their business looked to invest in greater infrastructure to support the volume of produce they were producing.

"We are constantly working on making our business more productive and efficient," Renee said.

"Improving our infrastructure and technology is key to growing our business."

In the Mallee region, there is a huge lack of adequate accommodation for staff which makes it difficult to attract workers.

Mark and Renee have recently built 28 new family homes to attract more workers and ensure they have appropriate accommodation.

For them this is critical for their business to create a reliable and long-term solution to workforce shortages, whilst also ensuring their staff have quality housing for themselves and their families.

"Improving our infrastructure and technology is key to growing our business."



Infrastructure

Creating infrastructure for growers is critical for long-term business development and confidence for farm business and their communities.

Regional accommodation options are limited across regional communities, particularly to support workers who are participating in a seasonal harvest period. The recent Australian Agriculture Visa announcement, as well as changes to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM), has meant the demand for accommodation has grown, and will continue to grow. Providing support for growers to invest in on-farm accommodation will allow growers to ensure that accommodation standards are met, as well as ensure growers are able to house the workers they need for their business.

Modernising on-farm processing facilities and waste facilities will also allow grower businesses to be more efficient. Building shared processing and waste facilities will support local economies by allowing growers to enter new markets. A regional shared facility will help centralise production and reduce the reliance on external suppliers, and could focus on reusing farm waste products creating a self-sufficient, circular economy. Creating compost from biproducts of production will remove the dependency from suppliers and protect growers when global or national supply chains are impacted.

Lastly, transport infrastructure is the lifeblood of the horticulture industry. The ability to get a product to market is key to business survival.

Policy asks:

Accommodation:

- Accelerated tax write off for businesses to build staff accommodation.
 Increase from current 3% to 33% per year over 3 years to assist growers to improve their accommodation offers to attract staff.
- \$3m to develop on-farm accommodation guidelines and support Local Government Association's with implementing them.
 Ensure all growers supply quality accommodation to workers, including essential facilities which are private and well maintained.

Supply chain:

- Create a funding pool to support growers to build and modernise on-farm processing and waste facilities.
 Helping growers to utilise waste products to prevent food waste and move towards a circular economy.
- Upgrading key roads and bridge assets to unlock the potential of important routes for getting fresh produce to market. Including B-Double routes, connections and unhitching pads, and access to inland rail.
 Ensure all growers can get their produce to market in a timely fashion and are not hindered by poor roads or facilities.

Catherine Velisha
Velisha Farms
Werribee South,
Melbourne, Victoria



CATHERINE Velisha is forward thinking and progressive vegetable grower in Werribee South, Victoria.

Coordinating the production of an array of vegetables including cauliflower, zucchini, iceberg lettuce, and spring onions.

Velisha Farms supplies produce direct to supermarkets and wholesale markets.

Catherine is the co-founder of the VEG Education Group which has two main focuses of training people in industry and helping connect children to where their food comes from.

Catherine is one of the many people who see that there is a disconnection between children and their food. She believes this is largely driven because children are not given the opportunity to go to farms and see how their food is produced.

In 2021, Velisha farms booked more than 200 school visits to their farm through the VEG Education Group, giving children the opportunity to see where their food comes from and how its produced. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented many of these from happening.

“It is crucial for the health and wellbeing of children to have these experiences,” Catherine said.

“To be inspired to eat healthy, learn outside the classroom and gain a connection to their food, the land and the industry that feeds and clothes them.

“These experiences are invaluable to give children the opportunity to aspire to a career in agriculture.”

A photograph of Catherine Velisha, a woman with blonde hair, smiling and kneeling in a vegetable field. She is wearing a dark green long-sleeved shirt and a bright orange high-visibility safety vest with 'VELISHA FARMS' printed on it. The field is filled with rows of green leafy vegetables under a cloudy sky.

“These experiences are invaluable to give children the opportunity to aspire to a career in agriculture.”

The Next Generation

The average age of the Australian farmer is 52, and less than a quarter of the workforce is under 35. Farms are getting bigger, but the number of farms is decreasing. Fewer young people are eager to work on the land or take over family farms despite the plethora of jobs available in horticulture businesses.

Exposing all children to agriculture from an early age is essential to spark interest in the industry. It will simultaneously educate children on where their food comes from and lead to a greater understanding and respect for their produce, which we hope will lead to increased consumption in the future.

Integrating agriculture into the core curriculum will also ensure long term benefits to children by teaching them how to grow, prepare, and cook their own food will promote healthy eating, physical activity and boost mental health.

Policy asks:

- Update the core curriculum to include an agriculture/ self-sufficiency/ cooking component.
Ensure all children have the opportunity to learn how to grow, prepare and cook their own food, supporting healthy habits and bodies from an early age.
- \$10m over 3 years to reinvest in kids to vegetables and potato farms.
Ensure all children have the opportunity to learn about food production and spark interest in careers on the land.
- \$10m for R&D to better understand changing consumer preferences.
Develop innovative solutions including more convenient healthy snacking options and products to access more opportunities.



AUSVEG

Michael Coote

CEO

Michael.Coote@ausveg.com.au

Tyson Cattle

National Public Affairs Manager

Tyson.Cattle@ausveg.com.au

Chloe Betts

Policy Officer

Chloe.Betts@ausveg.com.au

03 9882 0277

www.ausveg.com.au