

AUSVEG Federal Election – Policy overview

AUSVEG has compiled an overview of the commitments from the major parties during the election campaign that align with AUSVEG's Federal Election priorities.

There have also been some notable omissions from that list, including the \$100m to support increased domestic consumption of Australian vegetables and funding for the next generation activities that AUSVEG identified as priorities. However, AUSVEG will continue to advocate on all its priorities post-election into the future.

AUSVEG's Federal Election Priorities document can be found [here](#). You can also view the National Farmers' Federation 'Election Voting Guide' [here](#). To see the full commitments from each major party, please click the below:

- [Coalition's Agriculture Plan](#)
- [Labor's Regional Plan](#)
- [The Greens' Agriculture Policy](#)

Below, we detail some of the election asks from AUSVEG under its 9 key pillars, and measure those asks against the commitments from the Coalition and the ALP.

Workforce

The most high-profile issue in agriculture and horticulture has been that of the Australian Agriculture Visa.

The Liberal-National Coalition has been supportive of the visa and will continue to progress with it if elected. However, the Australian Labor Party has said it would restrict the visa to the Pacific Islands under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. It's AUSVEG's view that this would inheritably kill the visa and restrict growers from accessing the reliable and competent workforce they need to run their business.

Interestingly, the Australian Greens have supported the visa, provided there is adequate protections for workers.

This has been central to the design of the visa, so it will be important that industry and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) continue to highlight those protections post-election.

For more information, contact AUSVEG National Manager – Public Affairs Tyson Cattle at tyson.cattle@ausveg.com.au, or 03 9882 0277.

Labor has made a strong commitment in other workforce areas relating to horticulture, including a commitment to a National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme.

AUSVEG Asks	Liberal-National Coalition	Australian Labor Party
International: • Deliver a fully operational Australian Agriculture Visa. • Deliver an affordable National Quarantine facility for an agriculture/horticulture workforce. • Add harvest occupations to the Horticulture industry Labour Agreement (HILA). • Grow the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. Domestic: • Implement a National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme. • Develop an Agriculture Unit within the Fair Work Ombudsman. • \$20m to better develop vocational and tertiary education pathways for horticulture. • \$3m each year to develop a National Agriculture Workforce Network.	• Expand the Australian Agriculture Visa Program with other countries, building on the first bilateral agreement with Vietnam, while we continue to support our Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. • \$5.6 million over 4 years from 2022-23 for the Fair Work Commission to establish a dedicated unit to support small businesses, including with unfair dismissal and general protections disputes.	• Labor’s ag visa will draw on the stability of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility program. • Establish a national labour hire licensing scheme to regulate the labour hire industry and ensure that minimum legal standards are met. • Legislate to guarantee that labour hire workers receive the same pay and conditions as directly employed workers doing the same work. Labor will not accept the abuse of fixed term contracts of employment. • Establish Jobs and Skills Australia as a national partnership to drive VET education and strengthen workforce planning by working together with employers, unions and the training and education sector. • Create 465,000 new fee-free TAFE places in areas of demonstrated labour shortage. These fee-free TAFE placements will help rebuild industries hit hardest by the pandemic, like hospitality and tourism, as well as meet current and future needs in the care economy, including jobs like child care, aged care, disability care, nursing and community services.

Regenerative Farming

The Coalition has proven to be heavily invested in regenerative agriculture, with Minister Littleproud committing to the biodiversity stewardship program as well as investing heavily in the carbon farming initiatives.

The ALP has been a little more high-level with its response to regenerative agriculture focusing on acting on climate change and reducing emissions through a \$500m National Reconstruction Fund.

AUSVEG Asks	Liberal-National Coalition	Australian Labor Party
Innovation and Education: - Initiate market-based incentives to encourage the adoption of improved natural resource management practices. \$30m for R&D into sustainable packaging and plastics that can be recycled, reused, or decomposed easily. \$30m for R&D to extend shelf life of fresh produce such as improved cold chain management. \$20m for on-farm workshops and trainings to educate and share regenerative farmer experiences to promote implementation. Renewable Energy: \$100m in Renewable energy grants for growers to drive energy efficiency. \$20m to educate growers on emissions reduction and Australian Carbon Credit Unit opportunities.	- Invest \$27.3 million to reward biodiversity stewardship through a fully automated trade between farmers and buyers, backed in new laws and based on the world's first scientific measure of its value. - Help farmers participate in the market – based on advice from natural resource management organisations. \$14.3 million to help farmers take up new practices. \$7 million to give farmers a single source of truth on climate. - Continue to support farmers to be financially rewarded through carbon markets, with over \$2.2 billion in carbon farming projects through the emissions reduction fund, and additional investments making it easier for farmers to participate such as development of smart app to streamline registration and reporting, and provision of third party advice from NRM groups to farmers looking to participate in carbon and biodiversity markets.	- Work with farmers to develop more solutions to act on climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. - Reserve \$500 million of its National Reconstruction Fund specifically for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food and fibre. - Labor's National Reconstruction Fund is also available to support regional businesses such as in food manufacturing as they meet the challenges of entering new markets, the adoption of new technologies or processes and adapting to a low carbon world. - Labor's National Reconstruction Fund will support investment in value-adding production, expand the domestic and export market and strengthen our national supply chain resilience.

Biosecurity

Neither major party has committed to delivering an ongoing funding model for biosecurity. This is not a new ask, and AUSVEG’s view is in line with many other peak industry bodies that biosecurity needs an ongoing funding stream.

Much of the discussion on biosecurity has been focused on the red meat sector, with Lumpy Skin Disease creating headlines in the last few weeks after being detected in Indonesia.

AUSVEG Asks	Liberal-National Coalition	Australian Labor Party
Funding: - Introduce a biosecurity imports levy charge. - Introduce a passenger travel biosecurity levy charge. Management: - Ensure a 0% non-compliance rate of imported cut flowers and foliage. \$5m to review the current Fruit Fly activities and develop a national approach to fruit fly which all states adopt and protect trading relationships. Education: \$10m to support urban and peri-urban biosecurity networks to assist pest and disease identification. \$5m to Increase grower awareness and capability to manage pests, weeds, and disease.	\$20 million over 4 years from 2021-22 to work with states and territories to reduce the impact of pests and weeds on agricultural production, native wildlife, the environment, and the community.	- Improve biosecurity capabilities including addressing the potential impact of lumpy skin disease, supporting the adoption of livestock traceability reforms and reducing the impact of pests and weeds. - Double the number of Indigenous Rangers and boost funding for Indigenous Protected Areas which will assist with the early detection of exotic animal disease in those areas. - Strengthen Australia’s biosecurity system across mail centres and airports. - Provide an additional 20 biosecurity detector dogs and an additional 10 biosecurity detector dog handlers.

Emergency preparation and prevention

Food safety, mental health and water are all critical elements for growers to be able to manage through difficult periods and emergency situations.

The Coalition has made a strong commitment to water infrastructure as well as a commitment to regional mental health.

Unfortunately, there was no commitment from either party for food safety infrastructure support for growers.

AUSVEG Asks	Liberal-National Coalition	Australian Labor Party
Food Safety: \$50m to help growers implement food safety infrastructure on-farm. \$2m per year for 5 years for an industry-led program to connect growers to latest international agricultural innovations and tech solutions. 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. Water: \$20m to modernise water delivery and storage infrastructure and promote uptake of existing schemes. - Commitment to maintain and protect existing water allocations and entitlements for vegetable and potato growers. \$20m to educate growers on farm water efficiency.	- Implement the Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy, through \$30 million to establish a new National Centre for Digital Agriculture and put digital officers in the eight regional Innovation Hubs. \$28.6 million over 3 years from 2023-24 to increase the size of the psychiatry workforce through training posts, funding for supervisors, specific rural and remote initiatives and recruitment. \$4.2 million over 5 years from 2021-22 to support employment of general practitioners in headspace centres in rural and remote regions. - Invest \$7.4 billion to build and expand dams. - North and Central Queensland to invest in water infrastructure and supply chain projects that promote water security and open up agriculture and industry growth opportunities.	- Replace the Emergency Response Fund with a Disaster Ready Fund to invest up to \$200 million a year on mitigation projects to help reduce the impact of disasters when they happen. - Invest \$16.7 million towards establishing an Agri Tech Hub in Richmond NSW, which will include a high-tech industry partnered greenhouse array, supported by industry engaged research clusters in food technology, land use management and consumer demand.

Competition and Business

Given the challenges growers are facing with costs of production, competition and business policy has proven to be an important area for AUSVEG and its members, and has increasingly been on both major party's agenda. Both parties have come out strong with regards to recognising much of the pressure the fresh produce industry is facing.

The ALP has committed to focusing on unfair contract terms, while the Coalition has committed to supporting growers in creating greater market price transparency and support funding for benchmarking data.

AUSVEG Asks	Liberal-National Coalition	Australian Labor Party
Market information: - Introduce freely available and accurate real-time market price reporting in vegetables and potatoes. - Introduce freely available customer purchase data. Farm Inputs: - Increase penalties for businesses found to be price gouging in the agricultural supply chain. - Invest in domestic production facilities for farm inputs such as fertiliser, agri-chemicals, potash and wood. Farm Business: \$3m to help build grower capability in preparation to have sustainability conversations with their banks and their consumers. \$4m for business benchmarking for Australian vegetable and potato farms.	- A grant of \$653,950 provided under the Government's \$5.94 million program to improve market transparency across perishable agricultural goods supply chains, will be provided to Fresh Markets Australia to help develop and build of a web-based application that provides trusted, verifiable, daily updated market data across all fresh fruit and vegetables. - This will mean that growers can access daily market information online about the prices of fresh fruit and vegetables, and the volume of market sales. \$500 million for local manufacturing, \$200 million to improve supply chains. \$1.09 million study undertaken by ABARES into horticultural cost of production, production margins and overall industry profitability, initially covering apples and pears. This information will assist growers to strike a fair deal with their buyers including the major supermarkets.	- Improve protections for farmers against unfair contract terms with meaningful protection, safeguarding small business, contractors and smaller scale suppliers from exploitation. - Make unfair contract terms illegal, giving businesses with fewer than 100 staff or a turnover of less than \$10 million genuine protection against dodgy contracts. Once dodgy contracts are illegal, the competition watchdog will be able to issue civil penalties to those who use them. This policy will include small farms and agricultural contractors and suppliers, which meet the above definition. Labor will legislate this reform which the farm sector and small businesses have been calling for.

International Trade

The Coalition has continued with its budget commitments in driving efficiencies and streamlining export processes, while the ALP has released a market diversification plan with a number of Asian countries as priorities.

AUSVEG Asks	Liberal-National Coalition	Australian Labor Party
• \$5m to support for international market development initiatives to promote fresh vegetables and potatoes in export markets. • Resolve trade barriers with Indonesia that are stifling trade in fresh vegetable exports under the Indonesia- Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement. • \$5m for additional resourcing to support a reinvigorated whole-of-government approach to negotiating horticulture market access and seeking improved market access conditions.	• Invest \$127.4 million through the Digital Services to Take Farmers to Market initiative to further streamline export processes. • Deliver the \$11.7 million announced in the 2022-23 Budget to expand the Trade Information System, providing exporters with a single source of online information. • Deliver the \$7.7 million announced in the 2022-23 Budget for the “Tell Us Once” trade system – a digital model for doing trade. • Deliver an additional \$100 million as part of our Regional Accelerator Program for the Export Market Development Grants program to help our rural small and medium-sized exporters promote our goods in new markets. • Deliver increased market opportunities for our food and fibre exporters through the entry into force of free trade deals with the United Kingdom and India.	• Released a market diversification plan, naming Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea as priorities.

Infrastructure

Neither party had a strong commitment to addressing regional accommodation issues, however both parties committed strong amount of funding for road and rail improvements.

AUSVEG Asks	Liberal-National Coalition	Australian Labor Party
Accommodation: - Accelerated tax write off for businesses to build staff accommodation. \$3m to develop on-farm accommodation guidelines and support Local Government Association's with implementing them. Supply chain: - Create a funding pool to support growers to build and modernise on-farm processing and waste facilities. - 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.	- An extra \$880 million on Roads of Strategic Importance. - An additional \$678 million to seal another 1,000 kilometres of road and further upgrades along the Outback Way, taking total investment to \$1 billion. \$385.4 million through the Northern Australia Roads Program extension for upgrades to major freight corridors across our north. \$150 million for the Inland Rail Interface Improvement project. \$400 million to seal more than 450 kilometres of Queensland roads and contribute to upgrading heavy vehicle corridors critical to the transport of cattle and beef.	- Continue to build Australia's road and rail networks that are key to getting agricultural produce to market and keeping supply chains moving. \$250 million towards expanding the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program to support projects and upgrade roads in every part of Australia – particularly in outer-urban and regional areas.