



Fruit and vegie growers want ‘totally unfair’ biosecurity levy scrapped

Already squeezed by rising input costs and retail price pressures, horticulture producers want the revised biosecurity levy dropped.



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A biosecurity levy would add further financial strain for Australia’s horticulture producers feeling the pressure of retail prices and rising input costs, according to industry experts.

The Biosecurity Protection Levy, which will come into effect from July this year, will collect 6 per cent or \$50 million a year from domestic agricultural, fisheries and forestry producers to help cover biosecurity costs.

Producers will join taxpayers and importers in paying for Australia’s biosecurity systems, with the levy to be calculated based on each individual industry’s three-year gross value of production.

But producers across all ag sectors are calling for the “tax” to be scrapped altogether.

Industry veteran Trevor Ranford – who was awarded the 2022 Australian Biosecurity Award – has called on the Federal Government to dump the levy.

Mr Ranford, who has four decades of experience in Australia’s horticulture industry including involvement with Chestnuts Australia Inc and the Pistachio Growers’ Association Inc, said: “Right from day one, the industry across the whole agricultural industry has said this is totally unfair, and not a logical way to go.”



Trevor Ranford, left, has more than 40 years experience in the horticulture industry, and has slammed the biosecurity levy, calling for the levy to be scrapped.

According to Mr Ranford, Australia's plant industry contributed \$12.5 million towards national biosecurity in 2022-23, while affected plant industries are contributing 20 per cent to the national management plan for [varroa mite control](#).

"Over the years the industry has been paying its share of biosecurity issues, growers are managing pest and diseases regularly on the farm," Mr Ranford said.

"I've worked for a number of industries over the last 15 or 20 years, whereby we've had input into incidents like Varroa mite, Khapra beetle, and the growers are paying for that.

"This 'millstone' around the necks of Australian primary producers must be removed by the

Prime Minister if the government is serious about its stated goal of an industry worth \$100

million by 2030."

Fruit Growers Victoria growers services manager Michael Crisera said any levy was "just another added compliance cost" for growers.

“I see why they need to do it, I don’t know if it’s fair that growers need to wear that cost, because that’s where the cost will end up being charged to,” Mr Crisera said.

“We’ve sort of always relied on government with biosecurity, but national bodies have always contributed to the Plant Health Australia levy.

“I think (growers) just see it as another compliance cost they can’t do too much about. Compliance in our industry is very difficult, especially for the smaller guys.”

Labor's 'fresh food tax' on farmers is 'pure insanity'

Nationals leader David Littleproud says Labor’s “fresh food tax” on farmers is “pure insanity”. Mr Littleproud’s remarks come after the Albanese government confirmed in the budget handed down on Tuesday that there will be a biosecurity protection levy slapped on Australian producers. “This is just pure insanity when you think they are charging Australian farmers a tax to pay for their foreign competitors' biosecurity risks so that they can bring their products to this country,” Mr Littleproud told Sky News Australia. “So, what we are saying is we’ll scrap this fresh food tax on farmers that you’ll pay for at the grocery store, and we’ll put in place what we’re implementing anyway, which is a container levy.”

<https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/politics/labors-fresh-food-tax-on-farmers-is-pure-insanity/video/7bc4e6ee4406743e0e0c21952ac81688> - Move cursor to 2.02