

HORTICULTURE COMMITTEE

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Dear Horticulture Members,

Welcome to 2009 we hope it is a good one for everyone. Please find the February update from the Association concerning Horticulture issues currently being dealt with by the Committee and policy staff.

We will continue to work with growers, Government, industry and other grower organisations to ensure the best outcomes for farmers in marketing, regulation, transport and research, as you will see from the summary below.

Regards,



Peter Darley
Chairman – NSW Farmers Association Horticulture Committee

Management of Flying Foxes Update

The Association is currently preparing details in response to the licensing arrangements review for the culling of Grey-Headed Flying Foxes (GHFF) in NSW for crop protection. The Queensland Government announced in September 2008 that it will no longer permit the culling of flying foxes for crop protection because it has been deemed 'inhumane' by the Queensland Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC).

The Humane Society International (HSI) has recently presented a report to Minister for Environment, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt. The report expresses HSI views why the NSW Government should ban the culling of Flying Foxes by ceasing the issuing of licences for the shooting of flying foxes as a method of crop protection. This report is being supported by 55 conservation, animal welfare and wildlife rescue organisations and a campaign to the NSW Government to stop issuing licences to shoot flying foxes immediately is occurring.

There is concern that the removal of licensing arrangements would have negative implications on the management of flying foxes in the Sydney Basin as there is currently no effective and affordable alternative management approach available.

The Association has been invited to participate in an independent panel review of the licensing arrangements for culling of flying foxes in NSW orchards for crop protection. This is an important step in the licensing review to ensure the best outcome for both orchardists and the management of the GHFF will be achieved in NSW. The review panel will present their findings to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change by mid 2009. The Association also continues to hold meetings with NSW Members of Parliament regarding this important issue.

To date the Association has written to the Minister of Primary Industries Hon Ian Macdonald MLC regarding the licence arrangement review and a reply was received from the Minister supporting the current licensing arrangements in NSW.

The Association also wrote to the former Shadow Minister of Primary Industries Andrew Fraser MP informing the Shadow Minister about the NSW review of licensing arrangements, a reply was received from the Shadow Minister not supporting any changes to the current licensing arrangements in NSW.

Letters have been written and communication is occurring with the Department of Environment & Climate Change Minister regarding the relocation of flying fox camps from the Royal Botanical Gardens Sydney and the NSW review of licensing arrangements.

The Association has written to the Minister of Climate Change & Environment Hon Carmel Tebbutt, requesting to meet to discuss the NSW review of licensing arrangements.

In addition, elected Members have held meetings with State Government Members of Parliament in the affected regions to update these people of the situation and impact to industry of flying fox damage.

Meetings, which the Association has undertaken on this matter include:

- Meeting with District Members in Dural on 1 September 2008.
- Attended Flying Fox Consultative Committee meeting on 8 October 2008.
- Meeting with NSW DPI Sydney Basin district horticulturists and research staff regarding flying fox impacts and project information updates.
- Telephone conference with Department of Environment & Climate Change Threatened Species Manager clarifying the independent panel review of culling licensing arrangements.

The Association will continue to update Members on the progress of the licensing arrangements for the culling review and seek input from Members to assist with our campaign.

Horticulture Code of Conduct Review

The Horticulture Code Committee is currently reviewing the implications of implementing the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's ('ACCC') recommended amendments to the Code - being the 13 recommendations made by the ACCC as part of its review of the retail grocery industry. The objectives of the Code are not under review, and as far as the Association is aware, there is no push from any industry sector wanting to change the underlying objectives and purpose of the code. The Association submitted a response to the review supporting the submission and recommendations from Horticulture Australia Council.

NSW Department of Primary Industries Research Stations

The NSW Department of Primary Industries ('DPI') is currently proposing to sell land at the Orange Agriculture Institute ('OAI'). The Association has written to the Minister of Primary Industries Hon Ian Macdonald MLC and the Department of Planning outlining the concern about the sale of any NSW DPI land in horticultural areas, particularly where future prime horticultural land and research activities are put in jeopardy. The proposal to sell land at the OAI for urban development would also place increased pressure on existing horticultural operations to carry out routine agricultural management activities.

Upcoming Australian Vegetable Industry Conference

The 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, one of the most prominent events on the vegetable industry calendar is being held May 4-6 2009, Melbourne Convention Centre. This year's conference, 'Growing a Healthy Australia', is expected to attract up to 700 delegates, drawing from the 8000 vegetable growers in Australia, as well as Federal and State Government, researchers, wholesalers, retailers and industry service providers. The conference will be proudly brought to you by AUSVEG along with Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL), Onions Australia and the Australian Potato Processing Association.

Vegetables Growers are encouraged to attend the National event, for online registrations and more information, visit www.vegieconf.com.au. Early bird registrations close on 27 March 2009.