

HORTICULTURE COMMITTEE

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Dear Horticulture Members,

Please find the NSW Farmers' Association November update on issues currently being dealt with by the Horticulture Committee.

The recent hard work and lobbying has returned some big wins for Horticulture producers, including the review of the Horticulture Award 2010 and licensed culling of flying-foxes for the coming season.

The Association welcomes Member's feedback and issues to be raised, to ensure they are addressed by your Association and the best outcomes for farmers in NSW Horticulture.

Regards,



Peter Darley

Chairman – NSW Farmers Association Horticulture Committee

2009/2010 Licensed Flying-Fox Culling Arrangements for NSW Orchardists

The Association has been informed that NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) will be working more closely with Police to detect instances of illegal shooting on the North Coast and within the Sydney Basin.

DECCW have advised the following compliance requirements:

- All flying-fox species are protected in NSW. Commercial fruit growers who intend to scare or shoot at these animals with firearms must apply to their local National Parks and Wildlife Area office for a licence.
- Licences to harm a limited number of flying-foxes are issued to growers who can demonstrate damage to their crop. These licences are issued within 24 hours of a property inspection by the local Parks and Wildlife ranger.
- DECCW will undertake more stringent compliance and enforcement action this year together **with Police enforcement. This will target:**
 - Illegal shooting of flying-foxes;
 - Poor implementation of licence conditions; and
 - Record keeping of culled flying-foxes.
- DECCW intends to undertake day and night audits of properties, to ensure licence conditions are implemented correctly.

For further information or contact details for your local NSW National Parks and Wildlife Area Office please call (free call) 1300 361 967.

Meeting with CHEP Australia Representatives

The Association met with CHEP Australia representatives, to discuss the hiring and use of CHEP reusable plastic containers and pallets in Horticulture.

CHEP has expressed interest to work with the Association, to service Members

and ensure its container and pallet inventories are returned to CHEP for cleaning and refurbishment to ensure high quality products for customers.

Under CHEP's Terms of Hire any CHEP account owner that "lends" equipment to trading partners should always keep a record of that movement, and supply a copy of the movement paperwork to the trading partner.

Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee Nominations Invited

Vegetable Levy Payers who have an interest in serving on the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) for Vegetables and specialised Working and Advisory Groups are invited to register their interest with AUSVEG by 11 December 2009.

Role of the IAC:

- To represent vegetable levy payers by acting as the final Advising Group to HAL in recommending the investment of industry R&D levy funds.
- To assess the relative return to growers from investing in one area over another, and determine a weighting of significance for each strategy based on chance of success, value of return to growers, relative cost, and significance to the industry as a whole.

For full details regarding the vegetable industry advisory committee nominations, contact the Association.

AppleQuest Promotions Program

The Association together with Woolworths Limited launched the 2009 AppleQuest program, at Fort Street Public School, Millers Point Sydney on Monday 9 November 2009.

Students were greeted by the AppleQuest MC and MegaBite Apple, provided with the first AppleQuest Sundowner apples, competed to find who could make the longest apple peel using the Apple Slinky peeler, and were tested on their apple production knowledge. The event will deliver 53,000 apples to over 42,500 primary school children across 200 schools around NSW.

The smallest rural schools registered included Wanaaring Public School with 10 students and Gwabegar Public school with 13 students. The largest metropolitan schools included Dalmeny Public School (Preston's) with 830 students and Strathfield South with 815 students.



Kristy John (AppleQuest MC) with MegaBite Apple welcome students from Fort street public school to launch AppleQuest 2009



Fiona McCredie (Your Weekly Menu), Peter Darley (Horticulture Committee Chair and Apple Producer, MegaBite Apple and Malcolm McLean (Woolworths) with students at the Launch



MegaBite Apple with students displaying apples distributed during the 2009 AppleQuest launch

Horticulture Committee Face to Face meeting

The Horticulture Committee held a face to face meeting in Griffith NSW on 6-7 October 2009. The Committee then invited Members and local producers to attend an industry forum to discuss local horticulture policy issues. Major issues at the meeting included:

- **Horticulture Committee Operational and Implementation plans** – were adopted by the Committee for the next 12 months.
- **Raising the profile of horticulture** – it was reported that the AppleQuest Program will be reviewed after its completion in November 2009, with particular reference to the applicability of similar programs to other horticulture commodities. It was noted that future programs should seek to be undertaken earlier in the year.
- **Chemical User Training** – issues in horticulture were discussed. Employees who had recently completed chemical user training did not have adequate skills to calibrate airblast sprayers used in horticulture, due to being shown calibration with only boom sprays. It was suggested Members highlight specific training needs to organisations including the Association, so training courses can be tailored for specific areas and production backgrounds.
- **Abandon Orchards, Vineyards and Rogue fruit trees** – the Association will present a request to the NSW Government for increased regulatory action for the removal of abandoned and neglected orchards and vineyards across NSW. The Association will write to the NSW Government, to action the removal of rogue fruit trees, growing on roadsides and public reserves, to prevent the threat of potential bio-security risks for horticulture crops grown in NSW.
- **Industry and Investment NSW** – provided an update on the current activities of the Griffith Research Station. The forthcoming retirement of the Tumut District Horticulturist was discussed, with the Committee resolving to lobby for the position to be maintained after the current officer's retirement.
- **Horticulture Membership Development Strategy** - The Committee reviewed recent work conducted by the Association on the development of a Horticulture Membership Development Strategy.

Horticulture Code of Conduct

On 1 November 2009, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Hon Tony Burke MP released the Horticulture Code of Conduct Committee's report 'Implications of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission recommendations to amend the Horticulture Code of Conduct'.

The report examined the 13 recommendations made by the Australian Government in response to the "Report of the ACCC inquiry into the competitiveness of retail prices for standard groceries", July 2008.

The Committee found that the entire industry will benefit in the long run from improved efficiencies and transparency if the ACCC's recommendations are implemented. Where Committee Members could not agree on a single recommendation, the report outlines a range of options. Recommendations included the possible establishment of a Horticulture Ombudsman. The Horticulture Committee is currently reviewing the recommendations and will devise a strategy for future lobbying.

Freshcare Launches 3rd Edition Food Safety & Quality Code

The development of the 3rd Edition Food Safety & Quality Code is another milestone for the Freshcare program and is a significant step forward in strengthening the acceptance of the industry owned program by a wide range of customer groups; whilst at the same time, achieving consistency in food safety management across the fresh produce industry. The Association is a Member of Freshcare together with 19 industry bodies.

Now in its 10th year, Freshcare has become the largest on-farm assurance program for Australian growers; providing food safety and environmental certification services to over 4200 Members nationally.

The new 3rd Edition was finalised in August 2009 after extensive consultation with all industry sectors and feedback from growers using the previous edition and through grower trials. Included in the consultation process were major fresh produce retailers such as Coles, Woolworths and IGA.

The 3rd Edition code has a more logical, more user-friendly structure and includes improved hazard analysis tools and guidance information, plus practices for managing emerging issues such as allergen control. Code elements from the 2nd Edition have also been reviewed and in many instances strengthened to ensure Freshcare maintains its position as a widely approved on farm assurance program.

As with any new code edition, there will be a transition period before growers currently certified to Freshcare 2nd Edition will have to upgrade to the 3rd Edition. Until March 2011, Freshcare Members have a choice of being audited to 2nd or 3rd Edition Code. All audits after 1st March 2011 must be against the 3rd Edition Code of Practice.

In some instances, customer requirements will alter this timeframe, for example, Coles Housebrand suppliers (includes loose product in Coles black crates / black cartons) must have moved to the 3rd Edition Code by 1st March 2010

FarmReady Reimbursement Grants - Support for Freshcare Training

Growers new to the Freshcare Program, and existing Freshcare Members moving to the 3rd Edition Code of Practice, are now able to apply for funding to cover their training and out of pocket costs through the FarmReady Reimbursement Grant Program.

The FarmReady Program is a Federal Government initiative, providing grants up to \$1,500 per year to eligible primary producers to undertake approved training courses.

The following Freshcare Training Courses are eligible for FarmReady Funding:

Freshcare On-Farm Assurance – Quality & Food Safety (Fresh Produce) – ‘Transition Training’ Training (3rd Edition) designed for existing Freshcare Members and growers moving to Freshcare from other food safety/ quality programs. A one day workshop (6-8 hours).	Freshcare On-Farm Assurance – Quality & Food Safety (Fresh Produce) Training designed for growers new to on farm food safety and quality. A one day workshop (8 hours), with a follow-up visit on farm/ remote support, to assist with system implementation.
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For further information, talk to your Freshcare Trainer or visit www.farmready.gov.au

Freshcare Certification

Certification to the 2nd Edition Code of Practice was ‘Annual Certification’, requiring Members to successfully complete an audit in every 12 month period March – March; based on this audit outcome, certificates were then issued annually on the 1st March ‘Certification Anniversary’.

The Annual Certificate Model, whilst addressing the problem of certificates expiring mid season for short season crops, did present a number of problems, including difficulty in audit scheduling, Members declining / deferring audits and confusion as to when audits were actually due.

The last 2nd Edition (Annual) Certificates will be issued on the 1st March 2011.

Certification to the 3rd Edition Code of Practice will be for 12 months, from the date of audit. When Freshcare Members successfully complete an audit against the 3rd Edition Code, they will automatically be issued a new 3rd Edition Certificate.

In addition to the actual audit date, the 3rd Edition Certificates will show the Re-certification audit due month, and a certificate expiry month.

For example:

Audit Date: 12th Nov 2009 | Re-certification Audit Due: November 2010 | Certificate Expires: December 2010.

The certificate expiry month is set as the month following the audit due month, to allow time for audit reporting/ processing and the issuing of a new certificate.