

PRESS RELEASE

VoH welcomes Federal Budget's support of export markets and biosecurity

The continued efforts made by Voice of Horticulture (VoH) in lobbying the Federal Government in terms of a policy and budget focus on biosecurity and exports, has seen fruition in this week's 2018/19 Budget.

Chair, Tania Chapman welcomed the announcement of five key points relating to biosecurity, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and export trade assistance and said they would provide invaluable support in improving market access and on gaining new export opportunities.

Ms Chapman said the "real coup" was the announcement of additional funding to represent six Agricultural Trade Counsellors in six new countries, to be included in the United Kingdom, Mexico, Japan, India, Chile and Russia, now extending the total number of Agricultural Trade Counsellors to 22.

"This has been no mean feat, and VoH has executed much pushing for this to be extended through the *Ag Competitiveness White Paper*; increasing market access analysis and assessments and welcomes the \$51 million of funding over four years," she said.

"These overseas resources will help our growers and exporters gain better market opportunities in the global food arena through export growth and new market access.

"The funding will also go towards supplying our new and existing export markets with science-based assurances about food safety and the pest and disease status of Australia's exported horticulture goods."

With the export market so vital to Australia's horticulture industry, also promised in the Budget was a new Biosecurity Imports Levy to raise an additional \$360 million over four years. Ms Chapman said this would "... make imported horticulture products marginally more costly, and possibly provide better protection from exotic pests and diseases".

The Government has also promised to provide \$86.8 million over four years to enhance Australia's biosecurity system which will be used to; develop national action plans for dealing with priority pests and diseases, provide greater assurances and verification of biosecurity import conditions and increasing the Commonwealth's response to pest and disease incursions.

Finally, the APVMA was given funding of \$10 million over three years to go towards its digital transformation.

Ms Chapman explained that the funding would assist the APVMA to deliver an enabling technology program that addressed the need to modernise the information communication technology of the organisation and improve regulatory services from its new home in regional Australia (Armidale, New South Wales).

"Such services like communication tools, online submissions and end-to-end management of applications should now be more efficient, predictable and transparent," she said.

And finally, the other win for horticultural growth in the 2018/19 Budget was the Government providing \$6.3 million over two years to improve grower and industry access to agricultural and veterinary chemicals. Which is so important in keeping our growers competitive in our export markets Ms Chapman said

The Voice of Horticulture is a member based organisation that represents horticultural growers and business across fruit, nuts, mushrooms, onions, processing tomatoes, turf, and nursery plants.

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