

# Govt falls short on waste

## POTATOES SA

By ROBBIE DAVIS, CEO

IN THE last issue, I wrote about the highly anticipated release of the National Food Waste Strategy committing Australia to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12.3; halving food waste by 2030.

On November 20 I attended its launch by the Minister for the Environment and Energy Josh Frydenberg at a luncheon in Melbourne.

It has taken 2.5 years to get to this point.

But despite the positive commentary, advisory groups, presentations, international benchmarking and research visits and media hype during that period, the end result was seriously underwhelming.

It was a 'tick the box' exercise, not a plan to inspire action - most were disappointed and surprised.

Food waste has environmental, economic and social implications for all Australians and the estimated cost to the Australian economy is \$20 billion a year.

Halving food waste is a big job and will require change



Potatoes SA is the voice for seed producers, growers, fresh market, packers, processors, marketers, exporters, wholesalers and retail.

at all levels of society and across the supply chain, but the clock is ticking and 12 years to 2030 will pass extremely quickly.

The national strategy for Australia will only just get a voluntary commitment program in place by 2019.

To say we are lagging behind is an understatement.

Australia can realise concrete results very quickly with many organisations already engaged and ready to jump on board.

While supporting the need for collective, collaborative action and the four priority areas of the strategy - policy support, business improve-

ments, market development and behaviour change; serious funding is needed to get things started and to then maintain momentum.

A \$1.37-million commitment by the federal government is embarrassingly inadequate and reflects the lack of priority by, and social, environmental and economic responsibility of the government to this escalating problem.

Other countries are taking the lead in this area - one of the United Kingdom's leading supermarkets, Tesco is spending more than \$A17 million in five years fighting household food waste.

The United States has just published its second report on national food waste, has over 400 businesses signed up to a voluntary commitment, launched a national consumer campaign called Save the Food and is issuing new guidance to standardise food labels, which are a major source of confusion and waste.

Wasting food all along the supply/value chain is socially unacceptable and I am dedicated to working with others to address this.

The commitment to a national strategy is definitely the starting point, but further investment and a concrete plan of action is the only way to reach the goal; a goal far more in line with other developed countries.

To echo the words of Ronni Kahn, founder of OzHarvest and a member of the Food Waste Steering Committee: "on 20 November, government did not do its part. The time has come to stop talking about it and accelerate the action."

I believe the rest of the world must have lost some respect for us.



Potatoes SA chief executive officer Robbie Davies says its time to stop food waste as it has a massive environmental, economic and social implications.