

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **AUSTRALIA DOES NOT WANT IMPORTED FRESH POTATOES FROM NEW ZEALAND**

The threat of catastrophic yield losses of as much as 50% is gaining momentum as the Federal Government stalls on banning the approval of market access for New Zealand potatoes.

South Australia is the nation's largest potato producer with farm gate production worth \$206 million and the industry faces ruin at every link in the value chain if New Zealand imports are allowed.

Potatoes South Australia Inc has responded to DAFF's Draft advice and to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Joseph Ludwig on behalf of its stakeholders.

Robbie Davis, CEO of the peak industry body, said "Minister Ludwig urgently needs to address the crisis facing Australia's biosecurity system. Allowing market access for the importation of fresh potatoes for processing will result in the potential introduction of Zebra Chip disease complex and other pest and diseases not currently found in Australia. There is also no doubt that South Australia has the most to lose economically."

Ms Davis said "the risk posed by the Tomato-Potato psyllid and the bacterium is unacceptably high and the industry wants zero tolerance to the proposed importation. The disease and its transmission are simply not yet understood and there could be multiple hosts. Estimated losses in the New Zealand and USA industries due to Zebra Chip are in the hundreds of millions of dollars. South Korea has banned imports from disease-infested states in America - we must do the same concerning New Zealand."

Potatoes South Australia stresses that this is not about free trade or trade protection as Australia already receives processed products from New Zealand in the form of frozen French fry and crisp chips.

"It is vital that Australian growers and the Australian public have full confidence in DAFF carrying out rigorous and objective scientific assessments with regard to potential importation risks. It is also essential that decisions relating to these matters are transparent and allow for genuine consultation with industry. We must present a united front to fight this totally irresponsible market access request," she added.

Ms Davis and industry stakeholders will meet with Dr Vanessa Findlay, Australian Chief Plant Protection Officer, DAFF Biosecurity on 20 September in Adelaide.

Potatoes South Australia urges individual stakeholders along the value chain to express their concerns to DAFF, their local Members of Parliament and to the Federal Minister, responsible for DAFF Biosecurity.

ENDS

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