



2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission

28 January 2022



Introduction

AUSVEG is the prescribed Peak Industry Body representing the interests of the Australian vegetable and potato industry. AUSVEG is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that is run by growers, for growers.

AUSVEG represents over 3,600 vegetable producers that account for 3.72 million tonnes of vegetable production worth \$4.85 billion in farmgate value and over \$5.2 billion in retail value annually.

AUSVEG advocates on behalf of industry at local, state, and federal levels with the core purpose to enhance the economic, social, and commercial environment for growers so that the industry can continue to produce outstanding vegetables and potatoes for local and international consumers.

AUSVEG delivers projects for growers around Australia in the areas of extension, communication, environmental sustainability, biosecurity, export development and market access. We work closely with Australia's growers to ensure their needs are reflected in this work.

AUSVEG also hosts Hort Connections with the International Fresh Produce Association. This annual event is the largest conference in Australian horticulture and brings growers, supply chain and industry members together to increase awareness and uptake of the latest industry innovations and research, facilitate industry networking and recognises the industry's leading contributors through the National Awards for Excellence.

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Industry Insights

3,600+
Vegetable
Businesses
in Australia

Horticulture
employs
more than
60,000
people

Gross value of Australian
vegetable and potato industry is
\$4.8 billion



POTATOES



TOMATOES



CARROT



ONIONS



LETTUCE

=\$2.2b

3.72 million tonnes
fresh vegetables and potatoes
grown in Australia

In 2019-20,
Australian growers
exported over
210k tonnes
of fresh vegetables
valued over
\$275 million.

Top export markets
in 2021 include:



SINGAPORE



UAE



MALAYSIA



SOUTH KOREA



HONG KONG



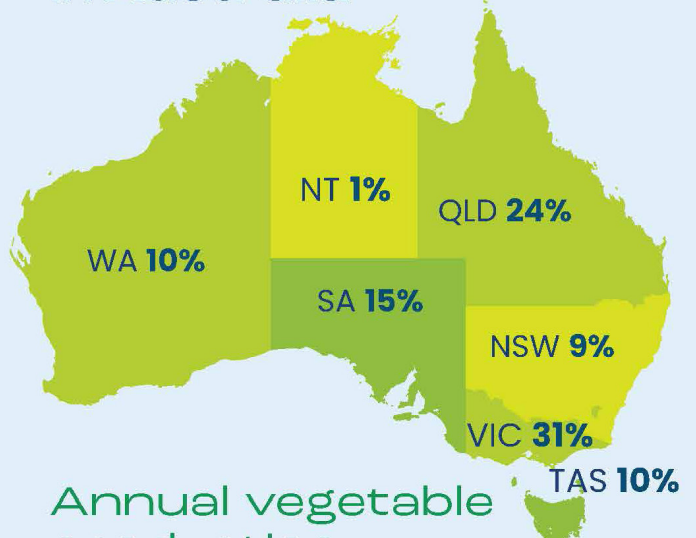
THAILAND



Average
consumption
of vegetables
and legumes is
2.4 serves
a day.

Australian Dietary Guidelines
recommend 5 serves a day.

Vegetable Production
in Australia



Annual vegetable
production:

3,723,506
tonnes (\$4.85b)

Executive Summary

AUSVEG supports the Federal Government's goal of boosting the value of Australian agriculture to \$100 billion by 2030, and believes the Australian vegetable industry will be a significant contributor towards achieving this goal.

The vegetable industry is one of the strongest performers of Australia's agriculture industry given its growing value of production, its prominence in retail and market settings across the country and its rising exporting presence.

The production and supply of fruits and vegetables is a truly a national industry that employs over 60,000 workers, not to mention the tens of thousands of additional jobs through the supply chain to process, transport and stock produce.

The recommendations outlined in this document will allow the \$4.8 billion sector to not only grow in value, but also help boost other parts of the economy and help secure the next generation of jobs in our regional and rural communities.

These priorities have been developed through extensive consultation and collaboration with AUSVEG's state members, as well as growers across the country.

The priorities are set around three central themes:

Driving increased consumption leads to both domestic and overseas opportunities. Increasing domestic consumption requires bold new thinking to tackle a persistent and worsening problem. Data from the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium (FVC) indicates that vegetable consumption is too low, and declining over time. However, the FVC outlines the benefits of increasing vegetable consumption, with an increase of just half a serve of vegetables per day conservatively generating an incremental increase in industry returns of \$634 million per year. On the export front, the vegetable industry is just getting started. Increasing trade and market access to countries such as Singapore, UAE, Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand will further enhance our selling opportunities for growers.

Developing more efficient businesses starts with access to a more efficient, reliable and competent workforce. While the Australian Agriculture Visa and Pacific Island programs are significant pieces of that complex puzzle, other pieces include affordable and reasonable accommodation options for workers and greater skilled career opportunities for the domestic workforce. Improved business management and negotiation skills are critical for farm businesses to become more prepared to effectively negotiate with their buyers and their banks. While greater market transparency will increase grower knowledge of pricing fluctuations and give them access to the free, timely and accurate market information they need to make more informed decisions for benefit of their business.

Becoming a more resilient industry is about planning for the future. This includes better understanding our customers' expectations and preparing for the constant challenges that the climate brings. From fires, floods, droughts and COVID, our growers have dealt with a wide range of issues outside of their control, but they can prepare to mitigate the impacts on their businesses and on our future food security. It also includes improved management for food safety and how the uptake in new technology can assist in ensuring Australia's fresh produce is safe for all consumers. These central themes are the core of the development of the vegetable and potato sector as it strives to become an \$8 billion sector by 2030.



Total Funding sought over five years

Portfolio	Funding asks
Agriculture, Water, and the Environment	\$83m
Education, Skills, and Employment	\$122m
Foreign Affairs and Trade	\$10m
Industry, Innovation, Science, and Resources	\$74m
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, and Communications	\$173m
Health	\$100m
Total	\$562 million

Summary of Recommendations

Increasing domestic consumption of vegetables

- \$100m to develop and execute a national strategy and behavioural change program.

Workforce

- \$80m over three years to implement a National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme.
- \$20m over two years to better develop vocational and tertiary education pathways for horticulture.
- \$12m over four years to develop a National Agriculture Workforce Network.
- Fund an Agricultural Unit within the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Regenerative Farming

- \$30m for research and development into sustainable packaging and plastics that can be recycled, reused, or decomposed easily.
- \$30m for research and development to extend shelf life of fresh produce such as improved cold chain management.
- \$20m over three years for on-farm workshops and trainings to educate and share regenerative farmer experiences to promote implementation.
- \$100m in Renewable energy grants for growers to drive energy efficiency.
- \$20m over two years to educate growers on emissions reduction and Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) opportunities.

Biosecurity

- Introduce a biosecurity imports levy charge.
- Increase the passenger movement charge with additional funds to go towards biosecurity.
- \$5m to review the current Fruit Fly activities and develop a national approach to fruit fly which all states adopt and protect trading relationships.
- \$10m over three years to support urban and peri-urban biosecurity networks to assist pest and disease identification.
- \$5m to increase grower awareness and capability to manage pests, weeds, and disease.

Emergency Preparation and Prevention

- \$50m in grants for growers to implement food safety infrastructure on-farm.
- \$10m over five years for an industry-led program to connect growers to the latest international agricultural innovations and tech solutions
- Increase the mental health and wellbeing of workforce in rural and regional areas by establishing an incentive scheme to attract and retain mental health service workers- of farmers.
- \$20m in grants and incentives to modernise water delivery and storage infrastructure and promote uptake of existing schemes.
- \$20m over three years to educate growers on farm water efficiency.

Competition and Business

- Introduce freely available and accurate real-time market price reporting in wholesale markets.
- Invest in domestic production facilities for farm inputs such as fertiliser, agri-chemicals, potash, and wood.
- \$3m over two years to help build grower capability in preparation to have sustainability conversations with their banks and their consumers.
- \$4m over three years for business benchmarking for vegetable and potato farms across Australia.

Trade

- \$5m to support for international market development initiatives to promote fresh vegetables and potatoes in export markets.
- \$5m for additional resourcing to support a reinvigorated whole-of-government approach to negotiating horticulture market access and seeking improved market access conditions.

Infrastructure

- Accelerated tax write off for businesses to build staff accommodation.
- \$3m over two years to develop on-farm accommodation guidelines and support Local Government Association's with implementing them.
- Create a funding pool to support growers to build and modernise on-farm processing and waste facilities.

The Next Generation

- \$10m over three years to reinvest in kids to vegetables and potato farms.

Pillar 1

Increasing Domestic Consumption of Australian vegetables

Recommendation 1: Funding for a broad-reaching, National behavioural change program over 5 years, that will deliver a substantial and sustained increase in the daily vegetable consumption for Australian kids and families

Cost:

\$100m to develop and execute a national strategy and behavioural change program*

Addressing the range of interventions required across different cohorts to educate, inform, inspire, and empower Australians to consistently have positive eating experiences with vegetables.

Background:

The business case for collective investment in a national behavioural change to drive vegetable consumption is convincing. The evidence base has been structured around core propositions, each of which includes compelling evidence drawn from Australian and international literature, comprehensive data analysis, and input from the expert knowledge of the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium members and a vast network of interested organisations including strategic marketing experts, supply chain partners and nutritional experts.

AUSVEG has recently sought member input for its main priorities and ‘increasing domestic vegetable consumption’ has risen as a critical issue that will deliver a triple bottom line of benefits that will improve the economic, health, social and environmental wellbeing of Australians:

1. **Thriving, healthy Aussie kids and families** – increasing vegetable intake improves physical and mental health, drives social connections, and reduces the health cost burden (reduction in obesity/overweight and chronic disease).
2. **Industry growth** – increasing demand by consumers which allows growers confidence to reinvest in their business and community. Reduce wastage/loss in the supply chain and in-home.
3. **Sustainable regional communities and jobs creation** – increased volume will directly flow to farms and supply chain operators and food provision, leading to job creation.

* Behavioural change programs essentially ‘stitch together’ and coordinate the collective efforts of multiple interested parties around a common framework. The recommendation is for a behavioural change model, rather than a marketing program alone, as there are many factors constraining vegetable consumption, and these vary across cohorts, communities, and meal occasions. Hence, a wide range of targeted and nuanced interventions beyond advertising alone is required.

Benefit:

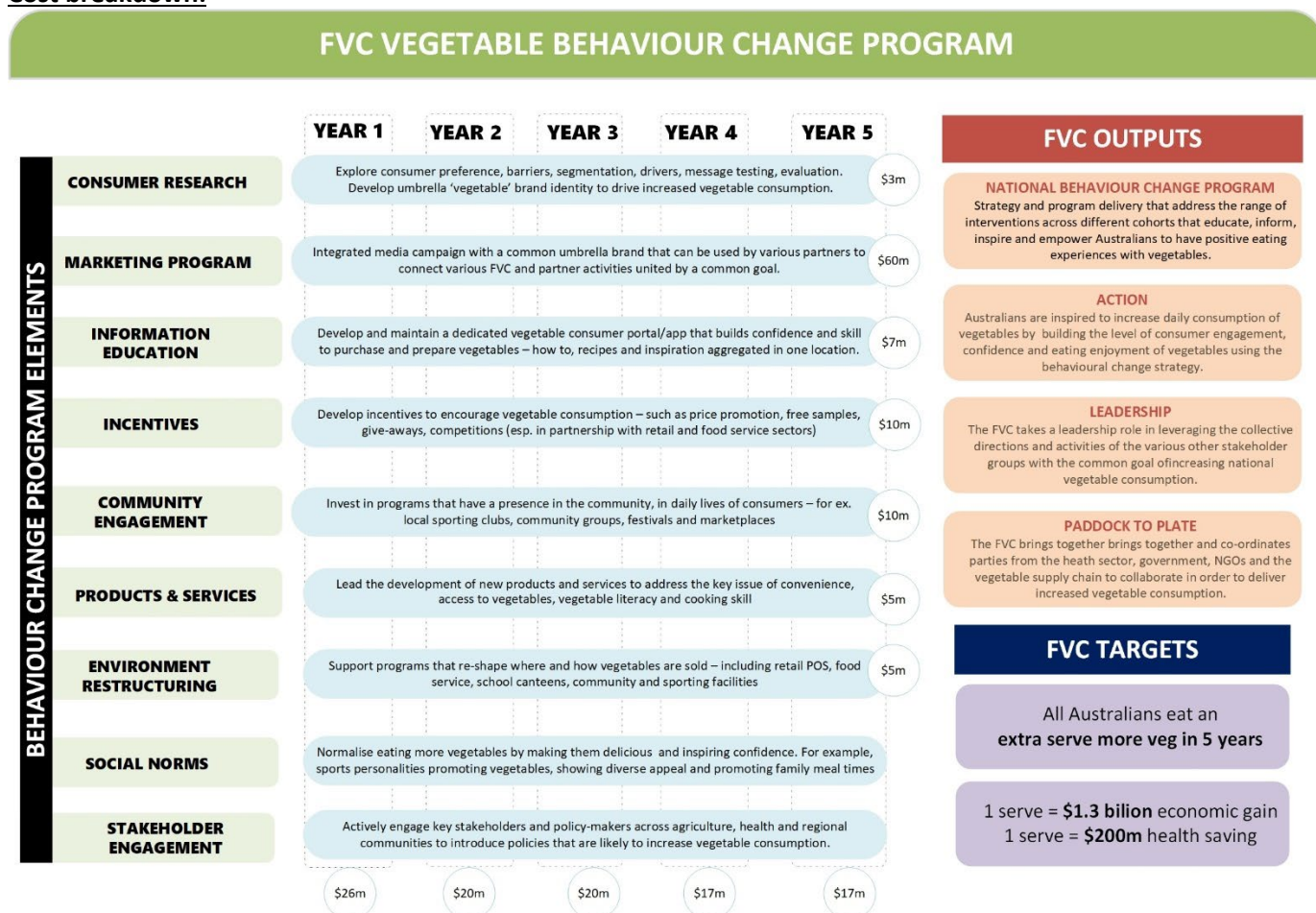
Investing to grow vegetable consumption offers a highly compelling case for federal investment. If Australians consumed just one additional serve of vegetables per day, this would deliver:

- Over \$1.3 billion increase in value to Aussie growers and food supply chain operators. Through an approximate 30 per cent growth in vegetable production to service a 21 per cent lift in

consumer demand based on 45 per cent of production currently being wasted in the supply chain or in home.

- Over \$1.6 billion increase in economic value across the vegetable supply chain.
- Every \$1 invested in a behavioural change program to increase vegetable consumption results in a \$10 return on investment.
- Every new job created in the Australian food industry supports an additional job in the regional economy.
- More than \$200 million reduction in health expenditure per annum.
- Drive increased grower and consumer confidence. The modelling from the Centre for International Economics (CIE) results shows a forecast lift in additional retail sales lift of 8.6 per cent in volume and an 8 per cent increase in price. This would achieve a cumulative gain of \$1.9 billion over the 11 years modelled. This presents a compelling case for wholesale and retail commercial co-investment.
- Investing to grow consumption of vegetables is the number one priority for federal attention and funding (based on 61 grower interviews).

Cost breakdown:



Intervention	Key Activities and Tasks	Year 1 Budget \$26M
Consumer Research	<p>Consumer attitude and behavioural research to understand key occasion triggers and barriers to vegetable consumption in a COVID-affected world.</p> <p>Understand consumer preference and new product innovation opportunities with quantitative modelling.</p> <p>National vegetable brand research.</p> <p>Campaign development and 'idea' testing.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation with consumer sentiment and brand tracking (over 5 years).</p>	<p>\$300k</p> <p>\$250k</p> <p>\$100k</p> <p>\$150k</p> <p>\$200k</p> <p>Total \$1M</p>
Marketing Program	<p>Appoint behavioural change agency to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National vegetable brand • Brand and campaign assets • Website/app • Digital/social channel <p>Advertising Media, PR and communications</p>	<p>\$3M</p> <p>\$13M</p>
Information Education	<p>Appoint digital agency to develop an information architecture and user experience.</p> <p>Detailed design and build.</p> <p>Content strategy and development.</p>	<p>\$3M</p>
Incentives	<p>Explore new ways to inspire vegetable consumption.</p> <p>Develop consumer, grower and industry incentives to encourage vegetable consumption – ex. price promotion, free samples, giveaways, competitions (esp. in partnership with retail and food service sectors).</p>	<p>\$2M</p>
Community Engagement	<p>Invest in programs that have a presence in the community, in daily lives of consumers – across key settings such local sporting clubs, early learning and schools, community groups, festivals and marketplaces.</p>	<p>\$2M</p>
Products services	<p>Partner with vegetable growers, supply chain and food service to develop new products and services to address the key issue of convenience, meal occasions, access to vegetables, vegetable literacy and cooking skill.</p>	<p>\$1M</p>
Environmental Restructuring	<p>Support programs that re-shape where and how vegetables are sold – including retail POS, food service, school canteens, community and sporting facilities.</p>	<p>\$1M</p>

Potential Partner	In-kind Contribution
Vegetable growers and industry bodies	Market research through industry R&D levies, product donations for advertising and promotions, industry spokespersons for promotional events.
Supermarkets	In-store activity, POS materials, messaging in media advertising, meal solution ideas and convenience tips, value meal and 'what's in season' promotions, children's programs
Foodservice outlets	In-restaurant activity and vegetable menu promotions
Wholesale markets	Promoting independent retailers, weekly media on what's in season, supporting independent retailers with program branded point of sale materials.
Processed vegetable brands	Integration with their brand marketing campaigns
Packaging Companies	There is the potential for packaging companies to collect a voluntary levy on each unit of packaging sold, which they would be encouraged to match. This would generate a significant funding stream that could be used to sponsor branded events. Suppliers of retail packaging could print messaging on packaging materials.
Kitchen appliance brands and retailers	Educational advertising on usage ideas, featuring hero-vegetable dishes. In-store promotions and cooking demonstrations.
Vegetable transport companies	Banner advertising on trailer curtains
Public Health and NGOs	<p>Content appropriate for these organisations would be developed as part of the program.</p> <p>Data bases, websites and other communications vehicles could be leveraged.</p> <p>Endorsement through association with the program brand will provide a halo effect.</p>
Media	Media actively involved in the program each with their own dedicated programs. In particular there is an opportunity to integrate content into food and cooking shows/features.

Why the FVC?

The FVC is an independent collective of organisations co-led by AUSVEG and Nutrition Australia and the only national standalone entity positioned to grow the vegetable intake of Australians. FVC membership starts at the paddock with Australian farmers, and spans the entire fresh food supply chain, human health (primary and preventative), planetary health (environment and sustainability), and consumer interest sectors (demand and consumption) – with unparalleled expertise and the requisite capability to drive what’s on the plate.

Its purpose is to drive a significant and sustained increase in the fruit and vegetable intake of Australians by taking an evidence and systems-based, collaborative approach to driving national behavioural change.

- The FVC is the only not-for-profit, NGO with national reach and the requisite structure, governance, expert advisory (agribusiness, consumer, food, and health), focus and agility to drive a significant and sustained increased in the vegetable consumption of Australians.
- The FVC is co-led by AUSVEG and Nutrition Australia which brings together the commercial and shared interests of the vegetable industry, food supply chain, and consumer health/nutrition sector.
- The FVC has a dedicated Management Team responsible for strategic and operational leadership, a committed fee-paying national Executive Committee, and member-endorsed, skills-based Governance structure that offer paid and in-kind support across the agile, collaborative eco-system (see table).
- The FVC is supported by over 260 organisations across Australia and has achieved notable government, media and consumer attention since inception and seed funding from Vic Health in 2017.
- The FVC has developed a Positioning Statement, Business Case, robust Governance Model and Blueprint for Behavioural Change to substantiate and effectively guide this investment.
- The FVC Management Team have deep expertise in consumer demand-side investment management, marketing, and communications:
 - FVC Managing Director – Justine Coates
 - Co-chairs of the FVC Executive Committee:
 - Michael Coote, CEO AUSVEG – Australian vegetable growers and industry
 - Lucinda Hancock, CEO Nutrition Australia – public health and nutrition

FVC Operational Objectives:

1. To inspire Australian families to increase their daily consumption of vegetables through building consumer engagement, literacy, health awareness (human and planetary), confidence, and enjoyment of vegetables
2. To integrate and reinforce the messaging already in the marketplace about the nutritional qualities and high integrity of Australian grown vegetables.
3. To take a leadership role in leveraging the collective directions and activities of the various other stakeholder groups with the common goal of increasing national vegetable consumption, e.g., National Preventative Health Strategy, National Obesity Strategy, Climate and Health, and/or collaborating with existing programs.
4. To engage with retailers to gain maximum impact and product pull through from the behavioural change/marketing program at the point of sale.
5. To improve the accessibility and convenience of vegetables for consumers by strategic R&D investment in new product formats and improved packaging and labelling.
6. To identify and develop programs to offer more vegetable options in food service outlets.

Pillar 2

Workforce – Domestic

Recommendation 2: \$80m over three years to implement a National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme.

AUSVEG recommends the Federal Government immediately allocate \$80 million to establish and rollout of a National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme.

Labour hire firms and workforce contracting firms play a pivotal role in the horticulture sector in supplying growers with workers. It is critical that growers can use these services with confidence knowing that their workers are treated fairly and paid properly.

A National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme for the horticulture sector would help growers to check if a labour hire company was meeting government expectations around compliance.

The horticulture sector needs a scheme that is built with integrity and well-resourced to ensure that action is taken against unlicensed operators.

Key Recommendations:

- Deliver a fully operational National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme by December, 2022.
- Ensure the National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme is well-resourced and funded to ensure enforcement activities are undertaken against rogue operators.

Recommendation 3: \$20m over two years to better develop vocational and tertiary education pathways for horticulture.

It is important for the horticulture sector to develop appropriate vocational and tertiary education pathways to create long term solutions for chronic labour shortages. Horticulture businesses need a skilled workforce to grow both their fresh produce and their business operations safely into the future.

The agriculture industry is aging with an average industry worker aged 49. The future of the industry depends on younger Australians to develop an interest and passion for horticulture. To do this the industry needs to demonstrate career progression and clear pathways.

The industry requires educational pathways that are designed to support farming businesses from the ground up and that focus on workforce development. These pathways need to be practical and better meet the needs of businesses by taking a more tailored design approach.

By creating stronger and more accessible pathways for Australians to get into agriculture it will allow our industry to expand into the future.

Key Recommendations:

- Funding to support industry bodies, farm businesses and education institutions to develop horticulture courses which meet industry needs.
- Funding to support secondary education providers understand the horticulture industry and support students to seek career opportunities in the sector.
- Create more practical and unique units which better prepare students for the industry.
- Develop resources and programs in a variety of languages to help meet the needs of our culturally diverse workforce.

Recommendation 4: \$12m over four years to develop a National Agriculture Workforce Network (NAWN)

The network will support growers across the country to access a range of workers either locally or overseas and help bring together the many programs available to growers such as visas, study pathways, and general information.

By increasing visibility of the existing training and career pathways available to both the worker and the grower, it will boost the industry's uptake of existing programs.

A well-resourced network with staff in key regions would support industry as well as provide valuable information back to the Federal Government about existing programs and the uptake, and how other education and workforce programs can be improved.

Key Recommendations:

- Fund resources in key horticultural growing regions around the country.
- Ensure staff are well-versed in international and domestic programs for employers and employees to access in their region.
- Ensure staff have existing linkages with industry and could link with existing extension projects to ensure best results.
- The NAWN staff would have a sound understanding of the horticulture sector in their region and provide key information and understanding back to the Federal Government on employment data, training and program improvements.

Recommendation 5: Fund an Agriculture Unit within the Fair Work Ombudsman.

AUSVEG is supportive of the recent \$8.7m of additional funding for the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) under MYEFO.

The funding should be ongoing to the FWO to ensure compliance activities and investigations in the sector are continued.

A designated agriculture unit within the FWO will ensure adequate support for the horticulture sector. By providing a range of services including education, investigation, compliance, and enforcement activities for the sector.

A properly resourced FWO will ensure timely and appropriate advice is given to the sector and its workers.

An agricultural unit will ensure compliance with new changes such as piece rate minimum wage.

Key Recommendations:

- Develop a dedicated agricultural unit within the FWO.
- Provide additional funding to ensure the FWO is well resourced to have an Agricultural Unit.

Pillar 3

Regenerative Farming – Innovation and Education

Recommendation 6: \$30m for research and development into sustainable packaging and plastics that can be recycled, reused, or decomposed easily.

Developing more sustainable packaging options for growers is important to:

- Reduce emissions and environmental footprint,
- Prolong shelf life of produce,
- For consumer convenience,
- To keep up with consumer and market demand of reducing single use plastic.

Growers are actively looking to improve their business practices and reduce their emissions. Packing often contains a large number of embodied emissions, which has a big impact on grower's footprint.

Often sustainable packaging options are expensive and need more research to develop, making them unattainable by growers. The increase costs also increase growers end-product which can make the product less attractive to consumers.

Increasingly consumers are looking for sustainably packaged goods to reduce their footprint and waste. Investors and markets are now demanding this from producers to meet the consumer needs. By providing more funding for research producers can meet the needs of markets, investors, and consumers.

Key Recommendations:

- Facilitate industry and research partnerships to explore viable sustainable packaging options.
- Work closely with farming businesses and consumers to find appropriate packaging options that meet the needs of growers, consumers and the supply chain.

Recommendation 7: \$30m for research and development to extend shelf life of fresh produce such as improved cold chain management.

It is important to extend the shelf life of fresh produce to reduce food waste. Currently a third of all food produced is wasted, either at the farm, during processing, transport, sale, or by the consumer.

This not only causes a significant environmental impact but affects growers' bottom lines through the lost investment in water, labour and other inputs.

Key Recommendations:

- Consumer education on proper food storage and usage.
- Research alternative packaging, transport options and processing technology that improve shelf life of fresh produce.
- Encourage investment for companies that are already investigating transport and display packaging options that increase shelf life.

Recommendation 8: \$20m over three years for on-farm workshops and trainings to educate and share regenerative farmer experiences to promote implementation.

Promoting better on-farm practices will protect and improve agricultural land over the long-term. Through focused land management and sharing farmer experiences and research, growers can gain a practical understanding of regenerative agriculture.

Developing tailored educational opportunities for growers to learn about regenerative agriculture from their neighbours or other growers is key to showing the practical use and success of regenerative practices.

Key Recommendations:

- Develop a regenerative agriculture education program that is specialised for each crop.
- Continue to innovate new practices by collaborating with companies domestic and abroad such as Ag no-till and Soils for Life.

Recommendation 9: \$100m in Renewable energy grants for growers to drive energy efficiency.

The vegetable industry is conscious of climate change and the impact it is having on farming land. While growers are actively reducing their emissions on their farm, there are some emissions that are unavoidable, such as fuel and electricity use, which accounts for 70 per cent of horticulture production emissions.

Providing grants and affordable energy efficient alternatives to encourage growers to upgrade or replace machinery is key to helping them reduce their emissions.

Key Recommendations:

- Grant opportunities for growers that encourages the purchase and installation of energy efficient technologies that use renewable sources on farms.
- Reopen funding for new on-farm energy grants and rebates in States and Territories.
- Continue to promote and fund the Energy Efficient Communities Project
- Reopen and develop on-farm energy assessments and workshops to improve energy efficiency on farm.

Regenerative Farming – Renewable Energy

Recommendation 10: \$20m over two years to educate growers on emissions reduction and Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) opportunities.

With the pressure of global warming, many farmers are already actively reducing their emissions. It is important to support farmers making these changes and incentivise others to do the same.

Growers have a huge potential to transition towards becoming a sink for carbon by making changes to practices and technologies by capitalising on unused/unproductive land and accessing grants that will allow them to change over to renewable energy technologies.

To help assist growers in the transition, it is critical to provide information to ensure the best adoption. Bringing together growers who have already made the transition and those just beginning is important to show that it can be successful.

A collaborative approach will also create a support network of growers who can continue the education together.

Providing information on the current grant and incentive programs is important to continue the make the programs more accessible. The ACCU opportunities presented by the Emissions Reduction Fund is excellent, however it can be complicated to navigate, meaning many growers have not signed up for it.

Key Recommendations:

- Make the ACCU program more accessible by providing better guidance through the administration and project guidelines.
- Provide free/subsidised services for growers to have their carbon calculated.
- Reduce the amount of administration involved to access the ACCU program.
- Hold workshops in person to ensure maximum benefits and gains.

Pillar 4

Biosecurity – Funding

Recommendation 11: Introduce a biosecurity imports levy charge.

A biosecurity imports levy charge is important for growers to equally distribute the responsibility of biosecurity risks of travellers and goods. Often growers are unfairly left to deal with the repercussions of imports or travellers who can unknowingly spread pests and disease.

AUSVEG is supportive of the \$371m over four years for biosecurity programs. However, Australia's biosecurity needs ongoing, consistent funding to ensure Australia's trading and production opportunities are protected.

Biosecurity is everybody's responsibility, and a biosecurity imports levy charge would reflect that.

The incursion of a pest or disease takes extensive time, resources, and management and takes a slice out of a grower's bottom line. If not properly managed a grower can risk losing their entire crop and increase the risk of spreading to surrounding farms.

By ensuring biosecurity is properly resourced it will ensure funding can be distributed to those growers so they can take immediate action and prevent further incursions. This is essential to safeguarding the livelihoods of growers.

The levy should be used to offset the costs of biosecurity activities that reduce and manage the risk created by imports. The levy will also help to support growers that are adversely impacted by pests and diseases spread by imported products.

Key Recommendations:

- Create an ongoing biosecurity imports levy charge which is fair and reasonable and recognises the risk which each imported shipment brings to Australia's biosecurity programs.

Recommendation 12: Increase the passenger movement charge with the additional funds to go towards biosecurity.

The implementation of a passenger travel biosecurity levy charge is in line with the recommendation from Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity Review in 2017 and will ensure that growers are not burdened with the cost of managing biosecurity.

Any person who travels into the country carries an amount of risk of spreading harmful pests and disease. Often, they are unaware and oblivious of the consequences of their actions. But growers bear the cost of these mistakes from chemical management on-farm to paying for the mistakes of others through their own Biosecurity levies.

Key Recommendations:

- Increase the Passenger Movement Charge when the moratorium ends on 1 July 2022.

Biosecurity – Management

Recommendation 13: \$5m to review the current Fruit Fly activities and develop a national approach to fruit fly which all states adopt and protect trading relationships.

The Australian horticulture industry faces a significant threat to its future growth and trade viability due to Fruit Fly. Poor management of Fruit Fly will potentially have severe trade implications for Australia's \$2.7 billion horticulture exports industry.

A significant amount of money is invested by state and federal governments each year to manage Fruit fly. A coordinated approach would create better outcomes and create a significant saving of taxpayer money.

Fruit Fly also impacts our international trade relationships, with many regions that once held a Pest Free Area (PFA) status now being threatened by Fruit Fly. Losing the PFA status furthers risks the trade relationships of countries like China, Thailand, and Taiwan. It also raises questions around Australia's ability to effectively manage and eradicate pests and disease.

A national approach will require collaboration between states and territories to build a strong biosecurity management plan for the fruit fly to prevent outbreaks and work towards eradication.

Key Recommendations:

- Review the current Fruit Fly management system in each state and identify areas of weakness and high impact zones.
- Develop a national educational awareness and training campaign for improved management of Queensland Fruit fly.
- Develop a long-term plan and policy in collaboration with all Australian states to manage Fruit Fly.
- Recognition of Fruit Fly as a national pest, with the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) coordinating management and eradication with States .

Biosecurity – Education

Recommendation 14: \$10m over three years to support urban and peri-urban biosecurity networks to assist pest and disease identification.

Ensure the majority of growers in high-risk zones are able to identify exotic pests and disease to detect risks early in peri-urban areas. Ensure that key urban risk sites across Australia have a source of well-informed stakeholders who are able to identify exotic pests and disease at an early stage of incursion.

Key Recommendations:

- Develop a robust support program for growers in high-risk zones to identify the early signs of exotic disease and pests so that effective eradication can take place.
- \$1.7 million for a national peri-urban biosecurity project
- \$1.2 million for a national urban biosecurity project
- Liase with industry to identify alternative programs and investment to increase education of biosecurity among growers and the wier community

Recommendation 15: \$5m to increase grower awareness and capability to manage pests, weeds, and disease.

Improving growers' skill to identify early signs of pests, weeds, and disease is key to stopping spread and preventing major outbreaks. Training growers and providing them with appropriate resources will help them to manage pests effectively and efficiently helping to isolate the incursion.

Growcom's Infopest can be utilised as a national biosecurity, pest, and chemical reference source.

Infopest was designed by Growcom and helps growers to identify pests and provides up to date control methods. Infopest links growers to agriproducts to control pests whilst also providing information on its safe use.

Key Recommendations:

- More funding towards Infopest and other pest identification applications or a similar initiative that the federal government rolls out in the future.

Pillar 5

Emergency Preparation and Prevention – Food Safety

Recommendation 16: \$50m in grants for growers to implement food safety infrastructure on-farm.

As we have seen over the last five years, food safety incidents can lead to drastic decline in consumer demand and result significant crop waste. Growers should be supported to implement on-farm infrastructure to ensure the food is safe before it leaves the farm gate.

Australian producers have a long-standing reputation for high quality and safe food, and the number of incidents relating to food safety are low in comparison to the rest of the world. Keeping this reputation for the long-term is critical for the upwards growth of our industry.

Key Recommendations:

- Grant funding available for growers to implement food safety infrastructure.
- Research/investigate new technologies to improve on-farm food safety infrastructure.
- Provide cost effective technologies and practices that can be implemented on-farm.
- Grant funding for onsite training for workers.

Recommendation 17: \$10m over five years for an industry-led program to connect growers to the latest international agricultural innovations and tech solutions.

It is important for growers to keep informed of the latest innovations and technologies in agriculture to allow continuous improvement. By helping growers connect on an international level there are greater opportunities for collaboration and advancement of projects.

Many growers tackle the same problems, whether they are domestic or abroad. Creating a space or platform where growers can share issues and solutions will help to push businesses further and allow them to become more efficient and resilient.

Key Recommendations:

- Create a network of Australian growers with international agriculture talent which brings together latest Agriculture technological innovations
- Hold workshops around Australia, with specific focuses and invite international speakers and leaders.
- Develop a platform online where stakeholders and researchers can collaborate and share innovations.

Emergency Preparation and Prevention – Mental Health

Recommendation 18: Increase the mental health and wellbeing of workforce in rural and regional areas by establishing an incentive scheme to attract and retain mental health service workers- of farmers.

Long-term and reliable access to mental health services is critical for the health and wellbeing of agricultural workers. Working on farms can be physically and mentally stressful, involving heavy machinery, long hours of physical labour and a lot of time in isolation.

Farms are often located in rural and remote settings with little access to services including mental health services. It is important all Australians no matter where they are located have reliable access to health services. Mental health is just as important as physical health, yet it does not get the same attention.

Keeping mental health specialists in rural and remote areas is critical for growers, their families, and communities. Whilst it may not always be an attractive area to move, there needs to be alternatives or programs which can provide more consistent care.

Key Recommendations:

- Develop a plan to establish long-term solutions to the reduced number of mental health service workers.
- Develop alternative solutions to increasing access of mental health services for farmers, including active and reliable online help.
- Create mobile mental health services with consistent staffing to build rapport with farmers.

Emergency Preparation and Prevention – Water

Recommendation 19: \$20m in grants and incentives to modernise water delivery and storage infrastructure and promote uptake of existing schemes.

Many vegetable and potato growers grow a variety of produce that requires a 12-month consistent and secure supply of water. Whilst some growers rely on irrigation water, others have dams that allow them to be self-sufficient and have consistent access to a secure supply. However, with more extreme heat waves and dry periods, it is critical growers continue to become more efficient water users.

Improving infrastructure and water delivery systems can significantly reduce the amount of water used on farm. Allowing farms to have more efficient water systems and retain more water for the future and the environment.

Key Recommendations:

- Continue to provide water delivery and storage infrastructure incentives and grants.
- Connect farmers to programs through a mixed online and in person format.
- Ensure continued rebates and schemes for water infrastructure across Australia. Further ensure matched funding in all states and territories.

Recommendation 20: \$20m over three years to educate growers on farm water efficiency.

Tailored educational opportunities can show growers the range of technologies available and practices being used on-farm to significantly reduce water use.

Promoting long-term management practices can help to secure water entities and minimise wasted water.

Key Recommendations:

- Develop tailored in-person and online workshops for growers around the country.
- Develop a platform to create a network where growers and industry can share practices and experiences.

Pillar 6

Competition & Business – Market Information

Recommendation 21: Introduce freely available and accurate real-time market price reporting in wholesale markets.

Creating freely available data will help support grower decisions and allow for healthy competition between businesses. In addition, it will ensure an equal opportunity to all businesses and not give disproportionate power to those with information.

Transparency of information on market trends help to inform growers on the changes that are happening in the marketplace and allow them to act accordingly. The ability to see these trends will improve the grower's ability to adapt to changes and identify opportunities in new markets.

Markets also use a paper-based system, which makes the collection of data time-consuming and often inaccurate.

The system to collect data needs to be streamline and simple to use. Whilst real time data would be ideal, daily updates would be more achievable in the short-term. Transitioning to an online system that can automatically process vegetables and potatoes will allow for quick and accurate data collection.

An online system would allow growers to track and compare the prices vegetable and potatoes in markets around Australia. Access to this data will give the grower more control over their produce and allow for better transparency between stakeholders.

Key Recommendations:

- Fund an ongoing pricing mechanism and resourcing for real-time market price reporting in the wholesale markets for fresh produce.
- Ensure equal opportunities for all businesses by creating a free and accessible system.
- Developing technologies that will assist with more accurate and timely data collection and track transactions on the wholesale market floor.

Competition & Business – Farm Inputs

Recommendation 22: Invest in domestic production facilities for farm inputs such as fertiliser, agricultural chemicals, potash, and wood.

Australian agriculture is heavily reliant on the global supply chain for key inputs. This reliance makes growers incredibly vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and shortages.

Purchasing inputs from overseas creates additional costs due to transport and freight, which can be significantly reduced if produced locally

Every year Australian Agriculture imports \$1 billion of Urea fertiliser from overseas. However, if Australia produced this product the economic and flow-on benefits could be moved back onshore, such as job creation that would stimulate rural and remote economies.

Key Recommendations:

- Prioritise investment to localise input production.

Competition & Business – Farm Business

Recommendation 23: \$3m over two years to help build grower capability in preparation to have sustainability conversations with their banks and their consumers.

Greater pressure is being put on growers and their businesses to demonstrate their sustainable on-farm practices, with both consumers and banks now asking questions about the day-to-day management of their business.

Whilst many growers are already working hard on developing a sustainable and regenerative business, growers need more guidance before having these conversations to ensure they can gain premium benefits.

Increasing growers' capability to have these conversations will improve the potential outcomes and opportunities such as gaining a premium standard and price. Being able to tell their story and demonstrate their practices will have long term benefits allowing growers to further improve their business.

Key Recommendations:

- Engage with farming and banking industry to facilitate tailored workshops for growers to prepare them to demonstrate their sustainable on-farm practices and demonstrate their financial benefits.

Recommendation 24: \$4m over three years for business benchmarking for vegetable and potato farms across Australia.

Comparing businesses can be beneficial to help set goals, ensure upward productivity and promote efficiency. It is important to compare with other businesses to set standards and drive new development and innovation.

Assessing business structure and strategy also allows growers to understand the needs of consumers, markets, and investors, and allows them to identify areas of improvement.

Key Recommendations:

- Provide constructed online and in-person trainings with relevant resources for businesses to undertake performance testing and benchmarking.

Pillar 7

International Trade

Recommendation 25: Allocate \$5m to support for international market development initiatives to promote fresh vegetables and potatoes in export markets.

The vegetable industry currently does not have access to any marketing funds to undertake international promotional activities. Government funding to undertake promotional activities in export markets will assist industry to raise the profile of Australian vegetables to drive export growth.

The majority of vegetables are exported via non-protocol pathways and market development is the priority for the vegetable industry to drive export growth. Provision of funds to support market development activities with marketing and promotional activities aligns closely with the industry's export strategy.

Key Recommendations:

- Grant opportunities for industry bodies and businesses to explore international market development opportunities.

Recommendation 26: \$5m for additional resourcing to support a reinvigorated whole-of-government approach to negotiating horticulture market access and seeking improved market access conditions.

Ensure that the appropriate government agencies are responsible and sufficiently resourced to negotiate technical horticultural market access and market improvements. Expanding the international markets available for fresh vegetable and potato exports is critical in driving export growth in the medium to long term.

Key Recommendations:

- Provide industry with government support to undertake international marketing and promotional activities to drive export growth in the near term.
- Funding for additional resourcing across relevant government departments and agencies to progress negotiation of horticulture market access and market improvements.

Pillar 8

Infrastructure – Accommodation

Recommendation 27: Accelerated tax write off for businesses to build staff accommodation.

Regional and rural accommodation options are limited across Australian communities, especially for agricultural workers who are helping with seasonal harvest. With the recent Australian Agriculture Visa announcement, as well as changes to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM), the demand for accommodation has grown, and will continue to grow.

AUSVEG supports the acceleration of the tax write off from the current 3 per cent to 33 per cent per year over three years to assist growers to improve their accommodation offers to attract staff.

Creating infrastructure for growers is critical for long-term business development and confidence for farm business and their communities.

Providing support for growers to invest in on-farm accommodation will allow growers to ensure that accommodation standards are met, as well as ensure growers are able to house the workers they need for their business. It will further encourage workers to return to their farm as accommodation is no longer a barrier.

Key Recommendations:

- Accelerate tax write off from the current 3 per cent to 33 per cent per year over three years to assist growers to improve their accommodation offers to attract staff.

Recommendation 28: \$3m over two years to develop on-farm accommodation guidelines and support Local Government Association's with implementing them.

Providing high quality accommodation is critical to attract workers to farms which are often located in remote and rural regions. Good accommodation will encourage workers to return to farms and make for a more motivated and healthier workforce.

Set guidelines will make it easier for growers follow and implement correct accommodation settings. With additional help from Local Government Associations, accommodation will be held to a high standard and help growers through the planning process.

Key Recommendations:

- Work with growers and Local Government Associations to set and implement accommodation standards.
- Build greater trust and transparency between federal government expectations and local government associations when it comes to worker accommodation.
- Ensure bonds are registered with the appropriate authority.
- Ensure accommodation is clean, safe and private.
- Accommodation must not be overcrowded and contain adequate facilities for the number of people living in.

Infrastructure – Supply Chain

Recommendation 29: Create a funding pool to support growers to build and modernise on-farm processing and waste facilities.

Modernising on-farm processing and waste facilities will allow growers to enhance the productivity and sustainability of their business by creating new market opportunities and streamlined business models that can process produce and develop new products from farm produce and waste.

Building shared processing and waste facilities will support local economies to become self-sufficient. Multiple central facilities on farm or shared by a number of farms will further reduce the overall transport, costs, and emissions, saving growers more than just money.

By processing food themselves or making new products from waste, businesses can reduce their reliance on external suppliers and transition towards a circular economy, making their business more resilient to supply chain issues and shortages.

Key Recommendations:

- Actively promote funding opportunities for on-farm processing and waste facilities.
- Work with ACEHUB, the Australian Circular Economy Hub, to move horticulture towards a circular economy.
- Work with local councils and farms to identify areas of improvement and opportunities to undertake projects.
- Work with local councils that are already developing facilities such as the East Gippsland Food Hub to help show available opportunities for growers.

Pillar 9

The Next Generation

Recommendation 30: \$10m over three years to reinvest in kids to vegetables and potato farms.

Exposing all children to agriculture from an early age is essential to develop an interest in the industry and simultaneously educate children on where their food comes from. A deeper understanding and respect for their produce could also improve consumption.

The average age of the Australian farmer is 56 (DAWE, 2016), and less than a quarter of the workforce is under 35.

Taking children to the farm will create a unique interactive learning experience and strengthen the connection between children and the land, and between rural and urban people.

This can also benefit the farmers giving them a new income stream from agri-tourism.

This would be an extension of the successful kids to farms program.

Key Recommendations:

- Create a platform where farm businesses and schools can connect for incursions and excursions. Foster relationships and partner schools/businesses.
- Reopen and expand funding for 'Educating Kids about Agriculture: Kids to farms grant program.'
- Funding for AgPacks which bring part of the farm to the school. AgPacks include seeds, fibre, soil science kits, etc which allow students to learn hands-on and gain a deep understanding of how food and fibre is grown