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Delay concerns over piece-level inspection



Produce industry concerned about wait times when security screening is implemented in Australia for all exports

Fresh produce will undergo compulsory security screening via x-ray or metal detector from 1 March if it arrives at airports without prior security clearance.

In the short term, scheduling is a concern for the industry whose perishable air cargo could suffer from time delays. It's not just fruit and vegetables that will need to meet the requirement, but all Australian exported air cargo regardless of article or destination.

Growers and traders can choose to either register as a 'Known Consignor', meaning they must meet certain security protocols to bypass airport screening at the take-off point

or have goods screened by a Registered Air Cargo Agent (RACA).

However, both Dominic Jenkin, CEO of the Australian Horticulture Exporters' and Importers' Association (AHEIA) and a representative from a global airline told Fruitnet that around two weeks out from the implementation date there are only a handful of RACAs on the list.

The aforementioned airline representative said the 1 March implementation date will be interesting to watch as it falls on a Friday which is a typical peak period for the week.

"The most concerning impact in the short run is excessive

wait times at the terminal operators, leading to shipments missing their planned flights as the shipments which are not from RACA or known consignors will [need to] be pre-screened," he said.

"Our terminal operator has published an additional 3 hours in lodge-in times but a lot of us are anticipating a longer lead time would be required."

Jenkin predicted a 24-hour delay at terminals, while Australian aircraft service group, Menzies Aviation cite an additional six-hour allowance for the new screening process.