

For fresh fruit and vegetable marketing and distribution in Asia



By Chris Komorek

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## ***IFAM extended until end of year***

### Australian government announce A\$240m extension of International Freight Assistance Mechanism



**A**ustralian exporters reliant on airfreight have welcomed the federal government's announcement of a further A\$240m in funding for its International Freight Assistance Mechanism (IFAM).

The [IFAM, which began in April](#) in response to a global downturn in air services as a result of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, has helped Australian producers export 36,000 tonnes of fresh produce, valued at A\$1bn, on over 1,800 flights. [It was expanded to meet growing demand in June.](#)

The further funding will extend the IFAM until the end of the year, in a commitment the federal government expects to deliver A\$3bn worth of produce (including seafood) to key international markets.

Federal trade minister Simon Birmingham said the extension would provide ongoing certainty for the country's exporters who rely on airfreight and will help to protect the tens of thousands of jobs of those who rely upon on the export sector.

The IFAM has flights departing from Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide,

Cairns, Toowoomba plus two internal routes - Hobart to Sydney and Darwin to Brisbane - which connect with international IFAM flights.

These allow exporters to reach destinations now including Tokyo, Dubai, Los Angeles, Singapore, Auckland, Hong Kong and Abu Dhabi.

Peak industry body, The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA), welcomed the funding extension, saying it will provide a boost for Australia's fruit and vegetable exporters.

"Export markets will be vital to the ongoing growth of the fresh produce industry and IFAM offers growers and exporters the opportunity to continue to supply their international customers during these uncertain times. This further enhances Australian farmers' reputations as reliable trading partners," said Michael Rogers, AFPA chief executive.

According to AFPA, Australia's exports of fresh fruit and vegetables have grown steadily over the past five years, with strong demand from a number of markets across Asia and the Middle East.

This is in line with more Australian fruit and vegetable farmers investigating export opportunities to diversify their markets and manage their risk.

AFPA members believe the programme needs to be continued with the same commercial approach with the potential to expand efforts to consolidate orders for small exporters to ensure as many farmers as possible benefit from the programme.

"We know that where products, such as citrus and table grapes, have been able to develop strong export markets there has been real flow on benefits to farmers and their communities. Export growth in fresh produce underpins jobs, investment and infrastructure across regional communities and we'd like to see as many fresh produce growers as possible benefit from the IFAM programme," said Rogers.

Industry representative for Australia's vegetable and potato growers, Ausveg, has also expressed its support for the funding extension, with national manager - export development, Michael Coote, highlighting its cooperation with the government.

“Industry has been engaging closely with the government, International Freight coordinator general Michael Byrne and his team to ensure that the needs of industry are being met with IFAM,” said Coote.

“We have been pleased with the level of engagement to date and this extension is due recognition that our fresh vegetable exporters continue to require assistance with logistics to continue their exporting trade.

“The extension of the IFAM assistance package is a positive sign that the Australian government is eager to help exporting vegetable growers maintain their existing markets – we look forward to continued engagement with the government to assist vegetable growers around the country,” he added.