By Gabrielle Easter

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National fruit fly council formed in Australia

A national council to combat fruit fly has been approved for a three-year funding commitment from the Australian federal and state governments

Plant Health Australia (PHA) and Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIAL) have announced the formation of a council to manage fruit fly across Australian states and territories.

The joint industry-government initiative has been approved for a three-year funding commitment by the HIAL board, with the Australian federal and state governments to contribute further funds.

The funding will see a full-time national manger of fruit flies be appointed, adding to the recently established roles of SITplus programme director and Qfly [Queensland fruit fly] area-wide management coordinator.

"The aim of the National Fruit Fly Strategy that PHA developed a number of years ago, is to have a national system to manage fruit flies that is effective enough to prevent fruit flies being a constraint to sustainable production or a barrier to trade and market access," Greg Fraser, executive director of PHA said in a press release. "This is an increasing challenge now some common chemical controls have been removed as options for farmers. It will need a concerted effort by everyone involved to manage the pest, and that's what the council will do – drive coordinated efforts Australia wide."

The council will focus on four areas related to the management of Mediterranean fruit fly and Qfly management, including prevention, detection and eradication of fruit flies; securing market access for horticultural products; national legislation and regulation; and research and development.

Damage to Australia's fruit and vegetable crops by fruit fly is estimated at A\$4.8bnm with the economic benefits of a national management approach estimated to be between A\$29 and A\$38m each year, according to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Science.