



By Chris Komorek

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Ensuring future employment opportunities



Research identifies what Australian producers must do to grow and secure workforce in the fresh produce industry

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARES) has identified more than half the employees working on an average Australian fruit and vegetable farm are locals.

The research findings were welcomed by the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA), whose members employ a combined 22,000 people across Australia, with more than half of the full-time equivalent jobs being performed by Australians.

Chief executive of AFPA, Michael Rogers, said its members are committed to developing a permanent local workforce that creates opportunities for young people, while developing practical solutions for permanent and seasonal harvest requirements.

“Alliance members are committed to engaging labour in a manner which is not only legal, but also ethical and promotes the integrity of the industry. This recognises the expectations of our customers and the end consumers of our produce,” said Rogers.

Seasonal workers, including backpackers on working holiday maker visas, are **more often employed on agricultural farms**, according to ABARES research.

However, Rogers said that the fresh produce industry needs to display its commitment to developing and maintaining an ongoing workforce.

“Fruit and vegetables are by nature perishable and often require a seasonal workforce to get the freshest

produce to working families across Australia”, added Rogers.

“The fresh produce industry needs to stand up and demonstrate that it is serious about developing a permanent workforce and ensuring the integrity of its employment practices.”

“Shortages of employees is simply not a valid reason to employ people outside the law. Ensuring integrity in the way people are employed is the best way to attract and retain workers”, added Rogers.