

Mr Fresh Pty Ltd



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December 11, 2020

Submissions for A1193 submitted by Queensland Government “Irradiation as a phytosanitary measure for all fresh fruit and vegetables”.

To Food Standards Australia New Zealand

Mr Fresh is an Australian family owned cut flower wholesaler operating out of Melbourne. Flowers are sourced both locally and globally for event managers, florists and other wholesalers. Mr Fresh has been in operation for around 13 years, and is considered a key wholesaler within the industry. Local flowers include flowers from the surrounds of Melbourne and other flower producing regions within Australia. Global sourcing includes cut flowers primarily from Kenya and Ecuador, and also from Singapore, China and Vietnam.

We understand the current call for submissions is limited to irradiation as a phytosanitary measure for all fruits and vegetables. However, our interest in putting forward this submission is to respectfully request that a broader plank is put forward. Rather than limit it to fruit and vegetables, we can see great merit in extending it to include cut flowers, and in particular, due to Australian demand and sale volumes, roses. Developing countries supply a high volume of roses when the Australian growing conditions preclude commercial cultivation. Put simply, when it is cold in Australia, we do not have sufficient supply to meet the needs of the Australian public, and must therefore find supply from other sources. We also face huge spikes in demand for particular events such as Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day.

At present, we are forced down the path of Methyl Bromide fumigation to ensure compliance to Australian Biosecurity requirements. And we are now also required to participate in Phosphine trials without any clear directions as to standards from the Australian Government. These are all carried out off-shore. Both these treatments have their disadvantages with regards to the environment and in particular the ozone layer.

Logically, we are very keen to see a more environmentally sensitive approach to the management of pest compliance.

Pre-Covid, together with Fairtrade Australia, we visited the X-Ray phytosanitary irradiation treatment facility in Melbourne and spoke at length about how we could trial irradiation on our roses. Our early trials indicated 800 greys did not harm the roses unduly. However, we clearly need to pick this torch up again to carry out further trials.

Irradiation carried out in Australia could well be a solution for the cut flower industry, enabling reliable supplies to be brought in to the country and the consumer needs to be met whilst also ensuring the Biosecurity of Australia is not compromised.

However, the lack of standards means we are feeling our way without clear direction, a time consuming and expensive exercise for individual companies to be doing on their own. And there is the risk that this is carried out without full understanding of the standards that would be required to be met by the Australian Government.

We believe the irradiation of cut flowers may well be a viable way forward for our industry, and urge that the current development of standards for the irradiation of fruit and vegetables as a phytosanitary measure be extended to include the development of irradiation standards for cut roses.

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