

Golden Mile Orchards Pty Ltd

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Dr Vanessa Findlay
Biosecurity Australia
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Dear Dr Findlay

I am writing to express my deep disgust in the proposed importation of New Zealand apples into Australia with the high possibility of exotic pests and disease entering this country.

Australia is well known around the world for its clean, green image – Western Australia even more so. Our country has such a high advantage in not having to spray extra chemicals to combat some of these exotic pests and diseases. If New Zealand receives approval to import apples there is a high risk of fire blight, leaf roller, apple curling midge and European canker – all unwanted pests and diseases which are totally unnecessary for Australia to risk. We would be throwing away our most valuable asset.

We are told that standard orchard practices can be adopted as quarantine standard sufficient to protect us (Australia) from risk. If this is the case, I would like to know if it is possible, as an accredited fruit grower and pack house operator, can I pack up a container of my apples, using my standard orchard practices and take it to Fremantle Warf to export to my desired location? I believe we both know the answer to that question.

Our Prime Minister, who I thought was the Prime Minister of Australia, should be looking after the country that gave her the right to lead, rather than attempting to boost her profile in other countries. Such as, earlier this year in New Zealand by announcing that apple imports will go ahead and receiving a standing ovation by the New Zealand parliament. This was an insult to the fruit growers of Australia and to Biosecurity Australia. I feel the Prime Minister is very short sighted. I would like to know how the Greens party, which is associated with the ALP, can accept the fact that we are risking our environment and are obviously not interested in the impact these pests and diseases can have if they entered our country. Is it because they are not producing revenue from it (e.g. Carbon tax) or, are we just too small to be considered?

I am 33 years old, one of the very few young fruit growers in the south west of Western Australia; my family have been farming in the area for three generations. Our orchard is situated in the small community of Donnybrook where every year during the harvest the population increases by 600 – 1000 people for a period of four months. Donnybrook relies on its fruit industry, apple growing is the very essence of our town; if the fruit growers in the town were to cease their businesses – the entire community will suffer.

I realise that the fruit industry is small compared to other industries in our country. In many cases the horticulture industry is established in small communities. Large amounts of infrastructure have been established in these communities due to the main industry of

horticulture. Pack houses, cool stores, carton factories, farm supply warehouses, mechanic workshops, machinery dealerships, transport depots and backpacker accommodation and facilities all exist in these communities because of the fruit industry. This model is replicated in every apple growing region in Australia. The impact of allowing these pests and diseases the opportunity to spread into our fruit growing districts by importing these apples into Australia will destroy the fruit growers in these areas, and this will affect the whole community and the country as a whole.

In time, the big picture is that it won't be viable to continue farming with the extra burden in private farm monitoring of these pests and diseases as well as protecting the crop with extra chemicals. Even with Australian fruit growers having a reputation of being one of the most economical producers in the world, with just some of these extra costs I have mentioned in our current climate, many growers will find it difficult to achieve high enough returns to cover costs and to save for the future. There will be many downsize, or pull out their trees all together. If this was to occur it will be felt Australia-wide. I believe that in around 5 – 10 years time, grocery prices will be too high for the average Australian to afford. Also, there will be most likely a substantial decline of fruit and vegetable growers in the country to help combat this rise; so, I guess we will just have to learn to live with it.

If the fruit industry is affected in this way, or worst case – stopped all together, Australia will never get it started again. We should not allow our countries horticulture future to lie in the hands of New Zealand. I believe that we grow more than enough apples right here in Australia, and there is absolutely no need to be bringing in apples from another country.

Yours faithfully


Sam Licciardello

1 July 2011