



Media release
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Batlow Apples fights for Australian grown

The Batlow Fruit Co-operative is calling for consumers to support Australian grown in light of the impending importation of foreign apples into the country later this year.

As it currently stands, Chinese apples could be in market in Australia by the end of 2010 with New Zealand apples hitting our shores as early as 2011.

The effect of this on the Australian apple industry is of great concern to the Batlow Fruit Co-operative and other growers due to the threat of disease and pests entering the country such as fire blight, European canker and apple leaf curling midge.

Australian growers pride themselves on growing apples with the minimal use of chemicals to control disease - and want it to stay that way. In fact, Batlow was one of the forerunners of what is known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) which uses monitoring, lures, traps and predatory insects in order to control pests and diseases on apples, limiting the use of chemicals on orchards.

Furthermore, the importation will have a huge effect on Australian horticulture as foreign fruits do not necessarily match the high Australian growing and labour practices and will undoubtedly out price locally grown fruit, putting many farmers and growers in financial difficulty and unable to compete.

Apple and Pear Australia Ltd (APAL), the national representative body for the apple and pear industry, does not support the unrestricted trade of fruit into Australia and is planning to fight to protect the industry by ensuring that only disease free apples can enter the country.

APAL General Manager, Tony Russell said: "APAL has campaigned vigorously for more than 10 years to ensure that the risk analysis process is comprehensive and rigorous so that imports from any source meet Australia's appropriate level of protection. This is vital to ensure that our industry can continue to economically provide high quality and safe products to consumers without the use of expensive crop protectants to control exotic pests."

Batlow Fruit Co-operative chairman, John Robson, adds: "This is an extremely concerning situation for apple growers to be in and is one that could have a huge impact on our industry and also on consumers and the food that is available to them."

"Most consumers want to buy fresh Australian produce, whether it be apples, other fruit or vegetables. We therefore need to help them identify which foods are Australian grown and have passed our strict quality standards, which we try to do by highlighting the 'Product of Australia' mark on our Batlow Apple stickers."

The Batlow Fruit Co-operative is grower owned and 100 per cent Australian. It is today recognised as one of the largest storage and packing operations in the country, collectively packing and marketing an average of one million cartons of apples every year.

For further information about the import issue and APAL's position, visit www.apal.org.au/trade-market-import-risk-assessments.cfm

For further information on the Batlow Fruit Co-operative, visit www.batlow.com.au

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