

# **Horticulture Australia Limited submission to Preventative Health Taskforce**

## **About Horticulture Australia**

Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) is a national research, development and marketing organisation that works in partnership with the horticulture sector to invest in programs that provide benefit to Australian horticulture industries.

HAL invests almost \$80 million annually in projects in partnership with the horticulture sector. During the year HAL runs more than 1200 research, development and marketing projects covering a diversity of topics including: market access, market research, export marketing, domestic marketing, supply chain management, quality assurance, food safety, skills development, industry communication, biotechnology, biosecurity, breeding, plant health, pesticide regulation, agronomy, crop regulation, physiology, irrigation and sustainable practices.

HAL does not conduct research and development itself. It contracts organisations such as state departments of agriculture, universities and the CSIRO to undertake the work. HAL conducts some activities within the marketing program but also engages external suppliers to undertake marketing activities.

As part of the Australian Government's commitment to rural research and development, horticulture industries can access matching Commonwealth funding through HAL for research and development activities.

## **Potential Initiatives**

### *4.1 Reshaping the food supply towards lower risk products and pricing*

While the Technical Report identifies large increases in the price of many fresh products, HAL contends that Australian consumers have access to a wide range of well priced fruit, vegetable and nut products.

Consideration of policy related approaches, such as subsidising "healthy" foods would be welcomed by the horticultural industries as a means of providing greater access to healthy food products. As identified in the report the most cost-effective policy, subsidising fresh produce, has the potential to deliver significant public health benefits and requires further appropriate consideration by government.

### *4.2 Food composition*

While not ignoring the potential benefits offered through reformulating existing products, HAL believes the emphasis needs to be placed on the consumption of natural and minimally processed foods in a balanced diet. Any long-term approach to food composition requires a balanced approach that emphasises natural foods, while at the same time seeking to encourage existing "formulated" products to achieve reductions in added salts, sugars and fats.

### *4.3 Food subsidies*

HAL supports government efforts to improve access to fruits, vegetables and nuts. This includes further consideration of issues such as transport subsidies for healthy foods to rural and remote regions, support for regional horticulture development opportunities and appropriate handling and storage facilities in remote communities.

#### *4.5.1 Social Marketing*

HAL supports the contention that an effective and coordinator long-term public education campaign is needed to address the issue of obesity. The importance of increasing fruit, vegetable and nut consumption as a means of combating preventable disease, such as obesity, is well recognised and internationally there are over 30 countries with multilevel, national education programs in place.

Fresh produce consumption is a key component of Healthy Weight 2008 - Australia's Future - the report of the National Obesity Task Force and is also included in the WHO Strategy in Integrated Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases through its Fruit and Vegetable Promotion Initiative.

At an Australian government level the National Public Health Partnerships Strategic Intergovernmental Nutrition Alliance (SIGNAL) developed both Eat Well Australia and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan. Both of these strategies were endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers Council on 1 August 2001, where increasing fruit and vegetable promotion was identified as a priority initiative.

HAL has actively supported the development of a national framework for the Go for 2&5<sup>®</sup> campaign - a multilevel approach that is supported cooperatively by government, industry and commercial interests. It further contends that social marketing campaigns require a framework that can be actively supported by industry and non-government organisations.

While the Go for 2&5<sup>®</sup> campaign has been successful to date in lifting consumption of fruit and vegetables, appropriate Australian government investment in this program is required over the longer term. As the organisation responsible for the management of the private sector component of the campaign, HAL has been advised by numerous potential investors that this longer-term government investment is required to attract significant cooperative development from non-government organisations.

HAL's contention is that the Go for 2&5<sup>®</sup> campaign is an effective component in a coordinated public education strategy to address the issue of obesity. Importantly the Go for 2&5<sup>®</sup> campaign has a consistent approach that can and is being used to drive a range of strategies in different settings; from schools to workplaces and from the retail outlet to the community. The licensing framework provides opportunity for governance, industry, commercial organisations and non-government bodies to work together under the one framework to promote good health.

### **Supportive Documentation**

HAL has previously argued the case for further long term government support for cooperative public / private sector social marketing campaigns directed at addressing the issue of obesity. HAL wishes to draw the attention of Preventative Health Taskforce to these arguments detailed in the two attached documents:

- HAL submission to the House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing – Inquiry into Obesity in Australia.
- Better Health – It's Simple

## **Correspondence**

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