

The world-wide spread of COVID-19 is game-changing for everyone - and we're all sailing in uncharted waters. PCA is committed to helping you stay informed regarding the latest updates and advice, and ensuring that you are receiving information from reliable and authoritative sources.



COVID-19 Update

If you're like me, your inbox is filling up with news about COVID-19. Clearly, we're all facing very challenging circumstances going forward – with the 'unknown unknowns' causing great angst. Significant impacts are being felt on global economies and the disruptions to our day-to-day lives now extend beyond the inexplicable toilet paper panic.

The protected cropping industry is no exception

Australian horticulture is a highly globalised industry, depending on export markets to sell our produce and importing key inputs such as chemicals and fertilisers from overseas countries. So, what will be the likely impact on our industry from this pandemic?

There are no clinically confirmed cases of COVID-19 linked to the consumption of fresh produce or even (at this stage) food sold through traditional retail outlets. As consumers select their produce, adhering to food safety guidance is critical. Consumers are being encouraged to wash their hands, and to also wash and prepare their produce carefully.

PCA working for you

As more and more restrictions are placed on our activities, many of you will already be facing challenges in maintaining your workforce. Recent decisions by the federal government will make this even harder. You can read about this [here](#).

These specific policies will hit our industry hard – and will be exacerbated by today's decision to ban all foreign travellers (non-citizens and non-residents) from entering Australia at all from tomorrow night.

We are working with other industry bodies and all levels of government to develop solutions for resulting potential labour shortages over the coming months. We've written to the both the federal government and the opposition seeking a review of these decisions to minimise further disruptions to business.

We've asked them to look at extending visas for workers already in the country, enabling Pacific Seasonal Workers to move more freely between Approved Employers, exempting

Pacific Island workers from quarantine requirements (in line with New Zealand) and incentives to get more Australians working in seasonal roles on farms.

We've also supported the call made by the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman for government assistance packages to be extended to all small businesses who are facing dire circumstances as a result of this health crisis - including sole traders.

Our friends at Growcom have put together a very useful guide for growers in managing workplaces. You can download this [here](#).

PCA is actively monitoring the situation and we'll share updates as they come to hand to help you adjust planning for the weeks and months ahead.

Obviously farm tours are off the agenda at the moment, but we'll soon be launching a program of virtual farm tours that you can be part of without leaving home. Watch this space.

Every cloud has a silver lining

We are hopeful that, as social isolation measures are implemented across the country, Australians spending more time at home will cook more meals from scratch and hence rediscover the great value offered by our fresh food and vegetables. They may also find reasons to invest in improving their indoor and outdoor spaces with greenlife and flowers.

Our industry has proven its resilience time and again. The challenges and disruption we face today only serve to teach us more about our passion and prepare us for the future. Just as the plants we grow do, our united industry will adapt to its new environment and will continue to promote our value to Australia and all Australians.

Want to know more?

We've collated a list of resources you can take a look at to help you better understand the impact the virus may have on you, your family, and your business.

There's a lot of 'fake news' out there at the moment, so remember to question the trustworthiness of each source before taking any advice - and never underestimate the value of evidence-based work.

The ABC's health expert, Dr Norman Swan, is one source we know we can trust. You can subscribe to his daily updates on COVID-19 [here](#) and listen today's talk [here](#).

Here are contacts for government health websites:

• Federal	Department of Health	www.health.gov.au
• ACT	ACT Health	www.health.act.gov.au
• NSW	NSW Health	www.health.nsw.gov.au

• NT	Department of Health	www.health.nt.gov.au
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• Qld	Queensland Health	www.health.qld.gov.au
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• SA	Department for Health and Wellbeing	www.sahealth.sa.gov.au
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• Tas	Department of Health and Human Services	www.dhhs.tas.gov.au
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• Vic	Department of Health and Human Services	www.dhhs.vic.gov.au
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• WA	WA Health	www.health.wa.gov.au
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Here are some more interesting links:

- This blog post by US agricultural economist Jason Lusk discusses the potential impacts of COVID-19 on [global food markets](#).
- Australia is a net exporter of farmed goods with two-thirds of product sent overseas for consumption – read the [NFF's insight on COVID impacts](#).
- There are some good suggestions [here](#) as to how to safeguard your business .
- Farmer and clinical psychologist Steph Schmidt discusses ways to manage the [psychological turmoil](#) of the coming weeks.
- Looking at 2-weeks self-isolation? Get '[cabin fever](#)' tips from farmers in this ABC news article.

And remember ...

We're here for you at any time. If you have a question, need some advice, or just want someone to talk to, feel free to reach out.

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