

# Fruit Fly Insurance and On Farm Fruit Processing Assistance Campaign and Policy Pack



# The Problem

## **Context**

Fruit fly quarantines are essential for protecting SA's biosecurity and the future of the industry, but they come at a significant financial cost for growers.

## **The Problem**

- No insurance or government compensation for quarantine losses
- Missed peak sales threaten farm viability
- PIRSA funds enforcement ("sticks") rather than support ("carrots")

## **The Solution**

Government must fund direct support for growers to ensure they can survive the containment process.

- Compensation for quarantine losses
- Protection of Australia's food sovereignty
- Sustainable biosecurity policy

Biosecurity is a shared state and federal responsibility, and support for growers should reflect this.

**This is a political choice** — voters must demand better.

# What we heard from Growers

## Grower Feedback

In February, we spoke with growers at the Adelaide Farmers' Market. Notably, many regular farmers were absent due to quarantine restrictions.

## What We Heard

- Frustration with PIRSA's zoning decisions: One farmer's property is split by the Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone, but quarantine applies to the entire farm.
- Concerns about PIRSA staff: The community feel staff lack the seniority to make commonsense decisions and the expertise to apply flexibility. Many growers feel there is a disconnect between decision-makers and those directly affected, leading to frustration, communication breakdowns, and increasing resistance to compliance.
- The breaking point for some growers: Uncertainty about future restrictions, a lack of assurances from the government, and the economic toll of quarantine measures have led some farms to shut down entirely—costing jobs, livelihoods, and local produce.



# Solutions

## Policy Solutions

We propose the following policy solutions:

### 1. Government-Backed Insurance for Growers

A government-backed insurance program that applies when quarantine measures result in crops being destroyed or fruit becoming unsellable.

#### Rationale:

- Private insurance in Australia is costly and limited in scope, leaving growers without adequate protection.
- Many countries, including the United States, Canada, and France, have government-backed crop insurance programs that subsidise premiums to support farmers and mitigate risk.
- Germany and the UK also have established insurance markets, with varying levels of government involvement.
- Nations such as Brazil, India, Azerbaijan, and Romania recognise the importance of protecting farmers against climate risks and market volatility through government-supported crop insurance.

A government-backed insurance scheme would provide certainty for growers, ensuring that biosecurity measures do not come at the cost of farm viability.

# Solutions

We propose the following policy solutions:

## 2. On-Farm Food Processing Program

A program to reduce food waste and provide growers with a mechanism to generate revenue during quarantine restrictions.

These options are especially important for organic and low-spray growers.

### **Rationale:**

- During a fruit fly outbreak, food cannot be taken off-premises, leading to significant waste and lost income.
- On-farm processing offers a solution, allowing growers to transform their produce into value-added products that comply with quarantine restrictions.
- However, these processes are capital-intensive and require investment in equipment and infrastructure.

We propose that under a government-backed insurance scheme, growers be given the option to:

- Receive compensation for losses.
- Purchase capital equipment for on-farm processing.
- Access a mobile processing unit to convert produce into shelf-stable products.

South Australia has a strong but under-utilised food production sector with innovative ideas for food and food waste reduction. Technologies such as freeze-drying and dehydration allow for safe, compliant processing while creating new market opportunities. Supporting these initiatives would reduce waste, increase resilience, and strengthen local food production.

# Key recommendations:

This issue should be framed as an opportunity rather than a conflict — one that strengthens biosecurity while addressing the real economic pressures on growers. Public outreach is key, and the way this conversation is shaped will determine its success.

- To PIRSA: Position engagement with growers as a way to rebuild trust and improve compliance. A more balanced approach that includes direct support alongside enforcement can strengthen biosecurity outcomes.
- To the community: This is a chance to remind the public where their food comes from and whose work makes it possible for them to eat. It's an opportunity to educate people on the function and value of biosecurity measures like fruit fly quarantine while acknowledging the financial strain on growers. Taking a lesson from public health, trusted community members should be the face of messaging, as known and relatable sources are more effective than unknown experts.
- To the media: Frame the issue through the lens of primary producers, job creators, and food sovereignty. Outlets like the ABC are receptive to stories about "battlers" and the national interest—this campaign has all those elements and should be positioned accordingly.

By tailoring messaging to each audience, the campaign can drive meaningful policy change while strengthening public and industry support for biosecurity efforts.

# Supporting Information

## Fruit Fly Facts

- 1 million kg of infested fruit collected and destroyed in the Riverland alone since 2020.
- \$43 million allocated over two years to fruit fly eradication.
- An SA berry farm forced to destroy nearly \$250,000 worth of produce due to quarantine has now closed — compare that to the \$43 million budget.
- \$4.4 million over four years allocated for rural financial counselling — to help primary producers “be more prepared” emotionally for industry challenges that need practical solutions.

The contrast is stark: tens of millions for enforcement, but little direct support for those bearing the cost.

## Freeze-Dried Facts

- Freeze-dried produce is a premium product in a way that dried fruit isn't.
- Dried fruit often requires additives like sulfites for processing, which add costs and limit market access.
- Lower sulfite use expands the market, reducing allergy concerns and making the product accessible to more consumers.
- Better nutrient retention and longer shelf life compared to other preservation methods.
- Versatile product options – freeze-drying allows for whole fruit, slices, and fruit powders, which can use damaged or misshapen fruit, reducing overall waste.

An example of a South Australian food innovator turning food waste into value add products is Woodlane Orchard and Sphiker.



WeCollaborate identify and design community driven solutions to issues in regional Australia.

We believe that systems change is needed in Australia’s food and agriculture sector.

Through our work in agtech, regional digital skills, and community development, we have gained deep insight into real-world challenges — and the organisations and people driving them.

We see innovation and solutions in new ways, but we are frustrated by how difficult it is to create change. Our food systems must evolve because regional communities are suffering. Growers, with respect, are growing older, and succession planning is uncertain — many in the next generation don’t want to endure the same struggles. Add a changing climate and economic uncertainty, and regional industries are under immense pressure.

We turn ideas into experiments, policy, and projects because we care.  
Regions are worth it. Food security is worth it.



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