



21/10/13

Submission in regard to the impact of imported processed fruit and tomatoes on the Goulburn /Murray Valleys and Australian economy.

Background BuyAustralianMade - <http://www.buyaustrianmade.com.au/>

BuyAustralianMade (BAM) is a member based organisation founded in 2009 by Stephen Gately. It was developed out of personal savings and is now partially funded by BAM member's annual subscriptions. No Government funding has ever been received.

BAM's philosophy is that "if people don't know what is Australian made, Australian grown and know where and how to buy it, they won't." BAM's focus is to make it easy for people to find Australian made and Australian grown products.

BAM's membership is approaching 400 businesses. Products made or grown range from high tech products like solar panel through to dried fruits and everything in between. BAM promotes 1000's of different products. Some BAM members are multi-billion dollar businesses exporting to the world, others are operating from their garage. The majority of BAM members are SME's with less than 50 employees.

BAM actively engages with members and the general public. This engagement includes receiving regular comments and feedback on issues relating to the future of Australian manufacturing and Australian producers.

This submission summarises some of the issues and comments received recently regarding Australian grown fruit processing in this country. The points are grouped into

1. Processing Plants
2. Products
3. Health
4. Future Food Security

Processing Plants

- The ongoing benefits to the nation of retaining the capability, infrastructure, skills to process a large range of different fruit and vegetables
- The need to provide multiple opportunities for Australian farmers to sell their produce and to have their produce processed
- Decisions to close processing plants are being based on short term goals and circumstances, not on what is in the best long term interest of Australia
- Processing plants which have closed are not being made available for other organisation to buy and provide ongoing processing facilities
- Processing plant closures are substantially reducing employment opportunities

Products

- Shopper choice is being eroded, there are less Australian grown processed products on supermarket shelves
- Some shoppers prefer to buy Australian grown and processed food and would like that choice of doing so remain
- Private label brands replacing traditional brands on shelves under the guise that customers are requesting that replacement but the choice to buy anything other than private label brands is being reduced
- The ease at which private label brands can shift both sourcing of produce and production offshore
- An increase in imported processed food means more Australian dollars flow offshore
- Australian produce and processing is recognised to be high quality and safe, without a viable farming sector and processing facilities future opportunities are reduced
- If Australia is going to become the “food bowl of Asia”, processing produce should be seen as a value add rather than exporting just the raw materials
- Processing food in Australia helps reduce carbon miles
- Improved labelling laws will assist shoppers in making an informed decision

Health

- Australia produce is recognised as being “Green and Clean” and must capitalise on this label by continuing to have a range of processing facilities
- Reduced confidence in imported processed food over locally processed produce
- Concern about the use of banned chemicals and lack of legislation relating to produce grown and processed offshore
- Poor working conditions and employee entitlements in some offshore farms and processing plants

Food Security

- The future of quality food production is becoming a major focus for many economies, Australia should be ensuring that food production and processing is secured for future generations
- In the event of a global crisis such as war, disease, natural disaster. Australia should be in the position to be self-sustaining in regards to food production and processing
- Other major economies are treating food security as a priority, whilst Australia is allowing the dismantling of the nation’s food processing sector

Regards

Stephen Gately

Founder and Managing Director of BuyAustralianMade

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