
Don't bypass backyard biosecurity to save at the supermarket

15 September 2022 (Canberra) - Lockdowns may have eased but the number of Aussies growing their own fruit and veggies at home has not, prompting a reminder about good backyard biosecurity. Australia is fortunate to have the world's best farmers producing more than enough food for the nation but according to shopping website Ebay, there's been a spike in online purchasing of staple vegetable seeds. Sales of potatoes seeds have reportedly increased by 168 per cent, green beans by 120 per cent, lettuce by 125 per cent and cucumbers by 80 per cent over the past four months.

While exercising the green thumb is a great activity and may help to save on some of your food costs, it could come at an even greater cost for Australian agriculture and the economy if not done properly. It is crucial that home gardeners remember to buy seeds from a known origin and practice responsible pest and disease management to protect themselves, their future harvest and Australian farming.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey, said, "Most people wouldn't even think that their backyard veggie patch could possibly cause a widescale issue, but if left unchecked, pests and diseases can spread quickly and can pose real and serious threats to major farming operations if they are allowed to breakout."

"Home gardeners should equip themselves with appropriate pest management tools and consult their local garden centre for the best advice on what to use for different produce and how to use those products safely and effectively," Mr Cossey said.

Australian Seed Federation CEO, Mr Osman Mewett said, "Australians should always look to buy seeds from reputable Australian companies, and not from online mail-order sources overseas. Seeds of unknown origin pose a major threat to Australia's biosecurity as they carry no guarantee of having undergone important testing procedures that detect and prevent seed borne pathogens that have not previously been reported in Australia."

In a research project conducted last year by the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Agriculture Victoria, 75 per cent of seeds purchased online from overseas suppliers carried viruses that were a biosecurity concern.

"Seed imported legally by reputable seed companies undergoes rigorous testing to meet Australia's strict biosecurity requirements. Keeping seeds, and consequently plants, healthy is crucial to ensuring a sustainable and affordable food supply and protecting Australia's environment and agricultural enterprises," Mr Mewett said.

Mr Cossey concluded, "Responsible seed purchasing and good management practices at home will ensure farms and our nation's crop production aren't inadvertently threatened or damaged causing ever great food supply challenges."

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the national peak industry organisation representing the plant science sector in Australia. CropLife's members are the world-leading innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry, worth more than \$20 billion a year to Australian agricultural production, provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies key to the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability and sustainability. CropLife is part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.

