
Fighting food loss to fight food inflation

29 September, Canberra – Marking International Day of Food Loss and Waste today, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, CropLife Australia, is calling for a greater focus on food loss prevention on-farm as a practical way to ease cost-of-living pressures.

The cost of a typical basket of groceries has surged more than 20 per cent over the past five years, with low-income households now spending more than a fifth of their income on food. Fresh fruit and vegetables have been hit hardest with inflation in this category consistently running two to three times higher than overall food inflation.

“Even as headline inflation has eased, families are still paying far more for their fruit and vegetables than other food items,” said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia.

“Compared to a 3 per cent average for food and non-alcoholic beverages, fruit and vegetable prices rose 4.6 per cent in the 12 months to the June quarter. In recent years we’ve even seen prices rise to an eye watering 8.6 per cent due to unfavourable growing conditions.

“Pre-harvest losses are the biggest driver of supply shocks, making up 58 per cent of total crop loss per farm, driven by weather events (63 per cent) and pests and diseases (32 per cent) pressures that are intensifying with climate change. With 95 per cent of bananas grown in Far North Queensland, for example, a single cyclone or disease outbreak can move national prices almost overnight,” said Mr Cossey.


While Australia exports around 70 per cent of its total farm output, most fresh produce is consumed domestically. Vegetables make up only a fraction of exports, highlighting how reliant Australians are on tight, regionally concentrated and perishable supply chains.

“Crop protection products and advanced plant breeding, including modern chemistry and biotechnology innovations, are essential to reducing losses and stabilising yields,” said Mr Cossey.

“Insect-resistant, drought-tolerant and disease-resistant varieties, combined with pesticides, fungicides and herbicides, protect crops from catastrophic losses and support faster recovery. Without these tools, almost three quarters of Australia’s food value would disappear, leaving supermarket shelves bare.

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.



“These technologies not only make supply chains more resilient, but they also act as an inflation buffer, limiting the volatile spikes in fruit and vegetable prices that hit families hardest. However, outdated and overly complex regulatory systems continue to delay or block farmer access to these essential innovations.”

Mr Cossey concluded, “Preventing food loss is not just a productivity issue, it’s a cost of-living issue. Improving Australia’s regulatory efficiency is critical to ensuring farmers have timely access to safe and effective innovations that reduce food loss, strengthen supply chains and drive down the sharpest cost of living shocks for basic food items.”

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