



Dietitians Association of Australia

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Horticulture Innovation Australia

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**Dietitians Association of Australia's Response to HIA Consultation Paper:  
Determining the Strategic Investment Priorities for the  
Australian Horticulture Industry**

On behalf of the Dietitians Association of Australia we strongly encourage that health, nutrition and wellness projects are included as Strategic Investment Priorities for the Australian Horticulture Industry and funded through the Strategic Co-Investment Fund Pool.

The Dietitians Association of Australia represents 5800 members nationally who are Accredited Practising Dietitians and students.

Health, Nutrition and Wellness is an issue that is strategically important to us and horticulture given the state of Australians' health, it's relevant to many horticultural industries, and there is market failure that warrants investment of R&D funds.

Nutrition, health and wellness projects are currently being undertaken by a number of Australian Horticultural industries. The value of these projects is to keep horticultural produce top of mind with consumers, health professionals and food regulators and public health policy advocates, and encourage consumption. A significant number of Australians are currently not consuming a healthy diet consisting of adequate fruit, vegetables, nuts and mushrooms. Projects that continue to raise the awareness of the health benefits of horticultural produce, influence behaviour and increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts and mushrooms have the means to radically change the health of Australians.

The Dietitians Association of Australia had a very successful partnership with HAL until the end of 2013 whereby industry focused fact sheets were produced as a resource for the industry members and for Dietitians. See the attached document.

Health, nutrition and wellness projects need to be part of the Strategic Co-investment Funding Pool research priorities because they are research areas that affect all Australians at all life stages.

In 2011–12 (1):

- More than 3 in 5 Australian adults (63%) were overweight or obese (70% of men and 56% of women).
- Overweight and obesity were more common in areas with the lowest SES than higher
- For children aged 5–17, 26% were overweight or obese – more so in lower SES areas
- More than 1 in 3 people aged 25 and older had high blood cholesterol (36%)
- About 416,000 adults had impaired fasting glucose (which if left untreated can lead to type 2 diabetes) —almost twice as many men (273,000) as women (143,000)
- The leading underlying cause of death for adults was coronary heart disease
- For males the next most common causes of death were lung cancer and cerebrovascular diseases (which include stroke)
- For females the next most common causes of death were cerebrovascular diseases, and dementia and Alzheimer disease.



A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts and mushrooms plays a role in chronic disease prevention and management such as managing weight and cholesterol and reducing the risks of heart disease and diabetes.(1-9)

The Australian Government is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles, addressing obesity, and taking preventative measures to improve the health of all Australians.(10) And with good reason -the most recent available estimate for the total cost of poor nutrition was more than \$5 billion per year, based on 1990 costings.(11) Given that the cost of obesity alone was estimated to be \$8.283 billion per year in 2008 (12) the current cost of poor nutrition in Australia will greatly exceed the 1990 estimates.

While the Australian Government is committed to improving health it has been several years since the national “Go for 2&5” fruit and vegetable promotional campaign (2005) and the “Swap it” healthy eating campaign (2011).

The ABS Australian Health Survey (2011-12) found that only 54% of adults eat recommended fruit serves per day (13) and a paltry 7% eat recommend vegetables serves. (14) This survey also found on average Australians eat just 5g of nuts a day (15) well short of the recommended 30g in the Australian Dietary Guidelines.(16)

Strategic investment partnerships have been utilised for the benefit of exposing health professionals to messages about horticultural products via the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Forum of Nutrition Research held in Brisbane (May 2014). Together, Avocados, Almonds, Mushrooms and Nuts for Life have shared a large trade exhibition space at Dietitians Association of Australia conferences. This enables them to compete for the attentions of dietitians at their key National event.

Linkages with Australian university departments undertaking primary research with aims to prove the health benefits of primary produce are also an effective way to influence diets locally.

A significant amount of investment is needed in nutrition, health and wellness projects in order to make significant and long-lasting changes. Many horticultural industries have made investments in disseminating information and yet only half of Australian adults are meeting the two serves of fruit dietary guideline (13) and just 7% are meeting the five serves of vegetables dietary guideline(14).

An example is consumer confusion over the fat content of nuts and effect on weight management still exists and while there are projects in place to help overcome this, it will take several years to see a shift in thinking due to the low fat mantra of the 1980-90s. Similarly current paleo fad diets which recommend that fruit consumption is optional are also affecting consumption.

Horticultural produce plays a vital role in achieving and maintaining good health and research is need to uncover the barriers that stop Australians from regularly eating these healthy foods as well as discover programs to help increase consumption.

Since fruits, vegetables, nuts and mushrooms play a role in managing chronic disease, without investment in this health area we are likely to see a continued drop in consumption of these foods and a greater reliance on health services as treatments for largely preventable lifestyle diseases rise.



Thus on behalf of the Dietitians Association of Australia we request that health, nutrition and wellness projects are included as Strategic Investment Priorities for the Australian Horticulture Industry and funded through the Strategic Co-Investment Fund Pool.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Claire Hewat', is positioned above the typed name.

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