

NFF COVID-19 UPDATE

9 April 2020

Welcome to the NFF COVID-19 update, collating recent updates and information relevant to the agrifood supply chain.

We strongly encourage you to forward this brief through your network.

In addition to this regular brief, we are also maintaining pages on FarmHub with information relevant to farm businesses. Follow the links below to view those pages.

FarmHub COVID-19 Resources

[Key Information and FAQs](#)

[Border Control Information](#)

[Assistance and Support](#)

[NFF Workplace Guide](#)

IN THIS ISSUE

- [DFAT briefing on global trade impacts](#)
- [Modern Award changes take effect](#)
- [Update on groceries for remote customers](#)
- [Redirecting produce from food service channels](#)
- [Business Liaison Group disbanded](#)
- [Amendments to Biosecurity Determination](#)
- [Media and communications](#)
- [Commodity briefs](#)
- [Key contacts and consultation forums](#)

DFAT: COVID IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE TELECONFERENCE

Austrade is reporting increased demand for Australia fresh food from a number of overseas markets including Singapore and Hong Kong. They are encouraging fresh food exporters to sign up for the [International Freight Assistance Mechanism](#) (IFAM). The first flights are scheduled to depart next week.

The Australian Embassy in Beijing reports the Chinese economy is slowly returning to full operation. The Chinese Govt has not announced a major stimulus package reflecting their assessment that the economy will pick up without it. COVID has seen Aust seafood exports to China drop 10-20% but orders are expected to increase with restaurants re-opening. Exorbitant freight costs into China have hit Aust dairy exports, but the IFAM is aimed at addressing this. Beef exports to China were reported as up in Feb by 7.7% though sheepmeat imports were down. The Embassy also reported the increase in e-commerce in China including increased orders from older people and the lower end of the market. The

Australian Consulate in Hong Kong has reported a 500% increase in beef imports from Aust and increasing pressure on fresh food supplies.

Other peak industry bodies raised concerns regarding: the cost and access to freight for both imports and exports; problems with getting health and other trade certificates to countries that won't accept digital copies; continuing uncertainty around what is an 'essential service'; visa certainty and extensions for foreign professionals; concerns around dumping of product in Australia; and the critical need to not introduce protectionist measures and to call out other countries that do. The Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association noted a radical fall in global demand for petroleum products. And the Minerals Council noted a 46% fall in minerals exports.

MODERN AWARD CHANGES

The Fair Work Commission (**FWC**) has varied most Awards, including the Pastoral, Horticultural and Sugar Industry Awards, to:

1. enable employees to take unpaid pandemic leave if they are required to self-isolate pursuant to government recommendation; and,
2. to allow employer and employee to agree for the employee to take twice as much annual leave at half pay.

"Unpaid Pandemic Leave" is available to all employees, including casuals, and won't be prorated according to weekly hours. "Double leave at half pay" will be available by agreement, and the agreement would have to be in writing. The change effectively circumvents inflexibilities in the existing annual leave provisions.

GROCERIES FOR REMOTE SUPERMARKET CUSTOMERS

Update from Woolworths

As of 2 April, existing Woolworths Rewards customers who live remotely (100km+ from a rural store) should have received an email notifying them of changes to product limits. Subject to stock availability, they will be able to access 3 times the limits applied to others. This also applies to remote account holders who usually email/fax their order into a store. They will be required to show ID and the letter from us when they enter the store and/or attach it to their order through their normal ordering process.

To allow these customers flexibility on their orders, the store manager will need to manually handle the process and we therefore ask our remote customers to remain patient and give our teams as much time as possible to fulfil their orders.

We hope these measures will help alleviate some of the frustration our rural and remote customers have been feeling and we appreciate their patience to date - the good news is that we are starting to see signs of our stock levels returning to normal.

Update from Coles

Coles Online already operates a Remote Delivery Service for customers in remote areas of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Far North Queensland, and this has continued to operate.

New customers can sign up to the Remote Delivery Service by registering at Coles Online and entering their address details. If the system does not recognise their address they can email businessorders@coles.com.au.

We expect to be able to remove purchase limits for existing Remote Delivery Service customers by 10 April 2020. For new customers signing up with the Remote Delivery Service, please contact Coles Customer Care to discuss removing product limits from your account

Please note that even once limits are removed, due to current stock demand we are unable to guarantee that customers will receive all the items in their order.

REDIRECTING PRODUCE FROM FOOD SERVICE CHANNELS

The NFF is actively engaged in discussions with Government, members and the food relief sector about ways to avoid food waste and reduce the financial impact caused by reduced demand in the food service sector.

Some industries and businesses have seen product demand fall significantly following restrictions on cafes, restaurants and hotels. We're in discussions about channelling this surplus product to the food relief sector while compensating farm businesses for lost revenue.

BUSINESS LIAISON GROUP DISBANDED

The Business Liaison Group which had been convened by the Prime Minister and Treasurer – consisting of the NFF and other business groups – has been disbanded as of this week. Consultation with these groups will now be handed directly by the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission.

Consultation structures for the Commission are still being finalised and a further update will be provided once we have more detail.

AMENDMENTS TO BIOSECURITY DETERMINATION

On 26 March 2020, the Commonwealth issued a determination to restrict access to designated bioregions in Australia to protect remote communities from COVID. Details are provided in the ***Biosecurity (Human Biosecurity Emergency) (Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) (Emergency Requirements for Remote Communities) Determination 2020***.

Designated areas for each state and territory are listed [here](#).

Under these arrangements, any person who is outside a designated area can only enter that region if that person is providing essential services or supplies; has been quarantined from the general public for the previous 14 day; or qualifies for a special exemption (including mining and food production) and adheres to strict conditions that minimise the risk of COVID-19 spread.

On 8 April 2020, the determination was amended to clarify **essential services** which includes:

Commercial primary production, defined as:

(a) commercial primary production of:

(i) food; or

(ii) products that, with further processing, will become (at least in part) food;

or

(b) commercial processing of primary products to make food from them; or

(c) provision of veterinary services for animals kept, used or bred for commercial primary production described in paragraph (a); or

(d) aquaculture; or

(e) agribusiness.

Workers who are engaging in essential activities that are neither urgent nor being conducted under an agreed risk management plan can enter a designated area after serving the 14-day self-isolation period.

Workers who are engaging in essential activities can enter without undergoing 14-day quarantine provided:

- The essential activity is urgent in nature; or
- Is conducted a management plan agreed on by a human biosecurity officer so as to minimise risk of transmission.

Persons carrying out commercial primary production in a manner must be agreed to with a human biosecurity office to minimise exposure to other persons.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is developing a factsheet for the requirements, exemptions and processes.

A jurisdictional contact list of human biosecurity officers is available [here](#).

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Key Messages

The NFF encourages stakeholders to align where possible with the cross-industry messaging below.

- Australia is one of the most food secure countries in the world, exporting 75% of what we produce.
- The impact of COVID-19 on Australian agriculture is an evolving situation, but it's largely business as usual for farmers and the food supply chain.
- It is critical that all levels of Government cooperate and agree to recognise agriculture as an essential service in a consistent way, and not restrict the flow of inputs or raw products through the supply chain.
- Panic buying by consumers is not necessary, and it's not helpful. There is plenty of food to go around. We just need to shop sensibly.
- The NFF is in ongoing contact with all levels of government, and helping to coordinate the flow of information to and from industry.

COMMODITY BRIEFS

RDCs and industry associations are releasing tailored information on COVID19 developments relevant to specific commodities. Links to these are below. Please let us know of others that can be added.

- [WoolProducers Australia](#)
- [Dairy Australia](#)
- [Red Meat Advisory Council](#)
- [Wool Industry – Shearing Operations: Protocols in response to COVID19 – Operations Document](#)
- [GrainGrowers Limited](#)

KEY CONTACTS AND CONSULTATION FORUMS

NFF is participating in the COVID19 forums listed below. Please forward any questions you would like us to raise in these forums to the following staff:

- Overall coordination: Tony Mahar – (tmahar@nff.org.au)
- Labour and workplace issues: Ben Rogers (brogers@nff.org.au)
- Border Controls: Warwick Ragg (wragg@nff.org.au)
- Stimulus packages and trade: Pru Gordon (pgordon@nff.org.au)
- Farm inputs: Adrienne Ryan (aryan@nff.org.au)
- FarmHub: Heidi Reid (hereid@nff.org.au)
- Communications and media: Laureta Wallace (lwallace@nff.org.au) or Charlie Thomas (cthomas@nff.org.au)

Forum	Convener	Time/day
NFF/DAWE Coronavirus Teleconference	NFF	Wednesdays, 3.30 - 4.00 pm
NFF Partner Briefing	NFF	Wednesdays, 4.30 – 5.00 pm
Member Communications Group	NFF	Thursdays, 4 - 5pm
NFF Member CEOs Meeting	NFF	Weekly, time TBC
Food and Grocery Sector Group	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Mondays 10.30-11.30am
The Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN)	Council of Australian Governments	Friday, 3 April 2020
Coronavirus – Industry Consultation	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Wednesdays, 2.00 - 3.00pm
Coronavirus – Industry Consultation	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Next TBC