



Office of the Mayor

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15 October 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References
Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Per Email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Members

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Inquiry into the effect on Australian ginger growers of importing fresh ginger from Fiji.

As Mayor of Gympie Regional Council (GRC) I am concerned with any proposal that would have a financial impact on the viability of industries in the GRC area. The Gympie area has eight producers of ginger in the area and the area under cultivation is expected to expand in the near future with State Government land in the Mary Valley being made commercially available for ginger production. The land identified for ginger production has been established as suitable for ginger production and has never been utilised for growing this product.

Ginger production in GRC is a relatively new industry utilising land that is new to ginger production and therefore has not had the experiences of utilising contaminated land from any source.

To permit importation of ginger from a known contaminated area, such as Fiji, introduces unacceptable risk to the fledgling industry in GRC.

GRC is part of the Wide Bay Burnett statistical division and this division is one of the lowest socio-economic areas in Australia. Instead of impacting economic growth by importing high risk ginger from Fiji, the approach should be to encourage expansion of ginger growing in Australia to provide more employment.

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Australia has a marketing edge in world markets by highlighting its clean, green image and this should not be compromised for a quick fix by importing fresh ginger from Fiji. GRC understands that processed ginger is imported from Fiji and this should be the only situation, so that our growers are not impacted financially by a situation that has not complied with all of the risk management criteria.

Denying the importation of fresh Fijian ginger would have a major impact on the well-being of the GRC area by:

- Promoting study and careers in science, including agricultural and food science, research and development
- Reducing red tape and identifying better regulations to reduce costs to business
- Continuing to maintain Australia's disease and pest free status and continuing to enhance Australia's image as a clean, green environment that produces superior agriculture products
- Developing a strategic policy for agricultural chemical use

In summary the importation of fresh ginger from Fiji is not in the interest of Australian agricultural production and more importantly it has the potential to severely impact on a young growing industry in the GRC area. It is obvious that the risk to our fresh ginger industry is not worth exposing our industry to the potential importation of a variety of diseases.

Yours sincerely

☞ Ron Dyne
Mayor