

Media Release

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NEW SUPPORT TO TACKLE FRUIT FLY AND PROTECT HORTICULTURE JOBS

Victoria's capacity to manage Queensland fruit fly and protect horticultural production and jobs will be reinforced with a \$6.4 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22*.

Queensland fruit fly is a serious pest that can affect production and markets in horticulture industries – more than \$1 billion of Victoria's horticultural exports are susceptible to damage from fruit fly.

The Andrews Labor Government's investment will back the implementation of the *Fruit Fly Strategy for Victoria*, which promotes a community and industry-led approach to the issue.

The Government's work to manage Queensland fruit fly will protect the 14,000 jobs supported by horticulture production across the state.

Fruit fly can build up in home gardens and unmanaged lands which then leads to problems on productive farms. The strategy, which has been developed in close consultation with industry, will deliver awareness programs that empower the community and growers to keep their crops free of damage from Queensland fruit fly.

As part of the Budget investment, \$5.3 million will be available in grants for Victoria's three key horticultural regions – the Yarra Valley, Sunraysia and the Goulburn Murray.

These grants will fund Regional Fruit Fly Co-ordinators to deliver on-ground help to manage Queensland fruit fly such as monitoring, community awareness programs, hot spot management and trialling of new techniques for improved management.

The strategy will build on the successes of the *Managing Fruit Fly in Victoria Action Plan 2015-2020*. In addition, it will keep Victoria free from biosecurity risks such as exotic fruit fly species while investing in research, contributing to national systems and facilitating trade.

The *Fruit Fly Strategy for Victoria 2021-25* will be released next month, with implementation to begin soon after.

The Budget initiative supports the Labor Government's *Agriculture Strategy* and will help to ensure Victorian growers are well placed to respond to biosecurity risks, while promoting and building confidence in the sector for international markets and the community.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"The Fruit Fly Strategy for Victoria empowers industry and the community to lead the way so we can best protect our robust horticultural businesses and ensure their local communities continue to thrive."

"We are listening to our horticulture farmers who have overwhelmingly voiced their support for the continuation of Fruit Fly Regional Co-ordinators and the programs they deliver."

"Providing this local, on-ground management helps our farmers to grow the quality produce they are known for."