

28 October 2022

The Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers, MP  
Federal Treasurer

Dear Treasurer,

### Supporting the fresh produce supply chain

Cost of living is a significant concern for most Australians and has been the topic of extensive discourse in the public sphere over the past six months or more. While businesses across the fresh produce supply chain acknowledge that it is a topic that demands discussion, they are concerned that the conversation very often begins with commentary about rising costs of fresh fruit and vegetables.

I write to you as CEO of Freshmark, the industry body representing the fresh produce industry in NSW, including the country's biggest central markets system, to ask that you support this sector by moving away from this harmful messaging. Many of our members are struggling following a near wipe-out of supply due to flooding earlier in the year, others have been severely impacted by more recent floods in the Goulburn Valley growing region, and it is critical for their future that consumers do not mistakenly believe that fresh produce is unaffordable. Fresh produce prices, for some vegetable and berry lines, were pushed up due to the flood crisis in the eastern states earlier this year, and more recent floods may lead to supply shortages in some summer stone fruits over the next few months. Indeed, our industry is always at the mercy of the weather. However, broader inflationary pressures have not had a disproportionate or specific impact on produce prices, compared to the impact on other goods and services.

Consumers, however, are influenced by commentary about cost-of-living pressures relating to produce prices, and my members are very concerned that this has turned them away from fresh produce in favour of frozen or canned products or other food items entirely.

As a result, demand for produce – which has already been grown, transported, and made available for sale through Australia's Sydney Markets – is much lower than would be typical for this time of year.

Freshmark and its members would appreciate your support in choosing not to highlight the fresh produce sector in discussions about cost of living. Even better, it would be both valid and helpful to note that fresh, seasonal, reasonably priced produce, which is in plentiful supply should be on everyone's shopping list, even in this period of economic challenge.

On behalf of the growers, transporters, wholesalers, grocers, providers, and other businesses in the NSW fresh produce supply chain, I thank you for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you and showcase our central market system's success by providing you with a tour of Sydney Markets.

Yours faithfully,



Meegan George  
CEO

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