

Media Release



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NUW worker survey findings: unfortunately nothing new

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has long been calling for a meaningful solution to the labour woes in the Horticulture industry.

“We have called for an Agricultural Visa, an amnesty or visa status resolution for undocumented workers who are at particular risk of exploitation, and a National Labour Hire Licencing Scheme. We have called for a rigorous approach to enforcement from the appropriate agencies,” said Ms Emma Germano, VFF Horticulture President.

“We have called upon the supermarkets to abandon their ‘down, down’ pricing strategies and to make ethical sourcing something that is not just words but actions. We have called for transparent supply chains that enable farmers to be paid the true value of their produce.

“Unfortunately there is nothing new about the allegations made about underpayment of wages and exploitation of vulnerable workers in the horticulture industry. We have long called for a united and holistic approach to this complex problem.

“The examples presented by the National Union of Workers (NUW) should be seen as another call to the Federal Government to take urgent action to address systematic labour challenges.

“There is no question that the unions have a role to play in supporting workers and giving them a voice, but it is disappointing that this information has not been referred through the correct channels, such as the Fair Work Ombudsman.

“The VFF supports the highest of employment standards being met across all commodities, and those who fall short should face the appropriate consequences.

“The NUW suggested in their report that the supermarkets must fix underpayment of farm labourers. We agree that the supermarkets need to support growers paying fair wages, but it is not the role of the supermarkets to regulate the industry. We need a solution that is driven by industry, supported by all supply chain partners, and backed by Government with a simple, practical regulatory framework.

“We must have all the stakeholders in the supply chain working together to create a meaningful solution. There is nothing to be gained from playing the blame game. We are all in this supply chain together,” said Ms Germano.

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.