



Media Release

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Markets & Chamber warn against banana imports in wake of Larry

Australia's largest fresh product markets, Sydney Markets, and the NSW Chamber of Fruit & Vegetables Industries have urged extreme caution on banana imports in the wake of Cyclone Larry.

More than 80% of Australia's banana supply is sourced from Innisfail and surrounds, which bore the brunt of the devastation from Cyclone Larry this week.

Sydney Markets Limited (SML) Chief Executive Officer Mr Brad Latham and Chamber Chief Executive Officer Colin Gray said that both organisations would strongly oppose banana importation.

"Sydney Markets caution against any decision made in haste regarding importation of bananas because of serious quarantine issues," Mr Latham said.

"In addition, we have concerns about the possible adverse effect of importation on the long term future of hundreds of banana growers who are struggling to try and salvage their businesses."

"What our banana wholesalers and growers need now is our ongoing support. Some of our banana wholesalers – who sell bananas exclusively – are doubly affected because they also grow bananas, so they have lost their farms as well as their market business."

Mr Gray said that up to 80% of Australia's banana supply – grown in and around Innisfail, which bore the brunt of Cyclone Larry – was likely to be impacted in the short to medium term, particularly in the eastern and southern States.

"There are supplies to last for the next two weeks, we anticipate that shortages will start occurring in two to three weeks' time," Mr Gray said.

"However as an industry we're working to source bananas wherever we can from across Australia, including Coffs Harbour and Southern Queensland.

"The issues of quarantine with imported bananas are extremely serious, so the Chamber would strongly object to any suggestion of importing," Mr Gray said.

Both Mr Latham and Mr Gray welcomed comments by Prime Minister John Howard on ABC Radio's AM Program (March 22) that it was too early to consider importation and there were quarantine issues to be considered.

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