# CITRUS AUSTRALIA – SA Region

20th March 2014

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

Dear Sir / Madam

## RE: Inquiry into the implications of the use of Fenthion on Australia's horticultural industry

Citrus Australia – SA Region is a relatively new body that was officially formed in October 2012.

Previously there were two citrus groups representing the industry and growers, namely the SA Citrus Industry Development Board and Citrus Growers of South Australia.

After a period of consultation with all stakeholders it was resolved to form one entity to represent the citrus industry in our State.

The Citrus Australia – SA Region committee is funded through a contribution of $1 per tonne of citrus grown in South Australia. It is managed through the Citrus Growers Fund and attached to a five year management plan which is updated annually.

The committee comprises volunteers who are both growers and citrus industry participants and are responsible for representing the views of the $90 million per annum SA citrus industry.

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**Chair**
**Citrus Australia – SA Region**

# CITRUS AUSTRALIA – SA Region

While Fenthion is not commonly used in the South Australian citrus industry or the wider South Australian horticultural sector, the implications of the withdrawal of Fenthion across industries in Australia would pose some risks in the battle against fruit fly. With suitable alternatives not presently implemented we must act quickly as to minimise the effects of its withdrawal on the Australian horticultural industry. Consideration of the lack of alternatives immediately available to the industry should be taken into account during this inquiry.

## Size of the Industry

The South Australian horticulture industry is worth $900 million at farm gate and represents around 3500 small businesses employing approximately 24,0000 seasonal workers and 13,500 permanent workers.
Across Australia the horticulture industry is worth in excess of $5 billion. Fruit fly is one of the biggest impediments to accessing our target markets, with all of our major trading partners and export destinations having strict protocols in place.
Citrus makes up the biggest fresh fruit export commodity by volume and value both in South Australia and nationally.

## Fruit Fly Management

South Australia currently remains the only mainland state that is ostensibly fruit fly free with the Riverland region surrounded by an exclusion zone. The State Government has the key responsibility to manage the State's pest free status and has an area wide management program in place which has kept the pest out of our growing regions for decades. Responsibility for this program – including the containment and eradication of outbreaks – rests with Biosecurity SA, a division of Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA).
The pressure on our borders has increased over recent years with the deregulation of fruit fly programs in the states of NSW and Victoria. A combination of factors including unseasonal weather, and resulting increase in populations of Queensland Fruit Fly in recent years has seen the pest become endemic in many growing regions throughout NSW and Victoria, with only the Greater Sunraysia Area maintaining its pest free area status.
Currently this region is fighting more than 20 outbreaks of Qfly simultaneously. We fear that they will be overwhelmed if nothing is done at a national level with the consequences being enormous for the Riverland region and our state at large.

While South Australia has the strongest fruit fly program in the country, the increased pest pressure has resulted in five medfly outbreaks in metropolitan Adelaide in the last 12 months and, of far greater concern to our committee, two outbreaks of Queensland fruit fly declared in the Riverland on January 15th of this year, the first such incidence in more than 20 years.

We have had a constant dialogue in place with Biosecurity SA and the Department of Agriculture (DAFF) to work through the implications to our industry resulting from the declaration of the outbreaks. We will have to carefully manage our trading partners' protocols for our entire export season. If we continue to have detections in our region we are putting at risk not just the citrus industry but all of the other host commodities grown in our region. If these detections continue the implications will also spread to our domestic markets, resulting in major increased cost to growers and industry and heightening the risk of losing these markets.

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## National Approach to the control of Fruit Fly

In our committee's opinion, we are now at the stage where we must look at a new range of measures on how control fruit fly going forward. We feel a national approach is necessary with many positive initiatives already being worked on throughout the country. We have a National Fruit Fly Strategy presented in 2008 along with an implementation plan and a cost benefit analyses document. Some of the initial hard work has already been done. The next step we feel is continuing the discussion on a national level on how we now progress a national plan.

There is a Sterile Insect Technology (SIT) facility currently planned for South Australia with support from our State Government, the CSIRO, Horticulture Australia Ltd and commercial partners. This facility will initially be a research facility to assess and update research and technology. Going forward it is envisaged to be able to produce up to 50 million sterile flies that will be used to suppress endemic populations across growing regions in Australia. This is a great initiative but would make up just one piece of the puzzle.

There is currently good research going on in Queensland with different baiting techniques, and one farmer to whom we have spoken from Toowoomba who is having great success with using both an SIT program on his farms along with an area wide management regime.

These are just small examples of the wider work going on the fruit fly space in Australia, and again highlights the need for a coordinated national approach.

## Summary

In summary our submission does not focus on just the implications of Fenthion but the wider issue of fruit fly control. We feel the importance of controlling this damaging pest on our current and potential export markets is immense and we would like to draw the attention of the committee to the importance of a national approach.

We look forward to the opportunity to present our views to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee on behalf of the citrus industry in South Australia.