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Berry industry on front-foot with managing Covid19 risks and seasonal workforce in New South Wales.

Berries Australia is taking a pro-active approach to educating NSW berry growers in preparation for the upcoming season.

The message to protect your workers, protect your business and protect your community is being reinforced through a range of resources and communication activities developed by the peak industry body for Australian berry growers.

Berries Australia Executive Director Rachel Mackenzie said that as an industry body we are well aware of the community concerns around an influx of seasonal workers into regional areas and have been working through these issues in berry growing regions around the country.

“We have worked really hard to educate our members on how to manage their risk and have written to every single berry grower in NSW to ensure they understand their legal responsibilities in this space and also provided practical advice and materials,” Ms Mackenzie said.

“We have engaged with all levels of government to create policy settings to enable the industry to access the necessary seasonal workers whilst minimizing the risk to regional communities.”

“The NSW Department of Primary Industries requires that all workers coming from a metropolitan area self-quarantine in-situ for 14 days and all visa holders need to fill in a declaration form which outlines their recent whereabouts.”

“On top of that Berries Australia is recommending that all growers require every single person who steps onto their farm to fill in a disclosure form and run through a daily checklist to reduce the risk of transmission. To assist our members these templates are available on our website.”

“We have also developed pictographic resources that all our members can put up in their sheds around basic social distancing and Covid19 management which can be used across all language groups.”

“Whilst Covid19 is not transmitted via food, a positive case has the potential to close down an operation and represents a significant risk to the industry.”

“We are also encouraging our members to utilise the National Harvest Labour Information Service to reduce the likelihood of jobseekers just turning up in regional areas.”

The challenge we have as an industry is how workers behave when they are not on-farm, so we have reached out to local governments to discuss collaborative approaches to accommodation and shared messaging.

For further comment please contact Executive Director Rachel Mackenzie on 0408 796 199. Please also refer to our website <https://berries.net.au/covid-19-resources-updates/>