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Enforcement is key to new piece rate rules

Berries Australia acknowledges the decision by the Fair Work Commission to ensure that all piece workers earn at least the minimum hourly rate under the Horticulture Award.

Berries Australia Chair Peter McPherson said that that the change must be adhered to by all growers even though it is likely to impact productivity and costs.

“This is a whole of supply chain issue, and it is important that those in the industry right through from growers to retailers, wholesalers and the food service sector play their part in ensuring that workers are paid what they are legally entitled to, this includes only sourcing product from growers who can show they are legally compliant,” he said.

“From an enforcement standpoint, we also encourage the Fair Work Ombudsman to enforce the Award and to take strong action against those growers found to be non-compliant.

“It’s all well and good to raise the bar but if there continue to be minimal consequences for doing the wrong thing in terms of fines or access to markets then it will be good growers who go out of business as a result of this decision.

“The Australian government must also step up and get on with implementing a national labour hire scheme which it has been talking about for more than a year.

Whilst dodgy labour hire companies can continue to fly under the radar, we will not be able to get on top of exploitation in this sector. Berries Australia is on the record calling for a national labour hire licensing scheme,” Mr McPherson said.

Berries Australia will work with the Fair Work Ombudsman to provide support materials to its members to ensure they understand the new rules.

For more information or to arrange an interview contact Berries Australia Executive Director Rachel Mackenzie on 0408 796 199.

Berries Australia is the peak industry body the Australian berry industry and is a joint venture between the **Australian Blueberry Growers’ Association (ABGA)**, **Raspberries and Blackberries Australia (RABA)** and **Strawberries Australia Inc. (SAI)**. Berries Australia represents more than 1000 growers nationally with members ranging from small family farms to large corporate enterprises.