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**Submission to:** Country of Origin Labelling Taskforce  
Department of Industry, Innovation & Science  
Australian Government  
[originlabelling@industry.gov.au](mailto:originlabelling@industry.gov.au)

**From:** Horticulture New Zealand  
Contact person:  
Mike Chapman, Chief Executive.  
[mike.chapman@hortnz.co.nz](mailto:mike.chapman@hortnz.co.nz)  
PO Box 10232  
WELLINGTON 6143

## **Country of Origin Food Labelling Information Standard 2016**

### **Introduction**

Horticulture New Zealand (HortNZ) represents New Zealand's 5500 commercial fruit and vegetable growers.

Horticulture occupies 100,000 hectares of productive land and provides 50,000 jobs in mainly rural communities.

Our products are exported to more than 120 countries, earning \$2.6 billion. The industry has grown from exports of \$35 million to \$2.6 billion in 30 years.

HortNZ has campaigned for the introduction of mandatory country of origin labelling (MCoOL) in New Zealand since 2007.

New Zealand law does not require a food manufacturer to identify the origin of the contents used in the bag, can or box their product comes in. It does not require point-of-sale country of origin information to be provided by retailers.

HortNZ believes the current food origin labelling legislation is not prescriptive enough and is not enforced to a satisfactory level. We also believe consumer demand for country of origin information on food and beverage products is increasing globally, not just in Australia and New Zealand.

### **Discussion**

1. Horticulture New Zealand supports the introduction of the new country of origin labelling (CoOL) system proposed by the Australian government in July 2015.

2. Horticulture New Zealand campaigns for the introduction of mandatory country of labelling for all food products sold in New Zealand, and supports the right of Australian consumers to be provided with that information in their own country.
3. Horticulture New Zealand does not support the concerns raised by the New Zealand Government over the introduction of the proposed new country of origin labelling in Australia.
4. HortNZ believes the CoOL standards proposed in the Country of Origin Labelling Consultation Package are not anti-competitive and will not disadvantage New Zealand food exporters.
5. HortNZ does not accept that mandatory CoOL is anti-trade. New Zealand's food exports compete in markets that already have CoOL and most attract a premium price for being 'Product of New Zealand'.
6. HortNZ does not accept manufacturers can claim extra costs around packaging requirements when packs are routinely changed for marketing purposes and other origin claims are already made informally on packs.
7. We do not believe country of origin labelling is a food safety issue but it does allow consumers to be selective in their purchases based on the country in which the product was produced.
8. HortNZ believes better country of origin labelling gives consumers more confidence in their food supply and it encourages retailers and manufacturers to respect the consumer's right to gather information about the products they purchase.

## **Conclusion**

Mandatory CoOL is the only way to ensure the consumer gets to make the right choice for them, whether their purchase decision is based on product origin, the price, safety concerns, nutrition needs or just flavour preference.

The proposed new Australian system will give the Australian consumer confidence in their food supply chain and allow them to make a food choice based on better quality information.