MEDIA RELEASE

Fruit Growers Victoria

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Fruit Growers Victoria Raises Concerns Over Expanded Water Purchases

Fruit Growers Victoria (FGV) has expressed concern over the recent release of the Australian Government's updated Restoring Our Rivers Trading Strategy, which outlines voluntary water purchasing to deliver additional environmental water across the Murray–Darling Basin.

The update increases the total volume of water that may be purchased in the southern connected Basin by 130 gigalitres (GL), bringing total purchase programs to 300 GL.

FGV Chair Mitchell McNab said:
"While we support measures to restore river health, we are concerned about the impact this expanded voluntary purchase program could have on growers and farmers in the southern Basin. Water is a critical input for horticulture and agriculture, and any significant reduction in availability risks productivity, profitability, and the long-term sustainability of our farms."

FGV strongly supports investment in irrigation modernisation and on-farm efficiency initiatives as alternatives to buybacks. *"If buybacks proceed, the Government must ensure growers have access to water efficiency subsidy programs and infrastructure support to help offset the impacts and maintain the productive capacity of horticultural regions,"* Mr McNab added.

FGV urges the Australian Government to work closely with growers and industry stakeholders to ensure water recovery programs are implemented in a way that balances environmental objectives with the needs of food producers. Growers in the region are already facing challenges from climate variability, and additional water reductions could exacerbate pressures on businesses, local communities, and regional economies.

"Our members rely on secure and affordable water allocations to grow high-quality fruit for domestic and export markets," Mr McNab said. *"We call on the Government to carefully consider the potential consequences of expanded water purchases and to engage transparently with the horticulture sector as these programs roll out."*

FGV will continue to monitor developments in the Murray–Darling Basin and advocate on behalf of Victorian growers to ensure their interests are represented in water policy decisions.

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