

To whom it may concern, I wish to submit my views to the productivity commission. Firstly, I believe that the outcome from this commission must be financially tangible for the main stream orange growers of Australia, otherwise the exercise has been a waste of time . The main cause of the downturn in the citrus industry is the exposure growers face from importation of CHEAP frozen concentrate orange juice (FCOJ). Unfortunately, nothing artificial can be done about this situation that will put real money back into the pockets of orange growers. Tariffs, import quotas or sales tax differentiation are not an option for Government since joining the W.T.O agreement. Is the government responsible for assisting orange growers ? The industry would not have developed in the 1970's and 80's relying heavily on the juice processing sector if it were not for government policy . Tariffs, sales tax disincentives, and import quotas were applied to imported FCOJ, allowing Australian orange growers to compete and survive in this type of protected market. Take away the protection and that sector falls over. So how does a government show responsibility ? It offers assistance to farmers to wean themselves off growing a low value juicing product. Financial assistance to ALL orange farmers that remain in this industry, but cannot afford to change varieties, or uptake new technology , or get out of the industry with some dignity and money. If the current situation is not rectified , growers will remain on financially unviable properties causing personal and social problems, and adding a different burden on government resources , such as counselling, welfare and poverty. The M.I.A Powerpack Program is a vehicle already in place that could facilitate the financial distribution of much needed redevelopment monies for orange growers. The level of assistance needs to be substantial , as many farmers who have completed business plans to access funding are finding it difficult to meet the gap between grants and expenditure. Grants should cover at least 75% of the cost of redevelopment or new technology to a maximum of \$60,000. The current grant of 25% to \$15000 is way too low. Tangible money gives tangible results. The citrus industry is a long term investment industry and therefore requires assistance that will see it through these difficult times. Other areas that need addressing are things such as the retention and EXPANSION of export licensing powers. The current situation of exporting fruit into the U.S.A is EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL , and ALL efforts must be made to retain the status quo. All new export markets should be treated the same way. ONE importer appointed , and no undercutting of good sound markets by so-called exporters who are poor salespeople. Japan is one such market that has fallen fowl of ruthless exporters undercutting prices to gain market access. It would be a major milestone if Australia could "claw back" some of that market share in an orderly fashion . This market is able to return fair prices back to growers if handled properly. Another issue to raise is the ability for local, regional and peak bodies to collect levies from their growers , and carry out duties on their behalf. The Rice industry in N.S.W. has no problem collecting levies through it's marketing board, yet citrus is continually being hounded for the small amount of money that it collects. I know that orange growers don't make much money, but levies are an important contribution . With this levy comes information transfer , market reports , crop forecasts and quality and IPM management. It is very important to retain the ability to collect levies. Market access is also a high priority with citrus. As a southern hemisphere producing country, there exists much potential to satisfy northern hemisphere countries with out-of-season fruit . This , coupled with licensed export powers would make Australia a powerful exporter of citrus around the world. reversing the current trend of importer of citrus products. Expensive exports far outway cheap imports. I hope you take into consideration my thoughts on the industry situation and how the productivity commission can assist. Yours in citrus Louis Sartor , citrus grower Griffith, N.S.W.