

My name is Robert Morey and I have been a resident of Cobram all my life. My parents were Soldier settler orchardists and naturally my childhood was spent on the family orchard just out of Cobram. I have been very fortunate to work with people in the fruit industry – soft fruit, citrus and tomato growers. To a man these producers were focused on quality and to provide the best tasting produce that they could. I currently am employed as a office manager at our local vet clinic and witness the plight of our dairy farmers on a daily basis and who appear like the rest of our farmers to be hung out to dry with the lack of real support. I would like to submit my opinion in two parts as follows-

Our large supermarkets have complete control of our farmers in regard to presentation. An example is the ordinary peach. I was in the supermarket not that long ago and I said to my wife that the peaches looked like the old Pullar peach which were very tasty and so with drooling mouth I grabbed half a dozen and unfortunately when I got them home and had the first bite they all visited the bin, a cardboard box would have tasted better. I enquired with a local orchardist regarding this fruit and was advised that they are forced to grow fruit that presents well and lasts on the shelf, regrettably taste does not appear to be a factor. Tomato growers appear to be having to do the same as they look good on the shelf but are a little tasteless. It appears that our primary industry is being destroyed from within by large supermarkets that really don't care who supplies them as long as the product looks good and sells. My big fear is that our next generations will never get to taste what real fruit and vegetables taste like and this situation needs to be stopped now as it is almost too late. Primary producers need to be able to grow quality product that tastes and looks good and the supermarkets need to plan their storage and deliveries accordingly.

Compared to the rest of the world Australians in general enjoy a very high wage with accompanying benefits. Our quality protocols and requirements are not only of a high standard but very costly. Therefore the level playing field that our politicians constantly allude to in regard to international trade is grossly uphill. We need to include in our GST tax system a non refundable 10% GST charge on all imported product. For example John Smith imports 100tonnes of fruit for the price of \$15000.00, Smith pays the supplier \$15000.00 and before the product leaves the port he pays the ATO \$1500.00. If this product normally attracted GST then Mr Smith would have to add another 10% gst when he sells the product of which would need to be dealt with and reported in the normal system. The amount of money raised from this tax would well and truly cover administrative costs whilst providing a huge employment boost. This tax would not level the playing field but it would give Australian producers and manufacturers a better opportunity to sell the quality product that Australia is renowned for at a reasonably competitive price. It would also not effect other countries prices or their ability to import product to Australia thus not affecting the level playing field.

As stated I have lived in Cobram all of my life and believe that it is a wonderful place to live, home of Murray Goulburn Co-op, did boast the largest orchardist in the Southern Hemisphere at one stage, varying types of primary production and industry. At the moment Cobram is an example of what community is all about. Water has made this area into the food bowl it is, sadly in my lifetime it may very well be the ruination of it, please don't let any other problems destroy it and let us think of ourselves for a change and help our struggling primary industry.

Regards
Robert Morey
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