

To the Australian Productivity Commission,

As an Australian fruit grower, what happens to SPC Ardmona (SPCA) has a direct impact on my business and livelihood.

SPCA has been hit by the flood of imported products appearing on supermarket shelves as a result of the high Australian dollar. The drought and floods did not cause the damage to SPCA – imports began rising before those natural disasters and have continued now that conditions are more normal.

As growers we are used to dealing with droughts and floods, but we cannot deal with the loss of the only processing plant that can process our produce.

What happens to SPCA will also affect the Goulburn Valley region

SPCA employs hundreds of workers directly but the impact of SPCA closing down would severely impact the whole region in terms of employment and income lost as well as social disruption.

I produce Peaches and Pears and have approximately 50 of acres. My supply to SPCA is approximately 95% of my income. My quota for the 2014 season has been dramatically reduced. We are left with little alternative but to destroy our trees.

As a result of this reduced quota I am forced to make dramatic cuts to my own staff and farm spending. Spending less on my business costs means I am putting less money into our community, and as all other surviving growers will be doing the same.

Like SPCA, I have invested in our business to make it competitive. Examples being upgrading irrigation system to be more efficient and planting new varieties

However the flood of cheap imports threatens to undermine everything I have done.

Our industry needs breathing space so that we can survive and then undertake the investment and productivity gains necessary to compete against imports longer term.

SPCA is asking for temporary breathing space through tariffs which are allowed under the WTO Safeguards Agreement.

I strongly support this reasonable request. In particular we support SPCA being given emergency provisional safeguards for 200 days, followed by longer-term full safeguards.

If this industry does not turn around and SPC Ardmona closes, my livelihood and career is over. I, along with many others, will have to re-educate myself into another field. That is why SPC Ardmona must survive. It is almost 100 years old and my family and I have been a part of this for approximately 40 years.

Shepparton, the Goulburn Valley and Australia need this company to regain strength and thrive like it once did.

Yours sincerely,

Mario Mete