

To the Australian Productivity Commission,

As an Australian fruit grower, what happens to SPC Ardmona 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.

As growers we are accustomed to dealing with the effects of nature on our business, 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, income lost and resultant social hardships.

We have approximately 18 ha of orchard which is planted solely to canning variety peaches. Our supply to SPCA is approximately 80 % of my income with the remaining 20% going to fresh market. Our delivery quota and that of all of our co growers for the 2014 season has been dramatically reduced. The size of these cuts were largely unexpected and came as a shock to nearly all growers. It is our belief that SPCA had tried to resist such cuts but the extended period high Australian dollar eventually left the company with little other choice given the negative impacts to overall profitability.

Reduced quota will mean that there is increased pressure on our business reserves. We will be spending less on our business costs and attempting to work even longer hours to try and keep our business viable. This will mean that we are circulating less money and time into our community.

We have invested in our business to make it competitive. In recent years we have increased Tree planting densities for earlier production increases and reduced tree height to improve O.H.S. outcomes. Irrigation system upgrades along with soil moisture monitoring to better use water resources. We have continued to move to more environmentally friendly pest controls and soil management practices. We have replanted new trees using the newest recommended varieties suitable for canning and always keep up to date with other productivity improvements as they become available.

However the flood of cheap imports threatens to undermine everything we 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 our family has been involved in fruit growing for 4 generations in the Goulburn valley.

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

Yours sincerely,

Doug Brown