

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 cannot deal with the loss of the only processing plant that can process our fruit.

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 have approximately 150 acres of fruit – comprising of pears, peaches, apricots and apples. My fruit supply to SPCA is approximately 50% of my income. My quota for the 2014 season has been dramatically reduced. We are left with little alternative but to destroy our unwanted trees.

As a result of this reduced quota I am forced to make dramatic cuts to my own staff and farm spending. I have already cut one of our full time employees this year and I envisage a large reduction of the 300 casual employees (approx.) hired throughout the year. Spending less on my business costs means I am putting less money into our community, and all other surviving growers will be doing the same.

Like SPCA, I have invested in our business to make it competitive. Over the past few years I have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars by planting new varieties of fruit trees, upgrading irrigation infrastructure and adopting new tree systems. 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 have been part of this from the start.

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

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Pogue

HW Pogue & Co.