

THE **FRUIT** & **VEGETABLE** CONSORTIUM

A fresh approach to increasing
fruit and vegetable
consumption

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Based in Victoria, the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium was formed in response to the alarmingly low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption in Australia. Just half of Australian adults and two thirds of children have an adequate daily intake of fruit. And of greater concern is the fact that just 7% of Australian adults and 5% of children meet the recommended guideline for daily vegetable intake.

The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium brings together key organisations to collectively advocate for comprehensive joint action to address Australia's complacency about eating fruit and vegetables.

What are we asking for?

To deliver a substantial and sustained increase in vegetable consumption, the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium is calling for:

- Funding of a broad-reaching, well-executed and appropriately resourced behavioural change campaign implemented over a number of years, with an initial focus on promotion of vegetables.
- Collaborative strategies that address the systemic barriers to consumption (eg access, availability, price, convenience and food literacy).
- Investment in locally-relevant, community led programs with demonstrated efficacy in increasing vegetable consumption, particularly for populations with the lowest intakes.

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Health benefits for individuals



Cost savings for government



Real economic benefit to growers

Position Statement

There is a well-established link between increased intake of fruit and vegetables and improved health outcomes.

Diets rich in fruit and vegetables have been shown to protect against high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.^[1-3]

We need to eat more vegetables.

Just half of Australian adults and two thirds of children have an adequate daily intake of fruit. But of greatest concern is that only 7% of Australians and 5% of children meet the guideline for daily vegetable intake.^[4]

For some communities, rates are even lower.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for example, consume on average of 1.8 serves of vegetables and 1.2 services of fruit per day compared with 2.7 serves of vegetables and 1.5 serves of fruit among non-Indigenous people.^[5]

Fruit and vegetable consumption is decreasing.

In 2004, 14% of adults consumed the recommended amount of vegetables. Ten years later, in 2014, just 7% met the guidelines.^[4]

Barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption.

These barriers have been well documented and include issues of preparation time, cost, access and convenience, quality/spoilage, family influence, gender, and food knowledge/skills.^[6, 7]

For some populations (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those living in rural and remote communities), these challenges are compounded by underlying socio-economic issues such as limited income, low education level, cultural background, or remoteness.^[8-10]

Food expenditure patterns are changing.

Food knowledge and cooking skills are in decline as we heavily rely on foods cooked outside the home.

- Spending on out of home meals and fast food has risen dramatically while fruit and vegetable expenditure has remained static over the past 20 years.^[11]
- Australians now spend 34% of their food budget on out of home meals and fast food, compared to 25% in 1989.^[11]

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Increasing vegetable consumption will reduce government expenditure.

Almost one billion dollars in government health expenditure is attributable to low fruit and vegetable consumption and this figure is increasing. If every Australian ate an additional half a cup of vegetables per day, government health expenditure would reduce by an estimated \$100 million per year (\$60.7 million to the Commonwealth Government and \$39.2 million to the states and territories).^[12]

Even modest improvements in vegetable consumption will have population health benefits.

An increase of 1 serve of vegetables a day (1/2 cup cooked vegetables) reduces the risk of death from all causes by 5% and deaths from heart disease and stroke by 4%.^[13]

Position Statement

An increase in consumption is good for growers.

Economic modelling suggests a \$10 million marketing spend per year would deliver:

- an increase in vegetable consumption of around 0.5 serves per person, per day, within 5 years.
- economic benefits to vegetable levy payers in the vicinity of a \$1 billion net increase in farm income over 11 years.
- benefits to others in the supply chain. Retailers would gain an 8 per cent increase in prices by 2030 and benefit from an improvement in gross margin of \$368 million by year 2030 and achieve a cumulative gain of \$1.9 billion over the 11 years.^[12, 14]

Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is possible.

There is evidence internationally and domestically that comprehensive, multi-component campaigns can impact consumption.^[15, 16] Two examples are described here. The Danish '6-a-Day' program (running since 1995) has had sustained success in increasing fruit and vegetable intakes across the Danish population.^[17]

This program involved a population-wide campaign, and worked alongside schools, workplaces, and industry to 'normalise' the availability of convenient vegetable-based meals and snacks.

Similarly, the UK Food Dudes school-based program successfully increased fruit and vegetable consumption in 4-11 year-olds through sustained investment over many years (with the greatest increases in consumption on those with the lowest intakes). The program involved repeated exposure to fruit and vegetable tastings and used the power of influential role models, the Food Dudes, to model fruit and vegetable consumption.^[18]

Closer to home, the 'Go for 2 and 5' campaign in Western Australia was a multi-strategy campaign that ran during 2002-2005. The campaign saw a population net increase of 0.2 serves of fruit and 0.6 serves of vegetables across the three-year campaign period.^[19]

Critical success factors

Evidence tells us that short-term 'advertising' campaigns are not the solution. Sustained, behavioural change strategies are required to address the key barriers to consumption.^[20, 21]

Key features of successful programs include:



Collaboration between industry, retail, government and not-for-profit organisations



Population wide-campaign in conjunction with efforts that seek to promote convenient access to vegetables



Programmes with a behavioural change; goal setting; or family engagement component



Clear and consistent messages



Programmes that are culturally targeted or relevant to a specific demographic



Programmes that promote consumption frequency



Campaigns that run over a number of years

Position Statement

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Position Statement

What's next?

We are developing a business case and prospectus for potential funders. This will outline the investment needed for a sustained, comprehensive behavioural change campaign.

Show your support

We are seeking your support and endorsement of this Position Statement. Your support will strengthen the call for increased investment in a long-term strategy to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

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Members of the consortium include:



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Visit thefvc.org.au for more information or contact the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium Secretariat Michelle Lausen at mlausen@nutritionaustralia.org or Chair Lucinda Hancock at lhancock@nutritionaustralia.org
Make sure you register your details so you can stay up to date with our progress.