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COLES ADDS FAIR FARMS CERTIFICATION TO ETHICAL SOURCING PROGRAM *Industry-based solution to promote fair treatment of horticulture workers*

Coles has taken another step toward being Australia's most sustainable supermarket, incorporating Fair Farms Certification into the Coles Ethical Sourcing Program to support farmers using ethical employment practices and fair treatment of workers.

Fresh produce suppliers to Coles can now register with Fair Farms to satisfy the requirements of the Coles Ethical Sourcing Program, which sets out detailed standards for treatment of workers in the supply chain that suppliers are required to follow and demonstrate their compliance.

Aimed at addressing problems around workplace compliance and exploitation within the Australian horticulture industry, the Fair Farms program provides support and training for farm employers on fair employment practices and a pathway to independent third-party audit and certification.

Horticulture industry body Growcom developed the Fair Farms Certification Program with support from the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Federal Department of Agriculture and AUSVEG. Coles contributed to the original design of the Fair Farms Standard to ensure the program would meet Coles' already-established ethical sourcing standards.

Coles General Manager of Produce Craig Taylor said adopting Fair Farms Certification meant farmers now had multiple ways to become approved under the Coles Ethical Sourcing Program, which also uses the internationally recognised Supplier Ethical Data Exchange (Sedex), a global ethical supply chain management platform used to assess supply chain risk in over 150 countries.

"Around 95% of the fresh produce we sell comes from Australian farms, and it's important to Coles and to our customers that the workers in our supply chain are treated fairly," he said.

"By adopting this additional industry-based solution that can be used by all suppliers regardless of who buys their produce, Coles is making it easier for Aussie farmers to meet ethical workplace standards."

Fair Farms Program Manager Thomas Hertel welcomed the support from Coles, which will work closely with produce suppliers who wish to transition to the Fair Farms Program and participate in its ongoing development through the Fair Farms External Stakeholder Reference Group.

"We are delighted to have Coles on board. Their commitment to collaborate with industry on matters of ethical sourcing policy is very good news for businesses in horticulture," he said.

The announcement follows the development last year of the Coles Ethical Retail Supply Chain Accord, through which Coles is working with unions representing workers from every stage of the Australian fresh produce supply chain to promote ethical employment practices and treatment of workers.

The Accord, signed by Coles and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Australian Workers Union (AWU), aims to achieve a safe, sustainable, ethical and fair retail supply chain for all workers regardless of their employment status, citizenship or visa status.

For further information, please contact
Coles Media Line (03) 9829 5250 or media.relations@coles.com.au