



Subscribe

Sign in 

January 8, 2024
Seymour, AU



20°C

Moderate Rain
Wind: 5 Km/h

NATIONAL

'Taking them for a ride': calls for supermarket probe



By **AAP Newswire**
Jan 7, 2024



The federal opposition says supermarkets are taking farmers for a ride when it comes to prices. -AAP Image

The price of fruit and vegetables at the supermarket checkout should be the subject of a consumer watchdog inquiry, Nationals leader David Littleproud says.

Mr Littleproud has called for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to launch a probe into prices, accusing supermarket giants of not providing fair payment to farmers after making record profits.

"Farmers are walking away because supermarkets are taking them for a ride," Mr Littleproud said.

"I previously called for an ACCC inquiry into beef and lamb, but it must also now investigate fruit and vegetables."

A Senate inquiry was launched in December to examine price setting at supermarkets, but is not set to hold hearings until February.

The Nationals leader said an inquiry by the consumer watchdog would allow for industry professionals to address the issue.

"We need to investigate the price disparity, compel CEOs to give evidence and have greater penalties for those who do the wrong thing, including not paying farmers a fair price," he said.

Agriculture Minister Murray Watt said farmers deserved to be paid fairly for produce by supermarkets.

"All Australians expect the big supermarket chains to pay our farmers a fair price, and in many cases, that's not occurring," he told reporters on Sunday.

"I can understand that farmers will always want to take the best price available and in some cases that's going to be our export markets.

"We also want to make sure farmers receive a decent pay from supermarkets when it comes to supply in the domestic market as well."

A spokesman for Woolworths said the price of fruit and vegetables in stores was determined by what was paid to farmers for each variety of food, but ensured producers received a fair amount.

The bulk of fruit and vegetables supplied to the supermarket come from suppliers rather than from wholesale markets.

David Littleproud says farmers are not being paid enough for supplying supermarkets. (Darren England/AAP PHOTOS)

"For the majority of the fruit and vegetables we buy, we work collaboratively with our suppliers to forward plan, and ensure we will have the right volume to meet our customers' needs," the spokesman said.

"We pay farmers the market price for their produce, which can vary throughout the year due to weather, seasonality, supply and demand."

The call for an inquiry came as prices for some products like bananas and mangoes were set to increase after agricultural areas were damaged during recent storms and flooding in far north Queensland.

It also followed a recent survey of workers by the peak vegetable body AUSVEG, which found more than 30 per cent of growers were considering leaving in the industry in the next year.

A spokeswoman for Coles said the supermarket worked closely with growers to ensure a fair price was given to them.

"Many of our relationships (with farmers) are multi-generational and in some cases extend well over 50 years of supplying Coles," the spokeswoman said,

"The price of fresh fruit and vegetables is determined by market pricing which varies throughout the year due to seasonal weather conditions, as well as supply and demand.

"We are always looking for ways to provide great value to customers, which is often through produce that is in seasonal abundance. This also supports our growers who may have ample supply."