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News

Avocado growers will need a helping hand to rebuild - 24/03/2016

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Avocados Australia is looking for assistance, not handouts, for our growers to rebuild the Atherton Tableland's growing communities.

We welcome Wednesday's announcement by the Prime Minister and Queensland Premier of short term measures that appear to offer more than the normal form of assistance.

Unfortunately the package already announced is not going to be enough in the medium and long term to re-establish what are key avocado businesses employing many Atherton Tableland's workers. The majority of avocado growers hit by the cyclone will not be eligible.

Moving forward and looking 2, 3 and 6 months down the track, growers are not going to be able to afford to employ their workers after losing this year's crop to the cyclone.

"The Federal Government is going to be faced with large numbers of out of work farm employees" said Jim Kochi, avocado grower and Director of Avocados Australia for North Queensland. "These people are going to end up on Centerlink payments. We would prefer to see these payments as part of a package which will keep the people in work on farms and contribute to the rebuilding of the local economy by having people in jobs," he said.

"This is money that is going to be paid out anyway, so lets make it part of the rebuilding effort", said Antony Allen CEO of Avocados Australia.

"Our growers are going to need a long term plan from both the Federal and State Governments to rebuild what is an essential part of the North Queensland economy", he said.

"We strongly support Growcom's call establish a Rebuild Agriculture Task Force that includes industry representatives to develop and implement medium and long term assistance measures," he added.

Avocados Australia has linked with other industry groups including Australian Banana Growers Council and Growcom to ensure cohesive solutions for horticulture.

For further comment:

Please see full size photos destruction on our website: www.avocado.org.au

Antony Allen, Avocados Australia Chief Executive Officer on 07 3391 2344 or 0438 132 477

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