



Steve Fielding Family First Senator for Victoria



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **PUT AUSTRALIAN APPLES BEFORE KIWIS Government must defend growers' livelihoods at World Trade Organisation**

The Federal Government should not be intimidated by New Zealand's complaint to the World Trade Organisation over the importation of New Zealand apples, Family First leader Steve Fielding said today.

The New Zealand Government has complained Australia is taking too long to finalise inspection regimes designed to make sure apples are not infected with the bacterial disease fire blight.

"The Australian Government should protect our \$4.5 billion apple and pear industry and growers' livelihoods from fire blight, whatever the threats from New Zealand", Senator Fielding said.

"The Kiwis are more interested in selling their apples than our concerns about fire blight.

"Family First and the apple and pear industry still have serious concerns about whether quarantine and inspection procedures will be strict enough to protect the industry from fire blight, because the Federal Government has refused to release details of the procedures.

"Family First wants Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran to release this information so growers can judge whether the inspection standards are adequate to protect their industry. If New Zealand's standards are not adequate, the Federal Government should be prepared to fight at the World Trade Organisation for better inspection standards.

"Family First supports free trade, but New Zealand has been ravaged by the bacterial disease fire blight and we can never be too safe when it comes to the livelihoods of thousands of farmers."

Last week during Senate question time Senator Fielding demanded to know why the Federal Government had continually refused to inform the industry of the kind of inspections New Zealand would carry out on its apples.

"Is it afraid of the industry scrutinising what is likely to be an inadequate procedure to protect Australia from fire blight?" Senator Fielding asked.

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