



FAMILY FIRST



Steve Fielding **Family First** Senator for Victoria

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FAMILY FIRST WANTS RUDD GOVT TO BE TOUGH ON FIRE BLIGHT

Family First has called on the new Rudd Government to publicly state where it stands on fire blight amid a World Trade Organisation investigation into Australia's ban on New Zealand apples.

Family First Leader and Victorian Senator Steve Fielding said the Labor Party remained silent in Opposition when apple and pear growers' fought with the Howard Government to refuse imported New Zealand apples or demand tougher controls.

Senator Fielding said to date the new Government has said little on the issue.

"Family First urges the Rudd Government to take a tough stance on protecting Australia's \$450 million apple and pear industry and get behind the thousands of apple and pear growers whose livelihoods are at risk," Senator Fielding said.

"Labor has been non-committal and it should now allay growers' fears by pledging to do all it can to keep fire blight out of Australia."

Senator Fielding said growers had a right to be concerned.

"New Zealand has been ravaged by the bacterial disease fire blight, Australia's and New Zealand's quarantine measures are questionable, and the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service has been found to be lax on its procedures during the recent horse flu inquiry," he said.

"It is no wonder growers are so concerned and want reassurance that the Rudd Government will fight for them."

Family First supports Apple and Pear Australia, which wants a tougher inspection regime, and shares growers' fears that the proposed biosecurity controls will not protect them.

For media enquiries phone Regional Media Advisor Heidi McIvor on 0432 454 437

www.stevefielding.com.au