**TomatoesNZ Levy Referendum Information**

**Key dates:**

2 July 2018 12am – voting opens

13 August 2018 12pm – voting closes

**Who can vote?**

All fresh tomato growers that have paid a levy during the twelve months to 30 June 2018 are entitled to vote. Voting packs will be sent to all known levy payers by early July.

**How do I vote?**

You can either vote online on [www.electionz.com/hortCLA](http://www.electionz.com/hortCLA) logging in using the PIN and password that will be provided in your voting paper. Or you can return the completed voting paper by post in the reply prepaid envelope.

**How much will be the levy be?**

The initial levy rate will not change from the current levy rate of 0.35% (or 35c per $100 of sales).

The ceiling for the maximum levy rate will change to 0.50% (or 50c per $100 of sales). Any shift from the initial levy rate of 0.35% must be approved by levy payers at an AGM.

**What was the levy in the past?**

Prior to 2013, the fresh tomato levy rate was higher – at 0.5625%. It was lowered at the last referendum because the levy was not all being spent and there was retained levy of nearly $1m. Since then, TomatoesNZ has run a deliberate strategy of reducing that retained levy, which is now down at around $550,000, or about 12 months of operating expenditure.

However, to continue doing the work we do in the medium term, we cannot continue to run deficits every year, which is why the scope is needed to raise the levy rate back closer to its previous level in the future.

**What will the levy be spent on?**

TomatoesNZ does fresh tomato specific work, which is separate to the wider industry work that Horticulture New Zealand do.

For example, funding for research projects into tomato pest control and environmental management; export market access; biosecurity; and advocacy with government on behalf of the fresh tomato industry are all funded by the Fresh Tomato levy. That work cannot occur without grower support for the fresh tomato levy.

We are proposing the levies may be spent on the following activities relating to fresh tomatoes or fresh tomato growers:

* Research and Development
* Market Development & Promotion
* Development of Quality Assurance
* Education and training
* Information and communication
* Day to day administration of TomatoesNZ
* Grower Representation
* Biosecurity (proposed new purpose).

The levy will not be spent on any trading or commercial activity.

**Source: Export Value - Statistics New Zealand**

**What does TomatoesNZ do for growers?**

Your fresh tomato levy funds TomatoesNZ to do a range of activities including:

* Pest management and crop protection – Sustainable pest management is important to our growers. We successfully imported *Tamarixia* in 2017 – the new tomato and potato psyllid biocontrol agent (it kills TPP nymphs). Trials are in progress currently with Tamarixia reproducing at some of the release sites and more releases along with site survey’s to be done mid this year, along with some work specifically on their use in glasshouses.

Other pest control work includes hunting for the previously released biocontrol agent *Macrolophus*, registration of new whitefly agrichemicals, and information on agrichemical use, along with a UV light trial at Lincoln for pysllids.

* Biosecurity readiness – it’s important we reduce risks and are prepared for biosecurity issues that we may be faced with. Recently we have been involved in poinsettia thrips surveillance work with MPI and industry partners. We are pleased to report that with the work undertaken it is now officially eliminated from NZ.
* We are also active with preparations to fight Brown Marmorated Stink Bug which is one of the biggest biosecurity threats we can face. We are currently seeking support to release a biocontrol agent (the Samurai Wasp) against BMSB if it is found in NZ. We are also involved in the Fruit Fly readiness work programme.
* Developing exports – to increase the value of the fresh tomato industry in New Zealand, exports are vital. TomatoesNZ actively monitors changes in export regulations and access, working with exporters to develop new markets. This includes undertaking a seafreight project for shipping tomatoes to markets beyond Australia which has resulted in successful seafreight to Japan – a high value market for our tomatoes.
* Health, Safety & Environment – we provide relevant information to growers such as producing an Agrichemical Residue Information chart and best practice guidelines.
* Your voice with government – we advocate on behalf of tomato growers on issues that may affect our industry such as irradiated food labelling and the Emissions Trading Scheme. Strong relationships with government agencies is critical to enable growth.

**How would a ‘no’ vote affect the fresh tomato industry?**

If we fail to get the support of growers there will be no levy income and we will not have a funding stream to continue our work. That may mean:

* No market development – exporters would need to access markets and keep abreast of export market changes without our assistance. That may mean more supply into the domestic market.
* No tomato specific funded research projects on pest control and other issues important to growers.
* No opportunities for fresh tomato grower to network and meet ‘experts’ at annual conferences and organised workshops.
* No regular promotion of tomato consumption and consumer awareness information.
* No advocacy – liaison with government agencies would need to be done by individual growers.
* No biosecurity readiness activities – you will need to ensure you’re up-to-date with best practice and are prepared for risks to tomato crops.

**For further information on the Fresh Tomato Commodity Levy Proposal please refer to our website:** [**http://www.tomatoesnz.co.nz/about/commodity-levy/**](http://www.tomatoesnz.co.nz/about/commodity-levy/)

**Or call Helen Barnes or Karen Orr on 0508 467 869**