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## PRESS RELEASE

# Stone Fruit Levy Changes to be put to a ballot

Following on from a series of consultation meetings held recently in major stone fruit growing regions around the country, decisions on the proposed changes to the stone fruit statutory levy will now be put to stone fruit (nectarines, peaches, apricots and plums) growers in a national postal ballot being conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

Summerfruit Australia Limited would like to see an increase in the amount of research and promotions that can be carried out from the current low base to a level that appropriately supports the size of the Australian stone fruit industry.

Summerfruit Australia Limited would like to see stone fruit product eaten more regularly and consistently by consumers in Australia, thereby stimulating an increase in sales, and to develop an increasing number of markets overseas.

Therefore stone fruit sales need to be backed up by a consistent offering at the retail interface. Increases in the R&D and Marketing levies will allow increased activity to ensure this improvement occurs should the proposed increases be approved by growers in this ballot.

The current domestic levy and export charge rate on stone fruit is 1c / kilogram or \$10 per tonne. 55% of collected funds are currently spent on Research and Development (R&D) with 45% spent on marketing and promotions.

Stone fruit growers will be asked to vote on the recommended new rates of 2 cents per kilogram for marketing and 0.98 cents per kilogram for R&D with 0.02 cents per kilogram recommended to pay the annual membership of Plant Health Australia.

Voting papers are being sent to current levy paying growers identified through the consultation phase of the process.

The ballot will be open from Monday 19th of September and ballot papers must be received by the Australian Electoral Commission by 10:00am on Tuesday 25 October 2011. All instructions on how to vote accompany the voting papers being sent by post.

Growers are asked to return their papers as soon as possible.

The result of the ballot will be available soon after the closing date.