

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission to the inquiry.

Background.

I have with my family, been a horticulturalist since 1987, making the majority of my living from the growing, harvesting, marketing and sales of avocados in Australia.
Our experience goes back to the use of market agents in the capital city terminal markets supplying on a consignment basis, then on a contract basis. We have also been involved as a founder and director of a grower based syndicate packing, marketing and selling avocados.

Experience and Observations.

We have found that levies, (and we used to charge ourselves voluntary levies before mandatory came in) provide growers with many advantages:
They provide our industry with a structure that would not otherwise exist, so growers would be forced to deal with all of the adversarial issues (and there are many) by themselves and we would be the loser.
The big corporations, both producers and the retail duopoly have the critical mass to fund these issues and by virtue of market forces are quite happy to see the small grower go without even to the point of going out of business.
When it comes to selecting and managing R&D, nobody is going to do it better than growers who are paying for and would benefit from it.

Recommendation.

We support levies not because we like giving away money but because without them our industry will not exist.
Issues such as R&D, promotion, dealing with the duopoly (the duopoly is the biggest single issue in horticulture) just do not get dealt with and the grower simply gets overruled. Voluntary levies by definition can't do the job and the winners are the retailers and ultimately the importers as our industry disappears.

Thank you for the opportunity, and I would be happy to address the Inquiry in person if required.

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