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5 October 2012

Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Palethorpe

RE: The proposed importation of potatoes from New Zealand

Thank you for the invitation to provide comment as part of the Committee's inquiry into the proposed importation of potatoes from New Zealand.

Woolworths is committed to supporting Australian farmers and domestic sourcing of our fresh produce. Our reputation as Australia's Fresh Food People is underscored by the fact that we source 100 per cent of our fresh meat (beef, lamb, pork and poultry) and 96 per cent of our fresh fruit and vegetables domestically. The remaining 3 per cent of produce is imported counter-seasonally or when supply is not available in Australia.

Woolworths has an active import replacement program, providing opportunities and support for Australian growers to expand the range of domestic crops, to establish new varieties, explore new growing regions and prolong growing seasons. In recent years this has seen Woolworths work with Australian producers to significantly extend the domestic garlic season and increased the local production baby corn.

One hundred per cent of potatoes sold in our stores are sourced from Australian farms. Domestically there is ample volume and varieties available to supply our customers with the quality of product they demand year round. At Woolworths we support Australian production first and foremost and as such would have no intention of supplementing our current supply with any imported potatoes.

We hope that any decision by the Federal Government in relation to allowing potato imports would be based on robust biosecurity measures and would ensure the local industry is not faced with unacceptable risks from exotic diseases.

Should you have any questions in relation to this correspondence, please do not hesitate to contact Cassandra Simpson, Public Policy Manager, on 02 8885 9133 or csimpson@woolworths.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Kate Blunden
Group Manager – Government Relations and Industry Affairs
Woolworths Limited