

# Your Levy At Work



Greenlife Industry Australia

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Australian production industry on alert with detection of tomato brown rugose fruit virus

The recent detection of the tomato brown rugose fruit virus (ToBRFV) in South Australia's Adelaide Plains region has raised significant concerns across the horticulture supply chain, especially for greenlife growers and production nurseries.

Detected for the first time in Australia this August, the virus, which impacts tomatoes, capsicums, and chillies, poses a direct biosecurity threat to the \$2.78 billion production nursery sector, with potential to disrupt not only local supply chains but also the national trade in greenlife products.

Director of RDE and Biosecurity at Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA), John McDonald, highlighted the virus's broader implications.

"The detection of ToBRFV in such an important food-growing area highlights how vulnerable the entire horticulture sector is. For production nurseries, this is a serious concern," Mr McDonald said.

"The virus spreads easily through infected seeds, on tools, and on and in plant material, which means any production nursery working with tomatoes, capsicums, chillies or similar crops could be at risk.

"If this virus takes hold in Australia and based on the ease of transmission and ability to survive outside a host plant, there will be significant crop losses across both the horticultural cropping of tomatoes, capsicums and chillies and in home vegie patches to the tune of millions of dollars annually.

"Fresh tomatoes alone are a more than \$500 million annual crop in Australia, supported by many production nurseries growing the seedlings and/or grafting these plants to meet the needs of their clients."

Regions with significant tomato, capsicum, and chilli production—including South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, and New South Wales—are especially vulnerable to outbreaks.

"Contaminated plant material could easily cross state lines, and this virus doesn't respect traditional biosecurity boundaries. Production nurseries across all regions must be prepared, as ToBRFV could hinder their operations and disrupt food production as well as the ubiquitous home-grown tomato," Mr McDonald said.

"I urge production nurseries to remain vigilant and review the plant protection and biosecurity measures and protocols they have in place to mitigate the spread risk of ToBRFV."

GIA recommend that production nurseries adopt robust biosecurity measures, including:

- **strengthen hygiene protocols:** clean tools, machinery, and surfaces between crop cycles and batches to prevent plant-to-plant transmission. Consider footbaths, sanitising stations, and restricted access areas. Use recognised disinfectants registered for plant viruses.
- **regular monitoring:** inspect plants frequently for symptoms such as yellowing, leaf deformities, or wrinkled fruit. Routine surveillance will help detect early signs of infection.
- **safe sourcing:** ensure seeds and plant material come from certified, disease-free suppliers. Quarantine and thoroughly inspect new stock before introducing it into the production environment.

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- **limit cross-contamination:** designate specific areas for different plant species and avoid moving equipment or staff between zones without proper cleaning and sanitising. Monitor visitors and external contractors closely.

Greenlife Industry Australia's CEO, Joanna Cave, emphasised the importance of implementing proactive response measures, noting that the spread of ToBRFV could have significant consequences for production nurseries and retailers which are critical to the horticulture supply chain.

"This virus poses serious risks for the greenlife sector, potentially affecting not only agricultural production but also the ability of production nurseries to supply healthy plants," Ms Cave said.

"Strong biosecurity efforts, led by production nurseries and retailers, are essential to containing the spread of ToBRFV and safeguarding the future of the industry."

A widespread outbreak could have serious implications for productivity, market access, and trade.

"Export restrictions, quarantine measures, and loss of consumer confidence are real risks. Stricter regulatory controls could also make it harder for production nurseries to operate domestically and internationally," Ms Cave said.

"GIA is actively working with biosecurity agencies to assess risks and provide the necessary guidance to production nurseries.

"The greenlife sector is resilient, and by adopting precautionary measures now, production nurseries can protect their operations and contribute to the overall biosecurity integrity of Australia's horticulture industry."

For more information on how to protect yourself from ToBRFV from the PEST ID Tool, please visit [www.pestid.com.au/](http://www.pestid.com.au/)

**ENDS**

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