

Comments from the Victorian Departments of Health and Human Services and Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

Due date of submission: 10 August 2016

The Victorian Departments of Health and Human Services and Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (the departments) welcome the opportunity to provide comments on Application A1115 which seeks approval to irradiate blueberries and raspberries for phytosanitary purposes. The departments note that the applicant is requesting dose ranges of 150 Gy to 1 kGy.

Blueberries and raspberries are potential hosts to fruit flies and other regulated pests. However, the departments note that the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has continued to suspend or restrict the use of fenthion and dimethoate for the disinfestation of a number of food crops, including berries.

The departments thus recognise that providing alternate safe and effective phytosanitary treatment options is important. The departments accept the review published by FSANZ in February 2014 on the nutritional impact of phytosanitary irradiation of fruits and vegetables, which concluded that phytosanitary doses of irradiation do not pose a nutritional risk to the Australian and New Zealand populations. The departments also accept FSANZ's assessment that there are negligible risks to public health and safety associated with the consumption of blueberries and raspberries which have been irradiated up to 1 kGy. The departments note that mandatory labelling requirements will apply to blueberries and raspberries that have been treated by irradiation.

Phytosanitary treatments that are safe and effective are important for biosecurity purposes. Permitting the irradiation of blueberries and raspberries will allow for continued access to markets and may lead to increased domestic and international trade.

In accordance with the above, the departments support the application made by the NSW Department of Primary Industries for approval to irradiate blueberries and raspberries for phytosanitary purposes.