



## **AUF FRESH PRODUCE WATCH**

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*A project of the Australian United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association Ltd*

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FRESH VERSUS PROCESSED FRUIT & VEG:**

#### ***Who's driving the current debate on quality and safety issues?***

The question, "What's best for me: fresh fruit and vegetables or processed products" is not new. In fact, the issue has been around for more than 20 years and debated from time to time. Recently it has been raised again in the consumer and general media through *Choice* magazine and *A Current Affair*, Nine Network.

AUF Fresh Produce Watch Project Manager, Frances Warnock says, "Observation over time has shown that what's normally behind this debate emerging again in the public domain is a new marketing thrust from sectors of the processed food industry - manufacturers of frozen and canned foods. Today, this includes the major supermarket chains which have recently launched their own private brands of frozen vegetables and ready-to-eat convenience products," she said.

The answer to the old question of *what is the best nutritional choice - fresh or frozen* - is not simple. It centres around nutrient losses, especially certain vitamins and minerals.

"In general," Frances says, "the available evidence shows that whole fresh produce that is handled properly, stored correctly and eaten while still 'fresh', retains much of its original nutritional goodness." And she adds that next in line, and a very close second, comes minimally processed fresh produce and frozen vegetables, followed by canned products.

"From a public health perspective, the message is that *Australians should be eating more fruit and vegetables*, with greater emphasis still being placed on consuming more fresh produce," she said.

"As a general rule of thumb, the more that fresh produce is processed and the longer it is stored the greater will be the nutrient losses, especially those vitamins that are destroyed by heating (blanching and cooking) and contact with air."

Frances spoke of Vitamin C, folate and B-carotene being the ones most affected and said that the greatest nutrient losses occurred as a result of consumers preparing and cooking food in the home!

***Fresh Produce Watch – 'Putting Food Safety First'***

Speaking on research undertaken into the issue, Frances spoke of most nutritional research that is now 'public knowledge' was undertaken more than 20 years ago. "It is desperately out of date and unfortunately forms the basis of our Australian nutrient composition tables/ NUTTAB," she said.

"We urgently need relevant and up-to-date information on fresh produce that more accurately reflects current industry practices, new technologies, new commercial plant varieties, consumer food purchasing and eating habits. Without this essential information *Fresh Produce Watch's* task of addressing misinformation and countering unsubstantiated claims about the poor quality, including nutritional quality, of fresh produce is made more difficult."

Frances Warnock says that much has been fabricated in the media recently about fresh produce quality and safety. "*Fresh Produce Watch* will continue to tackle the debate head on and provide the Australian public with balanced, factual information on fresh produce quality and safety," she said.

*Frances Warnock holds an Honours Degree in Food Technology from UNSW and is a qualified professional nutritionist with some 30 years experience in public education on food safety and nutrition.*

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## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION & COMMENT**

**Contact – Frances Warnock – Ph: 0412 005 232**

**Photo – Available on request**

### **WHAT IS FRESH PRODUCE WATCH?**

*Fresh Produce Watch* has been a project of the Australian United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association Ltd (AUF) for sixteen years and is sponsored by a number of cross-industry organisations.

*Fresh Produce Watch* informs the media, community and the fruit and vegetable industry about the positive actions taken by the fresh produce industry to improve food safety and to implement ecologically sustainable farming practices. In addition, the program reassures the consumer about the quality and safety of Australia's fresh produce, especially in the areas of pesticides and microbial food safety.

***Fresh Produce Watch – 'Putting Food Safety First'***