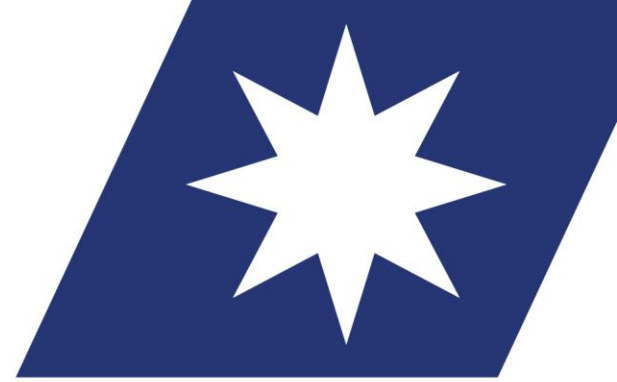


BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy



MEDIA RELEASE

19 May 2021

Hell no Mexico! FNQ citrus growers slam Fed import plans

Kennedy MP, Bob Katter has slammed the Federal Government's plan to import limes from Mexico, warning that it will destroy the citrus industry and risk bringing in a number of biosecurity risks.

Flanked by Mutchilba citrus farmer, Karen Muccignat and KAP State Member for Hill, Shane Knuth at a press conference in Mareeba today, Mr Katter tore strips off the Minister for Agriculture and the Government's free market ideology.

"This 'free trade' is absolute rubbish and it is continuing to destroy our primary and secondary producers. The growers up here have every right to be angry.

"This government say yes to everything and then we suffer the disease and the decimation. Citrus canker did untold damage to the industry here in Mareeba, as did papaya fruit fly, and that black sigatoka, panama disease and white spot disease continue to do to other industries.

"The Government are advocating that people in the cities get cheaper food at the expense of the farmers who go out of existence because they can't compete with these disastrous free trade ideologies.

"And the person that architected this was the leader of the party I was once in – the National party – which used to be the Country Party, which used to be the farmers party. But they are now the anti-farmers party and free market party.

"I share a balance of power with five other people, and the Agriculture Minister is one of the strongest pro free-marketeers you can have. And the Country Party has moved from being for the farmers to the exact opposite thanks to the likes of him. But if they think I am not going to go forward with some brutality here, they are very badly mistaken."

Karen Muccignat from Muccignat Farming said the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of family farms on the Atherton Tablelands were at risk if the imports were allowed in.

"Australia is currently assessing an application from Mexico to import limes into the country and this is a real concern for Australian farmers because Mexico is the biggest lime producer in the world - 1.1 million tonnes of lime.

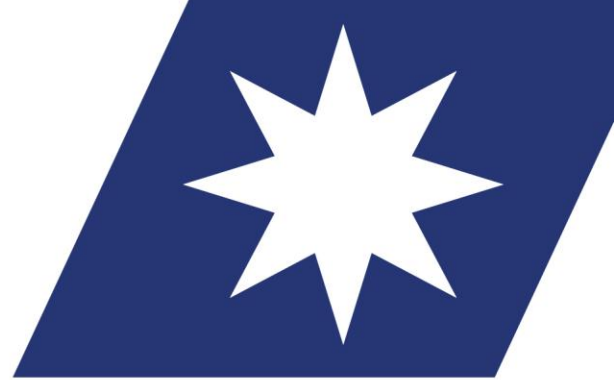
"Like us, they also reside in a tropical climate like our own, so the pests and disease risks are massive. There are 101 diseases risks but the federal agriculture has narrowed it down to four that would require no treatment.

"I have to do more to get my limes over to Western Australian than what is required to bring them in from Mexico and that is just not right.

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“There is a growing industry in Far North Queensland. Many are family farms, and their livelihoods are depending on this. If this goes ahead, they are just wrecking another industry in Australia.”

Member for Hill, Shane Knuth said he would raise the issue in the State Parliament.

“I cannot believe we are importing limes from a country that has citrus canker.

“When they wiped out the tobacco industry in Mutchilba and Dimbulah, they encouraged the growers to get into citrus farming. They were told it was secure.

“But this is going to devastate the industry and when I go down to Parliament, I will be asking them if they intend to support the Federal Government in importing limes from Mexico where there is citrus canker and the potential to wipe out our lime industry here in the far north.”

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