

ADVERTISING FEATURE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2016 THE AGE

AUSTRALIAN MADE



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Label to boost 'brand Australia'

New system will give buyers more information about their food, writes **Bev Johanson**.

In February last year, 32 people became ill with hepatitis A after eating frozen berries imported from China. The outbreak highlighted concerns about food provenance information and became the catalyst for the government to get serious about changing the country of origin labelling system for foods sold in Australia.

"We had been calling for changes for some years and we were happy the government got involved," says Ian Harrison, chief executive of Australian Made. "We saw that the current country of origin labelling system was not adequate for consumer expectations about food."

The new system aims for clear and consistent labelling information so that consumers know how much of the content is Australian. Companies will also be encouraged, but not required, to provide additional information such as identifying the origin of key ingredients from outside Australia. While it is specifically for the Australian marketplace, companies have the right to leave the new label on products when exporting, Mr Harrison says.

The proposal is nearing the end of the public consultation stage. The bill is expected to have bipartisan support and implementation of the new labelling is likely to begin around mid-year with a generous phase-in period. For food products made or grown in Australia, the new labels will incorporate the familiar gold kangaroo in the green triangle, an image that Roy Morgan Research



Australia is recognised internationally for its high-quality produce and farming. Above: a canola farm in NSW. Below: the iconic AMAG logos.

says is recognised by more than 98 per cent of Australians and trusted by 89 per cent to identify genuine locally made and grown goods. Below the triangle, the new labels will have a bar showing the amount by weight of Australian ingredients in the product – from zero to 100 per cent, with some prescribed text.

The new labelling system will be free to use and mandatory for all but a few exempt categories of food. "If you make a food product, you must use it," Mr Harrison says.

There are some concerns about the cost of introducing new labels and whether the new system

goes far enough.

SPC, the Shepparton fruit-processing company established in the early 1900s, is Australia's largest producer of packaged fruit and vegetables and is passionately committed to the promotion of quality Australian-made and grown foods. The company strongly advocates country of origin labelling, but believes that the proposed system is not extensive enough.

"While we welcome progress, we don't believe the current proposed scheme goes far enough or delivers for consumers, who are looking for a quick way to identify where their

food has come from when they shop," says SPC managing director Reg Weine. "The scheme as it stands adds complexity and cost to Australian business without giving consumers all the information they need."

Mr Harrison recognises there will be implications for Australian Made, which is funded by licence fees. "We will lose some revenue, as there will be no licence fee for using the new food labels. However, overall it's an exciting time. With the increased use, the iconic green and gold kangaroo triangle will truly become part of Australian marketing. This will build the



global impact of 'brand Australia'."

Licensing continues as usual for non-food categories and all products, food and non-food, exported from Australia.

Companies seek the China prize

For Australian producers and manufacturers, China is the ultimate goal – the vast potential market where the upper limit seems limitless and the sales possibilities are endless.

Family company A. H. Beard has been manufacturing bedding in Australia since 1899 and started exporting high-quality mattresses and bases to China three years ago. The venture has been successful and has a very positive outlook for the future, says Allyn Beard, co-owner of the company with his brother Garry, and deputy chairman of the Australian Made board of directors. "The number of container loads has doubled each year," he says.

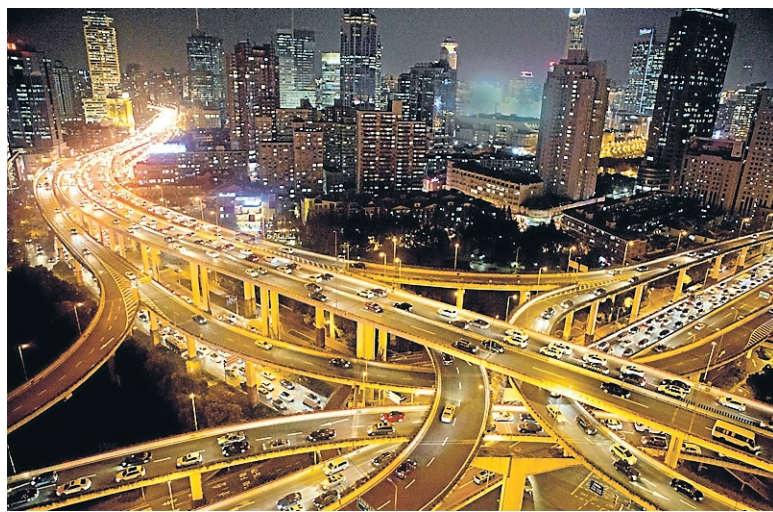
Mr Beard says it has been quite a long process getting to this point, and it is crucial to have the right retail partner. His company had something of an advantage when

former prime minister John Howard agreed to launch the products in Shanghai. "His profile there is huge, so that helped. It certainly raised our status with the Chinese consumers."

Mr Beard says the Australian Made logo is very important to export customers and, in the early days of negotiation, he was required to give absolute assurance that the green and gold triangle would appear on products. There were also detailed questions about materials used and A. H. Beard was required to supply proof of their provenance.

Mr Beard believes that one of the beneficial aspects of overseas expansion is the upskilling of the Australian workers.

"In China, we are competing with all of the very best bedding brands in the world, so we have to provide a very high-quality product," he says. "I don't believe



the free trade agreement will cause jobs to be lost. Expansion into China will create more work here in Australia."

Premium Australia Foods (PAF) is a marketing initiative that brings together e-commerce specialists and Australian food and beverage producers to sell Australian products into Asia.

PAF has been trading in China for two years, operating online and from an office in Shanghai where the company employs eight staff.

Chris Morley, managing director

of PAF, says Australia is recognised in China as a leading source of top-quality, safe food. "The only way we justify our price premiums is through this image and, as a nation, we must continue to perform in three key areas – protect our biosecurity and disease-free status; continue to promote 'brand Australia'; and develop the best possible consumer insights and traceability systems."

In these early days of PAF, the company is concentrating on shelf-

Australian producers and manufacturers have their eyes on the massive markets of China. Photo: Shanghai.

stable foods and has been successful with Red Island Olive Oil, Charles Cookies and the children's organic snack brand, Whole Kids. Next year, PAF plans to start exporting red meat to China along with dairy foods, seafood, lamb and, later on, summer fruits. The company is currently working with 20 Australian food brands.

Customers are the emerging middle-class who want a secure protein supply, and affluent consumers who simply want the best food they can buy.

Mr Morley says that finding paths to Chinese consumers is complex and requires a great deal of patience. "Nearly every brand that enters China starts from zero in terms of market acceptance and getting there can be a long process. With this in mind, we target brands and producers that we feel match our understanding of the market."

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Supporting local farmers and Aussie businesses

In the 15 years we've been in Australia we've learned a thing or two about what's important to you.

We directly employ over 9000 Aussies and it goes without saying local suppliers are crucial to our success. We work hard to nurture local relationships in order to provide consistently high quality groceries, fresh fruit and veg, at permanently low prices.

Many of these partners have grown with us, from small family-owned businesses into large scale operations.

Meet Neville Donhargt and Nalpa Station

Nalpa Station is a third-generation family farm located at Langhorne Creek on the edges of Lake Alexandrina, in South Australia. Neville and his team have been supplying ALDI with their delicious and nutty flavoured Monaco potatoes for 11 years now, and produce over 10,000t annually.



The region is known for its nutrient rich soils, which help to produce wonderful wines as well as fresh food. According to Neville the “plants just thrive, with minimal input [from] chemical fertilisers, which is great for Australian

families. I just love growing a potato plant, and providing customers with a healthy natural food that I have nurtured from start to finish.”

The farm also grows seedless watermelon and pumpkin, with excellent potential for expansion. Neville is now teaching his kids and grandkids to farm and love potatoes as much as he does, so that Nalpa Station will remain a family-run Australian business into the future.



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Customers stay loyal to the local

Manufacturing in Australia has its rewards in higher sales, writes **Russ Williamson.**

Australian businesses are reaping the rewards of local manufacturing with increased sales and customer loyalty.

Research strongly suggests Australian consumers prefer to buy Australian-made goods and products, and that preference is resulting in strong sales for companies that promote their Australian origins through carrying the Australian Made logo.

Australian Weaving is one such company. It has bucked the textile industry trend by remaining firmly committed to manufacturing in Australia and is the only large-scale towel manufacturer in the country – using mostly Australian-sourced cotton.

First established in 1927, the company counts iconic brands dri.glo and Dickies in its stable with towels produced in a weaving mill in Wangaratta in Victoria's north-east.

Australian Weaving marketing manager Sanja Lalic says manufacturing in Australia gives the company 100 per cent control over the quality of its products and it is that Australian-made quality that customers appreciate.

"From our retailers to the end consumer, everybody sees the Australian-made component as a very strong selling point and so do we, because we do see it in our sales," Ms Lalic says. "It is a stamp of approval to say this is made to our standard."

"And as long as we can be price-competitive, consumers are happy to choose our product over imported products in the same price point and category."



Ms Lalic says that it is also important for companies to promote their Australian origins and manufacturing to give consumers as much knowledge as possible.

For Timothy Lannan, director of Melbourne-based The Health Food

Guys Co, ensuring customers know their products are Australian-made has helped to open up new markets locally and overseas.

Mr Lannan and his partner James Annabel started developing and making Raw Protein bars from organic fruit, nuts and protein

from their kitchen and selling them locally into health food shops more than five years ago. But after some social media marketing drew traction, they decided to get serious and two years ago launched three Raw Protein bars commercially.

Left, top: Australian Weaving is firmly committed to manufacturing in Australia; below: The Health Food Guys Co is increasing its market share.

To ensure the highest quality and freshness, given the products contain raw ingredients and no preservatives, Mr Lannan says it was imperative the products were made in Australia, and manufacturing locally has also been instrumental in their success.

"When we first launched the product just two years ago there was less of a selection in the organic and health food market and most of the stuff was imported from the US," Mr Lannan says. "So to see something made locally for our sector in our market and being proud and putting an Australian Made logo on it was very important to consumers and the stores."

"We are a small independent producer and we are not in big chains – our biggest markets are a few health food chains and IGA – so it is really important to these stores to be supporting local companies."

The company has now added Raw Protein bites to its range using wild Australian ingredients. Mr Lannan says promoting the products' Australian origins through the Australian Made Campaign and carrying the logo has also been vital for accessing export markets.

The company now exports to Singapore and is about to enter the North American market.

"Made in Australia is very important to both of these customers that we are working with," he says. "People perceive, and there is truth and reason behind it, that products made in Australia are very high quality – in terms of their organics and the craftsmanship that goes into the product – so the Australian Made logo has a lot of clout behind it."

More Australians buy Australian

More and more Australian consumers are prepared to wear their hearts on their sleeves, with the latest findings from Roy Morgan Research indicating nearly 90 per cent of Australians are more likely to buy products and goods grown or made in Australia.

Its latest survey on country of origin buying habits released earlier this month found that in the 12 months to September 2015, 89.2 per cent of Australians aged 14 and over said they would be more likely to buy products made in Australia. This represented an increase of 3.6 per cent compared with a previous survey in 2013 that noted 85.6 per cent of the population preferred Australian-made products.

Michele Levine, chief executive officer of Roy Morgan Research, says this is encouraging news,

particularly for the country's manufacturing sector.

"The love affair between Australians and Aussie-made products shows no sign of fading," she says. "In fact, it's the healthiest it's been for two years, with nine in every 10 Australians saying they're more likely to buy products made in Australia."

The survey looked at products across six sectors – food, clothes, wine, sporting goods, electrical goods and motor vehicles – with all except motor vehicles recording an increase in the percentage of consumers likely to buy Australian compared with 2013.

Not surprisingly, food was top in local preferences with 88.1 per cent of people more likely to buy Australian produce, while 76 per cent were more likely to buy clothes manufactured in Australia.

Wine, sporting goods and



electrical goods all recorded an Aussie preference of more than 60 per cent while only Australian-made cars (52.9 per cent) were less popular than previously, possibly as a result of Ford, Holden and Toyota all due to close their Australian manufacturing operations by the end of 2017.

Ms Levine says one of the driving factors for the increase is the perception of Australian goods and produce being high-quality,

and this is not just limited to Australian-born consumers.

"Even though Australians are getting more multicultural and diverse, the trend to buy Aussie-made products seems to only be getting stronger," Ms Levine says.

"Almost the same proportion of Australians born in the UK and Europe agree that they 'try to buy Australian-made products as often as possible' as Australians born in Australia.

Australians are increasingly choosing locally grown produce over imported.

"There is also an upward trend of people saying they 'believe quality is more important than price' over the last few years and this could be a reason the proportion of Australians saying they are more likely to buy Australian products is on the rise."

The rise in popularity of Australian-made goods and products comes despite a massive increase in shopping options, with the internet allowing consumers to buy goods easily and affordably from around the globe at the click of a mouse.

However, while the products may be imported Ms Levine notes that Australians are still prepared to support local online businesses.

"Online shopping has broadened our retail horizons, enabling us to purchase items made in all corners of the globe," she says. "It's worth remembering, however, that the majority of online shoppers in most product categories still buy from local sites."

Look for the logo, support your mates

Buying Australian helps to keep fellow Australians in work.

As Australians around the country celebrate Australia Day, consumers are being urged by Australian Made Campaign to help support local farmers and manufacturers by buying goods grown and produced in Australia.

Australian Made Campaign, the not-for-profit administrator of Australia's country of origin certification scheme, is calling on shoppers to seek out the famous green and gold kangaroo logo whether they are buying prawns for the barbie or indeed the barbecue itself.

Australian Made Campaign chief executive Ian Harrison says that buying Australian made or grown products for Australia Day is a start but it should also be a practice encouraged all year round.

"We encourage consumers to look more closely at the products they are purchasing, and make Australia Day a starting point for new buying behaviours," Mr Harrison says. "Most products – and all food products – carry a country-of-origin label, and sometimes it's just about getting in the habit of looking for it."

Australian Made Campaign



director Nicki Anderson says the green and gold kangaroo logo is Australia's only registered country of origin certification trademark and there are a number of benefits for consumers and Australia for buying products that carry it.

"It's very much about supporting people that are manufacturing, growing or processing in Australia so it is effectively keeping jobs in Australia," Ms Anderson says. "And when people are making a choice between buying a product made in Australia versus overseas, you know that you are supporting your mate next door."

She says Australian products are also renowned for their quality



and "that is something that we as a country stand for and that is a really exciting reason to buy Australian".

Over the past 12 months, the average number of businesses registering to use the Australian Made, Australian Grown logo each month has almost doubled and there are now more than 2400 businesses registered to use it.

Ms Anderson said the logo – that was first introduced in 1986 – has become a trusted symbol denoting Australia as the country of origin for products and Australian Made Campaign works closely with the ACCC to ensure all registered products meet high levels of compliance.

"People come to us when they know they do meet the criteria for Australian Made or Australian Grown," Ms Anderson says. "And we are very strict in making sure that everything that carries the mark complies otherwise it undermines the certification."

"We have got about 15,000 products registered and I know lots more would like to be registered but they don't meet the criteria," she says.

The logo is the only registered country of origin trademark across all 34 classes of goods for Australia, and Ms Anderson says consumers should be wary of any other claims made by unregistered products that may suggest Australian origin



Trusted triangle: Products which display an official Australian Made, Australian Grown logo have met stringent standards.

through branding or packaging.

"It's buyer beware and people need to do their homework on other marks whereas they can trust the Australian Made logo."

A comprehensive list of certified Australian products can be found at: australianmade.com.au/products.

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Support for home-grown tennis, too

Campaign looks to future, writes
Russ Williamson.

While Australian sports fans are glued to all the action courtside in Melbourne as the world's best tennis players compete in the Australian Open, Australian Made Campaign is playing its part in helping to develop the next generation of home-grown tennis stars.

The Australian Made Foundation Cup is a joint initiative of the Australian Made Campaign and the Fed Cup Foundation and offers young children from rural and regional Australia the opportunity to compete in a national event.

The tournament was held at the Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club earlier this month as part of the Australian Made Summer of Tennis program. Children from around the country including Albany, Alice Springs, Burnie and Mildura made their way to Melbourne to represent their states.

Fed Cup Foundation president Judy Dalton says the tournament offers a unique opportunity for rising stars to gain valuable competitive experience with the best and fairest male and female players each awarded \$1000 to



Former tennis star and Australian Made Summer of Tennis ambassador Alicia Molik chats to young rising stars.

assist with their tennis development.

"Cost and travel constraints often prevent rural and regional players from participating in high-level tennis, but the Australian Made Foundation Cup gives country children the same opportunities as their city counterparts," Ms Dalton says.

The Fed Cup Foundation is a

not-for-profit body that works with Tennis Australia to promote women's tennis, specifically the international women's teams Fed Cup event. However it also runs a number of tournaments for juniors such as the annual Australian Made Foundation Cup to help youngsters further enhance their tennis experience.

The Australian Made

Foundation Cup is open to players aged 13 and under that are selected from regional play-offs in each state, with a final team of four boys and four girls from each state competing in the national tournament.

Some of Australia's greatest tennis players, such as Rod Laver, Margaret Court and Pat Rafter, originated from country areas and

in recent years, elite players such as Australian Open and Wimbledon Junior Champion Luke Saville and Australian Fed Cup player Jessica Moore have participated in the event.

Australia's Fed Cup captain and tennis champion Alicia Molik is the brand ambassador for the Australian Made Summer of Tennis campaign and says it celebrates home-grown athletes and local industry, highlighting the importance of supporting both to benefit all Australians.

"The Australian Made Summer of Tennis is all about ensuring a better future for Australians, particularly young Australians," Ms Molik says. "The Australian Made Foundation Cup gives kids the opportunity to participate at the highest level.

"As a mum and Australia's Fed Cup team captain, I'm proud to be part of that. As an Australian Made ambassador, I try to help educate families about the importance of buying local.

"It's important we teach our kids about where products come from, and feed them fresh Australian-grown produce so they grow up healthy."

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DAVID JONES **MYER** **hs** harris scarfe

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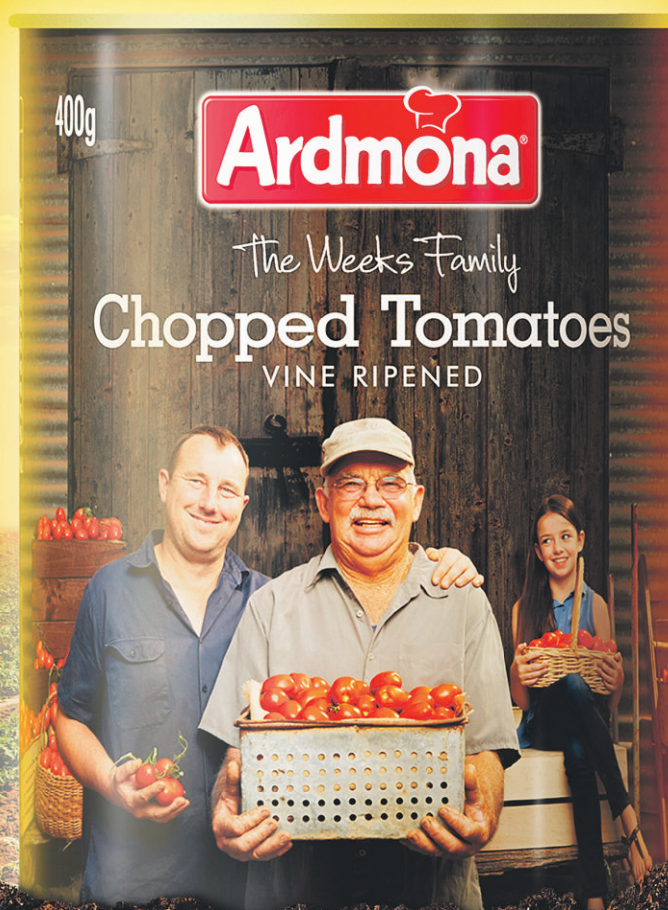
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