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## Six-pronged approach to support the Aussie melon industry

In the wake of a Listeriosis outbreak earlier this year, Hort Innovation has worked with growers to launch a six-pronged initiative to combat foodborne illness risks and support the sustainability of the melon industry.

Being delivered by the NSW Department of Primary Industries, and funded through the grower-owned research and development corporation using melon grower levies and funds from the Australian Government, the new project will see strengthened food safety measures and training support for the industry.

Australian Melon Association industry development manager Dianne Fullelove said: “Australian rockmelon growers, and consumer confidence, suffered a blow in the wake of the devastating incursion earlier this year,” Ms Fullelove said. “This intensive and targeted six-pronged initiative aims to help turn that around.”

“Food safety in Australia is already some of the most stringent in the world. This new initiative will make that reputation even stronger and give our growers sure-fire tools to support our product integrity for decades to come.”

Over the coming months, the initiative will deliver:

1. Visits to all Australian rockmelon growers and packing sheds to review and audit current practice and critical control points and provide one-on-one food safety consultations with growers, managers and key farm staff.
2. The development of a melon food safety Best-Practice Guide, informed by the findings from the above consultations, feedback from retailers and other key stakeholder groups.
3. The ongoing monitoring of current practice by growers and in packing sheds and training of staff in line with the Best Practice Guide.
4. The development of a ‘toolbox’ for grower use including risk assessment templates, training guides, food safety posters and record sheets to support food safety programs – this will be housed on the Australian Melon Association website.
5. Regional roadshows in key growing regions that highlight the availability and contents of the toolbox and Best Practice Guide.
6. A helpdesk to provide technical support to growers, packers and other stakeholders.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries, which has extensive experience in melon food safety research and industry development, has already started consultation with rockmelon growers in Queensland and Western Australia. The whole project due for completion in May 2019.

Lead researcher, Dr SP Singh said: “The pathway to recovery from the recent outbreak in rebuilding consumer confidence requires a collaborative and consistent approach underpinned by supply of safe fruit to consumers”.

“This project has the strong potential to expedite the recovery by monitoring and improving industry best-practice. We are inviting all commercial rockmelon growers and packers to participate in the project and demonstrate their commitment to food safety.”

For more details on upcoming activities relating to this initiative, keep an eye on the [Hort Innovation](#) and the [Australian Melon Association](#) websites.

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