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Media release

Banana industry gears up for GumFreeDay protest

Banana growers take on US confectionery giant, Wrigley's

Australia's banana industry is gearing up for a day of protest in January to demonstrate its outrage at chewing gum company Wrigley's lack of concern for its denigration of bananas as a health food.

Australian Bananas Marketing Manager, David Chenu says, "We believe the industry has been open and fair with Wrigley's in our quest to have them modify a television commercial or to withdraw it from airing, but our sincerest efforts have been ignored.

"The banana industry is very strong and closely knit, mostly family-based industry that does not take kindly to its future being threatened. For a confectionery company to treat it with contempt is poor form.

"Two incidents have riled the industry, firstly the Wrigley Company not responding to our request to modify or withdraw its ad and secondly being told that no decision had been made to run the ad in 2010, but shortly after learning from a journalist that it will run in April.

"Growers are incensed to the point where they will be holding a rally in the key banana-growing areas of Innisfail and Tully in Far North Queensland. There may even be support from the smaller banana growing areas of Coffs Harbour in NSW and Carnarvon in WA.

"Maybe even people in capital cities might decide to demonstrate their support for this vital Australian industry by giving chewing gum the thumbs down on GumFreeDay," he says.

GumFreeDay will be held in the latter half of January on a date to be announced.

Chenu says, "With Christmas upon us and people likely to be away on holidays immediately after, we will work to choosing a date in January that can optimise the opportunity for our communities to participate.

"As well as encouraging people not to buy or eat gum on the day, we will also look towards a demonstration of protest as a symbol of unity among the industry, those who rely on it for income, other supporters and banana lovers.

"How wonderful would it be for the day to become a national GumFreeDay where others could offer support," he says.

With reinforcement for the banana industry's position flowing, its resolve against Wrigley's intensifies with industry experts saying eating bananas will not cause tooth decay.

Derek Lewis, who sits on the Oral Health Committee of the Australian Dental Association, has been reported as saying that unless someone ate large quantities of bananas and failed to rinse their mouth, "no one is going to decay their teeth by eating bananas".

"Why didn't they put a glass of fizzy cola in the ad?" he asked.

Further, Dr David Topping, a senior scientist at the CSIRO said he was not familiar with any population studies that supported bananas being a concern for oral health.

"The evidence is that bananas are an excellent source of resistant starch which doesn't begin to digest until the lower intestine. In fact, resistant starch is low in the Australian diet and is something we work on getting increased consumption of," Dr Topping said.

Enquiries

David Chenu, Horticulture Australia Limited, Tel (02) 8295-2381, Mobile 0419 318 013