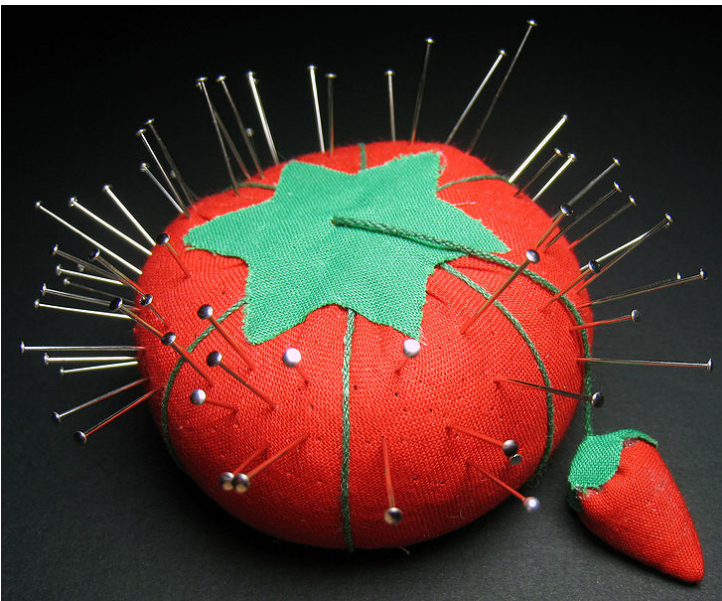


Tougher penalties for fruit contamination

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Over the past few days, owing to a series of distressing events that has unfolded, relating to tampering with strawberries, particularly out of Queensland, the Liberal-National Government is acting to increase the penalties on people who commit these crimes.



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Keeping the priority of Australians safe in mind and to support the farmers whose livelihoods have been put at risk, the Government has announced:

- \$1 million to make more food safety officials urgently available to increase detection, fast track recalls and assist the strawberry industry to rebuild confidence.
- An increase to the penalty for existing offences relating to the contamination of goods. These offences currently carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. The changes are being made to elevate the offence, in terms of penalties, from one similar to forgery or theft of Commonwealth property (which carry a penalty of up to 10 years in prison), to one akin to possession of child pornography or funding a terrorist organisation (which attract penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment).
- New offences of being reckless as to whether this type of conduct will cause harm, which will carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

- For the most serious cases that have national security implications, the Government will amend the Commonwealth sabotage offences to ensure that sabotage of Australia's food supply is captured by the sabotage offences. The penalties range between 7 and 25 years imprisonment.

These actions reflect the seriousness with which the Government views the current threats against Australian industry and, in particular, the livelihoods of growers, communities, towns and whole regions.

Families need to have the assurance that the Australian produce they are buying is safe for their kids.