

Adding GST to fruit and vegetables could cost lives

14 October 2013

Removing GST exemption from fresh fruit and vegetables could have huge implications for the health of Australians, warn researchers from The University of Queensland (UQ).

Dr Lennert Veerman and Dr Linda Cobiac, from UQ's [School of Population Health](#), said removing the GST exemption could reduce people's consumption of fruit and vegetables by about 5 per cent.

Dr Veerman said not eating enough fruit and vegetables was associated with increases in the risk of heart disease, stroke and cancers of the lung, oesophagus, stomach and colon.

"We've estimated that adding GST to fruit and vegetables could add about 90,000 cases of heart disease, stroke and cancer over the lifetime of the current Australian population and add another billion dollars to the country's health care bill," Dr Veerman said.

He said that abolishing the GST exemption might also see people eat more of other, less healthy foods, compounding the problem.

"We could see quite complex shifts in people's diets making it very clear that the government should explicitly consider the potential health consequences before making changes to Australia's tax regime," Dr Veerman said.

The researchers' warning comes amid talk of the Federal Government broadening the base of the GST and Tony Abbott's commitment to producing a white paper on tax reforms before the next election.

Dr Veerman and Dr Cobiac have detailed their findings in a letter published in [The Medical Journal of Australia](#) today (14 October 2013).

More information: Dr J Lennert Veerman, 0401 265 973 or l.veerman@uq.edu.au

Media contact: Vanessa Mannix Coppard, 042 420 7771 or v.mannixcoppard@uq.edu.au

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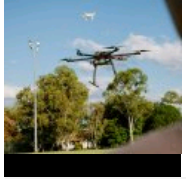


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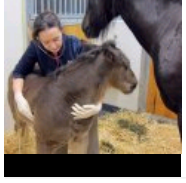
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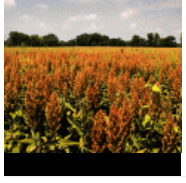
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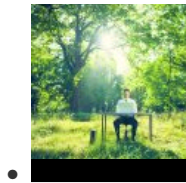
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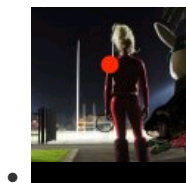
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