



Industry and consumer attitudes towards produce stickers – Findings report

Green Industries SA (GISA)

Data Collected
9 July – 10 September 2025



Table of contents



Background, Mission and Objectives	<u>3</u>
Methodology and Approach	<u>4</u>
Executive Summary	<u>6</u>
Research Overview	<u>7</u>
Summary of Research Findings	<u>8</u>
Survey Snapshot	<u>10</u>
Survey Comparison	<u>11</u>
In-depth Interview Findings	<u>12</u>
Focus Group Findings	<u>21</u>
Survey Findings	<u>40</u>



Background



Government
of South Australia

Green Industries SA



Green Industries SA (GISA) is an enabler and driver of change, supporting development of the circular economy through diverse collaborations and partnerships which improve productivity, resilience, resource efficiency and the environment.

South Australia's planned ban on non-compostable produce stickers, originally scheduled to come into effect in September 2025, has been paused. Further research into consumer attitudes and behaviours was undertaken to inform policy and provide further insights into both public expectations and practical industry constraints.

Square Holes was commissioned by GISA to conduct this exploratory research to better understand public attitudes towards produce stickers to inform future decision making around the implementation of the ban on plastic produce stickers.



Mission

Understand public attitudes toward produce stickers, focusing on their impact on shopping choices, brand awareness, and environmental concerns.



Methodology & Approach

The research methodology consisted of three focus groups with members of the South Australian general population who were the primary / joint grocery shopper for their household. Groups were segmented by age and location (Metropolitan Adelaide and Regional South Australia). Discussions explored consumer perceptions, preferences and behaviours around fruit selection and the use of produce stickers, including factors influencing fruit choice, awareness and impact of stickers and attitudes toward alternatives or regulation.

To support these detailed discussions, an online survey was also distributed to South Australian primary / joint grocery shoppers. These findings helped to quantify key attitudes and behaviours around fruit selection and the use of produce stickers. The overall number of surveys collected was 407. Data has been reported at a total level, with some comparisons across demographics and purchasing behaviour.

The project was carried out in compliance with ISO 20252.

Respondents for research

South Australian primary / joint grocery shoppers

Focus group overview

Number of focus groups	3
Group composition	Group One: Metropolitan Adelaide, Aged 18 - 39 Group Two: Metropolitan Adelaide, Aged 40+ Group Three: Regional SA, Mixed Age
Group length	90 minutes
Moderation	Jason Dunstone
Location	Online (via Zoom)
Honorarium	\$80 Prezzee e-giftcard
Collection dates	22 – 23 July 2025

Survey sample

Sample achieved	407
Sample source	Research-only online panel
Distribution of survey	Square Holes
Survey length	10 minutes
Collection dates	26 August – 4 September 2025



Methodology & Approach

In addition to collecting data from South Australia consumers, five in-depth interviews were also conducted with fresh fruit growers. The purpose of these discussions was to examine how produce stickers are used across the supply chain from a grower's perspective, including their role in branding, traceability and retailer requirements, alongside the costs, operational challenges, and environmental concerns they create. Whilst views on alternatives, regulatory impacts and future solutions for product identification and communication were also explored.

The project was carried out in compliance with ISO 20252.

In-depth interview composition

Number of interviews 5

Interview length 45 minutes

Moderation Jason Dunstone

Collection dates 9 July – 10 September 2025

Respondents for research

South Australian Fruit Growers



Executive summary



Research overview

The research shows that while produce stickers support branding, traceability and checkout efficiency, most consumers see them as wasteful and environmentally harmful. Shoppers favour removal or compostable alternatives. Growers and industry, while overall supportive and already investing in R&D to reduce reliance on non-compostable stickers, emphasise the need for more time to find viable solutions and align with a nationally consistent transition.



Summary of research findings

Sentiment towards produce stickers leans negative or indifferent, with many describing stickers as wasteful or annoying. A smaller proportion recognised functional benefits (e.g., checkout scanning, variety identification), but these were not central to overall attitudes

1 Consumers are largely apathetic or negative

Stickers play a minimal role in consumer purchase decisions. **Survey data shows 74% said stickers are neutral or unimportant to what they buy**; freshness, quality and price dominate decision-making

2 Produce stickers don't drive purchase decisions

Growers see stickers as a retailer-mandated necessity, essential for traceability, compliance and brand visibility. They were also described as a costly, operational headache (e.g., added labour). Yet, alternative solutions are often not viable (citing expense and scalability)

3 Growers view produce stickers as a necessary evil

Consumers were generally in favour of the removal of produce stickers, or the replacement with sustainable alternatives - provided supermarkets bear the cost. **Growers were also supportive of change but stressed the need for viable alternatives and consistent requirements** rather than a fragmented approach

4 Both consumers and growers support change, with caveats

Currently, **the most viable compromise is a shift to compostable stickers and / or improved shelf signage, supported by nationally consistent, phased regulation**. This balances consumer demand for sustainability with growers' operational and financial realities

5 Compostable stickers and signage are a practical alternative to the removal of produce stickers



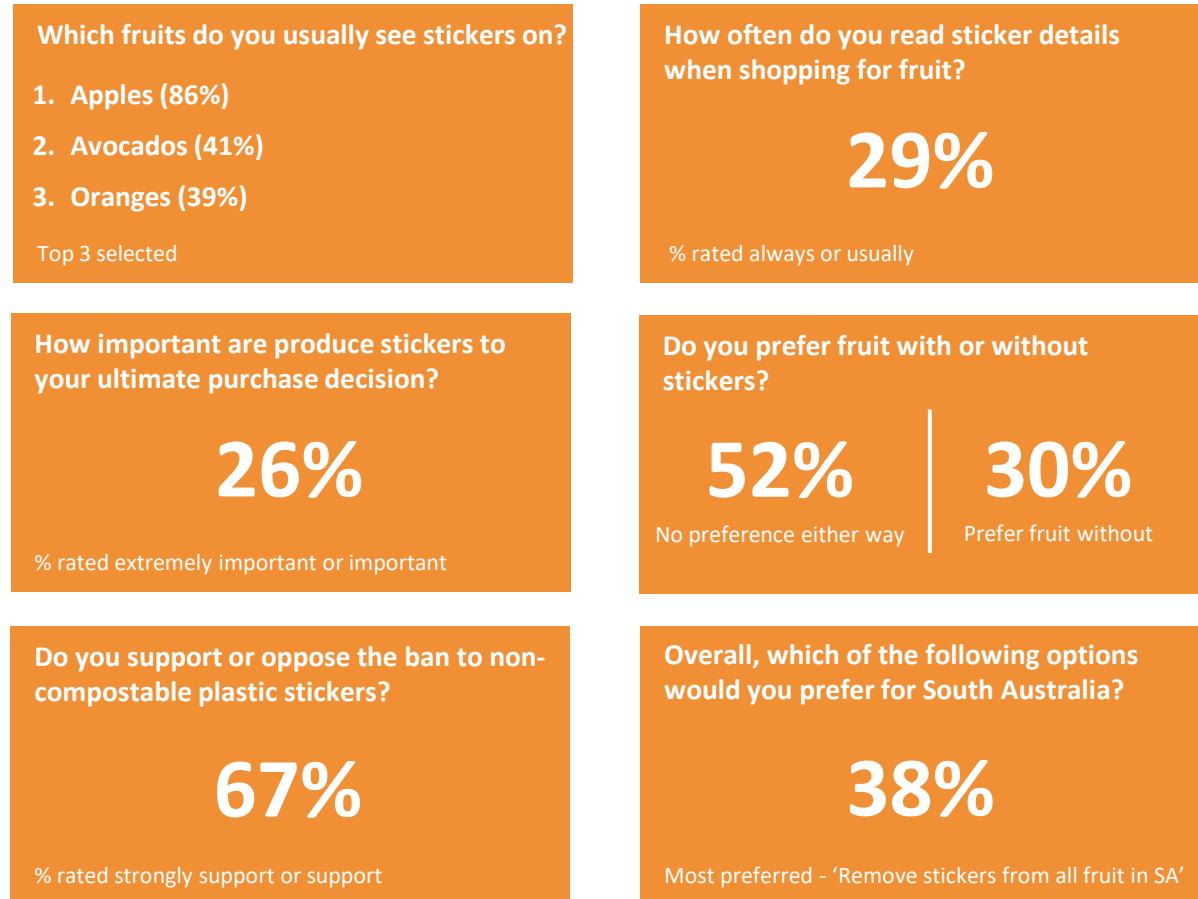


“We're happy to have the sticker ban. **We think it's great for the environment, but we just don't want South Australia to have it done three years before everybody else** because what are we gonna do in that time?”

In-depth interview



Survey snapshot



“What a waste of packaging. Only good for scanning at customer check outs. Saves 10 seconds but seriously I would prefer that they weren't there. If I want info about the fruit, I can read the point of sales information in place.”

Survey response to Q17. What do you think about when you hear the term 'fruit sticker'?



Survey comparison

	Total [n=407]	18 - 24 [n=21]	25 - 34 [n=73]	35 - 44 [n=73]	45 - 54 [n=71]	55 - 64 [n=69]	65+ [n=100]	Shop at supermarket [n=371]	Shop at independent stores [n=112]
Awareness of produce stickers	94%	95%	92%	90%	92%	97%	98%	94%	96%
Attention paid to produce stickers (always or usually)	29%	24%	47%	22%	28%	22%	26%	28%	33%
Importance of produce stickers on purchasing	26%	24%	48%	19%	27%	17%	21%	26%	25%
Produce sticker preference									
No preference either way	52%	62%	59%	53%	51%	49%	45%	53%	45%
I prefer fruit without stickers	30%	19%	14%	38%	38%	28%	33%	29%	37%
I prefer fruit with stickers	16%	19%	26%	4%	11%	19%	19%	16%	17%
Importance of produce stickers on purchasing	26%	24%	48%	19%	27%	17%	21%	26%	25%
Support for the plastic sticker ban	67%	71%	60%	59%	76%	64%	72%	67%	72%
Support for alternatives									
Better shelf signage	78%	62%	75%	71%	79%	86%	84%	79%	80%
Better use of technology at check-out so stickers are not needed	49%	55%	52%	41%	49%	45%	53%	49%	52%
Compostable stickers (which may increase price slightly)	35%	33%	55%	33%	37%	28%	26%	36%	31%
Plastic sticker only on selected fruit	24%	20%	48%	16%	24%	25%	12%	25%	17%
Laser printing on fruit	22%	33%	34%	21%	25%	13%	16%	22%	19%
Produce sticker option preference									
Remove stickers from all fruit in South Australia	38%	43%	19%	36%	45%	43%	45%	38%	44%
Shift to alternatives such as compostable stickers or laser printing	32%	29%	40%	37%	27%	25%	32%	32%	29%
Continue with current way produce stickers are used	22%	29%	37%	16%	18%	26%	15%	22%	23%



In-depth interview findings



Use of stickers

Across all interviews, growers emphasised that the use of stickers is primarily retailer driven rather than a voluntary choice. Major supermarket chains were noted in discussions as mandating stickers for scanning, traceability and supply chain management.

Such requirements leave growers with little room to opt out, even when many would prefer to avoid the associated costs and operational headaches. Independent retailers and wholesale markets are more flexible, but even in these channels stickers are often maintained to avoid confusion and maintain brand visibility.

“Personally, I hate stickers and we resisted using stickers for a long time, but **unfortunately they've become a necessary evil.** **There's a couple of reasons. One, the chains won't accept anything without a sticker.**”

“We send most of our fruit to markets. Some of our fruit goes to supermarkets like your Woolies and your Coles, Costco, and **they all have to have the barcode on them.**”

“Now some countries it's mandatory to have PLU numbers, some we've got to have barcodes, and some we can just have a brand as long as it's got a sticker on. New Zealand's got to have a PLU number. America has to have a PLU number and a barcode. And then retail, of course, has the barcode. The fruit that we pack for New Zealand actually goes to supermarket and they use the PLU number rather than a barcode for scanning. They also do a big promotional programme promoting our breed. **We like to put [our] brand on there to help them with their promotions. Whereas retail in Australia is different, they don't want the branding on there, they just want the barcode.**”



Branding and consumer recognition

For many smaller and premium growers, stickers serve as one of the few direct touchpoints with consumers. Such interviewees noted that stickers play an essential role in differentiating their high quality fruit from generic or imported alternatives. Without stickers, some feel premium produce risks being commoditised, misrepresented or mixed in-store with cheaper varieties. The visual presence of a brand name or logo directly on the fruit reinforces recognition and loyalty.

While larger businesses acknowledged that branding benefits exist, these were often secondary to retailer or regulatory requirements.

“We've always used fruit stickers, to show variety and they need it for export and to show the brand. We pride ourselves in having quite high quality citrus that's the best you'll get in Australia and **we want people to know where they're getting their fruit.**”

“Generally, we're probably tracked down [by consumers] from our sticker and that's probably the main reason for us. That's the reason we started doing it. We try to stay out of the chains as much as possible. We will sticker for them when a batch is going there, but really we're focused on high-end retail. **We're a premium fruit supplier, not a volumetric supplier. So the main reason for us was so that when we walk into a store or someone walks in the store, they can tell it's from [us]. That's important because it costs us a lot of money to do what we do.** We take a lot of care and we put a lot more labour into what we do than a lot of packers. And we also expect much higher return, but if someone can't identify a fruit or if we're highly replaceable. That means even someone has our box, and we've seen this before in their store. They've used up our fruit, which they might have bought a \$40 box, they buy a \$20 box, pour it into our box in the store. We've got no way of controlling that.”

“It's 100% retail lead. And then as far as the wholesale market goes in Australia, it's a matter of whether you want to promote your brand by having it on the fruit. We will sell it in a [branded] box so the people at the market can see that is [our] brand, but the people at the supermarket won't see the branding. But **most supermarket shoppers shop with their eyes and price anyhow, so they don't specifically say, oh, I'm going to buy [this] brand. If they're dearer than the competitor, they'll buy the competitor's fruit.**”





“It’s hard for people to contemplate the investment in the genetics. **When you bring it back to the fruit stickers, it’s like, well, you put the sticker on the thing because there’s value in it being a Jazz Apple versus a Red Delicious because somebody owns the brand, the IP, the literal genetics of that fruit. If we say we care about it all the way up until you buy it at Woolworths, that’s crazy.** A consumer goes to buy it and we say we [don’t care], sell it as any apple, but we’ll spend a bazillion dollars on trademark lawyers to trademark [brand] in China, but we just don’t care that consumers can pay for any apple at the checkout. That’s a problem.”

In-depth interview



Traceability and food safety

Stickers are also said to carry a critical role in ensuring traceability and food safety across domestic and export markets. Several growers highlighted that stickers link fruit directly back to the producer, offering accountability in cases of contamination or tampering.

International markets often mandate the inclusion of PLU numbers, barcodes or varietal identifiers to ensure accurate recordkeeping and compliance with trade standards. This traceability function is particularly valued in export contexts where maintaining reputation and meeting strict import requirements is essential.

From the grower perspective, stickers act as an insurance policy, providing a verifiable link between product and origin that protects both the consumer and the brand in cases of quality or safety concerns.

“Those working on checkouts or others are not qualified to separate one fruit type to another and therefore can't get the correct price point. So, they need it for that part of the model. **I assume they need it for traceability. Because when you pour a box of fruit from me out and a box of fruit from you out in the same stand and then they have a food safety issue, who do they chase?** They can't pause everything, there's a traceability issue there, I'm sure... if you go into an [Independent retailer] and you pick up a mandarin and for whatever reason there is a food safety issue, where did it come from? Which supplier, does anybody look at down the chain? Where's the maximum residue limit problem occur? It can't be off everyone they bought. So, if they bought citrus off three to five people for that little store in that week. Does everybody do a recall? How's that work?”

“In some cases they'll use that sticker to identify the producer, which will identify a batch number, which means you can trace it all the way back to the orchard. So like someone puts a needle in the avocado, and it's just all the avocados mixed in together, you have no ability to trace back to... You actually can't differentiate. So, **there's certainly a food safety purpose. That's really critical.** But it's really just about consumers. They don't know the difference between what they're purchasing. And if you talk about avocados, you've got two suppliers of avocados on the shelf, if you can't tell them apart and one is good and one is bad, one is raising consumer complaints, and the other isn't. How does that supplier ever get that feedback?”



Challenges

Despite their mass usage, stickers are often seen by growers as a costly and cumbersome necessity. Compostable options, while aligned with environmental goals, are cited as more expensive, representing significant additional costs depending on business size.

Operationally, stickers cause frequent headaches - they stick to machinery, create waste and require additional labour to monitor and remove when misplaced. There is also a persistent risk of mislabelling.

Some growers even acknowledge that consumers can dislike produce stickers. Noting they can be inconvenient to remove, whilst the lack of compostable, end-of-life solutions only reinforces concerns about waste and contamination.

Amongst those interviewed, stickers are thought as being simultaneously unavoidable and problematic.

“We would rather not have them. **We have half a dozen guys for about an hour every morning picking all the stickers off our machinery because otherwise the cameras pick that up as part of the fruit and it doesn't grade the fruit properly.** **Everyone's washing machines are full of stickers. When we go home from work, there's a lot of labour entailed in removing labels off of machinery and stuff**, and you've got to be very careful that you don't mix labels in a box or in a crate, et cetera. If you're using multiple labels, if for some reason it doesn't size properly and it goes off the end of the line, it goes on to a return belt and can end up in a different drop with the wrong label on.”

“We knew that the sticker ban was coming in in the next few years and when SA decided to change it to the 1st of September, we were all quite shocked because, firstly we didn't have any other alternatives to the stickers. **Nobody would know if it's our fruit or where it's coming from or anything and the cost to change to completely compostable stickers was 70% more. It was a 70% increase and it would that would have just been unfathomable**, trying to change so quickly and then all the stickers that we already have that we were prepared to use up until 2028 or whenever the ban is coming in would just completely go to waste.”



Alternatives

When discussing alternatives to conventional produce stickers, growers expressed both cautious optimism and practical concerns. Laser branding has been trialled by some, with mixed results. Noting it comes with significant costs and is suggested only to be viable for certain fruit with thicker, inedible skins. For smaller and medium-sized operations, this technology remains out of financial reach and efficiency compared to traditional labelling raising questions about commercial scalability.

Compostable stickers are viewed as the most promising and closest to being ready solution. However, growers noted concerns around durability, adhesive performance and cost. Other methods, such as inking or printing directly onto fruit, are being discussed but remain in very early development.

Across the interviews, growers acknowledged that while alternatives are emerging they did not feel that they had been trialed to the extent that they were ready to fully replace stickers at the scale required for both domestic and export markets.

“I think **we would be supportive of any technology kind of solution that works for everyone. At the moment, the one that we're closest to achieving is compostable stickers.** So let's just go with that and then when the next best thing comes along, we'll go with that.”

“There's been talk about whether- like the eggs and **there's printing on the eggs, whether that can happen with citrus.** But how far that's into development, I don't know.”

“The biggest challenge has actually been the development of the glue. To actually have an adhesive that is strong enough to do the purpose. To stay stuck to the fruit while concurrently not making the product not degradable or compostable has been deeply problematic and it has literally taken and people don't believe this, but it has literally taken years of R&D to get the material, so **the sticker material and the adhesive correct so that the product can be compostable... Getting all of that to work collaboratively has been difficult globally.**”





“Laser is not commercially viable [for our operations]. When we package fruit, it runs through inline manufacturing process and if you think about it, you can simply stick up more pieces of fruit per minute than you can laser. And **the efficiency of the use of the equipment is really important because we're operating with margins that are sub 3%. When you have slower equipment, it starts to make a material difference in terms of your overall output** and your management of your investment.”

In-depth interview



Policy considerations

Growers consistently opposed fragmented, state-based bans on produce stickers, warning these create cost burdens and competitive disadvantages. Instead, they called for nationally consistent, phased regulation aligned with international standards, supported by government investment in research and clear transition pathways.

While some growers (particularly those most frustrated by sticker costs and operational challenges) said they would welcome a full ban if viable alternatives were available, most viewed compostable stickers as the most practical medium-term solution. Longer term, there was openness to emerging technologies like laser or printed-on marking, provided they become affordable and scalable.

Overall, participants urged policymakers to balance sustainability goals with commercial realities and to work collaboratively with industry on practical, evidence-based solutions.

“I can put the retail label on and I can put [our brand] label on or no labels. They're the three options that I've got. So if four of the states are saying, Our normal cheaper labels are fine to use, but SA says no, you must have the expensive compostable. I've got to put compostable on all five states. So **it's sort of all in or all out.**”

“They need to get national agreement. Simple. It's just not commercially viable without that. We're not going to supply Adelaide. Adelaide's not special enough to supply- to actually have a large cost imposed for the pleasure of supplying them and knowing that you're not going to get an increased return. The key issue here is if I went with a fully compostable sticker and I was going to make a dollar extra a box on top of the cost, then I've got a driver to do that. What I guarantee you is that none of our buyers will pay a cent more because we've done that... We have to have some coordinated approach to this and then hopefully if that means the sticker prices are equivalent to what they are now, it's a win win. Now Green Industries SA gets what it wants. I don't know if the consumers care. I think the consumers probably would be more don't want a sticker at all. I don't think they care whether it's commercially compostable versus not.”



Focus group findings





“I always thought they were there to help the store simply when it came to the checkout to speed up that process. And I think they have value in that process, even for the customer now because of self-serve checkouts, but only to the extent they have a barcode on them. Or if you're buying different types of apples, you might get to the checkout and you've got three bags that are all slightly different red apples and not be sure which is which, in which case they might be useful. But **I think that usefulness is marginal.**”

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Shopping preferences

Shoppers use a mix of local fruit and veg stores, independent supermarkets like Foodland, and major chains such as Coles and Woolworths. Convenience and location play a big role in store choice, with major chains often the go-to for the bulk of participants groceries due to their prevalence and range.

This is especially the case for regional areas where other options are sparse. Specialist grocers and smaller fruit and veg stores were preferred for hard-to-find items or good deals on fresh fruit and veg.

“[Major supermarkets have] a good range, quite **competitive price and it's local.**”

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

“Normally [major supermarkets], that's where we buy a majority of our stuff. **Not a lot of options in the town where we are.**”

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA

“I go to the **Asian Independent grocers for some specialty products** which maybe could not be sourced from [major supermarkets].”

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

“I find that the fruit at [major supermarkets] and stuff is either too expensive or not good enough quality. That's why I say that when **I go to [independent fruit and vegetable stores] because they always have an amazing quality there.** I'm very picky about the kind of fruits I eat.”

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide



Shopping patterns and online shopping

Most people do one large weekly shop and then smaller top-up trips during the week.

People are looking for both quality and price when shopping for fresh ingredients, which is why many of the participants favoured instore shopping over online for their fruit and vegetables.

For those that engaged with online shopping, it was usually due to necessity (accessibility issues), and while they appreciate the convenience of delivery, concerns remain about loss of control over quality, especially with fresh produce. This makes online grocery shopping feel like a bit of a “gamble” for fruit and veg.

“I'll do one kind of **large shop a week and then I'll do scattered picking up things throughout the week**, maybe three times or something like that.”

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

“**I don't like online shopping or click and collect option because the quality is very important.** Price and quality, both are equally important.”

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

“I mean that's a bit of a disadvantage buying online in the sense of some of things like that. Like **fruit and veg can be a bit of a gamble, I guess. You don't get to look at it firsthand and check it out and that's kind of the negative side.** I mean on the whole, I'm pretty happy with shopping online and having it delivered to my house and makes things pretty easy and pretty convenient. But yeah, you do miss a certain amount of control, so that's the only downside.”

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



What influences the fruit and veg purchase decision?

Across all three groups, fruit and veg purchase decisions were driven primarily by freshness, quality, price and availability, with some influence from variety preferences (e.g., Pink Lady apples) and a general preference for Australian-grown produce over specific brands or growers.



Aesthetics (look / feel) of product

"It's just the look and feel. If it's big enough, it's firm, it's not too soft..."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



What's on special

"We go by what's on special and also what looks nice and fresh."

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA



Ripeness

"And the ripeness, I do feel them. Don't squeeze them too much, but I do feel them and look at if there's any bruises."

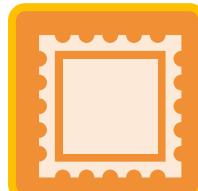
Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide



What's in season

"I would say we mainly basically buy fruit and veg off what's seasonally available."

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide



Lack of extra packaging

"I like to feel all the bits of fruit that I'm buying; I want to inspect it. If it's in a pack, I can't really do that with all of them."

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide



Locally sourced

"I do like to buy Australian; I will walk away sometimes. Mandarins are a big favourite, but if they've been imported then we don't bother."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Cost

"I prefer prepack because they're reasonably less expensive compared to other variables."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Preference of children / family members

"Based on what the kids will eat generally. There's always the pre-packed kids' apples because they're a good size."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Use – cooking vs eating fresh

"My pears, I tend to stick to the Packham pears unless I'm cooking with them. Depending on whether it's an eating versus cooking will sometimes dictate what my choice of fruit are."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide





Recognised brands

Brand recall was minimal across all groups, with only 4 brands referenced during discussions

"I was going to say, I guess **one known Apple branding is Lenwood apples up in the Adelaide Hills. You'll see them on their fruit stickers when you go buy their apples** that are sold in store. That's one well known one that I know of."

18 – 39-year-old Metro participant



How do you know it's local?

Participants generally relied on labels, stickers and signage to identify the origin and variety of fruit, with cues like "Product of Australia," or local brands guiding their choices.

While there is a clear preference for local and Australian produce, some shoppers admit they lack the time to actively investigate or shop around to fully prioritise this preference.

"If I'm shopping online I'll look and it generally will say 'Produce of Australia' or will give you a guide and then when you get the product, **generally they've got the stickers on it that they will say what sort of fruit they are, like what variety, and then often they'll say Lenswood or they'll say a location or a brand.** Generally, that's a guide for me if that's loose. If it's not, it'll probably be in a bag and have the product of Australia was something written on the bag."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

"Our **local grocer does have signage up as to where the fruit has come from.** What farm or proudly purchased from the Zerella farm. So, you kind of have an idea of where they've come from."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

"I'd probably prefer local products and Australian products, **but I really don't feel like I have the time spend on investigating or going to different shops to implement that at the moment.**"

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Produce sticker perceptions

When pressed on the purpose of produce stickers, participants across all three groups largely agreed that they served the greatest use to the provider (supermarkets etc.) in identification rather than being a critical component of consumer purchasing.

Participants also assumed that the stickers were used as marketing for different farms / regions to promote and distinguish themselves.

“I **don't think they really present a use for the consumer**, mainly for the fruit shops and supermarkets that sell them for product identification at the checkout essentially.”

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

“I find that a bit **more like a sales pitch** or a bit more of an advertising thing rather than the use.”

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Produce sticker benefits and frustrations



- Help identify when fresh foods are ready to eat
- Quicker, smoother process scanning at self-serve
- Identifying/checking varieties
- Organic/ non-organic products
- Identifying local/ Australian grown
- Helpful for cashiers at supermarkets

BENEFITS

“The most helpful stickers as of late is the stickers on avocados to tell you if they're ready to eat now or not.”
Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

“They have a little barcode on it. It makes it easier to check out.” Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

“I like to go and pick up an apple if I was in the store or even when I get them delivered at home. And by checking the sticker, I know what I've got is what I ordered or what I'm picking up is what I intended to get.” Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

“I think that the stickers help me making choices. Often it says where it's from, if it's Australian or if it's imported. I find it easier at the checkout at Coles and Woolies to actually just scan the little barcode code.”
Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

“I used to work at Coles many years ago and they helped me work out what type of apple to put through the register and I agree with the self-service checkout.”
Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



- Add to harmful waste
- Annoying extra step before cleaning /eating
- No influence on purchase behaviour
- Unneeded marketing

FRUSTRATIONS

“At the end of the day they're just more of an environmental waste.” Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

“They're more annoying than anything because I do have to clean the fruit so I have to pick the sticker off every time.” Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

“It doesn't influence me or stop me buying. I'd prefer if they didn't have them. I personally think this is a waste...” Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA

“The sticker is more of a marketing strategy. It is nothing to do with the quality, so I prefer the price and the quality not so much on sticker.” Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide





“It seems so silly. It's like, yeah, sure this apple is from whatever orchard or wherever, but **that's not helping my decision making about buying the apple really at all**. It's just a plastic thing that you have to take off to eat, I don't think they're needed.”

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide



How are stickers used in store?

In stores, produce stickers were seen as serving a basic functional role rather than a persuasive one. Most participants noticed them mainly on apples, bananas, avocados, mangoes and stone fruits, where they provided quick identifiers for variety or country of origin. However, most rarely relied on them to make purchase decisions - signage, product displays and visual freshness cues were far more influential.

A handful of participants also view those fruits with stickers as higher quality and coming from premium retailers, yet this was not widespread.

Across groups, stickers were more often described as clutter or waste, with limited contribution to decision-making.

“Occasionally look at the stickers if they've got them in there. **If I do look at them, it's probably looking for the variety, is the right variety that I've bought** and also where it's from, if it gives you that information.”

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA

“**I would regard them as more premium if there's a sticker on them** as opposed to if I go to independent groceries and there's a second-grade fruits, there wouldn't be any stickers on them.”

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



How are stickers handled post purchase?

There was some uncertainty amongst the groups around the proper fruit sticker disposal, with many mistakenly assuming they are compostable or biodegradable. Much of this assumption was based around trends towards sustainable products and assumptions that something on a food product wouldn't be harmful to the environment.

Others stated that they make a concerted effort to remove stickers before composting and throw them in general waste, while some participants admitted to doing what was easiest (just throwing everything in the general waste) - especially when outside of their home environment.

"I feel like in the past I might have just not seen it or kind of hoped that it would be (compostable) so yeah, possibly. **Possibly some of them have gone in the (green bin) because I feel like in my mind I was once told that the stickers are compostable...**"

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

"I would've **thought [they'd be compostable] because they're on fruit**, so I wouldn't have thought they'd be harmful or anything."

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA

"We compost, so I have to remove the sticker and **then put the peel and stuff bin in the compost and then the sticker in the bin.**"

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

"When I'm eating an apple, I'll stick it to the apple, then the apple goes in the bin if I'm at work. But yeah, I usually try and put my leftover fruit scraps in the green council bin to do the right thing there. But yeah, **most of the time if I've got a sticker fruit, it's going to be when I'm eating it at work during the week and then it's going to end up in the general waste...**"

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

"It depends how lazy I am. **Sometimes I'll just put it in the compost with the skin and that at the end, but I actually didn't think they were plastic, I thought they were paper.**"

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA



Environmental impacts



Participants were alarmed to see the impact of sticker waste on the environment through the images shared during the focus group discussion. These images helped prompt the shoppers to think deeper about the accumulated effect of this form of waste.

"You peel off anyway, but it feels like a drop in the ocean. But the ocean's made up of many drops, so it all adds up. **Why would you willingly put more plastics on something when you can just choose not to?**"

Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide

"I think **because they're so small people think of it as insignificant, but really if you look at the volume of them, that's a lot.** And I mean, I guess we'll be aiming towards trying to minimise our use of plastics wherever possible."

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA

For those participants that see a benefit in stickers for fruit variety identification and scanning, viewing these images helped to redefine the need vs the impact.

"Now I know that they're not biodegradable. It does seem like an awful waste to go to the trouble of putting them on every piece of fruit, particularly things like lemons where there's no different varieties to choose from."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Word associations with produce stickers

Group One, Aged 18 – 34

Waste	Annoying
Useless	Sticky
Barcode	

Group Two, Aged 40+

Marketing	
Convenience	
Product information	

Group Three, Regional SA

Small	Necessary (for cashier)
Fiddly	Outdated
Annoying	Nuisance



Attitudes towards the proposed produce sticker ban



- Stickers not essential; environmental impact outweighs benefits
- Small scanning convenience, but not enough reason to keep
- Support for biodegradable / compostable alternatives
- SA should be seen as leading sustainability change

IN FAVOUR

"Maybe it's the ease of scanning and the ease of encoding that information for staff or something. Maybe that's the biggest pro, but I don't know if it's enough." Regional

"As they are now? Yes. If they could make them biodegradable, then that'd be different story." Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

"Yeah, it's a good idea. And always South Australia leading the way with the environment. When we make change, we always seem to be the first ones doing it." 18 – 39-year-old Metro participants

"I think ban them, get rid of them. If they need to replace them, replace them with an alternative that maybe that we'll break down." Regional



- Needed for stock ID by farmers / supermarkets
- Risk of checkout mistakes without them
- Important as brand identifiers
- Tradition and practicality in industry
- Useful for telling fruit varieties apart

AGAINST

"I don't know whether there would be a lot of people making mistakes at checkout, purchasing slightly the wrong thing. So maybe from fruit farmers it wouldn't be very appealing to them to lose it. It might not represent or reflect properly their sales or things like that. That's the only thing." 18 – 39-year-old Metro participants

"I do think that the stickers are here to stay. They've been around forever. I think that there's a reason for that...I feel like the producers or the farmers actually want the stickers on it as the identifier because that's who they are. I think the focus should be to make them biodegradable rather than to not have them at all, because I think that would be harder to implement." 18 – 39-year-old Metro participants

"I would say no. They have value specifically for apples, but things that have distinctions, which, I can't see a pink lady and a jazz and I can't tell the difference." Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide





“The governments also got to look at the cost to the environment, not just the cost of maybe having to produce another sticker, which should be worn by the supermarkets, but **what's the cost to the environment if we keep manufacturing these type of plastics and just throwing them out?**”

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA



Alternatives to produce stickers

Participants across the board were against the use of plastic in the makeup of the stickers, however there was some concern that alternatives would involve even more plastic by way of repackaging. However, they did arrive at some alternative suggestions, and chief among them was:

Compostable stickers	Shelf information	Advanced self-serve technology
<p>Stickers that are edible/break down in the compost</p> <p>“I think it’s a good idea to make it become biodegradable. They still have value. Maybe we don’t know, but maybe for the producers, for consumers, for grocery stores, it still has value, otherwise it won’t exist for such a long time. So, to totally ban it may not be a good idea but making it biodegradable will minimise the impact on the environment but also keep its value.”</p> <p>Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide</p> <p>“Something paper-based, something biodegradable, something potentially that you can eat, something you don’t need to take off.”</p> <p>Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA</p>	<p>Variety/region information provided on shelves or added to pricing labels</p> <p>“If they put that same information at the point of sale and made it clear, then that might resolve the reasons why some people like them in terms of knowing where the product is from. And then someone could come up with a way to deal with the scanning issue surely. After seeing those pictures I’m now more inclined to say, they should just go ahead and ban them and the industry will come up with something.”</p> <p>Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide</p> <p>“Your bigger supermarkets and even fruit and veg shops, your little grocery stores, they’ve all got a label at the front telling you the price, so it’s pretty easy to add detail to that label. If you’re looking at how much per kilo or per unit, there’s going to be a price somewhere, if you include where it’s grown and exactly what it is that will help you identify what you’re buying..”</p> <p>Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA</p>	<p>Expectation that self-service surveillance technology can evolve to recognise variety / region</p> <p>“You go to the self-serve checkouts and you just put an item on the self-serve and then the camera will look down and be like, oh, that looks like it could be an onion or a garlic or a shallot or something, and you’ve got to click which one. So, the technology for identifying what kind of apple or what kind of orange or mandarin or something, it’s either there or it’s close to being there. So, for the shops side of things, it seems like it’s becoming more and more redundant, especially when we have that technology aiding us.”</p> <p>Group One, Aged 18 – 39, Metropolitan Adelaide</p>



Added cost for alternatives

When it was presented that some of these alternatives may include increased costs to shoppers, participants across all three groups argued that produce stickers offer little value to consumers, viewing them instead as a supermarket-driven requirement that should not come at the shopper's expense.

Many believe major supermarkets should absorb the cost, since stickers primarily benefit their operations, not customers or growers. There is ongoing distrust in large retailers inflating prices in a cost-of-living crisis, with participants suspicious that major supermarkets would unreasonably sting the consumer if costs were passed on.

"They should be wearing the cost. It's benefiting them. **It's not benefiting the consumer. It's not benefiting the grower.** If it's a necessity for them, they'll already turn the squeeze down on the growers already demanding that you'll give it to us for this price and we'll go somewhere else. I think it's a supermarket problem. Let them pay for it."

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA

"They **don't add enough value that you'd pay more for it**, for me."

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide

"I think **get rid of it altogether. If [major retailers] want to be able to identify, let them work out how they're going to identify it and let them pay for it.** It sounds to me more like a supermarket problem than the purchaser's problem."

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA

"Soon as there's a necessity to do something [major retailers] get on the bandwagon and put on their cut as well, and it ends up, **instead of costing 5 cents, it'll cost you 45 cents.** They'll be making the money."

Group Three, Mixed Age, Regional SA





“I thought that maybe they should have some education on the stickers now or previously instead of assuming that people knew what to do with them. Maybe a sign on your fruit and veg area, saying fruit put that in your green bin, sticker put in your red bin or something like that. **If they aren't biodegradable or aren't going to break down, maybe people assume because of the way people are shopping these days with less plastic, maybe they assume that it is a safe way to throw it in the bin.”**

Group Two, Aged 40+, Metropolitan Adelaide



Survey findings



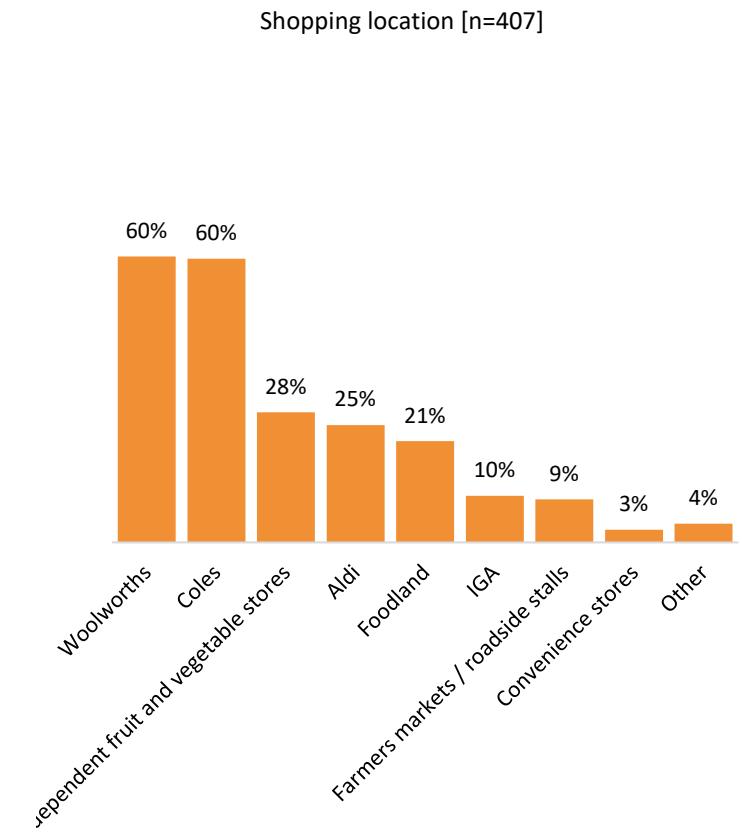
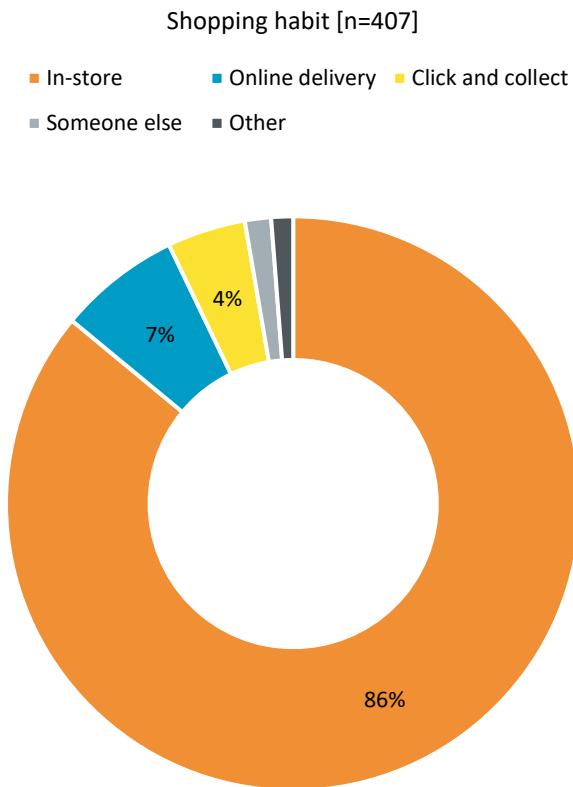
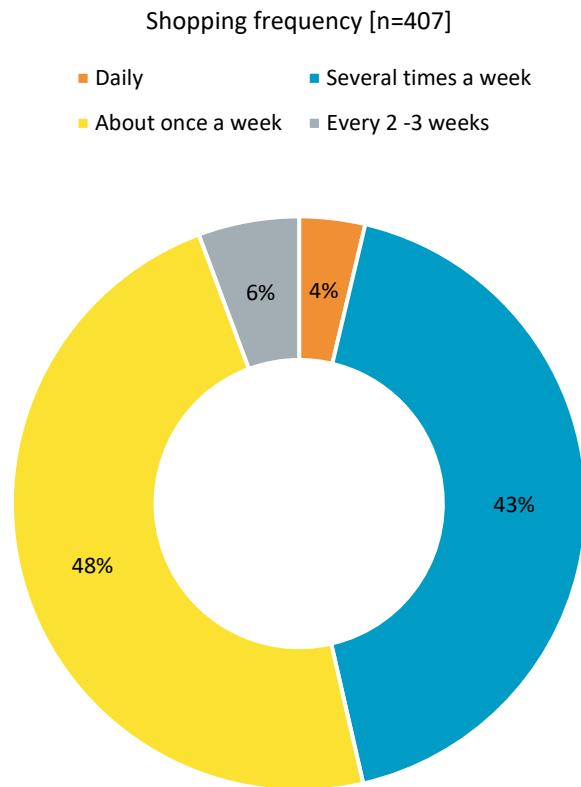
Respondent profile

Age, gender and location		Responsibility and location for grocery shopping		Employment	
18-24	5%	Main person	72%	Work full-time	39%
25-29	7%	Share equally	28%	Work part-time	16%
30-34	11%	Woolworths	60%	Home duties	6%
35-39	7%	Coles	60%	Unemployed	5%
40-44	11%	Independent fruit and vegetable stores	28%	Retired	23%
45-49	8%	Aldi	25%	Student	3%
50-54	9%	Foodland	21%	Pension	2%
55-59	8%	IGA	10%	Disability support	3%
60+	34%	Farmers markets / roadside stalls	9%	Other	1%
Male	46%	Convenience stores	3%		
Female	54%	Other	4%		
Metropolitan Adelaide	76%				
Regional South Australia	24%				



Frequency, habit and location of shopping for fresh produce

The majority of the sample shops for fresh produce frequently, with 91% doing so at least once a week. Most prefer to shop in-store and select the fruit themselves (86%). Additionally, they tend to shop at supermarkets (91%).



Q5. How often do you shop for fresh produce? Q6. How do you usually shop for your fresh produce? Q7. Where do you typically buy fruit?



Buying fresh fruit habit

Most respondents prefer to buy loose fruit (88%) over other options. This preference is consistent across all age groups and genders. However, those aged between 25 and 44 also tend to buy pre-packed fruit.

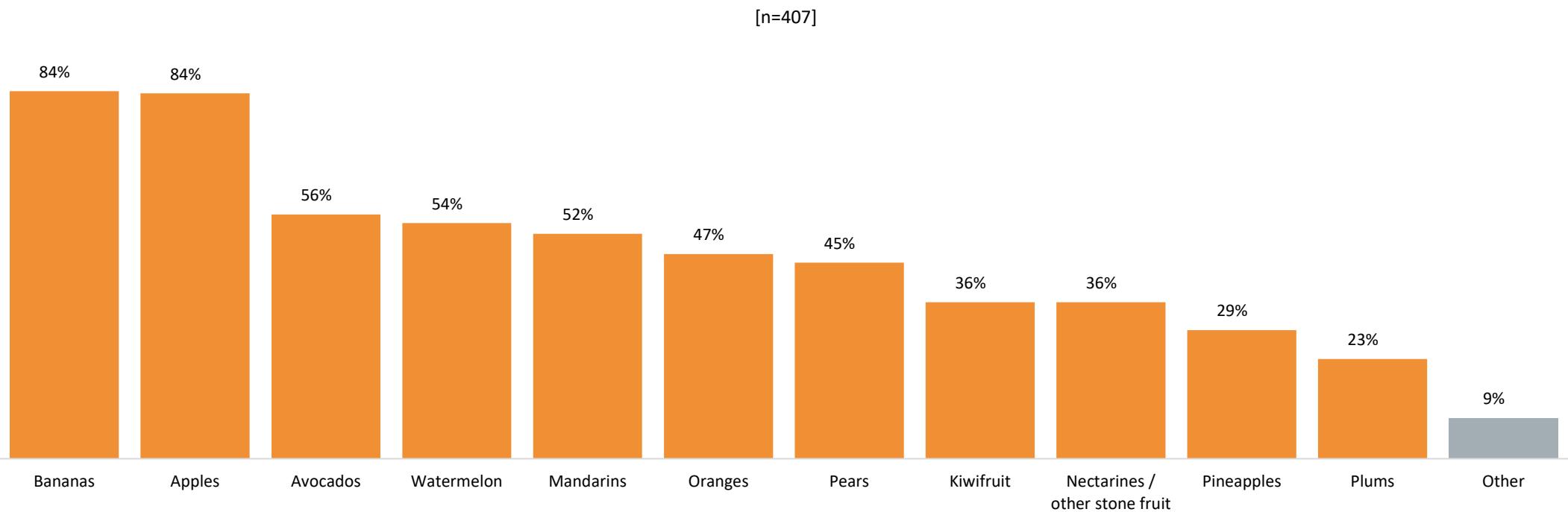
	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female
Loose fruit (unpackaged, picked by hand)	88%	90%	78%	92%	86%	96%	89%	86%	90%
Pre-packed fruit (e.g., bags, punnets, trays)	45%	35%	62%	60%	41%	32%	35%	48%	42%
Cut or pre-prepared fruit (e.g., fruit salad tubs)	12%	5%	25%	15%	6%	9%	7%	13%	10%
Other	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Total	403	20	73	72	71	69	98	187	216

Q8. Which of the following best describes how you usually buy fresh fruit?



Fruit purchased when in season

Bananas and apples are the most commonly purchased seasonal fruits (84%). In contrast, Plums (23%) and pineapples (29%) are less preferred.

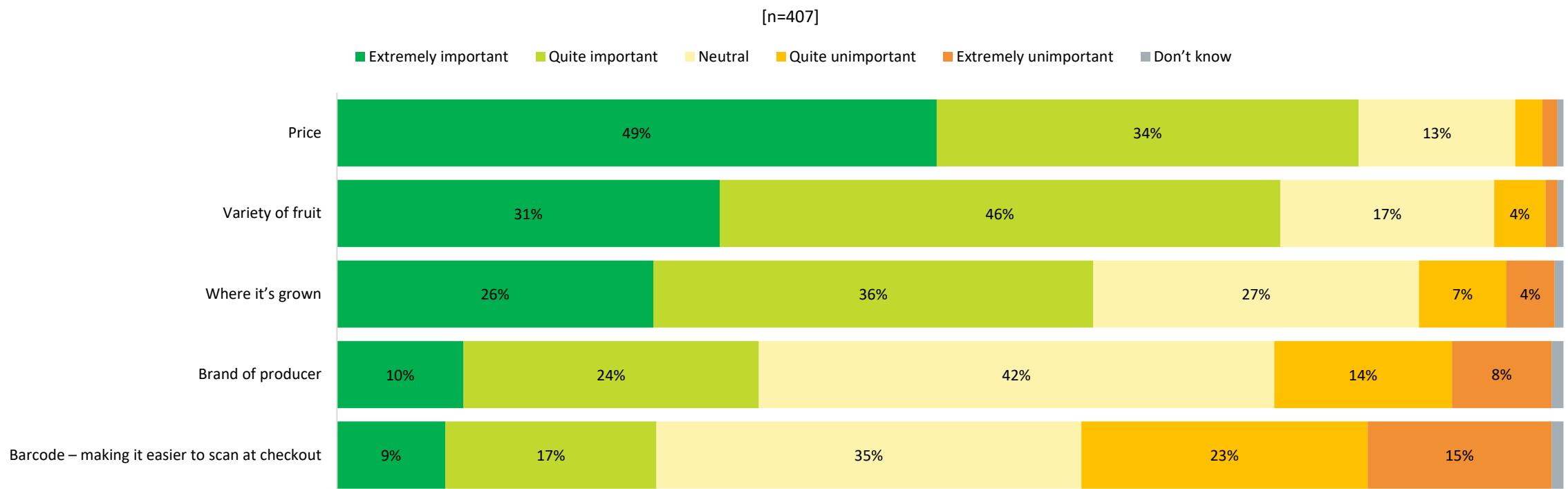


Q9. What fruit do you purchase (when available / in season)?



Important information when choosing fruits

Price (83%) and variety of fruit (77%) are the top priorities for consumers when choosing fruits. In contrast, barcode is much less important, with many (73%) feeling neutral or unimportant toward them.



Q11. How important is the following information when choosing fruit?



Important information when choosing fruits

[Of those who rated 'extremely important' or 'important']

Price (83%) is the most important factor when choosing fruit, especially among those aged 35-44 and 65+. In addition, shoppers at independent stores (85%) and farmers markets (86%) place the highest importance on variety of fruit. Barcode is the least important factor across all demographics, particularly among older age groups and independent stores shoppers.

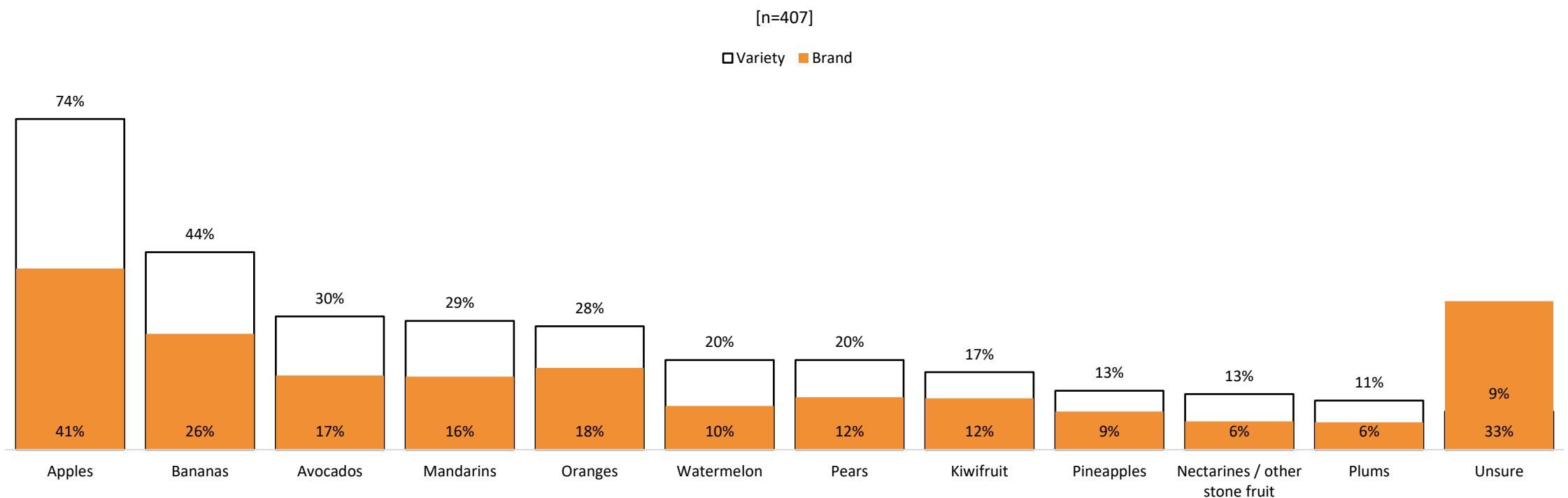
	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Price	83%	76%	82%	90%	77%	81%	86%	83%	84%	85%	78%	83%	86%	81%
Variety of fruit	77%	76%	78%	78%	73%	72%	81%	74%	79%	76%	80%	77%	85%	86%
Where it's grown	62%	38%	51%	60%	61%	71%	70%	61%	62%	64%	55%	62%	63%	76%
Brand of producer	34%	43%	49%	32%	35%	20%	33%	30%	39%	33%	38%	34%	34%	46%
Barcode	26%	57%	44%	15%	28%	12%	23%	25%	27%	25%	28%	27%	17%	38%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	189	218	308	99	371	112	37

Q11. How important is the following information when choosing fruit?



Fruits chosen by specific variety and brand

Apples are the fruits most frequently chosen based on variety (74%) and brand (41%), followed by bananas and avocados. Additionally, consumers are far more likely to choose fruit based on variety rather than brand, especially apples.



Q13. For which of the following fruits do you usually seek / choose a specific variety?; Q14. For which of the following fruits do you usually seek / choose a specific brand?



Source used when choosing fruit

Majority of respondents (74%) consider the "Look and feel" as the primary information source when choosing fruit, especially among those aged 65+. "Signage near fruit" and "Packaging labels" are less influential overall, while "Staff help" is rarely used except by farmers markets shoppers (24%).

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Look and feel	74%	62%	66%	74%	72%	72%	86%	75%	74%	77%	66%	73%	79%	73%
Signage near fruit	51%	38%	29%	59%	49%	54%	62%	46%	55%	52%	47%	51%	59%	57%
Packaging labels	42%	48%	59%	44%	35%	35%	36%	41%	43%	41%	45%	43%	39%	46%
Stickers on fruit	42%	43%	48%	42%	34%	38%	44%	35%	47%	41%	44%	43%	39%	46%
Staff help	9%	14%	19%	4%	10%	6%	6%	10%	9%	9%	8%	9%	13%	24%
Other	3%	0%	1%	3%	3%	6%	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%	2%	4%	8%
Unsure	2%	5%	1%	0%	3%	6%	2%	4%	1%	2%	5%	3%	2%	0%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	189	218	308	99	371	112	37

Q15. Which of the following information sources do you use when choosing fruit?



Thoughts on produce stickers

Sentiment towards produce stickers skewed towards negative with many seeing them as an annoyance or waste.

Apathy and indifference was also common.

Some recognised their role in identification and checkout, whilst a small portion of respondents found them helpful and informative.

“Annoyed - they are a waste of resources and more importantly **bad for the environment.**”

“Good idea makes it **easier to scan** at the checkout.”

“Nothing really. Just **accept that it's there.** Usually don't look at the info on it.”

“Helps to **determine what variety the fruit is** and makes the checkout process simpler.”

“I don't like them they are **annoying to take off.**”

“**Really annoying** to have to remove the fruit stickers before you eat the fruit.”

“Fruit stickers are so frustrating and unnecessary. They are **not compostable so you can't put them in the worm or chicken scraps**, unless you peel them off individually. I do not like fruit stickers at all.”

“**Wasteful** piece of plastic that often ends up being a problem.”

“**Adhesive on the skin** is unacceptable.”

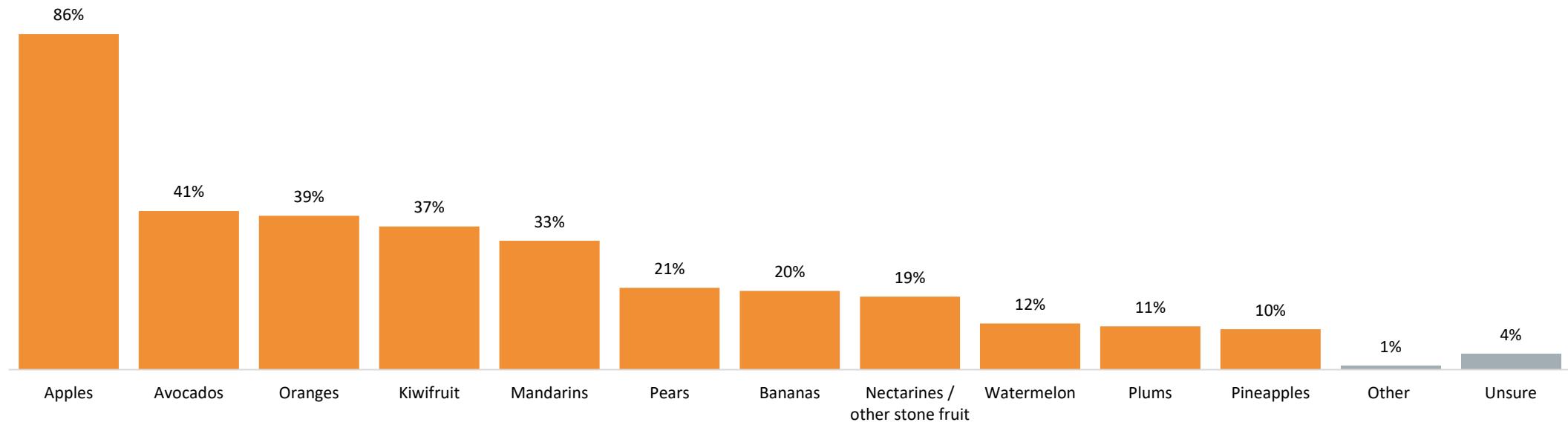
Q17. What do you think about when you hear the term 'fruit stickers'?



Types of fruit that use stickers

Stickers are most commonly seen on apples (86%), far more than on any other fruit.

[n=407]



Q18. Which fruits do you usually see stickers on?



Attention on stickers when buying fruit

A larger portion (31%) sometimes pays attention to whether fruit has a sticker, particularly among younger groups. Farmers market shoppers show the highest usual attention at 35%, with none of them citing that they never pay attention to produce stickers. However, 16% of respondents never pay attention to produce stickers.

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Always	7%	10%	12%	11%	4%	4%	5%	10%	5%	7%	7%	8%	10%	24%
Usually	21%	14%	34%	11%	24%	17%	21%	21%	22%	21%	21%	20%	23%	35%
Sometimes	31%	43%	33%	25%	25%	29%	36%	31%	30%	31%	31%	32%	25%	27%
Rarely	24%	10%	14%	36%	28%	30%	20%	22%	26%	24%	24%	25%	25%	14%
Never	16%	24%	7%	18%	18%	19%	18%	16%	17%	17%	16%	15%	17%	0%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	189	218	308	99	371	112	37

Q19. When buying fruit, do you pay attention whether the fruit has a sticker on it?



Read stickers details when shopping for fruit

Most respondents do not consistently read sticker details when shopping for fruit. The most common response is “sometimes” (29%), especially among older groups like 55-64 (36%). Notably, farmers market shoppers are more likely to “always” (30%) or “sometimes” (30%) read sticker details.

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Always	7%	10%	12%	5%	7%	3%	7%	8%	6%	6%	10%	7%	6%	30%
Usually	22%	19%	37%	21%	24%	12%	20%	20%	24%	23%	21%	23%	22%	22%
Sometimes	29%	29%	30%	26%	23%	36%	31%	31%	28%	30%	28%	31%	24%	30%
Rarely	24%	19%	14%	27%	24%	30%	24%	24%	23%	25%	20%	23%	28%	14%
Never	18%	24%	7%	21%	23%	19%	18%	17%	18%	17%	20%	16%	20%	5%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	189	218	308	99	371	112	37

Q20. How often do you read sticker details when shopping for fruit?



Information from the stickers

Brand (43%) and variety (42%) are the most commonly noticed pieces of information on stickers, especially among those aged 25-44. In contrast, price (19%) and barcode (30%) are less frequently observed. Shoppers at farmers markets tend to pay more attention to where produce is grown (54%) and brand (54%).

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Brand	43%	33%	58%	51%	45%	35%	32%	41%	44%	44%	38%	44%	39%	54%
Variety	42%	19%	37%	49%	35%	41%	49%	40%	43%	44%	33%	41%	47%	49%
Where it's grown	36%	24%	45%	32%	31%	32%	40%	34%	37%	35%	37%	36%	38%	54%
Barcode	30%	19%	34%	33%	32%	39%	20%	25%	35%	31%	28%	31%	32%	38%
Price	19%	24%	45%	16%	14%	3%	17%	25%	15%	20%	16%	19%	15%	46%
Unsure	11%	24%	5%	10%	13%	14%	10%	11%	11%	8%	19%	10%	7%	3%
Other	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	4%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	3%	0%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	189	218	308	99	371	112	37

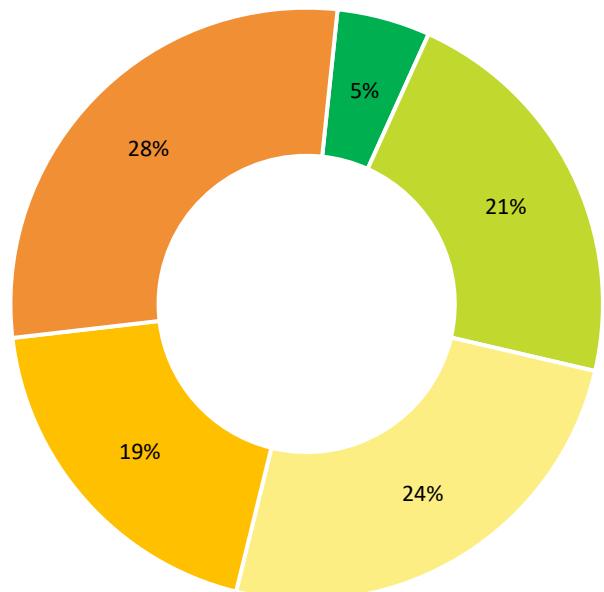
Q21. What information do you notice, read or use from the stickers?



Importance of stickers on purchase decision

[n=407]

- Extremely important
- Quite important
- Neutral
- Not very important
- Not important at all



Produce stickers for thproduce stickers not an important factor in influencing purchase decisions, with 74% of respondents citing them as neutral or not important.

Only 27% of the sample cited that they have ever chosen a fruit because of the stickers on it.

Generally, respondents believe that appearance, quality, freshness, and price are more important than stickers. Stickers have no influence on their purchase decisions.

"I still **rely on the quality** and **freshness** of the fruit rather than what a label says."

"If I want the fruit, I'll buy it **no matter what the stickers say.**"

"I care more on the **freshness** and **price.**"

"For me, **price** and value for money **are important.**"

"**They don't scan properly** half the time."

"Just provide information that is usually replicated **on signage.**"

Q22. How important are fruit stickers to your ultimate purchase decision?; Q23. Why is that?; Q24. Have you ever chosen a fruit because of the sticker that was on it?



Preference

The majority of respondents (52%) have no preference regarding stickers on fruit, most common among younger age groups. 30% of respondents prefer fruit without stickers, a preference that increases with age. In contrast, only 16% of respondents prefer fruit with stickers, with a slightly higher preference observed among those aged 25-34 (26%), and farmers markets shoppers (27%).

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
No preference either way	52%	62%	59%	53%	51%	49%	45%	49%	54%	51%	54%	53%	45%	41%
I prefer fruit without stickers	30%	19%	14%	38%	38%	28%	33%	27%	32%	31%	24%	29%	37%	30%
I prefer fruit with stickers	16%	19%	26%	4%	11%	19%	19%	22%	11%	15%	19%	16%	17%	27%
Unable to say	2%	0%	1%	4%	0%	4%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	189	218	308	99	371	112	37

Q25. Do you prefer fruit with or without stickers?



Scanning produce stickers at checkout

When purchasing fruit with a barcode on it, 26% of respondents would usually and 22% would always use this to scan at checkout. Younger groups (18-34) are more inclined to scan the barcode at the checkout compared to older cohorts.

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Always	22%	33%	26%	21%	23%	19%	18%	22%	19%	38%
Usually	26%	24%	29%	29%	27%	22%	25%	27%	22%	27%
Sometimes	24%	19%	29%	22%	24%	29%	19%	23%	25%	16%
Rarely	14%	14%	11%	19%	13%	9%	15%	13%	14%	11%
Never	15%	10%	5%	10%	14%	22%	23%	14%	20%	8%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	371	112	37

Q27. If the fruit sticker had a barcode on it, would you use this to scan at the checkout?



Removing produce stickers

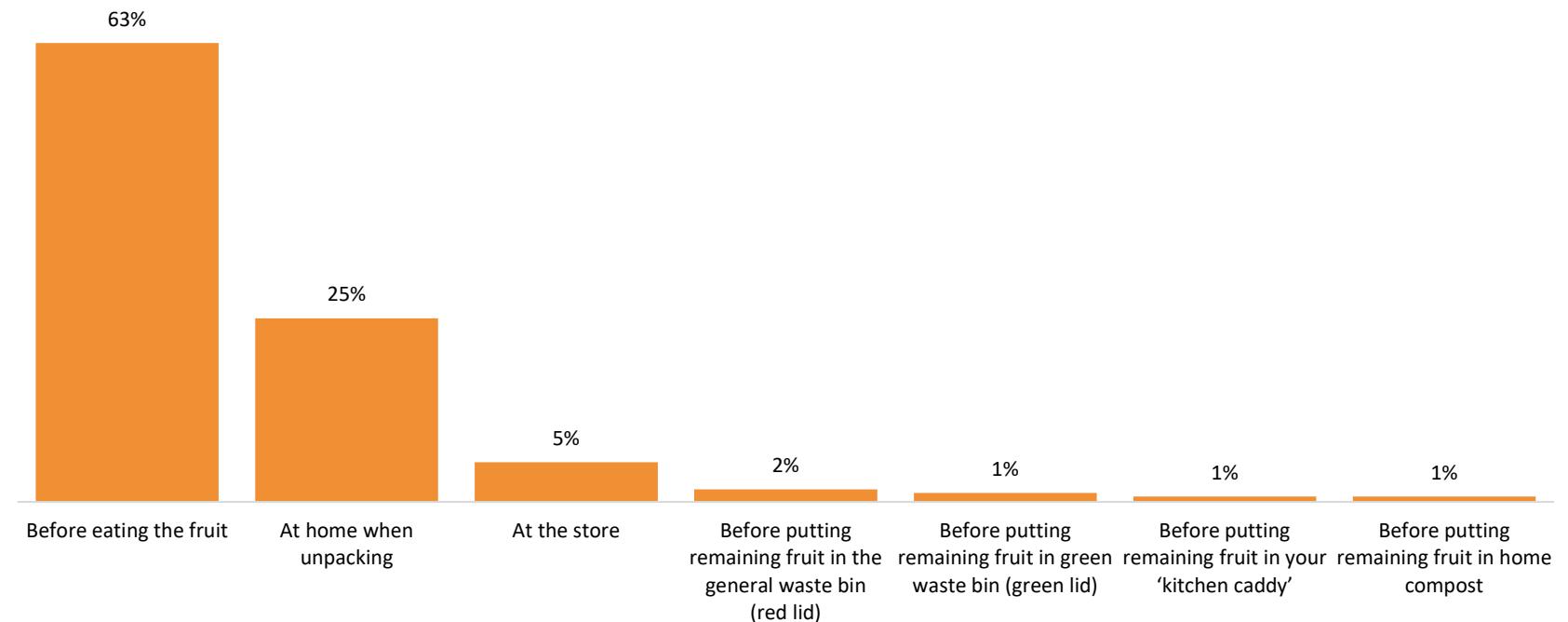
Respondents would typically remove fruits stickers before eating the fruits (63%) or when unpacking at home (25%).

[n=407]

"Put them in the general (landfill) waste as they are not recyclable in my area."

"I sometimes paste it in the fridge."

"Stick them on something near me. Microwave, empty cans."

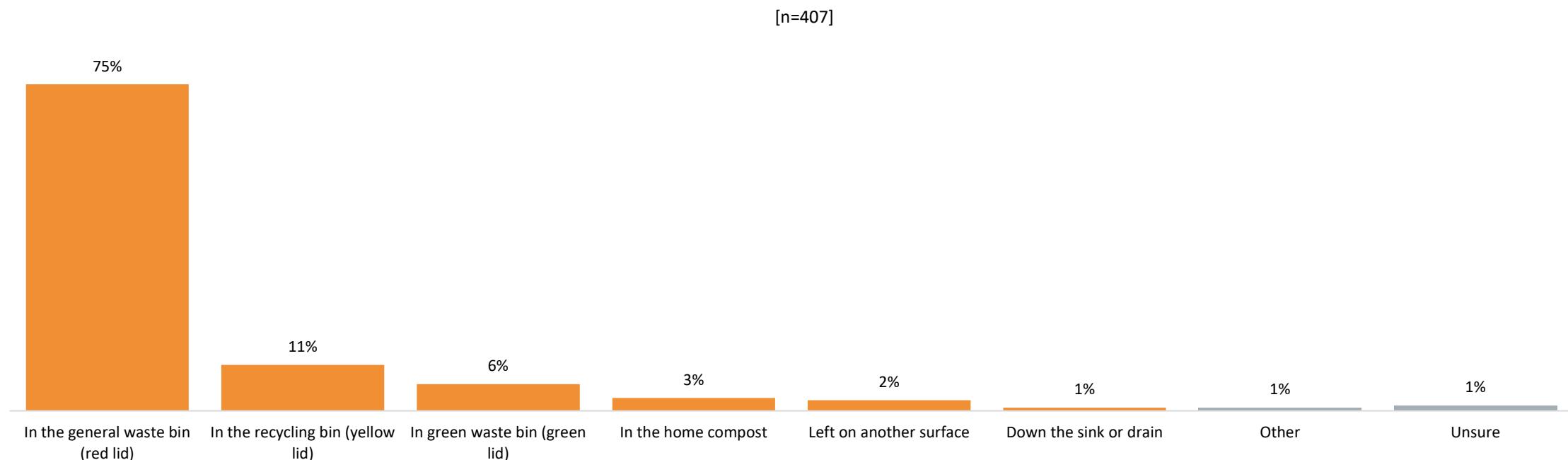


Q28. When purchasing fruit with a sticker, would you typically remove them...; Q29. What do you do with stickers once removed?



Where stickers go

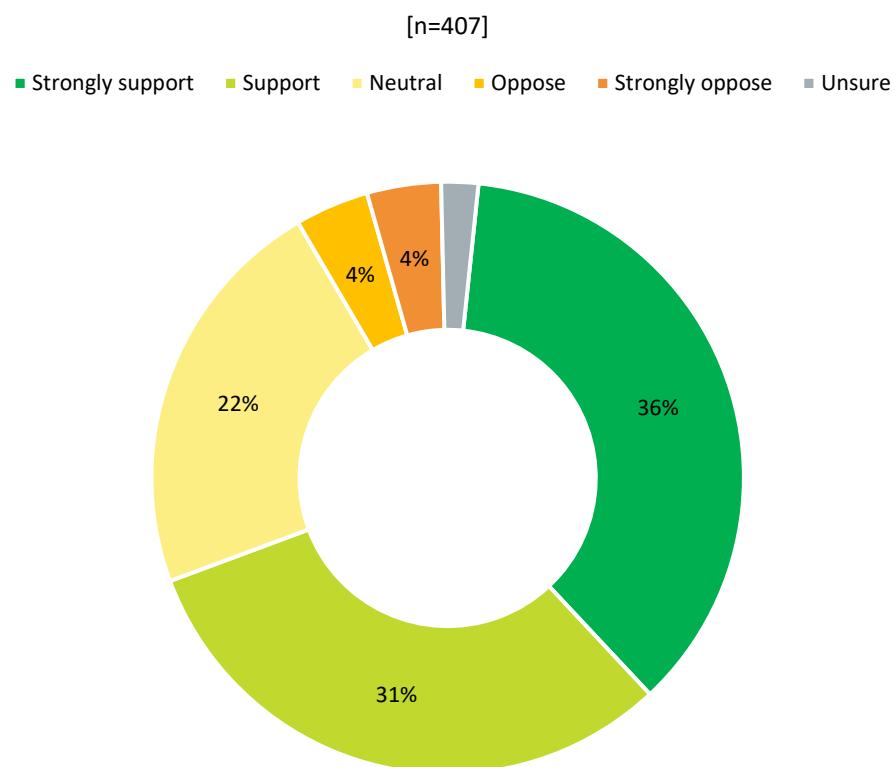
Generally, produce stickers after being removed, usually end up in the general waste bin (75%), far more than in the recycling bin (11%) or the green waste bin (6%).



Q30. Where would the fruit sticker usually end up?



Support for SA banning plastic stickers



67% of the sample support South Australia banning plastic stickers on fruits and vegetables. This support is consistent across all demographic groups and types of shoppers.

Their reasons center around environmental benefits, the unnecessary nature of stickers, and concerns about plastic waste.

“If it leads to a **healthier environment** then **I'm all for it.**”

“Anything that can contribute to **lessening our overall carbon footprint** is a **net positive.**”

“They are **completely unnecessary** and are not good for the environment.”

“**They don't really have much of a use.**”

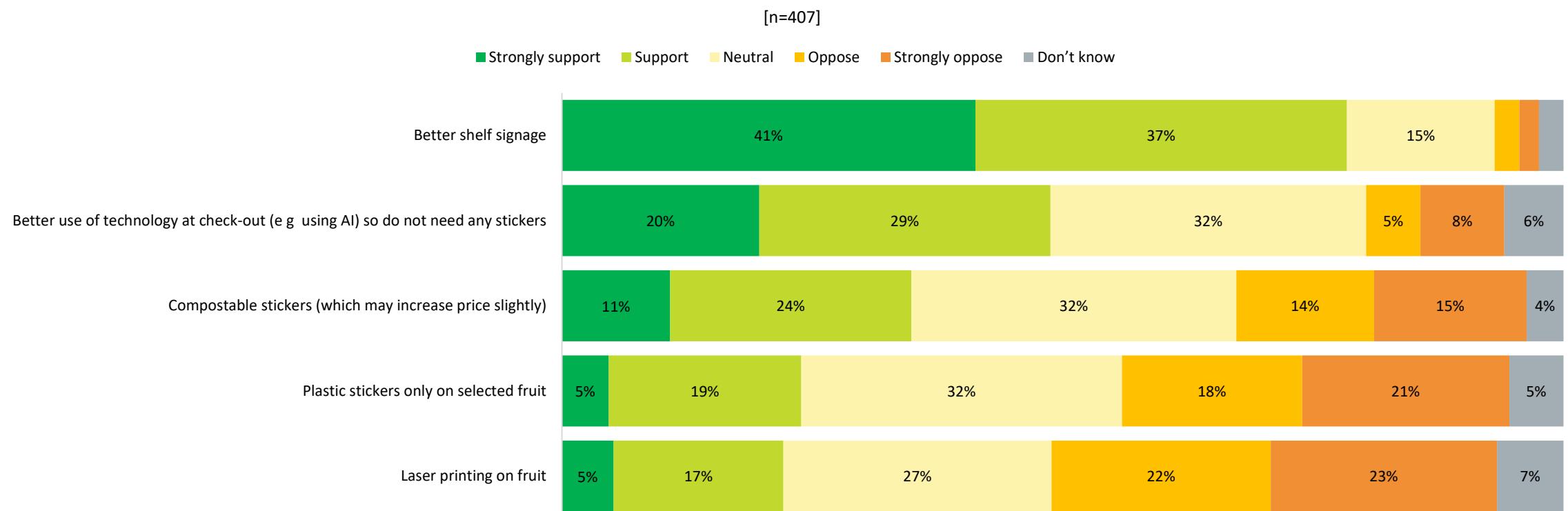
“**Reducing** all forms of **plastic** is a **positive** thing.”

Q32. Do you support or oppose South Australia moving forward to ban non-compostable plastic stickers on fruit and vegetables from September 2025?



Alternatives to produce stickers

Respondents showed a strongest support for better shelf signage (78%). In contrast, plastic stickers and laser printing were the least favoured, with higher opposition and uncertainty.



Q34. Would you support or oppose the following alternatives...



Alternatives to produce stickers

[Of those who rated 'strongly support' or 'support']

Support for better shelf signage is consistently high across all demographics, especially among older age groups. Younger respondents (18-24), as well as shoppers at independent stores or farmers markets are more likely to be open to technology at checkout and compostable stickers, while support decreases among older adults.

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Better shelf signage	78%	62%	75%	71%	79%	86%	84%	77%	80%	79%	76%	79%	80%	65%
Better use of technology at check-out (e.g., using AI) so do not need any stickers	49%	55%	52%	41%	49%	45%	53%	45%	52%	53%	36%	49%	52%	54%
Compostable stickers (which may increase price slightly)	35%	33%	55%	33%	37%	28%	26%	38%	32%	36%	30%	36%	31%	51%
Plastic stickers only on selected fruit	24%	20%	48%	16%	24%	25%	12%	27%	22%	23%	26%	25%	17%	35%
Laser printing on fruit	22%	33%	34%	21%	25%	13%	16%	24%	21%	23%	18%	22%	19%	49%
Total	407	20	73	73	71	69	100	188	218	308	98	370	112	37

Q34. Would you support or oppose the following alternatives...



Overall preference

Support for removing stickers from all fruit in South Australia is highest among older age groups (45+) and independent store shoppers. In contrast, those aged 18-24 and farmers markets shoppers are more likely to prefer compostable stickers or laser printing alternatives, while a notable portion across all groups prefer continuing with the current sticker use.

	Total	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+	Male	Female	Metropolitan Adelaide	Regional South Australia	Supermarket	Independent stores	Farmers markets
Remove stickers from all fruit in South Australia	38%	43%	19%	36%	45%	43%	45%	33%	43%	39%	36%	38%	44%	27%
Shift to alternatives such as compostable stickers or laser printing	32%	29%	40%	37%	27%	25%	32%	32%	32%	35%	23%	32%	29%	35%
Continue with current way fruit stickers are used	22%	29%	37%	16%	18%	26%	15%	26%	19%	20%	30%	22%	23%	35%
Unable to say	7%	0%	4%	11%	10%	6%	8%	9%	6%	6%	10%	8%	4%	3%
Total	407	21	73	73	71	69	100	189	218	308	99	371	112	37

Q35. Overall, which of the following options would you prefer for South Australia?



Suggested changes to produce stickers

Most respondents expressed a desire for produce stickers to be removed altogether, seeing them as unnecessary, annoying and wasteful.

A strong proportion of responses reinforced the suggestion to make produce stickers compostable or biodegradable (some even suggesting edible), so they are better for the environment. There were many calls to make stickers easier to peel off and without leaving residue, whilst some were in favour of presented alternatives such as improved shelf signage and box-level information.

A smaller number of people felt no changes were needed and were content with stickers as they are.

“Make them **compostable** and **leave the price as is.**”

“**Developing compostable stickers** that meet international standards.”

“**Get rid of them** altogether.”

“Making it break down in landfill easier and better.”

“**Printing information** like fruit details **directly onto the fruit skin.**”

“Making it slightly **larger** so **it's easier to read.**”

“**Use barcodes or AI technology** at checkout.”

“Just make **better signage** instead of using fruit stickers.”

“**Better labelling** at place of purchasing.”

Q38. If you could change one thing about fruit stickers, what would it be?





Jason Dunstone
Managing Director | jason@squareholes.com

Square Holes Pty Ltd
8–10 Regent Street Nth
Adelaide, South Australia 5000
1800 038 257 | www.squareholes.com

Job No. 250605