

17 November 2016

Australian Stock Exchange Company Announcements Office

Dear Sir/Madam

Costa Group Holdings Ltd (ASX: CGC) – addresses to 2016 AGM

Attached are the addresses of the Company's Chairman and CEO that will be delivered at the Company's AGM today, together with the accompanying presentation slides.

Yours faithfully

**David Thomas** 

**Company Secretary** 

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#### CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH - MR NEIL CHATFIELD

Ladies and gentlemen I am pleased to report that the company's performance for the 2016 financial year met all of our expectations, including the forecasts laid out in the July 2015 prospectus.

This performance is clear evidence that our diversified portfolio of high yield quality produce sets us apart from other agricultural businesses, providing us with the ability to absorb and manage agricultural risk, without impacting our overall performance and results.

Our performance is also evidence of our successful transition from a private to a public company, while delivering positive returns to shareholders.

Costa's total pro forma revenue was \$809 million, an 11.8% increase on financial year 2015, whilst pro-forma Net Profit after Tax was \$49.3m an increase of 28.4% over the prior year. In addition the company paid dividends in respect of the 2016 financial year of 9 cents per share fully franked, in line with our prospectus forecast.

These results have been underpinned by significant investment in growth and continued strong performance of our berry, citrus and mushroom categories, which offset underperformance in our tomato category. Once again this highlights the importance of having a diversified portfolio.

Our CEO, Harry Debney will provide more detail in relation to the financial results in his presentation.

The 2016 financial year saw continued progress on implementing our growth projects and realising a return on our investment.

This included the completion of a further 76 hectares in new berry plantings across our Australian farms, the commencement of production at our new 10 hectare tomato glasshouse in northern New South Wales, the further expansion of our African Blue operations in Morocco and the development of our berry farms in China.

During the year your Board also approved a second berry growth program involving an estimated \$80 million worth of capital projects to be undertaken in Australia over four years from financial year 2017.

This investment is focused on expanding our production capability, while also leveraging our superior plant genetics, agronomic skills, established cold chain infrastructure and scale of operations.

Our international footprint continues to also grow, with our African Blue joint venture in Morocco achieving a 76.6% increase in transacted sales on FY2015. The quality of our Moroccan blueberries is perhaps best summed up by the fact that UK and European retailers are routinely rating our varieties as preferred product, commanding a price premium.

We also formalised our China joint venture with Driscolls and with one farm already established in Shiping, Yunnan Province, a second China farm is currently being established in Manlai near the Burmese border.

The Company will continue to work toward positioning itself as a supplier of a healthy and nutritional product into the China market, one that is increasingly becoming more aware of the health benefits of consuming berries, particularly as disposable incomes rise. I note that Investment bank Credit Suisse has forecast that between 2009 and 2030, China's middle class is projected to increase by more than 850 million.

With our farming footprint continuing to grow, we recognise the importance of ensuring our existing and new operations are sustainable and that we committed to ensuring the highest standards of environmental stewardship. We also take great pride in knowing that we are contributing to a healthier community and population, with the fresh produce that we grow and sell being recognised for its health and nutritional benefits.

During the year we targeted investment in technology to enable the recycling and reuse of water. As a result our main mushroom farm located at Mernda in Victoria is now capturing and reusing waste water resulting in up to a 40 per cent reduction in water use. Our new 10 hectare glasshouse facility at Guyra in northern New South Wales has also been designed for full water self-sufficiency.

I also want to take the opportunity to highlight the importance of our Company in its role as a major employer in regional Australia. Horticultural is a labour intensive enterprise, much of which is dictated by the fact that the end consumer expects their fresh produce to be of premium quality. Our permanent FTE workforce of approximately 3,300 swells to more than 6,000 during peak harvest times.

To illustrate just how extensive our regional employment footprint is, at our tomato glasshouse in northern New South Wales, we provide employment for 500 people. The workforce at our mushroom farm near Murray Bridge in South Australia totals more than 260 people and in the north west of Tasmania during the peak of the harvest season, our labour requirements exceed more than 1100 people.

Jobs in regional Australia are not often easy to come by and opportunities can be limited for people to pursue a career in their local community. To this end an initiative that the Company is particularly proud of and which was commenced in the last year, is the funding of an undergraduate and post graduate scholarship programme over the next 4 years for local students from the North West of Tasmania to study Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania.

The scholarships are intended to provide not only job opportunities for young locals who want to work in agriculture, but also allow access to a career pathway through studying an agricultural related university degree.

Having a skilled local workforce not only benefits Costa, but it also provides genuine and lasting employment opportunities for young people from what is an economically challenged region, who wish to pursue a career in agriculture and not to have to leave Tasmania.

Ladies and gentlemen as I said in my introduction it is pleasing that the Company has successfully transitioned from a private to a public company, while being able to deliver positive returns to our shareholders.

This reflects the strong culture of the Company in which our core values of respect, accountability, passion, sincerity and determination always come to the fore.

The management team and all of our people throughout the organisation are to be congratulated for their commitment to ensuring that the Company delivered not only its prospectus forecasts, but also continued to establish a strong foundation for growth and sustainable value creation.

I also want to acknowledge the valuable contribution of my Board colleagues and also note the appointment of Ms Janette Kendall to our Board since our last AGM. As Janette will stand for election today she will address the meeting a little later.

During the last financial year the company initiated a number of growth projects and developed strategies to lay a long term foundation from which we can continue to grow. We have identified a number of attractive avenues for growth which we believe will enable shareholders to achieve sustainable long term value.

As our international operations continue to grow and make an ever more meaningful contribution to our bottom line, our financial performance will become more heavily weighted toward the second half.

I would now like to ask our CEO, Harry Debney, to speak in more detail about our achievements and activities over the past financial year and the outlook for the 2017 financial year.

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#### CEO's SPEECH – MR HARRY DEBNEY

Ladies and gentlemen I would like to begin by touching on some of the highlights for the 2016 financial year.

While it is very pleasing to have exceeded our prospectus forecast earnings, our financial year 2016 results also demonstrate the strength of our business model and our capacity to absorb individual category volatility in production and markets.

By way of example, FY16 saw a strong performance from our overall portfolio which offset challenging market conditions in the tomato category.

In the first half of the financial year we were also able to deal with the impact of three individual hailstorms affecting our New South Wales berry farms. Our focus on protected cropping also helped to moderate the impact.

Our international segment made a meaningful financial contribution to our results, which is reflective of the segment's continued expansion.

During the year we continued to deliver on key domestic and international growth projects.

The second year of the first Berry expansion program was completed with third year plantings now underway. Initial projects from the second Berry growth program, approved by the Board in FY16, were also commenced.

76 hectares of new protected cropping berry plantings were completed across Tasmania, Western Australia, Far North Queensland and New South Wales.

It's important to note that due to the success of our berry growth projects, as of FY17 Costa will have greater than 50% of our blueberry production outside of the main production period of August to December.

I also want to make it clear that we are the only blueberry grower in Australia with this capability and it gives us a significant advantage over our competitors with a full twelve month blueberry market offer. Thanks to Costa, Australian consumers can now enjoy quality blueberries year round.

As of August 2016 we have purchased a small blueberry farm in Tasmania to supplement the existing Tasmanian blueberry operation which provides shoulder season volumes. Work continues on developing our blackberry footprint with new Driscoll's varieties having cleared quarantine, and a small trial planting scheduled for FY17 in Tasmania.

With respect to growth programs in our other categories, the new 10 hectare tomato glasshouse at Guyra was commissioned and is operating at capacity while the Pike Creek Riverland citrus orchard acquisition was completed in March 2016, which added another 109 hectares and which we will expand to 130 hectares.

Our international growth program saw the Morocco farm expansion continuing.

At the end of FY16, African Blue had 208 hectares planted across five farms, including 13 hectares of substrate production. This was slightly less than the forecast 225 hectares. Preparation of the recently acquired expansion land is well in hand with 66 hectares of new crop to be planted in calendar 2017. New Costa trial varieties are also being tested in Morocco, with the joint venture continuing to self-fund its growth in addition to payment of dividends to shareholders.

Our China joint berry farm completed its first raspberry harvest completed in early 2016 and the first blueberry harvest to occur in December to April of FY17.

Response to date from the market, while admittedly based on small volumes, has been extremely positive. As also mentioned by our Chairman a second China farm is currently being established in Manlai near the Burmese border where both blueberries and raspberries will be grown.

As I said in my Annual Report review, our investment in China is a long term proposition requiring effort and patience to establish our footprint in not only China but also the wider Asian marketplace. However, it is clearly also one with very large potential.

Moving to the key financial highlights, our pro forma revenue of \$809 million was \$71 million ahead of our prospectus forecast and an increase of \$85.6 million on FY15.

Pro forma EBITDA before SGARA was up 27.6% on FY15 to \$91.1 million while pro forma net profit after tax of \$49.3 million was 1.7 million above prospectus. Our statutory NPAT of \$25.3 million takes into account pro forma adjustments mainly related to the costs of our IPO.

Revenue and transacted sales exceeded prospectus forecast by 9.6% and 6.5% respectively, with stronger citrus and mushroom sales outweighing the impact from lower tomato and banana pricing.

Revenue growth across our core produce categories of mushrooms, berries, citrus and tomatoes was 18.7%.

Importantly, we have also reduced our leverage from a starting position of 1.7 to 1.1 times pro forma EBITDA as at 30 June 2016. Pro forma debt reduced from \$122.7 million to \$100.5 million.

To summarise, we have a strong balance sheet which will support future growth initiatives in conjunction with existing debt facilities.

Further to this, I can announce today that Costa has entered into an exclusive non-binding arrangement with Macquarie Agricultural Funds Management Limited to jointly investigate compelling M&A projects in farmland, biological assets, water and infrastructure assets. This will extend our capacity to gain significant economic benefit for our shareholders.

If a formal arrangement is established between the two parties then where necessary and appropriate announcements to the market will be made.

Turning to individual category performance, mushrooms continue to be a very solid category. Demand for mushrooms has been positive, with industry value growth over the FY16 year of 4.3%.

Our growth has been driven by yield improvement through production refinements and overhaul of the industry marketing strategy, in which Costa has played a leading role.

Our berry category returned a solid performance despite the early setback in the first half due to the hailstorms but category growth continued unabated, with an increase in raspberry volume largely driven by new Costa production volume coming onto the market.

It is also relevant to note that the contribution of raspberries to Costa's produce performance has been exceptional this year and follows six years of continuous growth.

Our citrus category had an exceptional year with revenue growth of 32%, an outstanding result delivered through a combination of yield, quality and price.

We now have 2,171 hectares of planted citrus across five farms all located in the Riverland region.

Record yields were achieved for the calendar 2015 growing season and export market demand was buoyant, particularly from the Japanese market, which resulted in 59% of the crop being exported.

The contribution from our new 292 hectare Amaroo citrus farm was at the top end of expectations and although the 2016 calendar year citrus growing season has been a lighter crop, as per the biennial growing cycle, I can report that the fruit was of an excellent quality and demand was strong, particularly from exports.

As many of you would be aware it was a challenging year in tomatoes, one that was heavily impacted by price deflation. It should be noted that pricing over the last quarter of FY16 improved with seasonal change and the two major supermarkets are well progressed with their range reviews to redefine their respective tomato category offerings.

It is also important to acknowledge that there has been price deflation over the past year in other produce categories during the same period, namely apples, potatoes, stone fruit and bananas, so such price deflation is clearly not something that has been unique to tomatoes.

Our new 10 hectare glasshouse which is focused solely growing on snacking tomatoes began operating in October 2015. The facility has delivered better than expected yield performance, with snacking varieties the best performing tomato category, with an average pricing of positive 1.7% over FY16.

Costa Farms and Logistics continued to improve earnings from distribution centres and although there was some negative impact from banana price deflation, caused predominantly by industry oversupply, bananas is not one of our core produce categories.

I also now turn to a decision the Company has taken to wind down the Polar Fresh operations. This is a joint venture between Costa and Swire Cold Storage which provides management services to a number of distribution centres for the Coles Group.

Costa has been reviewing this venture for some time given that the profit stream is not a material value to us particularly in relation to the effort expended in providing the service, and lacks significant synergies with the strategic direction of the company.

Coles has recently decided to take one of the three sites in house and Polar Fresh is assisting in the hand over.

It is Costa's view that the contracts should run out at each expiry date and not be renewed. The second contract will expire in April 2017 and Coles have confirmed that this will also now move in house.

Costa has a carrying value for its share of the Joint Venture of \$7.4m in its accounts and this will be written off in the FY17 accounts as a non-cash item.

The operating financial impact in FY17 and beyond will be non - material.

Moving to our international segment, FY16 saw continued growth and the 2016 African Blue season exceeded expectations.

Favourable climate conditions enabled a longer growing season with peak volumes occurring a month earlier than last year, which is beneficial to pricing.

Expanding production in Morocco means that our blueberry varieties are now available in volume in the UK and continental Europe.

The Company also derives royalty income from the licensing of Costa's blueberry varieties in Morocco and throughout the Americas.

Income from plant sales has remained strong, with now over 800 hectares of Costa's varieties planted in the Driscoll's program across the Americas.

Ladies and gentlemen, Costa recognises that our people deserve a workplace that is both safe and healthy, provides them with every opportunity to succeed, and rewards effort for their contribution to our success.

The Costa "3 Pillars of Safety" - To Protect, To improve Culture and To be the Best provides the Company with an effective workplace health and safety vision which supports our strategy to work towards and maintain a zero injury workplace.

Evidence of the Company practising what we preach can be found in the total recordable injury frequency rate for FY16, which fell by 12%. This reduction reflects our continued commitment to the health and safety of our employees, contractors and visitors as well as aligning with initiatives implemented through the Company's Workplace Health and Safety Strategic Plan.

During FY16, we commenced development of the Costa Safety Leadership Program. This program is designed to focus behaviours, challenge our beliefs and values about safety, and set a benchmark to improve and build upon our safety culture. The aim is to ensure that this program is conducted with consistency across all our sites with over 600 employees participating. To date more than 300 employees have completed the program in FY17.

As our Chairman noted in his address, it is our people and the Company's core values that are the lynchpin of our success and performance.

It is vitally important to both attract and retain talent. To this end I oversee regular capability development reviews. These reviews form the basis for identifying any talent and capability gaps within the Company's key management roles and where necessary the need to recruit for those positions. We routinely map the most critical 150 people in the Company concentrating on performance, professional development and ensuring alignment of key employees with Company objectives.

We are also targeting tailored education and training to develop the leadership and management skills of our employees. The Costa Manager Program is designed to provide knowledge and skills for day-to-day leadership, supervision and management of staff through examples and applied learning that participants can adapt back to their own workplace.

Our managers gain skills in areas of team leadership, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, giving and receiving feedback, effective listening, problem solving, decision making in a team, and managing conflict.

Importantly given our extensive geographical footprint it is an opportunity for our Managers across the country to come together and share experiences and ideas around the challenges and opportunities they face at their sites.

To date 104 employees have completed the Program since its introduction in 2011, with 30 employees participating in the program during FY16.

A key part of business is a commitment to the safety and quality of our produce. Our customers quite rightly expect and demand the highest standard of safety and quality.

To achieve and maintain such a standard, Costa operates a National Quality Management System across the group which meets the requirements of the Global Food Safety Initiative benchmarked certification standard.

The Quality Management System is reviewed bi-annually by trained internal auditors and externally by BSI Group Australia & New Zealand.

In September 2015 BSI were engaged as the external compliance body responsible for auditing all Costa facilities nationally. The collaborative approach, strategic alignment and structured delivery of the auditing service provided by BSI has enabled Costa to provide guidelines for the review of the Quality Management System and facilitate the continuous improvement of the Company to ensure that the produce grown and sold by Costa meet food safety regulatory requirements, and the quality expectations of our customers.

I would now like to comment on the Company's progress so far in financial year 2017.

I am pleased to report that the company has started the year positively. To date we have not experienced any adverse weather events, and in particular we have not been impacted by the flooding events and storms that have affected large parts of the country in recent times.

Citrus has been a strong performer, but the season has finished earlier due to the lighter crop as previously flagged. Tomato market pricing has generally been in line with expectations.

We expect our earnings to be weighted toward the second half of the financial year due to the seasonal timing of international operations and our growth initiatives

With respect to providing guidance, we have experienced a favourable operating environment for the four months of FY17 and upgrade the NPAT before SGARA forecast to at least a 15% increase on FY16 pro forma NPAT, but inclusive of China start-up expenses.

This is prior to the non-cash impairment against the Company's Polar Fresh investment of \$7.4 million.

As also previously stated, FY17 dividends will be balanced against our need to fund growth initiatives, but indicatively will be in the range of 50-70% of NPAT (pre-SGARA).

Once we complete the half year I will be able to provide an updated assessment and commentary on FY17 performance.

Finally our performance as always relies on the efforts and dedication of our employees and I want to sincerely thank them for their commitment to our ongoing success. We have some truly innovative people working for our company who are leaders in their field and have made sure that our Company continues to grow and achieve success.

I would also like to thank the Board for its continued confidence in, and support of management.

Thank you.

**END** 



# **Highlights**

## **FY16**

- Exceeded our prospectus forecast
- ✓ Significant progress in delivering on our growth program
- ✓ International segment made meaningful contribution to results for first time

- ✓ Only blueberry grower with year round supply capability
- Demonstrated strength of our business model underpinned by our high quality diversified portfolio











# **Growth Projects**

## Australia

#### **Berries**



- Second year of first growth program completed with third year plantings underway. Initial projects from second growth program approved by Board and commenced.
- Completed 76 hectares of protected plantings across Tasmania, Western Australia, Far North Queensland and New South Wales.
- As a result of growth program in FY17 will have greater than 50% of blueberry production outside of main production period of August to December.
- Developing blackberry footprint with new Driscoll's varieties having cleared quarantine, with a small trial planting scheduled for FY17 in Tasmania.



#### **Tomatoes**

New 10 hectare tomato glasshouse commissioned, exclusively growing snacking varieties.



#### **Citrus**

 Pike Creek Riverland citrus orchard acquisition completed, adding another 109 hectares and will expand to 130.



# **Growth Projects**

## **International**





#### **African Blue**

- 208 hectares now planted, including
  13 hectares of substrate production
- 66 hectares of new crop to be planted in calendar 2017
- Costa blueberry varieties are now available in volume in UK and Europe
- Joint venture continuing to self-fund its growth in addition to payment of dividends to shareholders

### **China**

- First raspberry harvest completed early 2016, with first blueberry harvest December to April FY17
- Response from market has been extremely positive
- Second farm being established in Manlai. Both blueberries and raspberries to be grown at this farm
- Long term proposition, but one with very large potential



# **Key FY16 achievements**

# Financial performance

# **Pro Forma Net Profit After Tax**

- \$49.3 million \$1.7million ahead of prospectus forecast
- Statutory NPAT of \$25.3 million

#### Pro Forma revenue

- Increased by \$85.6 million to \$809 million - \$71 million ahead of prospectus forecast
- Revenue from transacted sales more than \$1 billion for the first time
- Revenue growth of 18% across core produce categories

# Pro Forma EBITDA before SGARA

- Up **27.6%** to **\$91.1 million**
- Stronger citrus and mushroom sales outweighed impact from lower tomato and banana pricing
- Performance of joint ventures has exceeded expectations











# **Category Performance**



### **Mushrooms**

- Demand has been positive, with industry value growth over FY16 of 4.3%.
- Growth driven by yield improvement through production refinements and overhaul of industry marketing strategy.



#### **Berries**

- Returned solid performance despite the early setback in the first half due to the hailstorms.
- Category growth continued unabated increase in raspberry volume largely driven by new Costa production volume coming onto the market.
- Contribution of raspberries to Costa's produce performance has been exceptional this year and follows six years of continuous growth.



#### **Citrus**

- Exceptional year with revenue growth of 32%, an outstanding result delivered through a combination of yield, quality and price.
- Now have 2,171 hectares across 5 farms
- Record yields were achieved ,export market demand was buoyant, particularly from the Japanese market, which resulted in 59% of the crop being exported.



# **Category Performance**



#### **Tomatoes**

- Challenging year heavily impacted by price deflation. Last quarter of FY16 improved with seasonal change. Two major supermarkets are well progressed with their range reviews to redefine their tomato category offering.
- Price deflation over the past year in other produce categories during the same period apples, potatoes, stone fruit and bananas, so price deflation not unique to tomatoes.
- New glasshouse which is focused solely on growing snacking tomatoes has delivered better than expected yield performance - snacking varieties best performing tomato category - average pricing of positive 1.7% over FY16.



## **Costa Farms and Logistics**

- Continued to improve earnings from distribution centres, although there was some negative impact from banana price deflation, caused predominantly by industry oversupply.
- Bananas is not one of our core produce categories.



## **International segment**

- 2016 African Blue season exceeded expectations. Favourable ground conditions enabled a longer growing season, peak volumes occurring a month earlier than last year.
- Income from plant sales has remained strong, over 800 hectares of Costa varieties now planted across Americas.



# **People**

## **Health and Safety**

# Maintain a zero Injury workplace

#### **FY16** highlights

- **12% reduction** in total recordable injury frequency rate
- Development of the Costa Safety
  Leadership Program with 600
  employees participating

## 3 PILLARS OF SAFETY





## TO PROTECT

- To look out for your work colleagues
   To point out any work practice you think is unsafe
- To treat company plant & equipment as if it were your own
- To prevent damage being done to our sites/properties

# TO IMPROVE CULTURE

- To create and maintain a workplace where people feel safe at all times
- To create and maintain a working environment where people feel comfortable to raise safety concerns

# TO BE THE BEST

- To continually strive to improve our people behaviours, knowledge and systems
- To achieve safety outcomes that set high standards and benchmark among the best in our industry



**COSTA WHS STRATEGY** 



# **People**









## **Capability Development Reviews**

- Attract and retain talent through regular capability development reviews.
- Routinely map most critical 150 people in the Company focusing on performance, professional development and alignment to Company objectives.
- Reviews form the basis for identifying any talent and capability gaps within the Company's key management roles and where necessary the need to recruit for those positions.

## **Costa Manager Program**

- Designed to provide knowledge and skills for day-to-day leadership, supervision and management of staff.
- Practical examples and applied learning that participants can adapt back to their own workplace.
- Managers gain skills in areas of team leadership, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, giving and receiving feedback, effective listening, problem solving and decision making in a team and managing conflict.
- 104 employees have completed the Program since its introduction, with 30 employees participating in the program during FY16.



# **Food Safety and Quality**





- Costa operates a National Quality Management System across the group which meets the requirements of the Global Food Safety Initiative benchmarked certification standard.
- System is reviewed bi-annually by trained internal auditors and externally by BSI Group Australia & New Zealand.
- BSI engaged in September 2015 as the external compliance body responsible for auditing all Costa facilities nationally.
- Collaborative approach, strategic alignment and structured delivery of the auditing service has enabled Costa to facilitate continuous improvement to ensure that the produce grown and sold by Costa meet both food safety regulatory requirements, plus quality expectations of our customers.



## **FY17** forecast

## **Financial**

- Favourable operating environment first four months of FY17.
- Upgrade NPAT before SGARA forecast to at least a 15% increase on FY16 pro forma NPAT\* - prior to the non-cash impairment against the Company's Polar Fresh investment of \$7.4 million.
- Dividends balanced against the Company's need to fund growth objectives and will be in the range of 50 to 70% of NPAT pre SGARA.

<sup>\*</sup> inclusive of China start-up expenses











# **Important notice**

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