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RIVERLAND. MALLEE. LOWER NORTH

Farmer

SPRING 2021

A man with a brown cap and a dark sweater over a light-colored collared shirt stands in a field. He is holding a large green vegetable, possibly a fennel bulb, in his left hand and a bunch of yellow flowers in his right hand. The background shows a field of green plants under a clear blue sky.

**Market mainstay
the stuff of legend**

Page 11



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AUSTRALIAN frost fans



« Katabatic Drift »

Frost Fans work best during radiation frosts when there is a strong inversion layer of warmer air.

Radiation frosts are characterized by clear skies, calm conditions & daytime temperatures in excess of 0°C.

The earth absorbs heat from the sun during the day and releases it into the colder atmosphere at night.

The heat loss is greatest just before dawn and this is usually when the maximum danger of frosts and crop damage occurs.

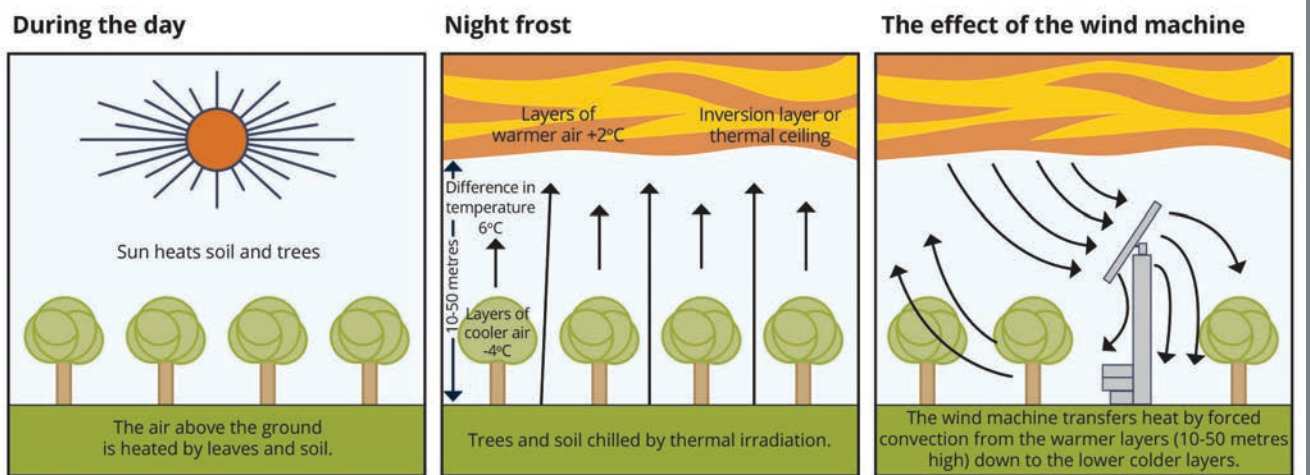
This nocturnal release of heat creates an 'inversion' layer of warmer air, which can be found from 10-50 metres above the ground.

During a radiation frost, a frost fan is used to draw down the warmer air in the inversion layer mixing it with the cold air to increase the overall temperature.

Katabatic drift, also known as 'cold air drainage' is a drainage wind that carries high-density air from a higher elevation down a slope under the force of gravity. This occurs in much the same way as water would flow off the land.

Even in very flat areas, the drift will be influenced by sloping topography many kilometres away. The drift will also follow rivers & water courses. During a radiation frost, katabatic drift may be barely noticeable, but it will still influence the coverage shape of a Frost Fan and how best to locate it in your orchard or vineyard.

Illustration of How Frost Fans Work



« Why is katabatic drift important? »

Site selection is still the key to lowering frost risk. Crops become more susceptible to frost damage when they are located at high elevations, in low lying areas where cold air settles and next to obstacles to air movement such as tall vegetation, levees and buildings.

Any obstacles that inhibit down-slope drainage of cold air from a crop should be removed.

These obstacles might be hedgerows, fences, bales of hay, or dense vegetation located on the downslope side of the field. Land levelling can sometimes improve cold

air drainage through a crop so that incoming cold air continues to pass through the crop. Row lines in orchards and vineyards should be oriented to favour natural cold air drainage out of the crop.

How does this affect the coverage shape of a Frost Fan?

Due to the effect of the drift, Frost Fans which rotate 360 degrees around the tower cover an elliptical shape, not a circular shape.

A FrostBoss® Frost Fan will cover 6-8 hectares depending on the specific site conditions and inversion strength. Typically,

the Fan will blow 250m downstream with the drift, 90m upstream and 140m to each side.

How to determine the direction of the drift?

The direction of the katabatic drift needs to be determined before sunrise, because it can change direction after sunrise. These studies need to be done on nights with radiation frost characteristics, but not necessarily when the temperature is sub-zero.

Smoke bombs, small fires or balloons filled with helium can all be used to study the direction of the drift.

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AUSTRALIAN
frost fans

Welcome to this edition of Farmer.

After an extremely dry start to the year, the past couple of months have finally seen some decent rainfalls to give dryland farmers hope of a decent season.

While modern practises and technologies meant dryland farmers could begin dry seeding, it really doesn't compare to having that wet stuff fall from the sky to have wet soil to work with.

This edition of *Farmer* covers a massive range of industries and showcases just how diverse the Riverland, Mallee and Lower North areas are.

An in-depth piece of this

year's wine vintage indicates a spectacular year for local growers.

However, growers have been reminded to keep a lid on the record crush.

The feature piece also delves into the current economic impacts of Covid-19 and how the wine industry sits in the world of exports.

Other stories featured in this edition are a Mallee pistachio grower, a beef-jerky producing couple from Loxton, and an up-and-coming grape-growing family from Ebenezer.

A strong Ag News section features once more, while our

industry experts have again provided an update on their respective fields.

The *Farmer* magazine continues to gain strong support from businesses, indicating just how sturdy the agricultural industry is right now.

New businesses, advances in technology, vehicles, machinery, workshops and more featured in advertisements showcase agricultural businesses' commitment to growth and their customers.

We hope you enjoy this latest edition of *Farmer* and we look forward to bringing you another jam-packed issue in summer.



Farmer

RIVERLAND. MALLEE. LOWER NORTH

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Caption

Patlin Gardens' Pat D'Onofrio has been growing organic fruit and vegetable in Penfield Gardens for close to two decades after removing the use of pesticides from his practices.

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GROUP NEWSPAPERS

The Farmer team

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Extended vintage produces top-quality Riverland wines

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY
CHRISTINE WEBSTER

THE extended vintage and cooler climate resulted in one of the region's best wine grape seasons yet, according to Waikerie-based Growers Wine Group.

The business consortium, which specialises in bulk wine is predominantly owned by the Thomson, Pfeiler and Miller families, while Chinese company, Auswan, is a small shareholder.

Growers Wine Group's chief executive officer, Shane Clohesy, said the 2021 vintage produced red wine grapes with strong varietal characters and aromatic whites.

He said the cabernet was dark and deep in colour due to a slower ripening process caused by the mild summer.

"This year we had a little bit more time, but it was still pretty busy towards the end, just to finish off the reds," Mr Clohesy said.

"The weather was very favourable.

"The chardonnay had nice green colours coming through in its wines. It was really good to see."

This year, Growers Wine Group crushed 55,000 tonnes of wine grapes with 20,000 tonnes supplied by their owners, the Thomson, Pfeiler, and Miller families.

"We also buy a percentage of wine grapes from the Riverland as well," Mr Clohesy said.

The winery consortium also offers contract wine grape processing and winemaking to Riverland wine companies and growers.

"We are the closest winery in the Riverland to the wharf in Port Adelaide," Mr Clohesy said.

Mr Clohesy said Growers Wine Group exports bulk wine overseas.

"We do have a label, but we don't really pursue a bottled wine product, we mainly do bulk wine," he said.

Mr Clohesy said the Growers Wine Group also supplied a number of contract customers in the region who export wine overseas.

The Growers Wine Group's main export market is Europe, which has a preference for white wine.

"We produce 60 per cent white wine versus 40 per



Rotary fermentation vessels are used during the red wine making process once the grapes are crushed. PHOTO: supplied



Growers Wine Group's chief executive officer, Shane Clohesy, with a road train loaded with 72,000 litres of wine to be exported overseas from Port Adelaide.



A load of red wine grapes being emptied into the receive bin ready for the crusher. PHOTO: supplied

cent reds," Mr Clohesy said.

He said the white varieties of wine his company sent to Europe were chardonnay, colombard, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc.

Mr Clohesy said Covid-19 has boosted the demand for Growers Wine Group's white wine in Europe. It is sent in bulk and bottled over there.

"Once it kept rolling, our wines kept flowing faster because we supplied supermarkets," he said.

"The bulk of the wine goes there and the supermarkets were the ones that stayed open more, so there was quite a demand."

Growers Wine Group has also been a big supplier to China, but its 220 per cent tariff on Australian wine, imposed for five years from March 28 this year, has halted the industry's exports to the Asian nation.

Mr Clohesy said even though Chinese company Auswan was a small shareholder of the Growers Wine Group, it still faced a 116 per cent tariff from China, which made exporting there impossible.

"It still hasn't exported anything, this has still made it double the cost of wine."

Before China introduced the 220 per cent tariff on the Australian wine industry, it was a key market for the Riverland.

Mr Clohesy said shiraz, cabernet and merlot had been in strong demand in China.

The Federal Government announced in June it would ask the World Trade Organisation to intervene in Australia's wine tariff dispute with China, but a resolution could take up to five years.

Mr Clohesy said it was a difficult situation for the Australian wine industry and welcomed efforts by Australia and Wine Australia to seek free trade agreements with other countries like the UK.

"If we get a free trade agreement with the UK to start off with... it helps us enormously," he said.

"If that kicks off, it is a slower thing to happen, but once it gets moving, hopefully that will work okay."

Mr Clohesy said losing the lucrative Chinese market could also impact on the returns wine grape growers would receive for their fruit in the future.

"Hopefully we can get over that hurdle with China and with quality and everything else, we will be able to maintain the best prices we can," he said.

He said a glut of wine grapes could also occur.

"I suggest that it will for a while and it is probably a two-year period that we need to work on, in pushing into other markets, as well as Europe," Mr Clohesy said.



(From left) Growers Wine Group winemakers Michelle Heagney and Sue Franke who analyse the wine to ensure it is ready for distribution.

Riverland wine grape growers urged to be wary following bumper year

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTINE WEBSTER

RIVERLAND wine grape growers are being encouraged to “keep a lid” on the 2022 vintage following its record crush this vintage.

Wine Australia’s senior analyst, Sandy Hathaway, said the region produced a record crush of 558,252 tonnes this year up nearly 100,000 tonnes from the 2020 vintage of 461,385.

She said it was a “unicorn vintage” for the nation with good growing and ripening conditions across most of Australia.

According to Wine Australia’s National Vintage Report, this year’s national crush of 2.03 million tonnes was 31 per cent higher than the 2020 vintage and 19 per cent above the 2019 vintage.

The Riverland was the biggest supplier of the national vintage, accounting for 31 per cent and South Australia was the largest contributor with 52 per cent of the crush at 1.06 million tonnes.

But Ms Hathaway has warned that the tariff China has placed on Australian wine is causing some headaches for the wine industry.

In November 2020, China introduced temporary tariffs of up to 200 percent after accusing Australian wine producers of selling wine well below the cost of production and causing harm to Chinese winemakers.

Final determinations of the anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations were announced in March when countervailing duties of 6.3 to 6.4 per cent and anti-dumping tariffs of between 116.2 per cent and 218.4 per cent were introduced on Australian wine, varying by company for a period of five years.

Ms Hathaway said the value of wine exports to China dropped from \$419 million from January to June 2020 to just \$13 million over the same period this year.

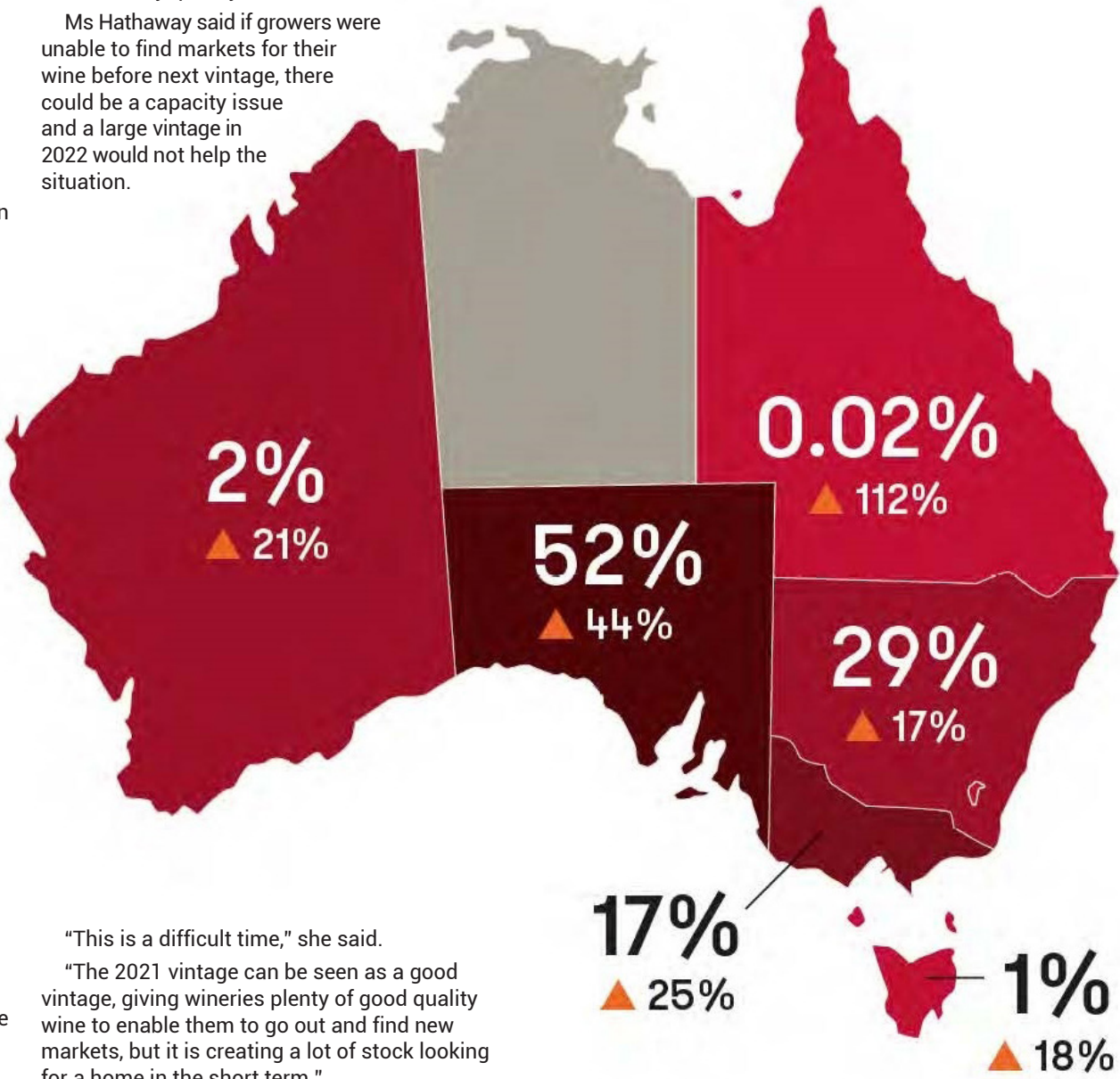
“There’s no denying that is a major loss,” she said.

Ms Hathaway said the speed at which it

had affected the Australian wine industry was also significant and it was a factor wine grape growers should take into account.

“Although we are seeing increases in exports to other countries, it is hard to turn things around really quickly,” she said.

Ms Hathaway said if growers were unable to find markets for their wine before next vintage, there could be a capacity issue and a large vintage in 2022 would not help the situation.



“This is a difficult time,” she said.

“The 2021 vintage can be seen as a good vintage, giving wineries plenty of good quality wine to enable them to go out and find new markets, but it is creating a lot of stock looking for a home in the short term.”



The value of wine exports to China dropped from \$419 million from January to June 2020 to \$13 million over the same period this year.

Recovering from China's impost

Farmer

Ms Hathaway said it was important for the Australian wine industry to minimise the impact of the wine tariffs from China.

"Wineries may be looking for other markets that already heavily favour reds, like South Korea or Taiwan, to replace sales to China," she said.

Ms Hathaway said an increase in demand for white wine in export markets in the UK, Europe and the United States was also an opportunity.

Ms Hathaway said white varieties such as prosecco, pinot gris, and sauvignon blanc and muscats, were all showing increases in production and pricing.

She said varieties like muscat gordo blanc or muscat blanc can be used to make moscato, which is in strong demand, especially

among young drinkers in some markets including Australia.

She said rosé was also a popular wine style, which could be made out of existing red wine varieties grown in the Riverland.

"In France, they drink more rosés than whites, and its popularity is increasing in other markets, particularly among younger drinkers," Ms Hathaway said.

"The Riverland is well-placed to turn reds into beautiful rosés.

"The advantage is that rosés can be made from most red varieties including grenache, cabernet, shiraz or pinot noir rather than requiring a particular variety."

Ms Hathaway emphasised that it was important for growers to keep a close eye on trends and



Sandy Hathaway

make sure they closely consult their wineries on what varieties they were seeking before making any changes.

Price drop for reds

Sandy Hathaway says the record 2021 crop helped reduce the impact of a considerable drop in price for red wine grape varieties from the Riverland.

She said the prices for red wine grapes reduced overall by 20 per cent.

"If growers got more tonnes per hectare, they didn't necessarily lose money," she said.

For Riverland wine grape growers, the price for shiraz dropped 21 per cent to \$552 a tonne from more than \$697 a tonne and cabernet was down 23 per cent to \$539 from \$698.

She said the wine tariff dispute with China, which had been a key market for premium red wine had contributed to this drop in wine grape prices for reds.

However, Ms Hathaway said the price growers received for white wine grape varieties increased overall by six per cent, indicating increased demand and tight supply for whites.



Wineries may be looking for other markets that already heavily favour reds, like South Korea or Taiwan, to replace sales to China.

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Rain levels

RENMARK
May to July 29, 2021: 49mm
Rainfall to July 2020: 116.0mm
Rainfall to July average: 119.9mm

LOXTON
May to July 29, 2021: 56.2mm
Rainfall to July 2020: 139.9mm
Rainfall to July average: 138.9mm

WAIKERIE
May to July 29, 2021: 74.8mm
Rainfall to July 2020: 119.8mm
Rainfall to July average: 132.8mm

LAMEROO
May to July 29, 2021: 94.2mm
Rainfall to July 2020: 221.6mm
Rainfall to July average: 171.2mm

GAWLER
May to July 29, 2021: 173.2mm
Rainfall to July 2020: 170mm
Rainfall to July average: 209.1mm

Storage levels

DARTMOUTH DAM
Current storage: 68%
This time last month: 66%
This time last year: 53%

HUME DAM
Current storage: 70%
This time last month: 57%
This time last year: 49%

LAKE VICTORIA
Current storage: 70%
This time last month: 55%
This time last year: 93%

MENINDEE LAKES
Current storage: 66%
This time last month: 63%
This time last year: 27%

Flows into SA

CURRENT FLOWS
7500ML per day
THIS TIME LAST MONTH
5700ML per day
THIS TIME IN 2020
13,100ML per day



A welcome, and not so dry, July

HEALTHY storage levels are reassuring to Riverland growers still experiencing below-average rainfall for 2021, while Mallee and Lower North dryland farmers finally saw the skies open up in July.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) recorded just 5mm of rain in Renmark throughout May, however this increased to 13mm throughout June and to 31mm for July.

This is compared to the 12.8mm Renmark received for June 2020, with 5.8mm recorded in July of last year.

BoM also recorded 7mm of rainfall in Loxton during May, with 13.2mm falling in June and 36mm in July.

This was a big increase on the 6.1mm Loxton saw in July 2020, however 15.4mm was recorded in the town during June of last year.

Waikerie saw 5.4mm of rain

during May, compared to a long-term average of 17.9mm for the month, with 34.2mm falling in June and 35.2mm in July.

Rainfall figures of 60.6mm in June, and 87.4 in July, have helped bring Gawler's total rain for 2021 so far to 226.2mm.

This is above the average rainfall to the end of July of 209.1mm, and the total received at the same time last year of 170mm.

Lameroo had recorded 147mm of rain so far in 2021, down from 221.2mm seen at the same point last year, and the long-term

average to August of 171.2mm.

Latest reports from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority indicated total active storages had increased by 311GL over the last week to 5659GL, or 66 per cent capacity.

This marked a 22 per cent increase since the beginning of May, and a 10 per cent increase since the same time last year.



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TRINITY COLLEGE



From Penfield Gardens to Wayville...

Patlin Gardens' organic produce an icon of Adelaide Farmers Market

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BRENDAN SIMPKINS

MORE than 80 stalls are set up every Sunday at Wayville Showgrounds as part of the Adelaide Farmers Market, but there is one that shoppers consistently flock to.

Patlin Gardens has been a mainstay at the Market for near-on two decades, and owner Pat D'Onofrio (pictured) is the stuff of legend.

As punters line up to purchase some of

Pat's organically grown produce, he will often rattle off what's in season and even dish out some tips on how to utilise the veggies in recipes.

The D'Onofrio farm is located alongside the Gawler River in Penfield Gardens where the family has farmed since the early 1960s.

Originally Pat had planted olives on the

land in the 1990s after taking over operations from his father. At the time, Pat worked the farm part time as his landscaping job took most of his attention.

Today Pat and his wife Lina grow more than 100 different varieties of seasonal produce, all using organic methods, across their 20-acre property.

CONTINUED ON PAGES 12 & 13

Farmer

Pat said previous health issues were the catalyst which sparked the switch to growing vegetables organically.

It was discovered that he had lingering pesticides in his body including insecticide DDT and Glyphosate, otherwise known as Roundup.

"I started looking as well, at what are we doing to our bodies," Pat said.

"...I started fiddling around with lots of different ideas (like) composting, done a little bit of research into microbes, and all that sort of worm activity and all that sort of stuff...

"I stopped using all pesticides and eventually I even stopped using Roundup after a year or two"

Approaching the age of 70, Pat said he felt "better now than I did at 50" and attributed that to shifting to an organic diet.

Patlin Gardens has been pesticide free for about 17

“

**However the farm
still has its problems
with pests**

years. However, the farm still has its problems with pests, which are dealt with by using integrated pest management principles.

At the time Pat and Lina made the switch to organic farming in the early 2000s, it was a niche market. But over time the demand for organically grown produce has continued to rise.







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to 12.30pm.**

Produce is consistently sold to first-time customers who later return and point out a noticeable different in taste compared to that bought in a supermarket.

Pat said he has “hundreds and hundreds” of customers who love their vegetables.

“They tell me all the time that they really can’t see themselves going back into the supermarket anymore, because (the vegetables) are not the same,” he said.

As well as being organically grown, all of Patlin’s vegetables are seasonal. Each time you visit the stall you will find something new and even some varieties not likely to have been seen before.

Jerusalem artichokes, Romanesco cauliflower, kohlrabi (German turnip), purple broccoli, fennell, leek and spring onion were just some of the vegetables in season when we spoke to Pat in July.

Some of the niche or obscure vegetables that Pat grows at various points in the year included purple asparagus, trumpet squash, red onion of Tropea (a variety from the south of Italy) and mini melons among others.

Marinated olives and olive oil is produced from Patlin Gardens’ 2000 tree grove, and fresh pickled vegetables are also sold.

The Patlin Gardens stall can be found at the Adelaide Farmers Market at the Wayville Showgrounds every Sunday from 8.30am to 12.30pm.



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Riverland's best kept secret?

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY STEPHANIE THOMPSON

AN iconic product sold in pubs and clubs, service stations and supermarkets nationwide might just be the Riverland's best kept secret.

Schmek's Beef Jerky is a proud, Riverland family business, made just outside of Loxton for the past 24 years.

After identifying a gap in the market, Peter and Ronny Goodhand began manufacturing their own beef jerky.

"It's been a journey, which has been very productive for us," Mr Goodhand said.

"When we started 24 years ago, there weren't very many beef jerky manufacturers around.

"At the time, there was probably only one other around from Alice Springs that we knew of."

Since then, the brand has continued to grow, with Schmek's Beef Jerky and Beef Stix now sold nationwide.

"To get the brand name out there took at least 10 years," Mr Goodhand said.

The local business produces beef jerky from its Loxton site weekly, employing six local staff.

"Beef jerky is not a cooked product. People think it is, but it isn't," Mr Goodhand said.

"It's a dried product."

Schmek's Jerky uses one particular cut of the beast, meaning sourcing enough product is unviable in the Riverland.

"We source our beef from a meat supplier in Adelaide," Mr Goodhand said.

"We use an outside flat.

"Because it's one cut of meat, we need 500kg a week.

"We tried using a local abattoir, but unfortunately they can't supply enough of one cut.

"It is top grade, 100 per cent Australian made and it's a very lean product."

Mr Goodhand said the business has seen an increase in demand for jerky in recent years.

"We believe that it is because our product is more unique in its taste and texture than our competitors," he said.

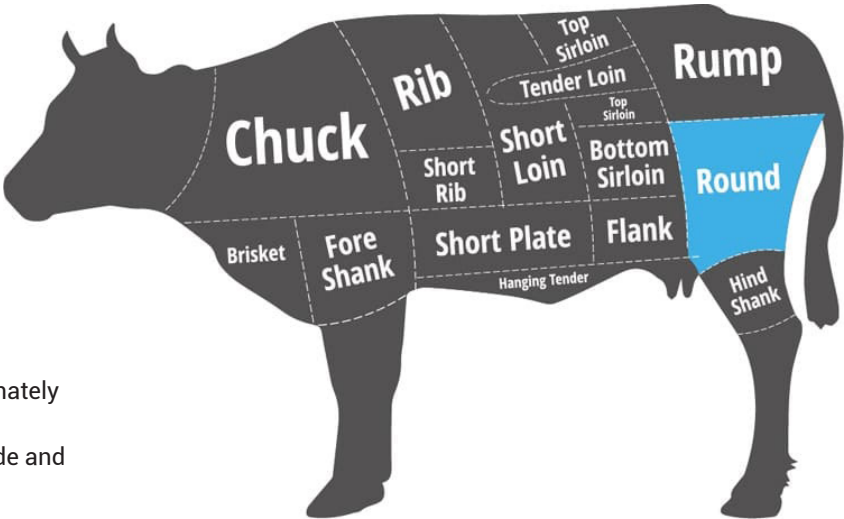
"Most of our competitors have what you call a wet jerky, which consists of a lot of sugar.

"We are one of the lowest in salt too and we have kept the same recipe for about 20 years."

About 50 businesses in Australia now produce beef jerky, according to Mr Goodhand.

"(Competition) is always a concern, but given that we have been doing it for 24 years, it does mean something about our product and that is that people must like it," he said.

"We also package beef stix and that's been a complementary product to our beef jerky, which we started about 10 years ago."



It's been a journey, which has been very productive for us. When we started 24 years ago, there weren't very many beef jerky manufacturers around. At the time, there was probably only one other around from Alice Springs that we knew of.



Working at the Loxton site are Schmek's Beef Jerky employees are Natasha Brown, Jenny Buckton and Courtney Smart. The business employs six local staff.



Sales boom, despite Covid

MARCH 2020 will be forever etched in their memories for Schmeks Beef Jerky owners, Peter and Ronny Goodhand.

But now, over 12 months after the initial impacts of Covid-19, business is booming and continuing to go from strength-to-strength.

“We knew at that time (in March 2020), things were going to get very difficult,” Mr Goodhand said.

“Interestingly, we shut down for two months.”

Mr Goodhand said producing a preserved product like jerky had its benefits.

“We had already made sufficient supply to carry us over those two months,” he said.

Sales were slow initially due to lockdown as Covid-19 gripped Australia.

“After two months, there was a bounce back and within two to three months, business improved markedly,” Mr Goodhand said.

“We thought it was recovery from people running their stocks low.

“But, it has stayed that way and we don’t know why.”

Mr Goodhand said sales have continued to increase.

“People are now becoming more aware of buying Australian and ensuring it is Australian,” he added.





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INDUSTRY EXPERT UPDATE



Journalist Hugh Schuitemaker spoke with key Riverland, Lower North and Mallee agricultural industry figures to gain an insight into their respective seasons.

WELCOME to the latest instalment of our regular Farmer industry experts Q and A.

Once again I have been fortunate enough to speak with the leading minds from some of South Australia's most important agricultural industries, from the Riverland's citrus and almond orchards, all the way down to the Barossa Valley's vineyards and Mallala canola fields.

It seems as though whenever I chat with these dedicated growers and farmers there is never a shortage of challenges, and the winter of 2021 has been a mixed bag of some positive, and some negative, results.

Growers in the Riverland are contending with an ongoing battle against fruit fly outbreaks – which could continue into next year – although some favourable June and July rainfall levels should mean farmers in the Mallee and Lower North are able to complete the current season without much more worry.

However, what always shines through is the innovation, ingenuity and optimism of agricultural professionals and I hope the perspectives of these experts can give confidence to other growers and farmers



John Lush
Mallala dryland farmer,
Adelaide Plains councillor

Have July rainfalls been enough to alleviate any worries of a dry year?

We've had 100mm for July, so it's wet. It's certainly a turnaround from the last couple months. It's been a bit of a surprise, and I can't remember the last time we had 100mm in one month. That's a really wet month.

We've always had a saying that if you get 50mm two months in a row, it sets your season up really well, and we've had that in one month, plus a fairly big rain the month before. We've got a lot of topsoil moisture and the year is looking really promising.

It's absolutely alleviated a lot of worry for us, but it's not all over the state.

Dry-seeding methods seemed to be popular, and successful, this season?

A lot of us all over the state sow dry now with the hope it's going to rain. It held off in the Mallee area and east of the ranges for quite some time, but I think they are getting enough rain now that those crops are established. If we have a good spring they will still be able to salvage a good year out of it, and all the weather forecasts say it's going to get wetter, not drier.

They are saying it won't be quite as wet as 2016, but

well along the way.

Are you expecting an increase in yields this year?

I would think so. We've got crops now that are just about finished with no more rain, so if we get average rain between now and the end of spring, we'll have above average yields.

Canola prices are sky high and wheat prices aren't too bad. Some countries are struggling in other parts of the world and their loss is our gain, so we might fluke one of those rare years where prices and yields are both good at the same time. That doesn't happen very often.

Is there more confidence in the export market at the moment?

One of the benefits of Covid is that we've realised you can't put all your hopes into one market, or one country, such as China. We must diversify our markets... we became too dependant on China across the board.

The whole of our agricultural production must not be reliant on one country being our main market.

When China stops buying grain from us, they go somewhere else to buy it, and that leaves another door open for us to go in.

The international market is a changing scenario and where your main market might be one decade, in the next decade that will change.

Any advice for farmers at this stage?

You've got to accept change as it comes, and that's going to be really important for Australia as a whole. We've now realised some manufacturing in Australia is necessary, and it needs to be subsidised by the government to keep it here.

We've just put 40,000 litres of diesel storage on our farm, because we realised Australia runs on about a seven-day supply. If a couple of boats get sunk... we run out of fuel in a week.

My advice is for farmers to store enough fuel to do at least one of their programs, either get a crop in or get a harvest off. If we happen to run out and you can't finish your harvest, your crop just rots. It's really important we have some self-sufficiency and an emergency plan.

Succession is similar to a journey or a trip; we have a basic idea of where we want to go but a vague understanding of where to start

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Sean Cole
CCW chief executive officer

Have growers experienced the 'unicorn' vintage we've heard about recently? What factors were most important for this quality of vintage?

Growers certainly experienced a very solid vintage with little disease pressure, mild growing conditions and few heat waves.

As reported by Wine Australia the Riverland region crushed 558,252 metric tons, which would be the largest crush in the region on records going back to 1993.

The Riverland is now producing 25 per cent of Australian wine – what is CCW's reaction to reaching this milestone? What have been the key factors to the region's growth in wine exports/quality?

The Riverland holds this position due to its strong value proposition to the market, and being a consistently and reliable producing region, with low disease pressure.

Our wines continue to meet and exceed the expectations of wine drinkers domestically and around the world.

What factors will be vital to ensuring Riverland grape and wine production continues to expand?

With the recent stoppage of export for the most

part to China, it will be essential for the region and industry to retain and win market share elsewhere, in particular for red wine.

The ability of the industry to pivot and maintain low production cost will be key to the survival and growth of hectares in the region going forward.

Have stability in water allocations, and cheaper temporary water prices, helped growers this year?
For growers leasing in water this has certainly helped with the cost of production, after a very difficult year last year.

This year we have seen a return to a more normal pricing environment, due to increased rainfall entering catchments in the past 12 months.

“As reported by Wine Australia the Riverland region crushed 558,252 metric tons, which would be the largest crush in the region on records going back to 1993.”

What should growers be doing at this time of year to ensure healthy vines?

There are many checks growers should be doing which include inspecting vines for scale, soil sampling and analysis.

If you are a CCW member contact our staff who are more than happy to give advice and help growers get on top of pest and disease issues.

Top 10 grape varieties crushed in the Riverland (from Wine Australia):

Variety	MT's crushed
Shiraz	155,470
Chardonnay	128,005
Cabernet Sauvignon	85,587
Merlot	30,479
Muscat Gordo Blanco	28,864
Colombard	27,339
Sauvignon Blanc	20,879
Petit Verdot	15,231
Semillon	9,626
Pinot Noir	9,140

“The ability of the industry to pivot and maintain low production cost will be key to the survival and growth of hectares in the region going forward. ”

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Adrian Hoffman
Winegrape Council of South Australia
Region 2 chair

We experienced a ‘unicorn’ vintage in the Riverland this year, was this similar in the Barossa?

Across all varieties yields and quality were good, so you don't see too many vintages like this where both the grower and winemaker are very happy with the result of the vintage.

Quality was really outstanding. Probably the only disappointment for some growers was grenache, which didn't yield as well as it should have. Hot winds in spring messed up the flowering a little bit... the quality was still good, but the yields weren't as good as they could have been.

Overall, everyone was exceptionally happy with the vintage.

A lot of people are looking at double, or three times the amount they had on the previous vintage, so a lot of growers are very happy.

South Australian regions continues to reach new milestones in production. What has been key to this?

The South Australian wine industry is a well-supported industry within the state, and the government knows that. We're seeing both the state government and federal government making sure the

industry stays strong, because we are a big employer across all areas.

What factors are important to ensuring the industry continues growing?

Communication between wineries and grape growers is going to be very important over the next couple of years, especially with the tariffs being put in by China. We definitely saw a softening in pricing this year, and looking at some of the bigger companies, there's going to be further softening of prices.

I encourage growers to get out and have a chat to the winemakers at this time. Make sure the market is still there, and create a niche in that market for (your) grapes.

Is there more confidence in the export market at this stage?

I don't know whether we'll find the next Chinese market, but a lot of wine has been moved sideways already, and the UK market is quite strong. China definitely inflated the value of wine there for a while, so we're going to see a softening of prices at that top-end level. The first thing that happens when prices start softening is the commercial regions suffer quicker, because the grower sells their fruit for less.

Look at your yields, look at your properties and don't charge in. Make sure you're growing for your market.

Have recent rainfall levels been helpful for growers?

There will be a great about of positivity about the rainfall we've received so far. In the Barossa, the more rain we get, the less water we have to use, and in the Riverland the more water that falls in the catchments, the cheaper water is. One of the biggest impacts on the price of production is the cost of water.

What factors are most important for vine health at this stage?

Monitor your bud numbers and look at the yield levels. Inspect the overall health of the vines, and now is the time to have those conversations with wineries that will be very important.



Mark Doecke
Citrus SA chair

What varieties of citrus are currently being harvested in the Riverland?

Currently in the Riverland the Washington navels are all but finished. The kirkwood and cara oranges are in full swing and afuror mandarins are starting.

Have weather conditions benefited the quality of fruit this year?

Having the cool summer that we did this year helped to give us good-sized fruit and superb eating quality.

How important was the success of the Pacific Island workers program to avoiding labour shortages in 2021?

The Pacific Island program has been running successfully for several years now. It is a big contributor to the labour requirements of the citrus industry in South Australia.

“It is a big contributor to the labour requirements of the citrus industry in South Australia.”



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Have there been added costs for Riverland growers to treat citrus for fruit fly?
Any fruit located in a 'RED' zone has extra cost to transport, cold treat in transit, or in cold rooms.

"On the farm at this time of the year manures or gypsum applications could be spread. Pruning as soon as the crop is picked is good for next year's crop and helps pickers to access the fruit. "

Has stability in water allocations, and cheaper temporary water prices, helped growers during this time?
Any grower who leases water in as a part of their business model is currently enjoying lower temporary water prices.

What should growers be doing at this time to ensure healthy trees and fruit?
On the farm at this time of the year manures or gypsum applications could be spread.

Pruning as soon as the crop is picked is good for next year's crop and helps pickers to access the fruit.

Maintain irrigation systems because spring/summer is just around the corner. Also it is a good idea to perform soil tests, to gain a baseline of nutrient levels.



Brendan Sidhu
Australian Nut Industry
Council chairman

We're seeing the almond industry reaching new milestones for production, what has been key to this continual growth?
It's mainly due to young plantings I think. We've had a lot of new plantings go in and they are just now coming into production.

We're predicting a 150,000-tonne crop in four years' time, and that's just based on young plantings already in the ground coming into production.

Were July rainfall levels helpful for growers?
We've had a look and we've obviously got some really good sub-soil moisture. That's always good and it always helps a lot of us who are on drip orchards establish good crops.

Has there been any new technology developed to help almond growers recently?
The Almond Board is working on technology for monitoring for carpophilus beetles and diseases. My manager here in the technical office has been to a meeting regarding pheromone interrupters, that have traps with cameras in them so you can see what they are targeting.

There's always new technology we're looking at, and

there's a lot of new things out regarding the way we monitor our water use and tree growth.

Is the availability of bees presenting any challenges for growers?
There's obviously a fair demand on bees and the biggest problem was going to be when South Australia had the lockdown. But I'm very thankful to the CEO of the Almond Board of Australia, who was able to work with the New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian Government. We're having trouble getting fruiting buds in Queensland, but hopefully we get good pollination weather.

"A lot of it is because young orchards are coming into production, but I think the last year has been a particularly good growing season."

Are self-fertile almond tree varieties becoming more viable?
There's definitely a lot more self-fertile trees that are out, and we've put those in ourselves. They're not self-pollinating, but you need a lot less bees per hectare than what you usually need to cross pollinate. They are working on breeding more precocious varieties while are not only self-fertile, but can also self-pollinate. However, we're a few years away from that.

Are prices looking favourable for growers this year?
It looks like the price is returning a bit. We had a bit of a crash in price over the 2021 crop season – it's been a bit of a low-price year. But it's already starting to improve because of the severe drought in California, so hopefully we'll have a good year.

Any advice for growers at this time?
Growers should be making sure their irrigation maintenance is up to scratch, because we'll start watering soon. We're a bit of a way off February now, but we'll get there.

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In 2006 Ian Mau's heart surgeon brother spotted a newspaper advertisement for an investment in pistachios at a farm near Pinnaroo.

Now, in 2021, Mallee Orchard Pistachios – known fondly locally as The Nut Farm – covers 300 hectares, or 90,000 pistachio trees, and Ian is the operation's manager.

"Back in the day the government had an investment scheme where for every dollar you invested they added a dollar, and they did that for olives and pistachios," Mr Mau (pictured) said.

"Originally 70,000 trees were planted, and we have planted somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000 on top of that again."

At the moment Mr Mau oversees a workforce of about 12, and during the farm's busiest times about two dozen, made up of locals and international backpackers.

Successfully growing pistachios is a year-long commitment.

"In a nutshell, during winter, the trees are deciduous and have all gone to bed, so we do irrigation repairs, and pruning," Mr Mau said.

"If you prune when the trees are dormant it invigorates them, whereas if you prune them in leaf it does the opposite.

"We plant about 5000 trees a year, so we're getting the ground ready for that, deep ripping it and doing all the irrigation that needs to be in place.

"In the middle of August we will start our spray season, spraying trees with fungicides, nutrients, oil for scale – and then in the middle of September we start our irrigation full time."

By then, he said, the buds on the trees will have burst and they will be starting to grow leaf and small nuts.

"For October/November the trees size the nut, determining the size by the shell," Mr Mau said.

"In late November, early December, that shell hardens on the tree, then it has a bit of a rest, before we fertilise it pretty vigorously straight after Christmas, and then it fills that nut up.

"Usually by late February, early March, that nut will split open inside the soft hull and then the hull will start to deteriorate. Then we come in with the harvesters and shake the fruit off, and it is processed in Robinvale."

Mr Mau said the Mallee climate was perfect for growing pistachios.

"Through summer we like it as hot as it can be, and winter nice and cold, but above zero," Mr Mau said.

"We are the same as the stone fruit guys. We are after winter chill through winter, so we need about 700 hours of under 7C.

"(Then we) like a nice long, dry summer and a dry harvest, and not any wind, because by then the trees are ready to shake, and the nuts just hanging on.

"They are easy to bump or blow off, so we like it fine and breezeless."

Australian pistachios make up about 40 per cent of the domestic pistachio market, and can be found at most major supermarkets including Coles and Woolies.

"The supermarkets like them a good size, and they like the shell to be unstained, nice and clean and white, so it looks attractive to the buyer," Mr Mau said.

"The Australian ones are probably not as big as the American ones that are imported, but the flavour is a lot nicer.

"The flavour is important but the supermarkets are more worried about what they look like."



Mr Mau said similar to olives and almonds, pistachios have a small harvest one year, and a bigger one the year after.

"Each biennial year we have had really good seasons, with nice cold winters and nice dry hot summers, and not too many problems, along with a good price compared to other products on the market," he said.

"I have been here now about 10 years, and in that time those two-year averages have increased by about 100 tonnes of dry weight, that is the marketable yield."

Last year was an "off" year but Mallee Orchard Pistachios was still able to produce about 1000 green tonnes that went to the Robinvale processing factory, via four semi-loads a day.

"That is before it is dried and processed for the supermarket, so it would have been about 350 to 400 supermarket tonne," Mr Mau said.

"Prices are not too bad... they have been as high as \$14 a kilogram for our gate price, although they



have softened to around \$10 to \$11.

“They are predicting that they might soften a bit again, as the almonds have.

“I think it is because of the US and China tariff war.

“The Americans have planted pistachios until half of California is covered with them, and so they are having record harvests, but right at the same time China, one of their main buyers, has increased the tariff and almost made them too expensive.”

Mr Mau said this season's harvest in the Mallee was already looking good.

“The bud is on the tree now for next year,” he said.

“When the pistachios are growing they are growing the fruit for the next harvest, but at the same time they are growing an extension past the fruit with bud on for the following year.

“So you get a bit of a time capsule, you can look into the future one year at a time, so even while the trees are asleep, there is bud on that extension.”

Mr Mau said at the moment Australian pistachio growers only export a small amount overseas.

“In farm versus farm there is not really much competition, because the better everyone does the more it helps fulfil the quota,” Mr Mau said.

“What is interesting is that (across) the Australian pistachio industry as a whole – not just our farm who have been growing a little bit – growers are planting 20,000 to 30,000 trees a year, and there is a real expansion in the industry at the moment.

“In the past there has been three bigger farms and 30-odd smaller farms, but there are a couple of new farms going in that are quite a big size again.

“I think someone said that in the next five years the industry will be about three times the size.

“That is good for us though. We encourage more people in the industry because we can't grow enough for our domestic market, so the more the merrier.

“It makes us more reliable in supply, up to a point, and then after that when you become a

bigger industry you have to look at export, and that is when it probably does get competitive.”

Mr Mau said the increased popularity of TV cooking shows had helped boost the market for pistachios.

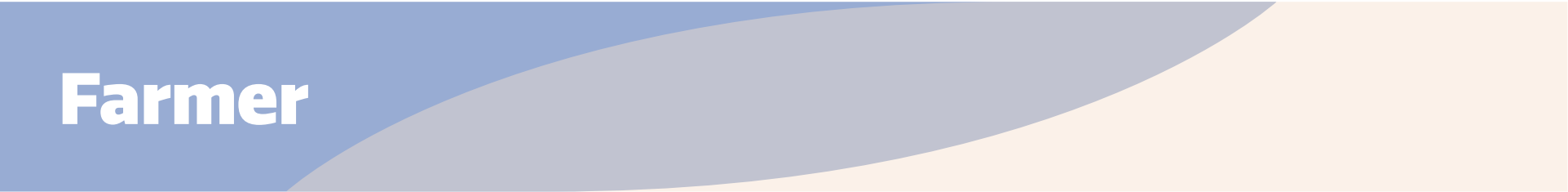
“I am not an expert, but they say it is very high in melatonin, so it is supposed to give you a good night's sleep... and the nuts are very high in things like B12,” he said.

“They are (more popular), mainly because the cooking shows are using them extensively. So people are using them in cooking, as well as a snack, but the snack market is still our main bread and butter – obviously.

“Peebinga (where Mallee Orchard Pistachio is located) pistachios are the tastiest of all, and they are the prettiest at the factory.

“Ours go over and they are bright pink, whereas everyone else's are yellow or green.

“We wonder if it is something to do with the soil.”



Farmer



Federal Minister for Trade, Tourism, and Investment Dan Tehan (left) visited South Australian grain producers to discuss market access for grain growers.

Trade minister talks grain market access

THE Federal Minister for Trade, Tourism, and Investment Dan Tehan met with South Australian grain farmers in June to get a seasonal outlook and to discuss how access to markets can ensure growers can take advantage of positive seasons.

Hosted by GrainGrowers board director and industry stalwart Richard Konzag and his family, it was a chance for the minister to get an update of on-farm activities at the start of the winter cropping season as he leads Australia's efforts to secure a range of new trade agreements.

"Minister Tehan has strong connections to the agricultural sector and has a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by our growers," said David McKeon, GrainGrowers CEO.

"This was a timely opportunity to talk through the need for ongoing effort and investment in opening new markets and accelerated market development particularly for the barley industry, but also across all grains.

"The strong partnership with industry and government to improve market access is more important now than ever, with the current case in front of the World Trade Organisation regarding Chinese tariffs on Australian barley and active negotiations underway on critical agreements such as the

Australian-EU FTA."

The minister toured the Konzag grain farm in the Mallala area, which produces wheat, barley, lentils, faba beans, chickpeas, canola and oaten hay.

The Konzag family has been farming in the area since 1911.

Joining the visit were local farmers and representatives from the National Farmers Federation and Grains Australia.

"It was timely for the minister to be able to discuss these issues directly with growers today as the ABARES Crop Report was also released that shows favourable seasonable conditions and high world prices are expected to drive winter crops nationally to a record high," said Mr McKeon.

"A big crop means a big export task, making the ongoing efforts of government on improving market access even more important."



Virtual crop inspections to continue following demand from Australia's grain customers

THE Australian grains industry will again deliver free virtual crop inspections to international grain markets following strong demand from customers.

In 2020, the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre (AEGIC) led a new virtual form of crop inspections to keep Australia's grain customers well-informed.

The videos are a collaboration between grain producers and organisations across Australia, and cover eastern Australia, South Australia and Western Australia.

The videos help maintain the connection with customers who would usually travel to see crops first-hand, visiting farms, receival sites, ports and research companies.

AEGIC CEO Richard Simonaitis said maintaining customer interactions was critically important.

"Our customers highly value keeping track of growing conditions and seeing our supply chains in action," he said.

"It gives them confidence in our production systems and supply chains, and just as importantly, it helps maintain the human

connections between producer, trader and customer.

"The virtual crop video series is able to support these requirements and build new relationships within the industry."

Mr Simonaitis said there was a strong demand for the Australian industry to continue the series in 2021.

"We received an abundance of great feedback from international customers," he said.

"This is a fantastic example of the industry working together for a great outcome."

The videos are translated into five languages and distributed to flour millers, brewers, maltsters, government agencies, traders, and other stakeholders across 12 countries.

The videos are a collaboration with ADM, CBH Group, CHS Broadbent, GrainCorp, GrainGrowers, the Grain Industry Association of WA and Viterra.

The videos are also supported by GIMAF, Grain Producers Australia, Grain Producers SA, and Grain Trade Australia.



AG NEWS

Could collaboration be best weapon against weeds?

COLLABORATIVE weed control could have the potential to deliver a “better return on investment and be more effective” for all land users, according to initial results from a new project led by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) investigating the social and economic impact of area wide weed management.

In contrast to the area-wide management of feral animals – which requires co-ordinated control at one point in time for greatest efficacy – area-wide weed management is unlikely to mean controlling weeds at the same time or even with the same approach.

It is likely to involve different land managers working together with a shared understanding and a common goal for weed management.

The research is part of the ‘Area Wide Management for cropping systems weeds, investigating the weed management, social and economic

and environmental sense, associated with an area wide management approach – especially when you consider weeds like fleabane and feathertop Rhodes grass that are affecting a range of industries in a region.”

Social researcher Sonia Graham from the University of Wollongong said the interviews involved more than 80 people from across Australia, with a focus on three case study regions – the Darling Downs in Queensland, the Riverina in New South Wales and the Sunraysia region in Victoria.

“These initial interviews identified some of the key benefits of collaborative weed control as including a better return on investment and more effective control, greater awareness of weed issues, and less confusion over responsibility,” Ms Graham said.

“There was a general belief that one potential approach within area wide management – the pooling of resources – could result in individuals spending less on weed control over the long term.

“However, the interviews also highlighted three key challenges – leadership, bringing people together and demonstrating benefit – that would need to be addressed as part of an effective area wide weed management program.

“The interviews also revealed a wide range of weed concerns across the three regions, with herbicide resistance being considered the most significant issue by more than half of the interviewees because it increases the costs of weed control and resistance can travel easily across fence lines.”

Mr Emms said herbicide resistance was a major challenge for those on the frontline of weed control, with resistance genes capable of moving via both seed and pollen.

Ms Graham said interview participants also identified other potential hurdles to the area-wide management of weeds including differing financial resources, identifying common weed priorities, achieving co-ordinated control, and communication between various groups.

These initial interviews also asked participants to rate the weeds of most concern for their region with flaxleaf fleabane, feathertop Rhodes grass and annual ryegrass identified as the most problematic weeds across the three geographic regions.

The project is also undertaking local on-farm trials and weed and resistance mobility testing in the Darling Downs, Riverina and Sunraysia regions. A more extensive survey of growers is being conducted in July and August to validate and develop a more comprehensive understanding of how to take the next steps towards gaining wider benefit from implementing area wide weed management.

For more information or to become involved in the research contact Sonia Graham sgraham@uow.edu.au.



Barker agriculture sector the big winner

THE Australian Government has reached an agreement in principle with the United Kingdom Government on a free trade agreement (FTA).

Barker MP Tony Pasin said farmers and agricultural workers in Barker were big winners in the Australia-UK FTA.

“In my electorate of Barker there are more people per capita engaged in food manufacturing than in any other electorate in Australia,” he said.

“The historic Australia-UK free trade deal will strengthen our economy by delivering more jobs and business opportunities to Australians, especially in the manufacturing sector.”

The Coalition Government had secured tariff free access to the UK’s 66 million customers for Australian meat, sheep meat, dairy, wine, rice and sugar.

“Farmers in Barker will be happy with this deal,” Mr Pasin said.

“Our Government has negotiated for our local producers to be more attractive to new customers which will support jobs and businesses in Barker.

“We produce high-quality and price-competitive produce in Barker and this FTA will give our local products tariff free access to the UK.”

Under the FTA Agreement in Principle:

■ Tariffs on Australian wine and short and medium grain milled rice will be eliminated when the agreement enters into force.

■ Beef tariffs will be eliminated after 10 years. During the transition period, Australia will have immediate access to a duty-free quota of 35,000 tonnes, rising in equal instalments to 110,000 tonnes in year 10. In the subsequent five years a safeguard will apply on beef imports exceeding a further volume threshold rising in equal instalments to 170,000 tonnes, levying a tariff safeguard duty of 20 per cent for the rest of the calendar year.

■ Sheep meat tariffs will be eliminated

after 10 years. During the transition period, Australia will have immediate access to a duty-free quota of 25,000 tonnes, rising in equal instalments to 75,000 tonnes in year 10. In the subsequent five years a safeguard will apply on sheep meat imports exceeding a further volume threshold rising in equal instalments to 125,000 tonnes, levying a tariff safeguard duty of 20 per cent for the rest of the calendar year.

■ Sugar tariffs will be eliminated over eight years. During the transition period, Australia will have immediate access to a duty-free quota of 80,000 tonnes, rising by 20,000 tonnes each year.

■ Dairy tariffs will be eliminated over five years. During the transition period, Australia will have immediate access to a duty-free quota for cheese of 24,000 tonnes, rising in equal instalments to 48,000 tonnes in year five. Australia will also have immediate access to a duty-free quota for non-cheese dairy of 20,000 tonnes. There will be a further duty-free transitional quota for butter of 5,500 tonnes rising to 11,500 tonnes in year five.

The FTA will improve working holiday opportunities for youth in both countries. Eligibility to participate will be raised from 30 to 35, stays allowed up to three years, and people will have more freedom to choose where they work.

Mr Pasin said UK FTA would be the most comprehensive and liberal agreement Australia had signed, outside of our partnership with New Zealand.

“Our Government worked very closely with the agriculture sector when negotiating this FTA to ensure the best deal possible for our farmers,” Mr Pasin said.

“There is still much work to do, on what is a complex legal document, but this agreement is a win for jobs, businesses, free trade and highlights what two liberal democracies can achieve while working together.”

“
WE WANT TO INVESTIGATE WHETHER THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES, IN AN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SENSE, ASSOCIATED WITH AN AREA WIDE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

opportunity’ project which receives \$1.8 million in funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment’s Rural Research and Development (R&D) for Profit program.

The GRDC provides an additional \$466,000, which is also matched by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation.

As part of the project, interviews were recently conducted by the University of Wollongong, exploring the attitudes of grain growers, orchardists, cotton growers, vegetable producers and local government agencies.

GRDC manager weeds Jason Emms said the project hoped to identify the barriers to individuals, industries and organisations working together to control weeds.

“This project is really about taking a different approach to traditional weed control where people have often focused on select areas, such as farms, roadsides and national parks, without collaboration,” he said.

“We want to investigate whether there are opportunities, in an economic, social

AG NEWS



Against the grain to find new markets

GRAINS Australia (GAL) has been awarded \$969,480 in Federal Government funding to develop new export markets for Australian grains, oilseeds and pulses.

Barker MP Tony Pasin said grain production was an important industry throughout the electorate of Barker, and this funding would see the development of new overseas markets and accelerate trade diversification.

"Australian grain is highly regarded in Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam and the subcontinent, and we are under increasing competition from other suppliers and emerging production, particularly from the Black Sea region and Argentina," he said.

"This funding will help the grain sector focus in on new and emerging

markets and build the reputation and quality of our crops."

Mr Pasin said the grains industry was also developing a collaborative grains partnership with India, bringing together stakeholders from government and industry from both countries to build a platform for future trade in grain and grain products.

"The gross value of Australian crop production is estimated to have reached a near-record \$35.5 billion in 2020-21 and grains, oilseeds and pulses accounted for 50 per cent of this. Market access is an important part of ensuring we can continue this growth and the industry in Barker can reach its potential."



"THE GROSS VALUE OF AUSTRALIAN CROP PRODUCTION IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE REACHED A NEAR-RECORD \$35.5 BILLION IN 2020-21 AND GRAINS, OLSEEDS AND PULSES ACCOUNTED FOR 50 PER CENT OF THIS

Debt repayment waiver a boost for farmers

THE Australian Government continues to back farmers in hardship by passing legislation that waives the majority of Farm Household Allowance debts caused when incorrectly estimating business income.

Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management David Littleproud said the waiver draws a line under a complicated process and will help farmers get back on their feet and grow their businesses.

"Business Income Reconciliation debts result from asking farmers to make difficult predictions about their income for the year ahead," he said.

"Acting in good faith, some farmers underestimated their income and incurred a debt.

"With many Farm Household Allowance recipients impacted by droughts, floods and bushfires in the last few years, these debts are the last thing they need.

"Removing Business Income Reconciliation was one of the recommendations the government adopted from the farmer-led review of the Farm Household Allowance.

"Since July 1, 2020, farmers and their partners no longer need to complete this process.

"This waiver will help Services Australia to expedite and resolve outstanding reconciliations and provide certainty to the farming community."

Farm Household Allowance recipients will have until June 30, 2023, to provide documentation for processing.

This will determine whether they are eligible for a waiver, a refund, or a top-up of their payments.

Former and current Farm Household Allowance recipients who received payments between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2020, should make sure all their taxation documentation is compiled and ready to give to Services Australia as soon as they ask for it.

Requests for this information are anticipated to be sent from early 2022.

More information about the Farm Household Allowance can be found at agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/farm-household-allowance



Fast facts

- ✓ Since March 2014, Farm Household Allowance has paid over \$635 million to more than 16,600 farmers and their partners.
- ✓ This includes almost \$173 million this financial year, and close to \$25 million to pay for professional advice and training.
- ✓ More than 50 per cent of FHA

recipients have not exhausted their four years on payment. This trend has continued in 2021 as conditions for many farmers have improved.

- ✓ 94 per cent of people who responded to the FHA exit survey advised that the package of support provided has improved their circumstances in the short to medium term (12-24 months).



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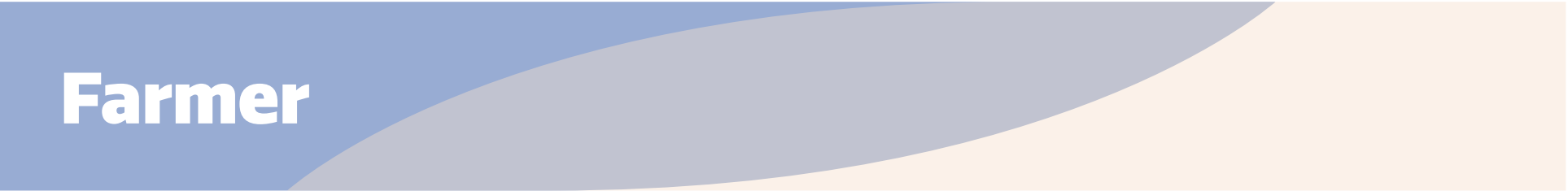


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Nuts about market expansion

THE Australian Nut Industry Council (ANIC) has received a \$550,000 grant from the Australian Government to implement a trade and market access expansion program.

Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia David Littleproud said the grant would put in place a two-pronged strategy to increase the market share for Australian nut growers.

"The project will draw on industry research into high-growth markets for Aussie nuts including the UK and India," he said.

"The Australian Nut Industry Council will use the information to look at market research, including consumer behaviour, supply chains and currency risk.

"The funding will also look to take advantage of our international reputation for safe, quality and sustainably produced agricultural goods.

"This will include climate change adaptation, biosecurity, water use, soil and product traceability.

"Together, these two projects will enable consumers to know that they are buying a high-quality, sustainably produced product."

Executive officer Cathy Beaton said the grant was a chance to validate the industry's reputation both overseas in the evolving marketplace expectations.

"In order to sustain a larger export industry, we need to have new and innovative techniques at home," she said.

"One of the best things we can do is develop an on-farm measurement and reporting framework and improve whole-of-industry reporting.

"We know that Australian products are of excellent quality. We know that Australian farmers have sustainable processes.

"What this will do is provide iron-clad evidence to reassure the consumer."

Barker

MP Tony Pasin welcomed the grant saying the funding would put in place a two-pronged strategy to increase the market share for Australian nut growers which was great news for Riverland growers.

"The project will draw on industry research into high-growth markets for Aussie nuts including the UK and India," he said.

"The Australian Nut Industry Council will use the information to look at market research, including consumer behaviour, supply chains and currency risk.

"The funding will also look to take advantage of our international reputation for safe, quality and sustainably produced agricultural goods. This will include climate change adaptation, biosecurity, water use, soil and product traceability.

"Together, these two projects will enable consumers to know that they are buying a high-quality, sustainably produced product."

Mr Pasin said this was "great news" for the Riverland nut growers.

"The Almond industry in particular is one of Australia's most valuable horticultural exports worth over \$772 million in 2019/20 when 76,500 tonnes of Almonds were exported," he said.

Fast Facts:

- ✓ ATMAC grants have been awarded under the Australian Government's Agri-Business Expansion Initiative (ABEI).
- ✓ The Australian government has invested \$72.7 million through ABEI to help Australia's agricultural, forestry and fisheries industries diversify and expand their export markets.
- ✓ Australian nut industry value of production was \$1.14 billion in 2019/20.

In 2019/20 Australia exported more than \$1 billion worth of nuts.



Drought resilience and innovation grants now open

BARKER organisations have been encouraged to submit expressions of interest to the \$34.2 million Drought Resilience Innovation Grant program for projects to manage and prepare for the impacts of drought through the Federal Government's \$5 billion Future Drought Fund (FDF).

Barker MP Pasin said the Drought Resilience Innovation Grants would drive development, extension, adoption and commercialisation of drought resilience practices and technologies.

"Innovation is critical to our agriculture sector. This grant program is all about supporting those bright sparks out there with ideas that could transform agricultural practices, technologies and business models to make Australian farmers and communities more resilient to droughts," he said.

Mr Pasin said the Government was

looking to support a range of activities and the grants are split into three categories: an ideas grant, a proof-of-concept grant and an innovation grant.

"Ideas grants and proof-of-concept grants are for good ideas that need some further development. Innovation grants are for mature ideas," he said.

"Whether you're from an innovation organisation, the private sector, industry, not-for-profit organisations, community group or a consortium – now is the time to get involved.

Those wanting more information about the grants and how to apply should visit www.communitygrants.gov.au

More information about the FDF Research and Adoption Program can be found at: www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/future-drought-fund/research-adoption-program

Exports grants awarded to key industries in Barker

BARKER MP Tony Pasin has welcomed Federal Government funding to explore new export market opportunities for key industries in Barker.

Wine, meat and dairy industry bodies have all received Federal Government funding to build on and diversify overseas markets and promote our top-quality produce.

Australian Grape and Wine has been awarded almost \$1 million in grant funding to explore new markets including marketing and promotional pilots in emerging markets like Japan and South Korea.

"These pilots will look to get consumers on board in countries where there is great potential for growth such as Japan and South Korea where there is an enormous amount of untapped potential. This is great news for our local winemakers, exporters and grape growers here in Barker where we produce more wine by value and volume than any other electorate in Australia," he said.

Dairy Australia has been awarded a \$310,000 grant to help reduce technical barriers to trade in South East Asian markets.

"This grant is intended to identify and reduce the impact of technical barriers to trade such as product testing, shelf life and food labelling; requirements add costs to exporters and often impede their ability to get Australian products to

international markets," Mr Pasin said.

Mr Pasin said Dairy Australia would focus on identifying obstacles to trade in key markets of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) will use a \$1.52 million Australian Government investment to explore market diversification opportunities within untapped segments of three export markets - Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Vietnam.

New business development specialists will work on improving trade flows for Australian beef, sheep meat and goatmeat to build new business opportunities in trade, retail and foodservice sectors.

"This funding is about building stronger relationships with important trading partners and smoothing the path for the red meat industry. We want to the industry expand exports and improve product spread to future proof against significant market shocks," Mr Pasin said.

"Barker produces some of the highest quality produce and these grants awarded to their respective national industry bodies will mean greater opportunities for our local producers and everyone involved in these industries right across the supply chain."

AG NEWS

Trial sites help soil regeneration

IN 2018/19, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board started developing collaborative viticultural trials with the Consolidated Co-operative Winery (CCW) in the Riverland region of South Australia.

The project aims to explore soil regeneration techniques through field trials and is due to finish in June 2023.

The project is supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and contributions from the Consolidated Co-operative Winery grower group and the landscape levies.

Two trial sites were established in the Riverland: one at Renmark in the heavy river-flat cracking grey clay soil type and the other at Monash in red sandy loam soil.

The trials looked at how to improve common problems in drip irrigated viticulture of high soil compaction, low organic matter content and low natural soil fertility.

These conditions can lead to longer-term yield decline in orchard culture.

The situation is usually accompanied

by other negatives, such as water logging, root rots and general vine decline.

The trial structure formed into four main streams: • integration of under vine and inter-row cover crops • direct composted organic matter incorporation into the soil • fertigation of liquid organics through the drip system • general ripping.

Within each of these streams a range of variations are being trialled.

The trial so far has shown significant improvements to soil conditions and soil productivity.

This is a primary focus as soil productivity and condition improvement is seen as the most essential aspect.

And evidence that the soil and the agro-ecological system of the wine grape production scenario follows the best pathway to foster soil humus building potential.

The under-vine cover crop treatments have demonstrated a significant improvement to soil water infiltration rates and have generally generated good levels of labile soil carbon enhancing microbial activity.

The action of microbes under these treatments is just beginning to show signs of beneficial nutrient cycling, indicating the soil system is re-invigorating.

These treatments rely on annual cover crop sowing and early termination in the September/October period. The treatments have proven more suited to the sandy loam soil type.

The composted organic matter treatments are a mixture of surface spread and deep ripped organic matter incorporation.

These treatments have, in some cases shown massive increases in both the labile and resistant and inert levels of soil organic carbon together with tremendous rises in soil microbiology.

The benefits to vine health appears to be in the availability of naturally mineralised supplies of ammonium and nitrate and improved arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi.

These treatments are reliant on annual applications of composted grape marc and manures. They have proven to be well suited to both soil types.



The injected organic matter treatments were slow to establish.

They appeared to cause nitrogen drawbacks in the first year, followed by progressive improvements to soil microbiology and natural soil nitrogen levels into year two. While this treatment works well at both sites at this early stage, they are probably the best treatment option for heavy cracking grey clay soil type of the river valley.

For more information please phone the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board office, Berri on phone: 8580 1800.

Funding enabling proactive measures

THE Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board was recently the successful recipient of the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund-NRM Drought Resilience Program Grants.

The Board received \$197,000 to identify and measure current regenerative practices, and assess opportunities for the adoption of regenerative practices to increase resilience in the region's low rainfall farming systems.

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board sustainable agriculture team leader Tony Randall said this was an excellent opportunity to work with low rainfall growers to, localise the relevance of regenerative agriculture, and enable growers to identify the opportunities they see to incorporate regenerative practices into their farming systems.

"The funding will help us to work closely with our growers from across the South Australian and the Victorian Mallee and to improve soils without making costly mistakes," Mr Randall said.

"The experiences of the past

four dry years have driven the need to investigate regenerative agricultural practices that contribute to increasing carbon storage and turnover and enhancing soil health.

"We want to work with growers to determine what regenerative farming might look like in a low rainfall mixed farming system, and how this can complement existing practices that provide resilience against drought."

Mr Randall said the board was excited to be delivering this project in partnership with CSIRO, Birchip Cropping Group (BCG), Mallee Sustainable Farming (MSF), and the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (Mallee CMA), which bring a broad range of skills, knowledge and expertise to the project from across the South Australian and Victorian Mallee Regions.

This project is supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, CSIRO, Mallee Sustainable Farming, Birchip Cropping Group, and the Mallee CMA through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund NRM Drought Resilience Program Grants and the landscape levies.

Investigations helping concerns over dry saline land impacts

OVER the past 18 months, the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, together with Insight Extension for Agriculture's (AIR) Chris McDonough and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA's Brian Hughes, have been investigating the rising issue of dry saline land throughout the Northern Mallee and Murray Plains regions locally and also areas on the Eyre Peninsula.

This project is supported by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the landscape levies.

Concerns over the growing impacts of dry saline land degradation across the Murray Mallee and the Eyre Peninsula have increased in recent years.

A survey commissioned by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board and AIR Eyre Peninsula was conducted between December 2020 and January 2021 and distributed to farmers through various networks for online completion.

One hundred surveys were completed, including 43 from the Murraylands region.

Dry saline land or "magnesia patches" describe areas in paddocks that have become saline in the surface layer and toxic to plant growth.

This results in bare, unproductive patches of ground.

They are not driven by the underlying effects of groundwater, stream flows or perched water tables.

The impacts can be highly detrimental

to farming practices across a range of landscapes.

Following the survey, soil testing was carried out at many properties over various sites and landscapes, measuring pH and salinity at multiple depths to gauge the characteristics of the salt within the soil profile.

Two farmer case studies were developed with more detail about the individuals' farming systems, agronomics, livestock, grazing and what treatments and/or applications the farmer has used on the issue.

This investigation showed that dry saline land affects a wide range of soil conditions and appears in vastly different landscape environments.

Patches become highly saline in areas that have moderate to high levels of transient subsoil salinity.

They are also highly conducive to capillary rise of moisture and evaporation, leaving the salts behind on the surface.

This is exacerbated by environmental and land management conditions such as long hot summers, periods of drought and the loss of surface plant growth and/or vegetative cover.

The next phase of this project will be looking into treatments and management methods to rejuvenate the dry saline patches in much more detail.

If you think you may have dry saline patches on your property, please contact Zoe Starkey, Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board on 0408 416 684 or zoe.starkey@sa.gov.au.

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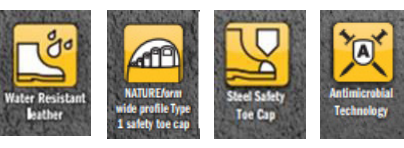
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Challenges face blossoming almond

WORDS JOSH BRINE | PHOTOGRAPHY PETA-MARIE PHILIPPOU

FULL STORY PAGES 32-34

OCAL almond producers are looking forward to harvest despite facing several challenges, including decreased profit margins due to an increasingly populated market and bans on chemicals in some export markets.

Drew Martin (pictured), owner of Omega Orchards in Murtho, said while the export market was currently strong, the price of almonds had tightened due to increased supply.

“California have been forecasting to grow a three billion-pound (1.36 million tonne) crop for three or four years, and they weren't quite doing it, but this past season they went over it,” he said.

“That was a psychological signal the market was looking for to say ‘Hang on a minute, there are a significant amount of almonds around at the moment’.”

Australian almond production was projected to reach 106,000 tonnes in 2020 – an almost 70,000 tonne-increase on a decade ago.

Mr Martin said running profitable almond orchards was becoming more challenging as international supply increased.

“If you were a Californian grower, where 80 per cent of all almonds are grown, you are actually at break-even now...” he said.

“In some lower yielding areas or places with water issues, they would be losing money growing almonds.

“In Australia... the benefit of the weak Aussie dollar at the moment keeps Australian growers just profitable for now.

“The almond industry is still profitable if

you've got the yield...

“Some people, if they're just starting out and have a big capital expenditure budget with young trees with low yields, they could find themselves in a situation where they're not making money already in Australia at these prices.

“But the growers out there who have been established for a while aren't sweating yet.”

Mr Martin said many growers needed to change their chemicals this year, after the European Union banned the popular fungicide mancozeb earlier this year.

“We'll have to use newer technology, and it will be three or four times the cost... because we are really limited for that market as to what chemicals we can use,” he said.

“There are other strategies we can use for the European market, and fortunately it's not where most of our tonnage goes to, but it's still an issue.

“If you were at break-even, you would have to seriously consider not marketing to Europe.”

Mr Martin said, through marketer Riverland Almonds, 60 per cent or more of his crop would be sold overseas, particularly to China, India, the Middle East and throughout Europe.

“It's tricky with shipping at the moment because there's a shortage in supply of food-grade containers to ship out of Australia in,” he said.

“Then there's logistical issues of ports being jammed with ships.

“It's not a big issue for almonds because they keep well and there's not a massive rush to get them to market.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



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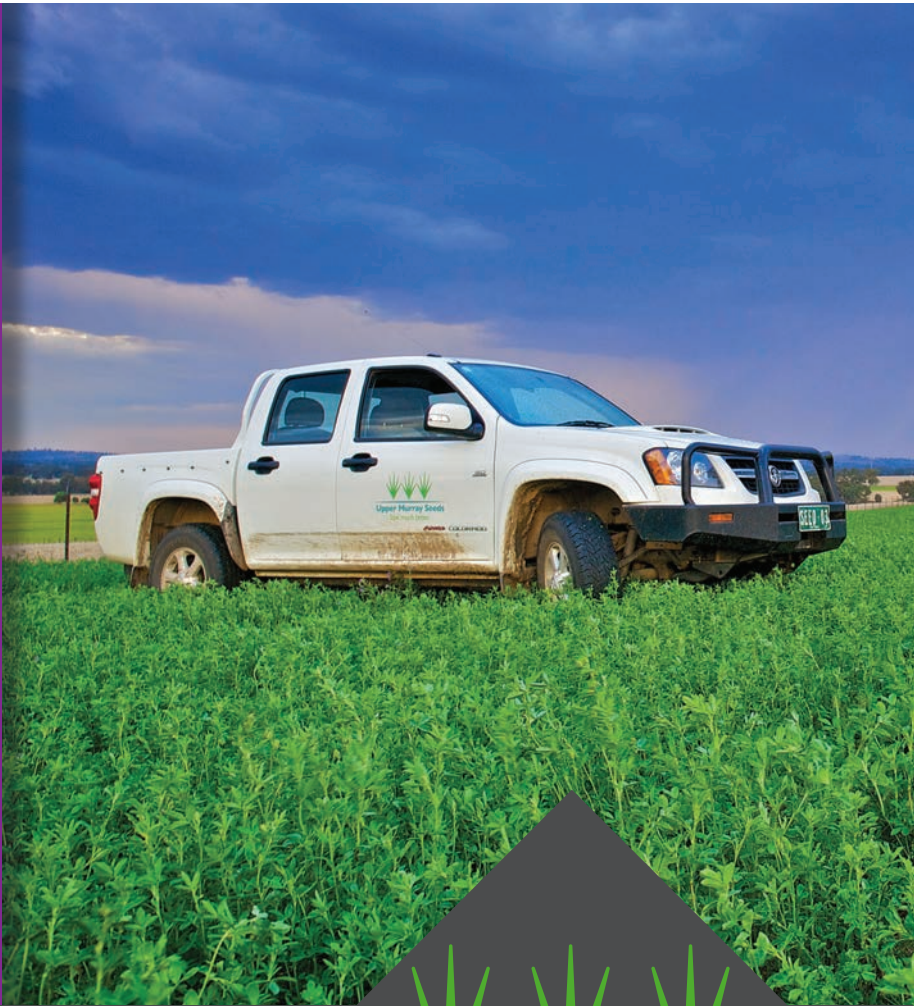
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“

There are maybe 50,000 or 60,000 bees in a hive...

Omega Orchards spans 450 acres, with the first trees planted in 2000.

Mr Martin said he hopes to average four tonnes of almonds per hectare each harvest – a total of more than 700 tonnes.

“Our last crop was good, we got the yield that we forecasted we would get and had really good quality,” he said.

“We also got the harvest done in a timely manner.

“Once you get into April the days are cooler and the mornings are a bit dewy, and you don’t need much moisture in the air for the almonds to not dry out, and then you can’t pick them up so it becomes a bit of a quality issue.”

During bloom and pollination, Mr Martin brought in more than 900 hives.

“There are maybe 50,000 or 60,000 bees in a hive, and an almond tree has maybe 20,000 flowers.

“It’s a bit of a numbers game, and you really want every flower to be visited by a bee at least once if not twice to make sure you get a good pollination.

“As the flower opens the pollen

is only viable for a few days for its maximum chance of getting pollinated and setting fruit to an almond.

“Every now and then during the end of July you can get days in the high 20s.

“When that happens, the pollen is not viable for long – it’s probably only viable for that day.

“Then you are relying on brand-new flowers to open up, and we don’t want to set every single flower.

“We only want to set about 10,000 flowers and that puts us in the realm of the yield we are trying to achieve.”

Mr Martin said rain throughout July had saved growers money by reducing the amount of irrigation required before flowering.

“What you want to do is get the profile full of water and then put your fertiliser on top, let the flowering do its thing, let the leaves start growing and then you start watering during flowering again.

“It means that growers will save 12 to 20 hours-worth of irrigation in power and water.

“It would be a few hundred dollars per hectare that’s being saved because of that opening season rain.”



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A focus on dryland farming

**INDUSTRY
SNAPSHOT**

Grain Growers CEO David McKeon spoke to Farmer magazine about the current outlook for dryland farmers in the Mallee, Riverland and Lower North...

What does the current season look like for SA in particular the Riverland, Mallee and Lower North regions?

David: Overall, SA is travelling well after a late start with good rainfall in June, post sowing. This is consistent with most of Australia's cropping regions, with some areas in WA and NSW heading towards record yields if good seasonal conditions continue.

The exception is the Mallee and Riverland regions, which have unfortunately had a very dry start, in some cases the driest first six months of the year on record.

How important is getting a decent rain in those areas?

David: Crops have been sown and are now up

across the Mallee, but soil moisture levels are extremely low so rain sooner rather than later will be critical for harvest prospects.

The Mallee and Riverland regions are generally low rainfall, and the farmers in these regions have become very efficient at conserving summer rainfall and maximising water use efficiency. However, some ongoing rain will be critical as the crops demand for moisture increases over coming months.

What varieties are doing well at the moment?

David: Although a late start, most crops have emerged well with some now getting their first applications of nitrogen.

A bit early to see any significant varietal differences for each crop type, but this year saw

higher than expected canola plantings due to high prices and the option of GM canola being available in SA for the first time ever.

What kind of impact has Covid-19 had on the grain exporting market? Have we entered a recovery period or are we still in a difficult patch?

David: Initially, there were many concerns about supply chain resilience and sourcing critical farm inputs, such as fuel, fertiliser and chemicals. Even though we've had some larger than expected demand for these products with big crops in recent years, the supply chains have held up remarkably well. At a local level, we are seeing farmers purchasing more inputs in advance, to help sure their supplies of critical inputs.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



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INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

A focus on dryland farming

In terms of logistics and movement of grain to export destinations, the industry has worked hard, continued to adapt, and overall there has been minimal impact. Since harvest, SA has been shipping grain at record pace.

Recently, we have been supporting AEGIC (the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre) to produce some great videos for our many international grain clients, who aren't able to undertake the usual Aussie farm and supply chain tours. These types of new approaches are critical to maintain a foothold in our key premium markets in a time where international travel cannot take place.

Have any other areas emerged as exporting options through the tough period due to Covid-19?

David: Australia had a huge crop last year, and with such a large export task, our markets were wide and varied. Although COVID-19 has altered some of the purchasing behaviour in international markets over the last year, the larger impacts have come from issues such as China placing tariffs on our barley industry – an issue we are currently supporting the Australian Government pursuing through the World Trade Organisation. The loss of the premium Chinese malt barley market has prompted a rapid shift into a range of new markets. For the first time, malt barley was exported to Mexico, and there is plenty of hard work underway to try and secure access for malt barley into other new markets such as India and Brazil. The Saudi Arabian feed barley market has also been a large volume

buyer of Australian barley during this period of change.

What are grain prices like at the moment? Do you expect they will rise, fall or stay consistent?

David: Canola prices are particularly strong on the back of dry conditions in Canada, one of Australia's export competitors to Europe. Wheat, barley and pulses are also at relatively strong levels. Seasonal conditions both here and overseas will dictate what happens to pricing going forward.

Do you have any advice for growers?

David: If you aren't a member of GrainGrowers, get in touch! Membership is free and we're here to be a voice for growers.

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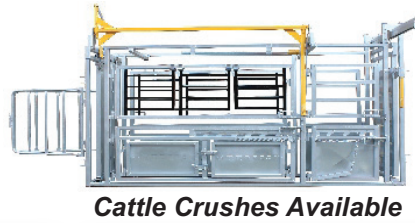
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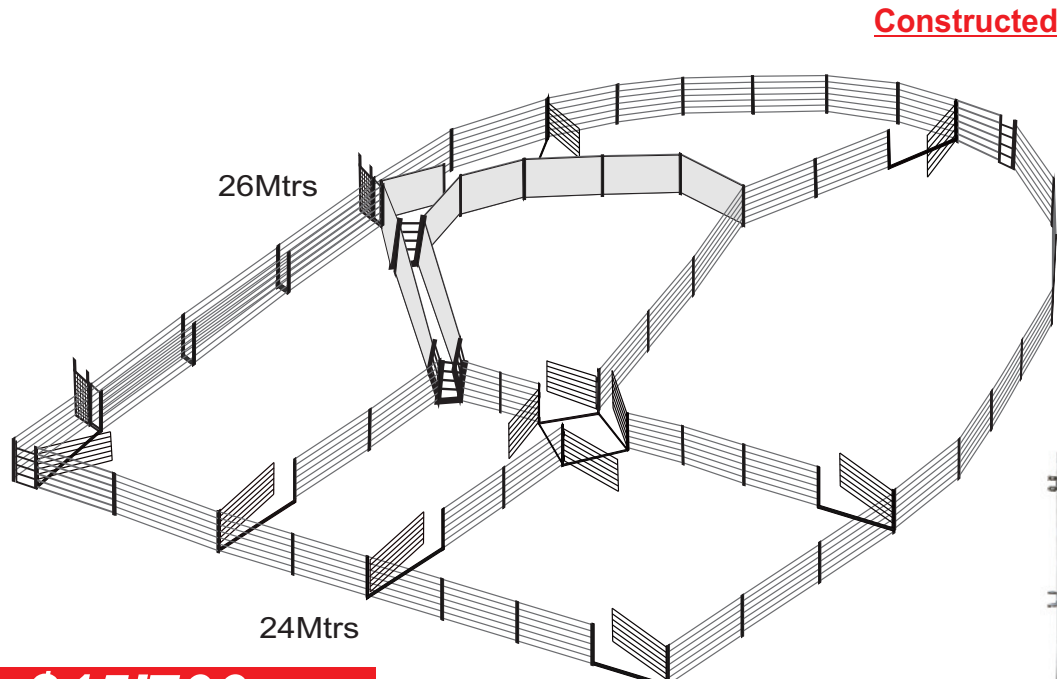


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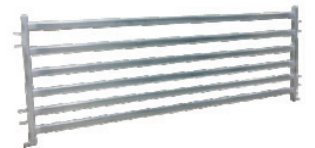
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Succession planning – keeping families together

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William Buck's expert team not only has decades of experience under their belt, but also deep personal roots in the farming sector.

businesses and individuals right across regional SA.

Growing up on a family farm in the Mid North and having her own small farm in the Adelaide Hills, Agribusiness Specialist at William Buck, Paula Liddle, is no stranger to the business issues that farming families face.

"We make it our business to



The firm's agricultural foundations date back 75 years with long-standing relationships forged with many primary producers and regional businesses ever since. It is now one of the strongest agri advisory firms in South Australia and is the largest locally owned accounting and advisory firm in the state.

It's the firm's unrivalled track record and personal understanding of the unique challenges facing rural and agricultural business that makes William Buck the advisors of choice among all family and corporate

understand the unique challenges, risks and opportunities facing each client," says Paula.

"While the industries may differ, it's often the same issues that continue to keep people up at night and succession planning is constantly high on that list.

"Handled well, it can take the business to the next level and create very favourable financial outcomes for the family. Handled poorly and the business and family relationships can be ruined. Our aim is to keep the family unit together."

A complete solution for agricultural businesses and families

Navigating the future with the Next Generation

Managing the transition of the business to the next generation is a common cause of stress among farmers. This can become more problematic as sons and daughters pursue careers away from the farm or move interstate.



William Buck's Agri team works closely with clients to establish a clear plan as early as possible enabling more effective long-term decision making for the farming enterprise and lessening the risk of disputes or disappointment down the track.

William Buck's five key tips for a successful succession

- 1. Plan, and plan early**
Asking yourself the right questions and having a clear understanding of your objectives are the key first steps.
- 2. Understand and embrace family dynamics**
It's vital that families have a clear decision-making hierarchy, well understood roles and responsibilities and there is clear and regular communication.
- 3. Maintain fairness and equity**
Careful consideration is required to ensure the allocation of assets is fair and equitable, particularly when non-farm siblings are involved.
- 4. Ensure your plan makes financial sense**
It's important to consider the structure of the business and the financial implications including future available cashflow for the business and family members, and taxation and transfer costs associated with any assets passed on.
- 5. Objective independent advice**
An experienced independent adviser can provide business and financial guidance free from the influence of family dynamics.

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The next chapter for Lowana

WORDS HUGH SCHUITEMAKER

FAMILY values have been central to the multi-generational success of a Riverland fruit business now set to write its next chapter.

Renmark-based stone-fruit suppliers Dino and Frances Ceracchi – who run Lowana Fruits with Dino's brother Mark and his wife Nicole – will soon step away from the business after more than 30 years.

Mrs Ceracchi said Dino and Mark took over the business that was established by their parents, Paul and Rosa.

"The name Lowana means beautiful girl," Mrs Ceracchi said.

"Paul thought it was fitting to have an indigenous name for the beautiful fruit that the ground produced.

"We started packing fresh fruit on a humble kitchen table under the shade of a tree in the front garden.

"We packed plums, apricots, peaches and nectarines... (and) this grew slowly into the professional packhouse we have today."

Mrs Ceracchi said a focus on quality produce, from a small number of varieties,

our planted patches accordingly.

"Lowana has sent fruit to China, Europe, Thailand, Taiwan, Canada, and India, as well as all the major markets in Australia."

Mrs Ceracchi said numerous members of their wider family had helped plant crops and pack produce.

"We would replant, as a group, any patches that we wanted to update according to market demands," she said.

"As the kids and grandchildren came along they would join us in the orchard at replanting time, and the packhouse, to help out with any chores that needed to be done.

"We always put emphasis on the family aspect of the business. Everybody had their own role to play and that was one of our strengths.

"Lowana faced many challenges over the years, including drought and flood, but everyone always pitched in and we overcame these obstacles."

Mrs Ceracchi said operating the business had allowed her – plus Dino, Mark, and Nicole – to build relationships with people across the world.

"The main highlight since we started (has been) the lifelong friendships we have forged along the way, both in various markets around the country, as well as staff members who have supported us over the years," she said.

"We've always taken pride in our multi-culturalism and had annual continental shared lunches that everyone contributed to, with a traditional dish from their own country of origin.

"We've had some great and unusual meals, from Thai curries to soda bread from Ireland, and let's not forget homemade bubble tea."

Mrs Ceracchi assured locals could "still look forward to lovely Lowana peaches and nectarines", with new operators leasing the property.

For further information regarding Lowana Fruits, contact sass.ceracchi@gmail.com.

We packed plums, apricots, peaches and nectarines...

saw Lowana become an international supplier of stone-fruit.

"Over the years we specialised only in peaches and nectarines," she said.

"This was a calculated and successful move as it gave us the ability to perfect our cultivating practices.

"We learned which varieties were sought after in different markets, not only nationally but also overseas and planned

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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ELLOUISE CRAWFORD

FULL STORY PAGES 44 & 45



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Ms Lewis Baida is preparing for a more thorough trial involving automated temperature logging technology, at the Turretfield Research Centre, in the summer.

A LOCAL animal science PhD candidate is exploring how automated technologies can be used to understand heat stress in sheep.

Bobbie Lewis Baida divides her time between the University of Adelaide's Roseworthy campus and the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) Turretfield Research Centre at Rosedale.

Her research has the potential to improve outcomes for the sheep industry, with heat stress a threat to sheep physiology, reproductive function and overall health and productivity.

"Heat stress in sheep is a huge loss to the industry and affects their general productivity, so wool and meat production, and then it also affects their reproduction," she said

"Whether that's not being able to fall pregnant, and when they do full pregnant, it can have an effect on lamb growth and development.

"We are seeing an average increase in annual temperatures in Australia, so these ramifications are only going to worsen as climate change progresses and summers get hotter."

Ms Lewis Baida has been working with researchers from the University of Adelaide's Faculty of Engineering, Computer and Mathematical Sciences to develop automatic ways to measure body temperature.

They have developed an automated temperature logger, within a mould, that can be non-invasively inserted into a sheep's vagina for the sake of collecting core body temperature.

The use of automated technologies reduces the need for manual temperature collection, which Ms Lewis Baida's research has found to be unreliable.

"At each time point we went into the shed to manually take a sheep's temperature, the vaginal temperature sensors were detecting a spike in their core temperature," Ms Lewis Baida said.

"So that's reiterating that human presence during data collection affects their body temperature – are you measuring a stress response or are you measuring their temperature?"

This summer, Ms Lewis Baida will undertake a more detailed and thorough trial of her equipment.

She hopes to not only identify heat stress in sheep but determine the true impact of hot conditions on sheep physiology and behaviour and on reproductive outcomes.

"What I want to do is see if we can tease apart those groups of ewes that naturally have a higher temperature and those that have a lower temperature and see if we can see a difference in their reproductive success, and the quality of their lambs," she said.

Heat stress in sheep is a huge loss to the industry and affects their general productivity...

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“As well as using tracking technology, like GPS to see what temperature their core temperature has to reach before they make a decision to go in the shade; basically, how the environment interacts with their behaviours and physiology.”

Ms Lewis Baida was this year announced as the 2021 recipient of the SARDI Science Bursary for Women.

The bursary is awarded each year to a female graduate in the agriculture, agriculture, fisheries, and natural resource management or forestry science fields in South Australia.

Ms Lewis Baida said it was “very rewarding” to be recognised for her research, and she intends to put her bursary towards buying more thermometry equipment.

She’s also a recipient of a Davies Livestock Research Centre scholarship, which supports her financially to complete her PhD.

Having grown up on a hobby farm in the Adelaide Hills, Ms Lewis Baida said she undertook an undergraduate degree with the vision of eventually becoming a veterinarian.

However, after her Honours project – looking into heat stress and the benefits of a nutritional supplement – she realised research was a path she wanted to follow.

She said it has been rewarding to run her own project and trials, and she is excited about where her research may lead.

“I’ve been able to validate the technology which was exciting, but I’m really looking forward to getting a larger field base trial happening and getting a lot more informative and valuable data,” she said.

Ms Lewis Baida’s device is the first of its type, with existing automated temperature loggers typically designed as an ear tag, and better suited for use with cows.

Bobbie Lewis Baida is in the second year of her PhD, looking at the development of automated technologies to better understand the effect of heat on sheep.



I’ve been able to validate the technology which was exciting, but I’m really looking forward to getting a larger field base trial happening and getting a lot more informative and valuable data



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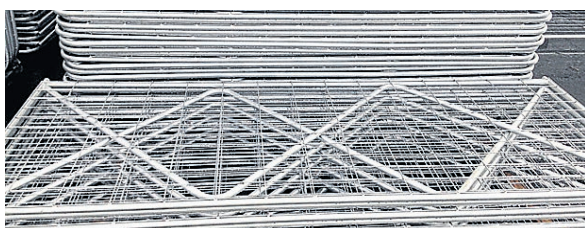
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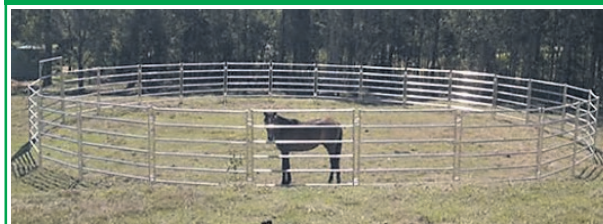
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The art of betting on yourself

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY LIAM PHILLIPS

THE story of Lost Penny Wines, located in the heart of the Barossa Valley in Ebenezer, required a number of moving parts to all come together at exactly the right time – and so far, so good.

The property was passed down to the great grandparents of Nick Riebke after his great grandfather, Paul Riebke, married into the Gunder family, who owned the farm. This on its own was out of the norm for the time for a daughter to inherit the family property.

Through the years the land has been used to grow different things, but Nick said

he and wife Carol (pictured) decided early on to focus on grapes.

"I wouldn't say it was a mixed farm, but we had some cropping and that sort of thing as well that we used to do," he said.

"We decided to get somebody else in to do that, so we had proper crop rotations happening and that sort of thing, and we can just concentrate on the vineyard."

For someone who owns a vineyard, Nick found his perfect match in Carol, who was a qualified winemaker when they met. She started working in the wine industry before the pair got married 16 years ago.

CONTINUED ON PAGES 48 & 49

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Farmer

Sharing a passion for wine, Carol said when an incredible opportunity arose with an overseas client, the pair decided to jump at it.

"It was around 2017 when we were fortunate enough that we actually had a distributor who I'd worked with in my previous job ask us why we weren't making any wine ourselves," she said.

"He said 'you've got the vineyard, the skills, the grapes and the qualifications – why don't you start up your own?' and told us he'd support us in whatever we might sell.

"It gave us the confidence to take that leap, because wine, like any industry, goes up and down, and in that 2017-2018 range there was just so many brands and labels out there that if we didn't have that foot in the door we probably wouldn't have worried about it."

Carol said the relationship between her family and the family of her Swiss business contact evolved beyond a business partnership – something she said felt "old school".

"We had a business relationship, but after being fortunate enough to go over to Zurich a number of times and help out with a wine festival called Expovina, it has evolved into a friendship between two families," she said.

"We need them, because we sell close to 90 per cent of our wine to Switzerland now, and they need a source they can trust."

Nick said after going through their first vintage at the home farm in 2016, they quickly realised they needed to aim for a product that suited their land.

"In the first vintage, we actually had some semillon planted at the time, so we picked it for that vintage," he said.

"That's when we decided that, due to how much water you need for white grape varieties prepared to red, we'd move away from that and really focus on what's good for this region.





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From the left: Owen (14), Carol, Elli (10), Jake (12) and Nick

It's not just about our reputation as a winery, but we're representing the Barossa Valley as a region...

"Over the years of working in one place the way I did, you learn how to really keep to their particular style, but I'm very fortunate here on the property that we have such a variety of fruit to source from, and it's so interesting, even on the property, the different type of soil types.

"If we pick a shiraz out one side of the property and then go down to the other side, it's going to be very different, so you can actually mould it quite differently."

While Carol said her experience at her previous workplace was invaluable, she also was able to notice inefficiencies in the process that has influenced the way she makes her own wine.

"My biggest thing that I wanted to do differently with Lost Penny was that my previous workplace was a bottle-in-time principle, meaning they would bottle it as it was required," she said.

"So say we were bottling a shiraz and it was all under the same product line, but you might bottle one six months earlier than the next one, and by that time the wine has already evolved and changed.

"That's where I looked at it from the consumer's side, and decided we'd bottle everything when it's ready so the whole batch is exactly the same.

"If you buy a bottle from us today, and you come back in a month's time you will be able to buy a bottle that is exactly the same blend as you bought the first time instead of it sitting in oak or in a tank waiting for when it's needed."

Carol also has a unique insight into Switzerland's wine market, having run a stall for eight hours per day for 15 straight days on a boat parked on a Zurich lake on a number of different occasions for Expovina.

"Some people overseas have this opinion on Australian wine because I think it got the reputation of being really 'big'," she said.

"There was a period of a few years when winemakers would oak things really heavily, and now it's about going back the other way and making it more approachable, where you can drink it younger.

"That has probably been the biggest progression, and being over in Zurich conducting these tastings I get that feedback straight to my face.

"It's about taking them on a journey so we can choose the varieties that suit them...

"They might not like my shiraz, but because I'll have other Barossa wines there as well I can say 'try this', and all of a sudden they like it, and then they can try all the other things that winemaker makes.

"It's not just about our reputation as a winery, but we're representing the Barossa Valley as a region, and it's important that they know every wine from the Barossa is going to be its own thing, and every producer does something different."

After a great year for the vineyard, Lost Penny Wines' vintage went from just under 10 tonnes in 2020, to nearly 24 tonnes in 2021. While the goal is not to get much bigger, there is a desire to get a stronger foothold in more markets, especially local.

"One thing we know for sure is that we don't want to employ people, because like we've said all along, we want to be able to do it all ourselves," Carol said.

"Down the track opening up new markets is always a thing I'm very open to, and I've talked to a lot of different markets to see how we could make wines to fit, but it's about being true to yourself.

"Twenty-five tonnes is the maximum we'd ever do every vintage, but it has built up very quickly.

"There's been a lot of drive behind that on the wanting of different wines, but we'll get to that point where we eventually realise this is a good amount that we can manage ourselves, and that's when I think it will be about working out what to allocate what stays domestic and what gets sent overseas.

"We're lucky to have two local bottle shops – Angas Park Cellars in Nuriootpa and Tanunda Cellars in Tanunda – who were there to support us when we walked in and let them know who we were and what we're doing.

"We've had a lot of really important support up to this point that we're incredibly thankful for, and it'll be exciting to see what's next."



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LOCALLY owned and operated since its inception in 1985, Alpha Industries has become a trusted name in delivering quality manufacturing using entirely Australian BlueScope steel.

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and it feels that way," she said. "We're very service and price orientated, and we don't tell our customers to just fill in some online form about what they want, it's very personalised when you do it with us.

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While Alpha Industries is more than equipped to handle everyday home jobs, Ms Datsopoulos said their services can scale up to much bigger projects as well.

"We do specialize in sheds, not just home sheds, but big farm sheds, and rural sheds," she said.

"But then we also do your verandahs and carports, the nice curves over pools, and we do the individual fancier stuff that people want at home. "From that, we also do the big commercial sheds that people are putting on their businesses on commercial sites, and even hangars, so we really do have the whole range."

Ultimately, Ms Datsopolous said the pride Alpha Industries takes in its work, and its commitment to using 100 per cent Australian products means there is not much more you can ask for.

"We pride ourselves on only using Australian bluescope steel," she said.

"Some of our competitors use a lot of import also, although they may not publicize it, but it's a well-known fact. So I think people who want to

We're very service and price orientated...

reinvest in Australia are buying from us because they're buying Australian steel and the money is going back to Australian people and employees.

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ALPHA INDUSTRIES





Farming life goes on after fiery tragedy

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HUDSON

FULL STORY PAGES 52 & 53



Mentally, I think we've still got some scarring...

THE farming dream still goes on at Hillier Farms despite tragedy hitting it in late 2019.

After taking over the farm from his father in 2016, Ted Ostrozny and his wife Tary (pictured), along with help from Ted's dad and Tary's mum, set out to move into chicken farming.

However, disaster struck in December 2019. After moving up to 1500 chickens from 200 which they had started with only weeks prior, they would

lose almost everything in the Hillier fire. "It was pretty devastating. For my mother-in-law and my father, my wife – it's a family business, and we just wanted to give it a crack," Ted said. "We pretty much lost everything." Both Ted and Tary added the support from the community, family and friends had been "unbelievable".

"We've got into a few Foodlands now, we're in about 28 stores across Adelaide, which is fantastic and the local support has helped significantly," Ted said. "We've really appreciated all the help from the locals, neighbours helping out, like (when) I lost my tractor."

"My neighbour and I, we call ourselves the next gen and he's helped with things like lending me his tractor."

However, they both admitted there's still some scars from that December two years ago.



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“Mentally, I think we’ve still got some scarring,” Tary said.

“Whenever we see in summer, those big days, we are cautious. Very cautious.

“We’ve got extra water tanks, portable water units. You’ve got to have a fire plan.

“People don’t realise you really need one and the CFS and MFS do a great job.

“People on the land need to be very, very mindful.

“It doesn’t matter how big your block is. If it’s two acres or 200 acres, you still need to have a plan.”

The dream is still alive for the Ostronzy family, one they’re working overtime to see happen.

“Dad’s been on this property since 2005. We came from a larger property at Mallala and dad came here to semi retire,” Ted said.

“We thought, well, we’ve got to do something with it to generate some form of income and pay the bills and things like that.

“We knew we weren’t going to be big enough to be broad-acre cropping and we knew we could do something in terms of some pasture stuff.”

Ted said he drew some inspirational from others who were working with chickens.

He said it was important for the farm to become self-sufficient, and also to find a way to utilise the farm through regenerative farming.

“My father had sheep on this farm, and that was just chewing and eating everything...

“(So) we needed to come up with something or some way that we could regenerate all the crops that they were eating without bringing it down to

a dustbowl.

“We looked into the chooks, we saw the model interstate that would work and that’s where I guess the Hillier Farms started with the hens.

“I think the goal is to officially just live off the land, have a reasonable income. We don’t want to be rich.

“We’d like to expand. We’d like to go probably another 1500 birds.

“We think there’s enough in it for two of us and that way we’re completely on the land. At the moment, we’re both still sort of half-working corporate half out here on the farm.

“We don’t have much social time. We’re here every night, every day.”

The chickens enjoy life in significantly sized paddocks, but need to be mindful of predators.

“In the summer and springtime, we generally just let them free range across the paddocks,” Tary said.

“But going into winter, their predators come out and scoop out chickens.

“So for better control of that, we’ve put some temporary fencing around some electric netting and it works sometimes.

“Having the two Maremmas has definitely helped a fair bit and now they’re starting to also learn that hawks are also predators and then stepping down and taking a chook.

“We want to make sure that the product’s good so we think that if it’s a happy hen, it’s a happy egg, and they’re having a good life.

“We are chemical free here. We don’t spray, we don’t do anything, and we just let it be.”



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Union calls for piecework wage an attack, says Tim

WORDS HUGH SCHUITEMAKER



A RIVERLAND MP says the possible introduction of a minimum wage for fruit pickers would force Riverland growers to “pull out their trees”, while a national industry body says the added financial cost would put businesses at risk.

The Fair Work Commission recently began a hearing regarding the potential introduction of a minimum wage for piecework, following claims of numerous seasonal workers being underpaid.

Chaffey MP Tim Whetstone said introducing a minimum wage would add extra financial costs for local growers.

“Nobody has ever said picking fruit is an easy job, and some people are just not suited to it,” Mr Whetstone said.

“I met with growers... to discuss this issue, and they said if this is what it comes down to they will pull out their trees, because they know they will go broke.”

Mr Whetstone said utilising the piecework system had maximised efficiency across numerous primary industries.

“In my previous life piecework was the norm, and I’ve seen it benefit pickers and families with extensive above-award wages,” he said.

“Piecework – particularly in the agriculture industry – has always been reward for effort.

“Shearers are paid by the sheep, fishers are paid by the kilogram, some builders are paid by the meterage, and bricklayers are paid by the brick.

“So I think it’s a bit rich for the AWU to come in and target an industry that puts food on the table of every Australian.”

National Farmers’ Federation CEO Tony Mahar said the current piecework structure meant payment

rates had to allow workers to earn “at least 15 per cent above the horticulture award wage”.

“Rather than offering a set, hourly rate, piecework rates allow workers to earn at a rate that directly corresponds to how much they pick or pack in a given workday,” Mr Mahar said.

“For example, a worker on an hourly rate might earn less than \$25 per hour over seven hours and pick five to six bins of apples, over the same period, a worker on piece rates might earn \$45 per bin, effectively doubling their earnings.

“Employment is the number one expense for many growers, at as much as 66 per cent of their operating costs, and any significant increase to that could see businesses fail.”

Mr Whetstone said a minimum wage for pickers would have prevented the success of a recent initiative to quarantine Pacific Island seasonal workers in the Riverland.

“We know we’ve got chronic labour shortages, and if it wasn’t for the Pacific Islanders in our region we would be in serious trouble,” he said.

“(Piecework) gives them a reward for their effort, for turning up every day and working hard.

“If you put someone who’s highly productive next to someone who isn’t, it raises the question of why should the person work so hard?”

Mr Whetstone said continued co-operation was needed between the state government and industry to ensure fair work conditions for all piecework employees.

“(The unions) would represent a very small minority of the workforce, that isn’t in tune with what it means for the picker, the farmer, the packer and the consumer,” he said.

“This is just another attack on food producers by unions who have no idea.

“If there’s an employer doing the wrong thing, they need to be reported to the ombudsman, but the Riverland has been born and raised on piecework... and it has worked extremely well.

“There is a small minority of employers that have done the wrong thing, and they deserve to have the book thrown at them. But I think abolishing piecework is basically throwing the baby out with the bathwater.”



Bookpurnong citrus grower Michael Ingerson says ideal growing conditions, including a mild summer, have contributed to an outstanding crop. PHOTO: supplied

Riverland oranges and mandarins ‘best in years’

PERFECT growing conditions have helped create the best tasting oranges and mandarins seen across the Riverland in years, farmers say.

Bookpurnong grower Michael Ingerson, whose family has grown citrus for 92 years, is enthusiastic about the season.

“I reckon it’s some of the best citrus we’ve grown for a long, long time, and it’s not just me saying this,” Mr Ingerson said.

“The Riverland has had a mild summer. I think we only had four days over 42 degrees and that’s pretty unheard of.

“Our imperial mandarins and navel oranges have been testing highly for eating quality.

“It should be a great season for fruit flavour.”

Mr Ingerson and his family’s favourite citrus at the moment is the imperial mandarin.

“We know kids love snacking on mandarins: they are easy to peel, seedless

and naturally sweet,” he said.

“They won’t be disappointed this year.”

All citrus varieties are renowned as being a vitamin C source, contributing to the body’s immune system in cold and flu season, and providing folate, which is important for growing bodies and expectant mums.

Citrus Australia says one orange, mandarin or lemon contains an entire daily recommended intake of vitamin C, as well as antioxidants and fibre necessary for a healthy body.

Citrus Australia CEO Nathan Hancock thanked all consumers for buying Australian.

“When you buy Aussie citrus you support our Aussie growers, who in turn support our rural towns across the state from Murray Bridge to Waikerie, Loxton and Renmark,” Mr Hancock said.

“Add them to your weekly shop. Citrus is great in the fruit bowl or fridge at this time of year and they keep very well – that is, unless they’re eaten in the first few days.”

RIVERLAND CITRUS UPDATE



Citrus Growers SA chairman, Mark Doecke, says a shortage of shipping containers, plus Covid-19 restrictions, are impacting the citrus season. PHOTO: supplied

Container shortage causing headaches

A SHORTAGE of shipping containers is hampering the export of Riverland citrus. Citrus Growers SA chairman, Mark Doecke, who has a fruit property at Sunlands, said the region had been hoping to export up to 100,000 tonnes of citrus this year, including navel oranges, mandarins, and lemons. But he said a shortage of freight containers and labour was causing serious delays to the season. "The lack of containers and sea freight to move the volume of fruit we need to move is the issue," Mr Doecke said. "As we are going through the season, there are issues that we weren't expecting."

The Riverland citrus industry

mainly exports to Asian countries, which include China, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. Mr Doecke said attempts to forward plan and ensure sufficient shipping containers for the citrus season had been unsuccessful. He said fruit was having to be stored in cool rooms and also left on trees because of the delays. "Cold rooms are at capacity, containers are short and we are starting to look at the next variety, but we haven't finished the one we are on now," Mr Doecke said. He said Covid-19 restrictions interstate were also slowing down the transport of citrus to the eastern states. "For exports, the problem is a shortage of containers, and for domestic markets it is the Covid shutdown," Mr Doecke said. "The quality of fruit has been okay."

Mr Doecke said Riverland citrus growers have finished the early navel orange season and were expected to finish picking mid-season navels this week. He said the late navel season was expected to continue until October, when the valencia season was due to start.



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Sixty Eight Roses hashtags its way to success

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PETA-MARIE PHILIPPOU

THE power of social media turned a local family's small project into a globally recognised wine label, bringing their vision to life.

Berri's Koutouzis family, who have grown vineyards for more than 25 years on a 60-acre block, started producing wine for themselves three years ago.

After impressing themselves with the product, they created their own label called Sixty Eight Roses, which symbolises the family's allotment number and the array of flora surrounding their home.

Sixty Eight Roses director and sales manager Yianni Koutouzis (pictured) said creating his own wine label had been something on his bucket list.

"Our (family's) vineyards were planted by hand by my parents more than 25 years ago and over the years we've seen some great flavours coming through," he said.

"The grapes have had a really great colour and consistency so I thought 'why not make some wine for home?'"

"After giving it a go and realising how great the quality, consistency and flavours were, we thought we had to start something a little bit commercial, so then came Sixty Eight Roses."

Mr Koutouzis partnered up with local winemaker Eric Semmler to help produce the label's wine.

"I built a strong relationship with Eric – from 919 Wines – and thought he would be the perfect person to get on board to help us produce our wine," Mr Koutouzis said.

"Before the process begins, I go through the vineyard and then call Eric over to assess the grapes before they get picked and made into wine."

"We then together come up with an agreement as to when they'll be picked and at what time, sugar level

and colour.

"We work together to create a style and then they get sent off."

Mr Koutouzis said he shared the

label's journey over multiple social media platforms since its first vintage in 2019.

CONTINUED ON PAGES 60



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countries
we can
export
too.”

“I made Facebook, Instagram and TikTok accounts for the label and each of them became extremely popular,” he said.
“I have a lot of friends in Europe who own businesses or are in industries where social media is huge and they have people working full-time on their accounts.
“I’ve noticed in Europe Instagram is starting to drop and TikTok is booming.
“Because we’re a new business and extremely small with no cellar door or anything, I knew I had to do something to not only get our label noticed, but put the whole Riverland on the map.
“Currently I only have distributors in Adelaide and my wine is available at the Renmark Club, but since I have been using TikTok, distributors from overseas have reached out and asked if we can export our wine.

“I’ve had a lot of interest from Korea, Germany and Singapore in particular.”
Mr Koutouzis said he looks forward to watching the boutique business grow.
“At the moment it’s kept in the family but eventually we want to grow, hopefully open a cellar door and employ people to join our label,” he said.
“The more we grow, the more countries we can export too.
“Receiving personal messages on social media and emails from overseas countries and sponsors has been fantastic.
“Hearing people from across the world say they love our product’s image and the fact that we’re a boutique business in a small region is great because that was our aim and social media has helped get us there.
“We want more visitors coming to our

region and trying its wonderful wine and food.”
Mr Koutouzis said each of the label’s products were “made with love”.
“We currently have four different wines: rose, syrah, vermentino and tempranillo,” he said.
“All our wine is vegan friendly and our vermentino and tempranillo is certified organic.
“We started with one and then slowly added more as the years went by.
“Our aim is to introduce a new wine annually.”
Sixty Eight Roses delivers its products free-of-charge regionwide.
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HOLY COW: Will it be third time lucky for our Alizah?

WORDS STEPHANIE THOMPSON



LOXTON beef handler Alizah Fogden will have to wait just a bit longer to represent South Australia and compete against some of the nation's finest.

Miss Fogden (pictured), 21, was announced as a national finalist for the 2021 Agricultural Shows Australia National Young Judges finals scheduled to be held at the recently cancelled Royal Queensland Show (The Ekka).

However, due to Covid restrictions, Miss Fogden will now compete at the Sydney Royal Easter Show next year.

"I am looking forward to actually

being able to do it," she said.

"We go to Sydney with the cows, so I know the arena there and know my way around."

It is the second setback for Miss Fogden, who qualified at the 2019 Royal Adelaide Show and was initially set to compete in New Zealand.

Despite the setbacks, Miss Fogden said she was hoping for a case of "third time lucky".

"It will be an experience of parading on a whole new level," she said.

"It's an exciting opportunity of learning."

Miss Fogden began parading cattle at the age of eight and said she enjoyed the whole process.

"Parading the animal is the final hurrah of all the hard work you've put in at home," she said.

"I really enjoy getting them in the ring and putting them forward to the judge."

Miss Fogden said she and her family are now turning their attention to the Royal Adelaide Show in a couple of weeks.

Miss Fogden is the daughter of Peter and Justine Fogden and the granddaughter of Richard ('Dick') and Deidre.



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Field Days organisers promise successful Covid-safe event next month...

Whatever it takes

EXTRAORDINARY measures will be taken to ensure the 2021 Riverland Field Days goes ahead.

Organisers have been working with SA Health since February on a raft of Covid-19 compliance measures aimed at maximising crowd numbers for next month's event.

"It will mean a lot of extra things we've got to do," said Riverland Field Day executive manager, Tim Grieger (pictured).

"But we're going to do them, because we want the event to be safe for everybody, and we want people to come and enjoy it."

Compliance measures will include changes to how people move about the site.

"There will be changes to the flow of people in and out of the pavilions," Mr Grieger said.

"Density will (also) be monitored."

Mr Grieger said the unpredictable nature of Australia's Covid-19 fortunes had necessitated a string of changes and updates for Field Days organisers.

"The extra load this year of course is the Covid-management plan, that I've been working on since February," he said.

"I think I'm up to about version four

or five, but it's coming together well. We have put together a comprehensive plan and are working with SA Health on the final detail."

Held just outside Barmera at a dedicated site, the region's biggest event was cancelled last year, robbing the region of a major economic boost.

Mr Grieger said organisers had been "confidently planning" for the 2021 event and said preparations were "on track" despite South Australia's recent snap seven-day lockdown.

He said maintaining a dual focus would be key to ensuring the 2021 event's success.

"In terms of planning, I'm pretty much working normally, as I would do, keeping the matter of Covid to one side," he said.

"But of course I'm always aware that it's an issue that we have to live with and work with.

"It's a factor that weighs on your mind, and adds that extra layer of stress and pressure.

"I've found I've had to be very focused to plan effectively and ensure that we don't miss anything."

Mr Grieger remains optimistic the influx of interstate exhibitors and stallholders that usually feature at the



event can again be on hand this year.

"We get a large percentage of exhibitors from Victoria and they're all very keen to be there – the support and enthusiasm shown by exhibitors from all sectors has been outstanding," he said.

“Exhibitor numbers are on par with previous events and we expect to reach our target.

"I think everybody is sitting there with their fingers crossed. We know the risks, we know what can happen, but we're putting that to one side and working

and planning to make this great event happen.

"I'm personally very confident that it'll go ahead very well."

Mr Grieger said the Riverland community was eagerly anticipating the 2021 event.

"People are very enthusiastic to see the event go ahead," he said, "and that's really encouraging."

The 2021 Riverland Field Days are scheduled for Friday, September 17, and Saturday, September 18.

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