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GROUP NEWSPAPERS

Farmer

RIVERLAND. MALLEE. LOWER NORTH

SUMMER 2020



**Family, farming
and fresh ideas**

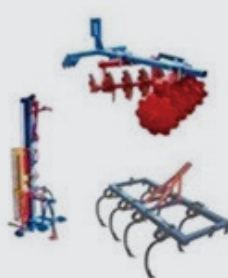
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Welcome to this edition of Farmer!

WE are heading into summer, and coming off a positive spring period for many industries in the Riverland, Mallee and Lower North.

This year's rainfall has eclipsed the previous several years, and with that comes a feeling of hope – and boy do we need that in a year like this.

Again, our team of journalists have worked hard to produce stories that represent a true cross-section of what SA grows and farms.

From an environmentally friendly egg farmer, to a booming florist and a proud, family-orientated winemaker – this edition of Farmer showcases the stories of many spirited and passionate South Australians.

Again, we have spoken to

industry experts from the Riverland, Mallee and Lower North about the important issues they are facing and how their respective seasons are looking.

Mallala dryland farmer John Lush sums it up best when speaking about what rainfall can do to the outlook of farmers.

"When it started raining, the change even in my own attitude was huge," he said.

"After the last two years that were dry, when it turned around and finally started to rain you thought 'wow'.

"All of a sudden you start thinking about what you'll need to develop in the future to take your farm to the next level."

As John points out, not only does rain bring relief it actually triggers farmers to evolve and invest in the future.

We hope our readers enjoy the stories in this edition of Farmer, and again we thank all the businesses that have continued to show such strong support for this publication.

We also hope our hard-working farmers have the opportunity to take a well-earned break over Christmas and enjoy time with family.

Jane Kuerschner
Taylor Group Newspapers
Special publications editor



Farmer

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Will, Taylor and Charlotte Swinstead, 16 months, pictured at their Overland Corner Estate property.

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Publisher

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INSIDE



15 **Not your average beef**



24 **Flower power**



38 **Top Block's historic vines**



22 **Grape report**



36 **Avo's smashing season**



45 **Cherries ripe for the picking**

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Family farm's practices environmentally egg-ceptional

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BRENDAN SIMPKINS

BROTHER and sister team Richard (pictured) and Ellen Chatterton are yielding strong results at their family's Riverside Farm through utilising environmentally friendly farming methods.

The pair are the sixth generation of their family to run the farm, located just outside of Lyndoch in the Barossa Valley.

It was established in 1848 by Joseph Barritt and has been in the Chatterton family for more than 170 years.

Originally the land spanned 100 hectares but has expanded over the years to currently sit around 1000 hectares.

The mixed farming property has traditionally had a focus on the production of sheep, cropping and vines.

Today, though, it is moving in a different direction, with regenerative and rotational style farming practices being implemented.

Richard said previously conventional farming had been undertaken on the property, but he is keen to move away from that.

"For me I would really like to change that," he said.

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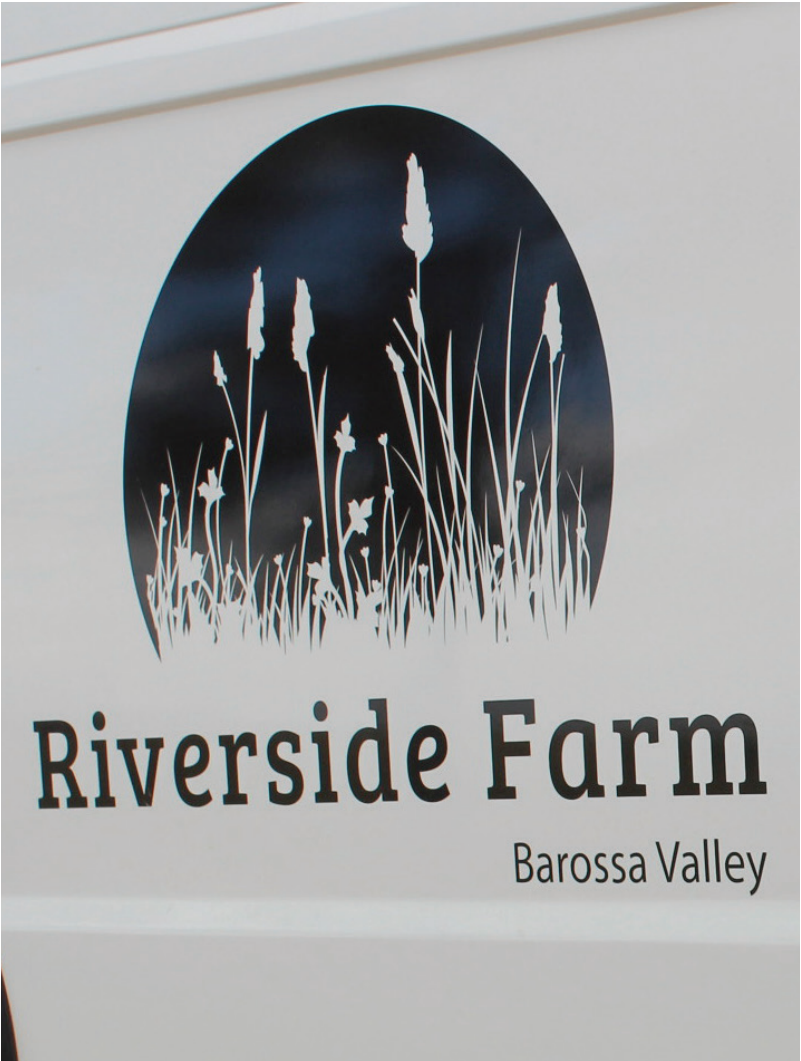
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"I think that conventional (industrial) farming can be pretty destructive... I do think there are better ways to farm that still return a profit but not at a cost to the environment and the soil."

Richard produces pastured free-range eggs with a stocking density of less than 90 hens per hectare that roam free on the property.

They are guarded by Maremma sheep dogs, protecting the hens from foxes and other predators on the farm.

Richard said farming using this rotational and free-range method is more beneficial for the environment and the soil.

"It is less intensive, so the impact is less on the environment and the ground," he said.

"A lot of the chicken

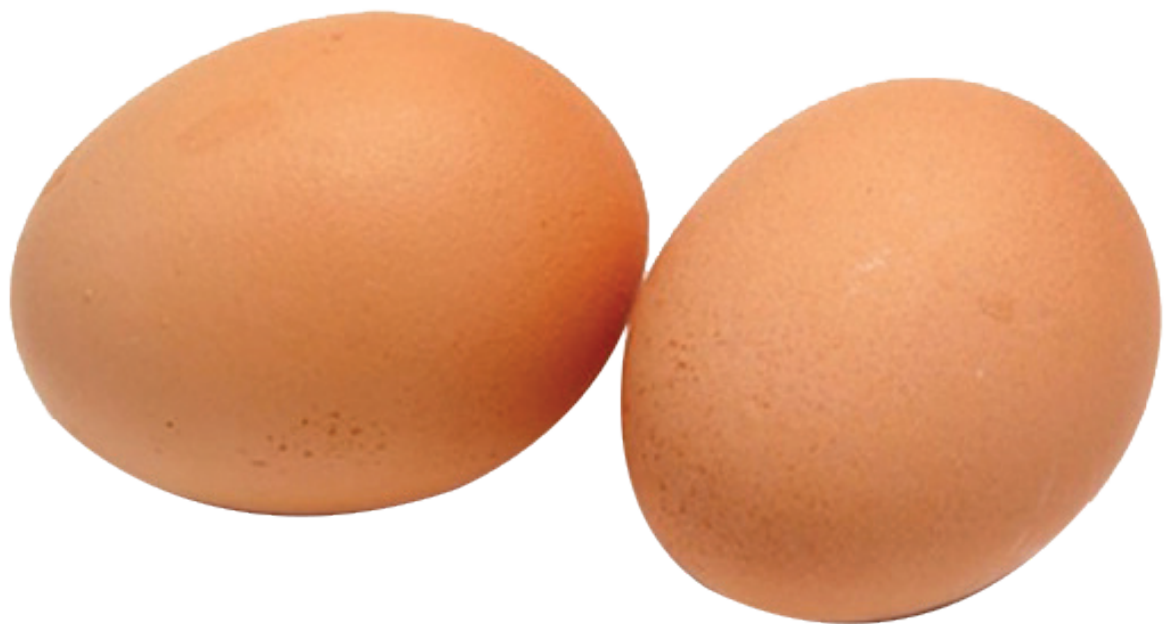
farms, they are in big sheds where they spend pretty much their whole lives with limited access to the outdoors, and then you have issues with waste management, not to mention disease and infection."

With this rotational-style system, the hens roost and lay their eggs in a mobile "caravan" that is moved around the paddock a few times a week.

Over the course of a year the paddock is fertilized by the hens' droppings, regenerating the soil and building its microbiome.

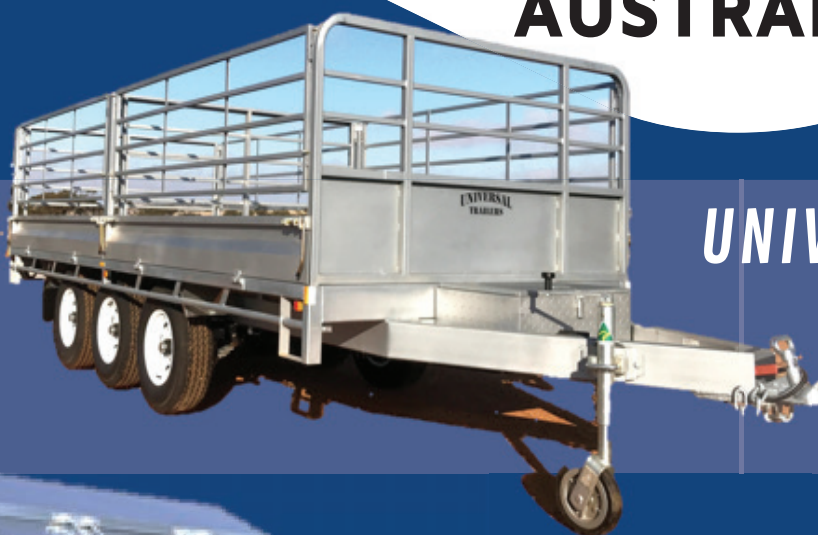
The scratching of the ground is also beneficial for halting runoff and trapping water which is soaked up by the soil along with the fertilizer.

Richard said farming using rotational methods creates a noticeable difference.



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"Last summer these two were the only green paddocks on the whole farm, so it really makes a massive difference with all that fertilizer and animal activity," he said.

It is also more ethical for the animals, allowing them to live how they would in nature.

"This way they can live freely, they are never restricted and they can go where they want so it is a pretty good life for them," Richard said.

Riverside is the only pastured, free-range producer in the Barossa Valley and Richard said it was a point of difference for the farm.

Eggs produced on the farm are notably different to other alternatives on offer.

Richard said Riverside's eggs were fresher than those you can purchase in supermarkets.

"You notice with our eggs the whites are a lot firmer and they



You notice with our eggs the

whites are a lot firmer...

sit up higher, whereas a lot of the conventional free-range eggs, they are kind of flat and pale," he said.

"In winter you get really orange yolks because of all the green grass which you don't get from conventional free range eggs."

"The green grass is what gives them that orange colour, so over summer you are going to get paler yolks, but the flavour will still be the same."

"That's also how you know you're getting a real egg because if you get bright orange yolks over summer you know that the producer is probably adding dye to their feed."

Ellen, on the other hand, runs a small flock of 60 sheep made up of Awassi and East Friesian bloodlines.

She produces yoghurt, labneh and different types of cheeses from the flock at her dairy on the property.

In 2019, Riverside Dairy's Sheep's Milk Pot Yoghurt was crowned a winner in the Delicious Awards for South Australia.

That was backed up in 2020 when this time her sheep's milk haloumi was honoured.

Garlic is also grown on the property and Richard is optimistic that this year will yield a good crop.

Over the next five years he hopes that garlic will continue to expand and become more of a focus for the farm.

Riverside Farm's eggs are available for purchase at various Foodland stores around the state, while Riverside Dairy is stocked at Lucia's Fine Foods in the Adelaide Central Market.

More information can be found at (www.riversidefarm.net.au).



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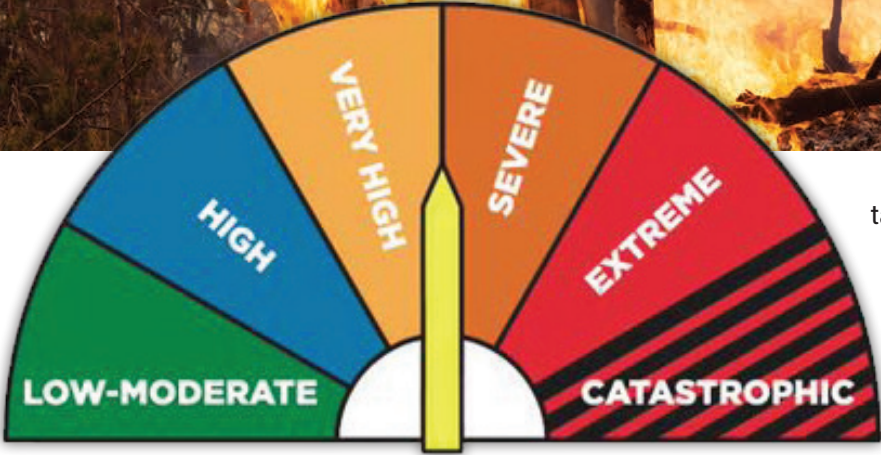


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Prepare your farm for bushfire season



FARMERS in the Riverland, Mallee and Lower North have been urged to ensure properties are prepared to minimise the risks of spreading bushfires this summer.

Preparation of your home and property is an essential key throughout the year to ensure that you, your property and your family survive.

A well-prepared home is more likely to survive a bushfire than one that is unprepared.

A well-prepared home:

- ☐ Can be easier for you or firefighters to defend
- ☐ Is more likely to survive, even if you're not there
- ☐ Is less likely to put your neighbours' homes at risk
- ☐ Will give you more protection if a fire threatens suddenly and you cannot leave and have to

take shelter.

Starve the fire by clearing vegetation and rubbish away from your home, and using non-flammable building materials.

Create a defensible space by managing trees close to your home and reducing vegetation for 20 metres.

Prune tree limbs that are lower than two metres above the ground or overhanging your home. Make a plan to help you take action and avoid making last minute decisions that could prove deadly during a bushfire.

The majority of people who die during bushfires in South Australia are caught fleeing their homes at the last minute.

Preparing a plan allows you to identify triggers to leave early or prepare to actively defend your property.

Fires can threaten suddenly and without warning. Be prepared to enact your Bushfire Survival Plan without receiving any emergency warning.

The CFS cannot guarantee a fire truck will be there to protect your property.

Look and listen for information on television, radio, internet, mobile phones and by speaking with neighbours.

A prepared and practised bushfire survival plan will help family members know where others are and what they will be doing.



Preparing a plan allows you to identify triggers to leave early or prepare to actively defend your property.

A well-prepared plan will include contingencies and back-ups if your primary plan fails.

Remember certain properties are undefendable, and certain fires unsurvivable.

Make sure you understand your capacity and the meaning of Fire Danger Ratings before making a decision to stay.

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Renmark farmer switches it up:

‘The almond that impressed us’

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PETA-MARIE PHILIPPOU

PHOTO: SUPPLIED



It took about three years to get our almonds ready after first planting them

DISCOVERING a unique almond variety while holidaying in America nine years ago gave a Renmark family the desire to make the switch to almond growing after a long history of growing stone fruit.

The Sourtzis family have been growing stone fruit in the region since the early '70s, however 10 years ago felt the push to get into something more automotive and less time consuming.

Jim Sourtzis said making the change came at a "great time".

"When we were thinking about converting our stone fruit to almond orchards, the property next-door to us actually went up for sale," he said.

"We thought it was a perfect time to expand as part of our almond planning for the future so we bought the property – in 2015 – and prepared it the following year."

Mr Sourtzis said the family's first commercial crop harvested was in 2018.

"It took about three years to get our almonds ready after first planting them," he said.

"Our

whole intention was to merge and convert all the stone fruit to almonds, but we currently have 30 hectares of almond orchards and about 10 hectares of stone fruit – predominately peaches and nectarines."

Mr Sourtzis said he grows one almond variety.

"The variety we grow is called Independence, and as the name implies it's self-fertile and self-pollinates its own blossoms, not needing any help from bees," he said.

"The variety comes from California so it wasn't well-known in Australia.

"When my family and I went to America in 2011, our trip was to learn more about stone fruit, but we were so impressed by this variety of almond that we decided to start growing it ourselves and see how it grows here."

Mr Sourtzis said growing one variety has worked well.

"Having one variety has been great because it's easy to maintain – irrigation-wise, nutrition-wise and spraying



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Tolly, Gabriella, 3, Antonios, 6, and Jim Sourtzis.

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wise," he said.
 "The managing practice is a lot easier and it saves a lot of time.
 "We didn't have much experience growing almonds because we were new to the industry, but after our orchards were prepared and established and we had help from the right people, it's all worked well."
 The Sourtzis family won Almondco's Quality of Excellence award for 2020.
 Mr Sourtzis said the award reflected his family's passion for farming and the "wonderful" people they worked alongside this year.
 "Coming from being stone fruit growers, we always try to do the best job we can as a family," he said.
 "Whether it's stone fruit or almonds, we are always passionate about what we do and receiving the award as new growers felt amazing.
 "We wouldn't be where we are today without the help we've received from people in the almond industry.



"Other growers have shared their knowledge and information with us and working with Almondco and the incredible people on their team has been great.
 "We can't wait to see what the future holds."



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Nutrien Water South Australia Regional Manager Adam Lean said the new brand will bring together local knowledge and technical expertise to provide customers with expert advice and quality service.

"Customers will have access to more irrigation knowledge and experience than ever before, following the alliance of Riverland irrigation specialists Total Eden at Renmark, Waikerie, and the Barossa and pivot and pump specialists Hall Irrigation at Lameroo," Mr Lean said.

Mr Lean says Nutrien Water remains focused on increasing

the knowledge and capability in the South Australian region.

"This unification is bringing together some of the best technical people in the irrigation industry as well as exceptional design, installation and project management capabilities under the one brand," Mr Lean said.

Nutrien Water specialises in design, project management, engineering, and installation of all types of irrigation systems from under vine through to large pivots and laterals, as well as the all-important pump systems. Nutrien Water stores will also continue to provide turnkey irrigation solutions across South Australia.

"Whilst the brand may be changing, the faces will remain the same and our customers will continue to receive the same quality service that they have come to know," Mr Lean said.

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TRINITY COLLEGE



Caitlin Brook holding Bernadette, Sarah Popow, Sylvia Tichborne and John Popow with one of the main herd's old bulls.

Our biggest thing was that we wanted to make sure what we were doing with the cattle was marrying together with our land management



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Not your average beef

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY LIAM PHILLIPS

AS a teacher at TAFE SA specialising in nutrition and food, Sarah Popow had a keen interest in natural lean meat, so when her friends were investing in houses and property, she decided to try her hand at producing her own premium cattle.

An animal-lover at heart, Mrs Popow has built her entire farming strategy around giving her animals – Limousin beef cattle – a stress-free life, and ensuring they are naturally paddock-raised and ready.

Limousin – which is a French breed of cow – was specifically chosen thanks to its naturally low levels of fat, along with being known as a hardy breed which is largely unaffected by trying weather conditions.

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Bernadette with a young Limousin cow her family purchased as part of Kamcheyenne Limousin's Kamshare program.
PHOTO: supplied

ultimate handling method, Sarah and John Popow's Kamcheyenne Limousin operates under the theory of 'healthy soil and water equals naturally healthy cattle' – and that natural, holistic approach has worked wonders for the quality of its beef.

"Our biggest thing was that we wanted to make sure what we were doing with the cattle was marrying together with our land management," Mrs Popow said.

"We've added nothing unnatural to our land, so there's no chemicals or anything, it's just pure beef.

"What we started finding pretty quickly was people saying to us how they hadn't eaten beef in years because of high blood pressure or other health problems, but they can eat our beef."

Mrs Popow firmly believes this is because of the breed itself and a result of the cattle's upbringing, which includes moving the cows every week to ensure a variety in grazing and surroundings – which also prevents the cattle from over-grazing a certain pasture.

To deal with weed species, Mrs Popow, her husband John and her two stud hands Caitlin and Sylvia work to increase the diversity of plant species, both as a food stock and to naturally compete with the weeds without the need for chemicals.

While the original plan for the business was to sell stud bulls and females, the Kamcheyenne Limousin operation has become so much more – most notably with the addition of

its Kamshare program.

"What we found was a lot of people in our area had smaller acreage, and would say how they're struggling to maintain their paddocks, or they have sheep they can't control, or a number of issues," Mrs Popow said.

"So, we came up with the idea that a lot of these properties would get real benefits from having a couple of cows – and that's where Kamshare was born.

"The idea is to sell these people good, proven breeding cows – completely bucket-trained and people-friendly – and instead of having 20 sheep running around making life difficult, they can have two cows that do the same thing.

"Since they're herd animals and form real, strong friendships, we are very strict on people having to take two, and we will pick two that we know get along well."

As part of Kamshare, Kamcheyenne Limousin offers 24/7 support to anyone who purchases a pair of cows, and also offers market value to buy back any calves which go back into the main herd.

Limousin cows are naturally long-lived and can breed up to almost 20 years of age.

They live into their 30s, so if there is a situation where an animal is no longer viable for breeding or meat production, people are now able to purchase it as a pet.

The meat sales are the last part of the business, and is a tender topic of Mrs Popow, who makes the trip with her animals once per month to make sure they are as comfortable as possible

until their time comes.

Kamcheyenne Limousin beef is sold in small amounts, and only at the One Tree Hill General Store, or larger quantities can be ordered directly from Kamcheyenne Limousin itself.

The other place you can find the product is at the monthly One Tree Hill markets on the first Saturday of every month, where the Popows run a sausage sizzle to raise money for local clubs.

At these sausage sizzles, they also take a couple of cows down so the

community – especially the kids – can interact with them and find out more about what they offer.

"We love the fact that we can not only provide for, but involve our local community so strongly in our stud and its operation," Mrs Popow said.

"Our goal is to continue to educate and enthuse people to have a safer and more natural and fulfilling relationship with their land and cows."

To find out more or keep updated with the stud's progress, head to the Kamcheyenne Limousin Facebook page or call Sarah on 0402 099 106.

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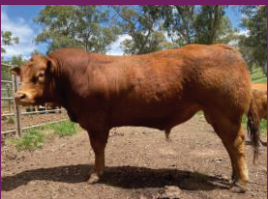
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Our goal is to continue to educate and enthuse people to have a safer and more natural and fulfilling relationship with their land and cows.



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Authorised by Tony Pasin MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Shop 5, Murray Bridge Green, Riverview Road, Murray Bridge SA 5253.



Resilient farmers still shining bright

TONY PASIN

ONE of the most enjoyable mornings I have spent over the last few months was with farmers from the Northern Mallee at the Brown's Well Crop Competition.

Having faced two of the toughest years in living memory, farmers throughout the Mallee could be excused if the passion for their craft had waned, but that was not what I experienced, instead I watched as passionate, resilient and innovative farmers showcase what a good season combined with their expertise could achieve.

But, just like one good innings doesn't make a summer, I know that one good season is not enough to make up for the damage caused by prolonged drought and that is why our Government continues to deliver drought support measures in support of Australian farmers.

Currently these measures include access to the Farm Household Allowance, support via the Rural Financial Counselling Service,

the Drought Communities Small Business Support Program, the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme as well as access to finance on favourable terms via the Regional Investment Corporation.

I encourage your readers to ascertain whether they can make use of these measures.

You may wish to approach my office or the rural financial counselling service for further information, self-assessment should be strictly avoided.

These programs operate to provide farmers with the financial breathing space needed to get through the impact of drought and prepare for the future.

Our Government knows the impact drought has had on mental health which is why we have partnered with organisations such as headspace, Lifeline and Beyond Blue to deliver improved mental health services in our regions.

For regional businesses, free, confidential financial counselling has been made available to assist farmers in making well-informed financial decisions.

Supporting drought-affected communities has been central to our response with up to \$2 million provided to each of the 180 drought-affected councils across the nation, including all councils in the Riverland, Murraylands and Mallee.

Importantly we have also established a \$5 billion Future Drought Fund to build a drought-resilient Australia.

This fund takes applications for a range of measures to help our farmers mitigate the impact of the next drought.

In addition to support for individual farmers at a community level, we have injected cash into drought-affected rural communities with funding for local roads, schools, early learning centres and other community projects.

The important message is that whilst the rain has arrived and the season looks like it will end well, the drought is not over until the financial pressures caused by it have subsided and as a Government, we are committed to ensuring that Australian farmers get the supports they need, because as I said we know that one innings doesn't make a summer.



Focus on women

WORDS DEIRDRE GRAHAM PHOTOGRAPHY SUPPLIED

IT took a stint at boarding school as she was growing up for Lameroo farmer Lou Flohr (pictured) to realise agriculture was where she wanted to be.

Lou trained in agronomy and is now working on the family farm with parents Janet and Gary, and partner Andy, where the Flohr's manage about 4000 hectares.

She is also a Southern panel member for the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

This year the Flohr family is growing wheat, barley, lupins, and vetch, as well as a large export oaten hay program.

They also have about 1500 breeding ewes and a merino self-replacing flock.

Lou's role within the business has shifted from paddock work to a role that is dominated largely by office duties, after starting her own family.

"Both jobs need to be done, and are equally important," she said.

"It's been good to get a grasp of the accounting, payroll and HR side of the business.

"I have a better understanding of the business now, but I'm looking forward to getting back in the truck."

Lou said the number of women in agriculture was at a steady state, although the pro-

portion of women doing agricultural degrees is higher than men.

"Where do they go?," she asked.

Lou believes the industry has to look at the way women are retained in the industry long term.

"There is no doubt that raising a family results in women dropping out of the work force, both in the agriculture industry and the work force in general," she said.

"I think as an industry we need to look at this, and establish strategies to attract women back after they have raised their young family."

Lou's role with the GRDC this year has been based remotely due to COVID.

"I think working remotely presents a real opportunity for rural women who have young families," she said.

"Teleconferencing, while difficult at times, has meant that I have been able to contribute from home, without arranging childcare, accommodation and travel weeks in advance.

"If this is something our industry is willing to continue to do, there is a real opportunity to attract diversity in positions of influence for our industry."

Lou said that support within her town of Lameroo has meant more women have been able to work.

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"Access to five day a week childcare has been transformative for our town," she said.

"Women tend to be the primary car-givers, so access to childcare means more women are able to work.

"It has been a fantastic initiative by the Southern Mallee District Council, and it is benefiting our Mallee communities."

Other support for local women in agricul-ture comes from organi-sations such as Women Together Learning (WoTL), that provide information, work-shops and support.

"Women getting together is an important part of the picture as it allows peer learning and support," Lou added.

“

I have a better understanding of the business now, but I’m looking forward to getting back in the truck.



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Global demand steady for Australian wine

STEADY demand for Australian wine around the world has seen growth in value to all top-five export markets and a 4 per cent increase in overall value to \$2.998 billion, according to Wine Australia's latest Export Report.

In the 12 months ended September 2020, the average value of Australian wine exports increased by 4 per cent to \$3.89 per litre, matching the growth of overall value. The volume of exports declined slightly by 0.4 per cent to 771 million litres (85.7 million cases).

Wine Australia CEO Andreas Clark said the overall value was at the highest level since exports reached \$3 billion in the second half of the 2007 calendar year.

"Despite the unprecedented disruption that we've seen in markets around the world, Australian wine export volume has held reasonably steady and it is particularly pleasing to see both the overall value and the average value of exports growing during these challenging times," Mr Clark said.

For the 12 months to the end of September 2020, the growth in value was predominantly driven by exports to the United Kingdom (UK) and mainland China, with growth been particularly strong in the final quarter of the 12-month period.

"During the July to September 2020 quarter, the value of exports increased by 23 per cent compared to the same period in 2019, and this comes after declines of 4 per cent in the April to June quarter and 7 per cent in the January to March quarter," Mr Clark said.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been clear trends for wine consumption

Where's our wine going to?

IN the 12 months ended September 2020, Australian exporters shipped wine to 117 destinations.

The most significant growth came in exports to Europe, up 16 per cent to \$678 million and overtaking North America in value for the first time since 2011.

The top five destinations by value all recorded growth.

They were:

- ❑ Mainland China, up 4 per cent to \$1.2 billion
- ❑ United States of America (USA), up 1 per cent to \$439 million
- ❑ United Kingdom, up 18 per cent to \$430 million
- ❑ Canada, up 4 per cent to \$196 million, and
- ❑ New Zealand, up 9 per cent to \$103 million.

China growth for premium wines has remained strong this year."

Exports in glass bottles increased by 2 per cent in value to \$2.4 billion and decreased by 3 per cent in volume to 336 million litres (37 million 9-litre case equivalents).

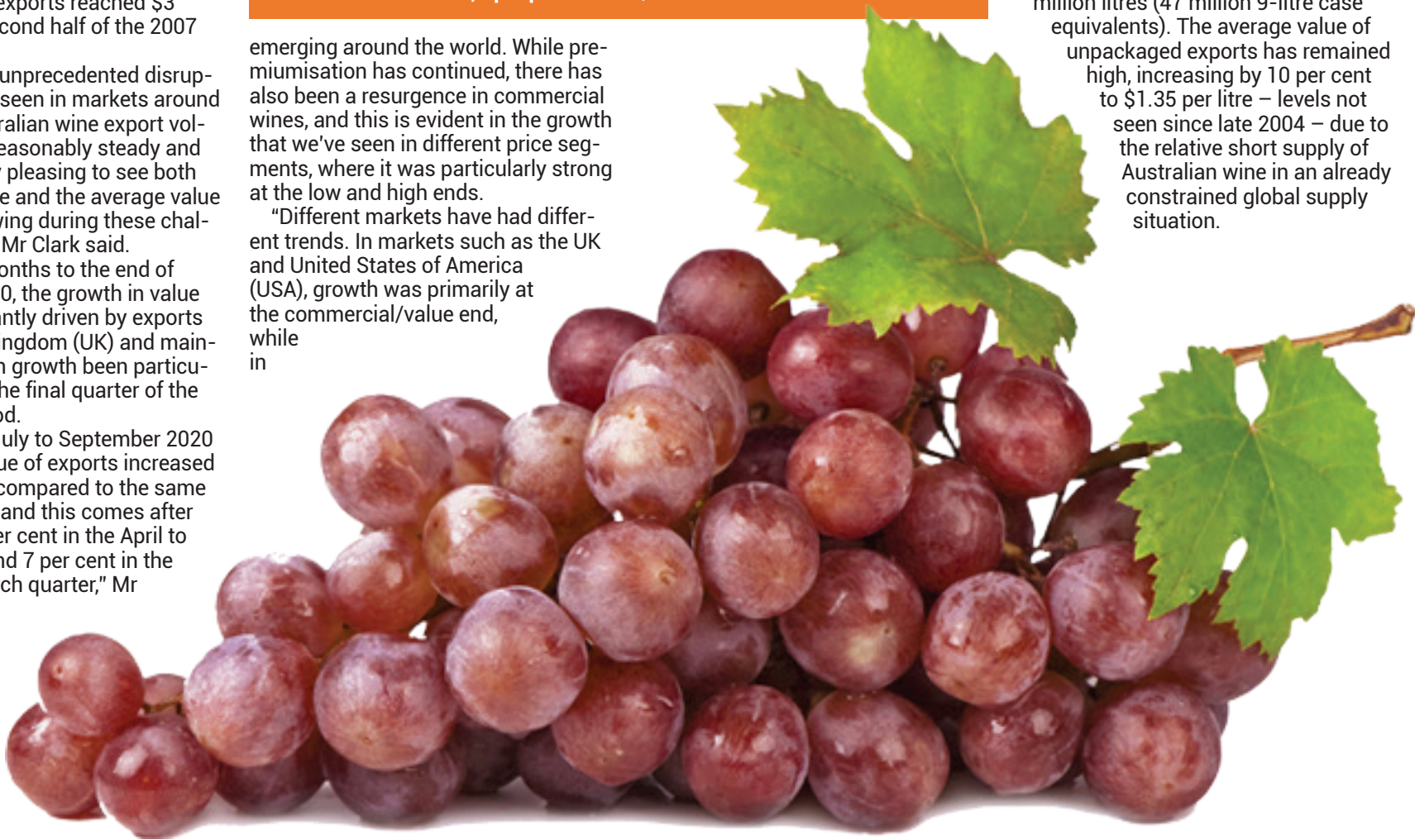
This translated to a 5 per cent increase in the average value of bottled exports to an equal record \$7.14 per litre, due to an increase in exports at the high end of the price spectrum.

Unpackaged wine exports increased by 13 per cent in value to \$576 million and 2 per cent in volume to 427 million litres (47 million 9-litre case equivalents).

The average value of unpackaged exports has remained high, increasing by 10 per cent to \$1.35 per litre – levels not seen since late 2004 – due to the relative short supply of Australian wine in an already constrained global supply situation.

emerging around the world. While premiumisation has continued, there has also been a resurgence in commercial wines, and this is evident in the growth that we've seen in different price segments, where it was particularly strong at the low and high ends.

"Different markets have had different trends. In markets such as the UK and United States of America (USA), growth was primarily at the commercial/value end, while in



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Growing demand for flower farm

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ELLLOUISE CRAWFORD

IN what has been a difficult year for most, Emma Wolters' flower-growing business is blooming with opportunity.

The 28-year-old has almost doubled the plantings at her Kudla farm in response to a sudden surge in demand from wholesalers – cut off from their usual interstate or international growers because of the global pandemic.

"They were calling saying 'just give us anything'," Emma said.

"They do want local stuff and a lot more of it which is really exciting."

For the past eight years Emma has been slowly re-growing what was once the thriving flower farm owned by her parents, John and Barbara Costa.

"Mum and Dad used to do it when I was younger but they just had a series of natural disasters – it used to be a lot of polyhouses and we had whirlywinds come through and just rip up all of it," she said.

"That was two years in a row and then the third year they got flooded out, so they decided they couldn't do it anymore."

The flower fields had been abandoned for some 15 years when Emma Wolters asked to plant a patch of chrysanthemum to help



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save for a house.
"From there I decided I actually really like this; it was really fun to see it grow and blossom.
"And especially with Mum and Dad, working with them and seeing how much they love the farm being in use again."
Emma took a course in horticulture, and paired with the knowledge of her parent's years of experience, set about making the business her own.
She laughs about clashing with her dad when it comes to deciding what varieties, or coloured flowers to plant. But having him beside her in the field has been invaluable.

"There were trees growing through the polyhouses, there were weeds everywhere, so we had to pretty much start again when I started," she said.

"I started with three poly-houses, and the next year put another one up



A house of snapdragon is growing to be ready in time for Valentine's Day



and covered it, and then kept going, so it's taken me a few years to get to this stage.
Preparations for Mother's Day have already begun, with 10,000 chrysanthemums just planted, which will produce well in excess of 40,000 stems.
A house of snapdragon is growing to be ready in time for Valentine's Day, while carnations of red, white and pink will be ready in time for Christmas.
On trend sweet peas are ready for the picking and out to delivery to several SA wholesalers, local market sellers, and direct to Barossa and Gawler Florists, including Gawler Flower Gallery.
"For next year I've actually ordered a lot more plants and our houses are going to be turned over a lot faster than what they would have usually been," she said.
"Even though it's really hard work, it is fun.
"It's really cool seeing something grow, and something beautiful as well."



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AUSTRALIAN frost fans

Introducing Ian Mason, Sales Manager for Australian Frost Fans, who has hit the ground running since joining Australian Frost Fans in August. Ian has international sales and marketing experience with an excellent understanding of the ag and produce sectors, including nearly 4 years with Bailey's Fertiliser.

Ian's enjoying being part of the team and has seen the value of Frost Fan™ wind machines used by growers over

the recent spring frosts. "Preventing crop damage and helping your business grow is what gets me out of bed in the morning", says Ian. "Conversely, there's nothing worse than being the 'undertaker' turning up after a frost event where growers have no frost mitigation." Ian has put together a list of reasons to choose Australian Frost Fans and why he believes growers should opt for FrostBoss® machines.



Ian Mason
Sales Manager
Australian Frost Fans

« 10 reasons for choosing Australian Frost Fans »

1. FrostBoss® Frost Fans™

are the most popular machine in Australia and New Zealand. FrostBoss® Frost Fans™ have been installed in Australia since the 1990's. Manufactured in New Zealand, the company has a significant research and development programme focused on improving the efficiency and reliability of Frost Fans™. This includes comparative testing and the use of Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) analysis to understand exactly how our FrostBoss® machines perform.

2. Our blades set us apart™

When we set out to design the FrostBoss® composite fan blade we had 3 goals – low noise, excellent coverage and fuel efficiency. FrostBoss® composite fan blades are incredibly strong with an aerodynamic design, which makes the entire blade length from hub to tip produce a uniform wind momentum. This optimises the coverage area at an efficient low engine speed of 1750 – 1800rpm at

which the maximum torque of the engine is generated.

3. Bird/vermin proof engine cabinets

The last thing you want is a machine fault caused by rodent damage or an engine fire due to a bird's nest. That's why we designed a lockable engine cabinet to resist birds and rodents.

4. Integral fuel tank

FrostBoss® machines feature a 490-litre integral diesel fuel tank. The integral fuel tank provides greater security with a lockable fuel cap and no readily accessible fuel lines.

5. FrostWatch™ monitoring

FrostWatch™ monitoring is a 'must' if you don't live on-site or you're running multiple fans. Alarms can be generated in the form of text messages. Frost Fan™ status along with tower temperature, engine rpm, battery status, wind speed and trip hours are sent to your Loncel hosted customer-specific website. By far the majority of our customers specify

FrostWatch™ monitoring capability when they purchase a FrostBoss® Frost Fan™.

6. We hold physical stock of machines and parts at all our Service Centres

We don't indent stock. That means shorter lead times for installation and highly responsive after-sales service and support.

7. We're wind machine specialists – it's all we do

We are passionate about what we do – providing crop security to help your business grow. As specialists, our livelihoods depend solely on our reputation and wind machine expertise.

8. A growing network of Service Centres with specialist service trucks

We have a growing network of Service Centres, each with dedicated and specially equipped service trucks. These trucks provide safe access to top gearboxes and fast,

environmentally safe oil changes.

9. Frost Fan upgrades

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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.



Brendan Sidhu
Australian Nut Industry
Council chairman

What stage of the season are you in?

We're getting towards the end of the fertigation season and the pre-harvest. We are trying to manage our trees with irrigation and the last of the fertiliser. We are also focusing on disease management and trying to keep our crop and maximise our yield, and we will start preparations for harvest in the next few weeks.

How is this year's crop shaping up?

We're very happy with it. There's definitely good potential for good yields on our property,

"There's definitely good potential for good yields on our property."

and most of the properties I've seen around the Riverland look very good. It's in part because of the rainfall and also just because of the season I think. The pollination was obviously good, although there were a few challenges there with the rain but they obviously got out and did their job. Some of our areas

were frosted last year, so they've come back pretty hard but crops I've seen all over the place look good.

Has there been problems with disease?

We're starting to see some rust in some areas. We have to be careful with that because if we don't get on top of it you can get defoliation on the trees. We like to start winding down our nitrogen at this time of year to try and avoid hull rot, because we think hull rot comes on with hull split and high nitrogen levels in the hull. We've just finished all our nitrogen, we're just finishing off our potassium now. It's important that we keep on top of the water to make sure we get good nut fill.

"We like to start winding down our nitrogen at this time of year to try and avoid hull rot, because we think hull rot comes on with hull split and high nitrogen levels in the hull."

What are the main challenges?

Trying to finish your nitrogen so you minimise the potential for hull rot later in the season will be critical. Obviously, we are doing a lot of insect monitoring for carob moth, but those numbers seem to be down this year which is

"Obviously, we are doing a lot of insect monitoring for carob moth, but those numbers seem to be down this year which is good."

good. Hopefully most people are continuing with their hygiene practices and cleaning up their old nuts.



Adrian Hoffman
Wine Grape Council SA

How has the season been going so far?

The season is looking very good at this stage, touch wood. The rain has been coming through, and weed management and fungicide management have been a pretty hot topic, which is once again a good problem to have.

Has the current rainfall been enough?

Because of the extra moisture in spring time, we're actually looking at pretty good spring growth for a change. There's been good flatbush and bunch numbers on the vines have

"There's been good flatbush and bunch numbers on the vines have been good."

been good. Anything that was under a bit of stress and didn't carry much of a crop last year is now carrying a nice little crop this year.

Has the extra rain been helpful at this

time of year?

The rain has been really good and it's definitely helped. Unfortunately we had a dry July, but August was close to average and October was above average, which has really set us up well. Every time a change came through in the last few years we would get nothing out of it, now we're getting 3 to 4mm out each change which just takes a bit of the pressure off.

How important will spraying crops for potential disease be this season?

We've been trying to keep ahead of it (and) most people have increased their spray programs to make sure they can manage any potential threats of disease. Most people have offered to make sure they have good slashing regimes, and at the moment we're going through taking all the weed heads off rye and barley grass to reduce the seed population for the next year.

"We've got shoots that are about 30cm or more now, so you can see the crop rating for the coming season and that's looking very promising."

Is there optimism among Barossa grape growers?

We've got shoots that are about 30cm or more now, so you can see the crop rating for the coming season and that's looking very promising. I think there's an air of optimism at the moment and hopefully we get a bit more rain... that will keep everything ticking along quite positively.

Any advice for fellow growers in the area?

Make sure you're keeping on top of your spray programs and keep in contact with your local chemical supplier, because there could be issues – if disease pressure becomes higher – that chemicals may come into short supply.



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Jed Puckridge
Nutrien Ag Solutions
Wool Area Manager

Is there confidence among wool producers right now?

Talking to wool producers recently, I think there is more optimism – albeit cautious – regarding future wool markets.

Late last month we saw an increase in demand from wool processors in countries other than China.

Confidence among wool producers increased once we saw increased competition, however, the wildly fluctuating market from week-to-week and in some cases day-to-day reminds us that it is still very volatile.

What challenges are wool producers facing at the moment?

Wool producers are facing several challenges at the moment. At the top of the list would be harvesting this season's wool clip.

Availability of shearers and skilled shed staff has become an increasing issue as shearing contractors scramble to get as many hands-on-deck as possible.

New Zealand supplies many shearers and shed staff to Australia during this period (and this workforce has not been able to travel

across this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. It has pushed back many shearing dates four to six weeks.

To their credit many shearers are working six to seven days a week to get this season's clip harvested before grass seeds and flies become an issue for graziers.

Because shearers are busy with shearing work, this has left many wool producers no other option but to crutch sheep themselves.

Has COVID-19 affected wool exports?

Consumer confidence is still low across the globe. Wool is a luxury item and at the moment most people are making do with what they have and only cautiously spending money on their living costs. New waves of COVID-19 across Europe and North America are going to delay recovery of apparel demand in these regions, impacting directly on the export market for mills in China, putting a limit on the recovery we will see in the greasy market for the time being. Keeping that in mind there is a strong feeling

"Consumer confidence is still low across the globe."

that the medium to long term outlook for wool is strong.

This is supported by growing demand with more consumers looking to purchase natural fibres and coinciding with historically low supply, which should overall be supportive.

Any advice for wool producers?

Keeping in mind the general sentiment on the outlook for wool is that there is potentially more upside than down for the next six to 12 months, my advice is to speak to your local wool representative to come up with a marketing plan that suits your business model, or speak to a Nutrien Wool Risk Manager in which you can find all the contact details at www.nutrienagsolutions.com.au/wool.



Sean Cole
CCW chief executive officer

Have vines been healthy through the early part of the growing season in the Riverland?

Vines throughout the Riverland are generally in excellent condition. While the start to the season has been relatively cool and wetter than average, these conditions have favoured strong and healthy shoot growth, and canopies for most varieties are now fully developed.

So far, no major disease infections have occurred or yet apparent.

Has recent rainfall been a boost heading into Summer?

The rain during the spring has been both a blessing and a curse. After the very dry winter it was great to get some rain, for many reasons, and not just for grape growers.

The rains have been widespread, including the catchment areas of the Murray Darling basin. The rains have promoted excellent growth in the early part of this season and have helped leach salts accumulated in the vine rootzone after a number of dry seasons.

The potential downside of a wet season is the increased disease pressure. Most of our major diseases are favoured by wet and moist conditions.

The frequent rain events have also caused some difficulty in maintaining regular spray programs, promoted luxurious weed growth, and increased chemical costs for crop protection and weed control.

Insect pests have also flourished in the wetter conditions of this season but fortunately, so have the natural beneficial predators of these

**pests.
How important is the spraying of vines for disease etc at this stage of the season?**

Spraying the vines through spring and early summer is one of the most critical operations conducted in the vineyard.

If the vines are not sprayed regularly, powdery mildew infections will occur in every season. In a wet season such as this, the wet weather diseases such as downy mildew and bunch rots can become established unless protective sprays are applied.

What factors are important to ensuring a healthy vine and grape development over the next few months?

The most important operation in the vineyard in the Riverland is irrigation. The Riverland has a generally hot and dry climate, and vines for most of the season are totally dependent on the water applied by irrigation.

If insufficient water is applied to meet vine requirements, the consequences will be smaller crops though poor fruit set and smaller berries, greater exposure of fruit to sunburn, slower grape ripening and more grape shrivel etc.

With the increasing number of heatwaves we now experience in each season, good irrigation management is more important than ever to produce commercial crop levels of good quality fruit. Another important factor is adequate nutrition.

Any major challenges growers are facing heading into 2021?

Growers will face the usual challenges of every season including control of pests and diseases, the threat of frost and hail events, managing vines during heatwaves, ripening a commercial crop and getting the crop into the winery in a timely manner.

The major challenge of 2020/21 could be a continuation of the wetter and more humid conditions we have experienced so far this season.

The Bureau of Meteorology December to February rainfall outlook shows a 65 to 70 per cent chance of exceeding median rainfall. Wet weather between now and harvest increases the risk of the development of bunch rots, and during vintage, rain can cause disruption to intake schedules.

Any advice for growers in the region?

Maintain crop protection measures against pests and diseases, but, as usual, the most important advice would be to ensure sufficient water is applied to the vines, particularly before and during heatwaves.



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INDUSTRY EXPERT UPDATE



Mark Doecke
Citrus SA chair

Has it been a successful end to the citrus harvest for Riverland growers?

The citrus season has been very successful this year. As we wind down with the last couple varieties, price and quality are among the best we have seen.

What varieties etc. were most popular this year?

All varieties have been popular largely due to the consumer looking for foods that give the most benefit in combating cold and flu.

"All varieties have been popular largely due to the consumer looking for foods that give the most benefit in combating cold and flu."

Oranges through the season, from M7 in May to late navels in October, were all well received and as always mandarins were popular.

What were the main challenges growers had to

deal with this season?

The main challenges this season were very low temperatures early in winter, resulting in some minor damage from frost, to the availability of labour across the industry.

The Australian Government decided early to support workers with finance (payments) so very few Australians sought work in the citrus season

What steps does the industry need to take to prepare for next year?

Already Citrus SA is liaising with the State Government to ensure workers are available for next season. Making it more streamlined for Pacific Islanders to enter the country is probably the area we think could give the best result for numbers of workers.

Will it be difficult bringing workers to the Riverland next year?

Hopefully both levels of Government realise that our industry and most horticulture indus-

"We look forward to working with Government to access overseas labour."

tries can't rely on Australian labour and we need overseas people to make up the short fall. So we look forward to working with Government to access overseas labour.

Advice for fellow growers?

Congratulations to Riverland growers for pro-

"Congratulations to Riverland growers for producing the best quality fruit in the world and now we have to do it all again."

ducing the best quality fruit in the world and now we have to do it all again. Keep up the good work as we face the next set of challenges.



John Lush
Mallala dryland farmer,
Adelaide plains councillor

How important has recent rainfall been at this stage of the season?

We've had a really good finish to the season. We didn't think it would ever rain again, and then it didn't stop. Like a lot of places we've had a good finish, with mostly cool weather and a lot of rain. The good finish has really put the icing on the cake for this year.

July was terrible and we were starting to think 'here we go again', but the really good spring rains we've had have made a lot of difference. Canola, beans and lentils were exceptional and the wheat might be slightly above average. It all looks very good, and the price of canola and lentils in particular is really good. So the yields will be good and the prices will be good, so in the end it should be quite a good financial result – which we need after the last two years.

Have you looked at the possibility of planting GM varieties next year?

We're certainly evaluating GM varieties, how they will fit into our rotation and where we need to grow them for better weed control. We won't be going into GM wholesale, but we'll certainly use it as another tool in our toolbox. We'll only use tools such as Round-up in the right place and in the right rotation, in the same way we use other chemicals. We

always rotate our herbicides to avoid herbicide resistance. If we're using GM canola that's Round-up ready, we'll certainly be considering that in the context of all the other things we do.

The livestock people are (also) pretty keen on GM pasture species, because there are some new GM rye grass species that will grow a lot more feed. If we can have pasture species with a lot more biomass production, we'll be able to run more livestock per hectare and that will be a good result.

Do you think any other improvements/changes are needed in the industry?

I think we need to be abreast of all things that are happening in the other major producing countries across the world, keep an eye on their technological developments. We need to be up to speed – or ahead if we can – with all the latest developments, plant breeding techniques and varieties, so we know we can compete with the rest of the world's farmers.

I remember talking to one of our major wheat buyers out of Indonesia years ago and he said the price sensitivity was less than a dollar per tonne. If they can save one or two dollars per tonne, they'll go somewhere else other than Australia if they need to. The efficiency of production and how that relates to what we can afford to sell our grain for is critical for our ultimate survival.

Are other farmers in the area also optimistic at the moment?

When it started raining, the change even in my own attitude was huge. After the last two years that were dry, when it turned around and finally started to rain you thought 'wow'. All of a sudden you start thinking about what you'll need to develop in the future to take your farm to the next level.

Advice for fellow growers?

Evaluate the new varieties and see how they relate to your own farm. Look at the NVT results and work out how that will apply to your own farm, because every farm is different. Just because it works for me in Mallala, doesn't mean it will work for someone at Lameroo or Alawoona. You've got to do back-ground on the soil and fertility, then relate that to the new varieties to make sure they suit your property.



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Farmers given GM choice in 2021

FARMERS across mainland South Australia will have the choice to grow Genetically Modified (GM) food crops in time for the 2021 grain season with no councils approved to operate as a GM-free area.

The GM moratorium was lifted for mainland South Australia in May this year but councils had a one-off six-month ability to apply to be designated a GM crop cultivation-free area, which 11 of the 68 Local Government Areas chose to do.

The independent GM Crop Advisory Committee assessed all 11 applications on the merits of demonstrating an economic benefit from remaining GM-free and provided advice to the State Government.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development David Basham said outside of Kangaroo Island, there was no substantial evidence to justify any council area remaining GM-free.

"The Marshall Liberal Government has undertaken an exhaustive consultation process on lifting the GM

moratorium and the outcome importantly gives farmers on mainland South Australia the same choice as those across the rest of mainland Australia," Mr Basham said.

"By lifting the GM moratorium everywhere except Kangaroo Island, we are backing our farmers and researchers to grow the state's agriculture sector and create jobs.

"Under the legislation, councils had a once-off six-month opportunity to apply to remain GM free but under the Act passed by Parliament, applications could only be considered on trade and marketing grounds."

The 11 councils who unsuccessfully applied to have local GM moratoriums were, Town of Gawler, Berri Barmera Council, Adelaide Hills Council, Alexandrina Council, Barossa Council, City of Onkaparinga, City of Playford, District Council of Yankalilla, Mount Barker District Council, City of Tea Tree Gully, and City of Victor Harbor.

SNAIL awareness and control will help growers protect the value of their grain and avoid costly delays from clogged headers at harvest time, according to the South Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regions' research division.

Entomologist Kym Perry says understanding snail behaviour can help minimise their impact at harvest.

"In spring, snails climb plants to avoid heat from the soil," Mr Perry said, whose research is through Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) investment.

"As temperatures rise, they increasingly shelter in crop canopies, sometimes between grains in the seed

head, and become very difficult to dislodge."

While recognising that snail dynamics and harvest operations are different on every farm, harvesting high-value crops or infested crops early is one strategy to help growers manage snail contamination.

"Plants are more resilient at early maturity and snails will be easier to dislodge before temperatures peak," Mr Perry said.

Monitoring snail movement can also assist with timing harvest operations to keep snails out

of the header.

More information on snail control can be found at www.grdc.com.au.

Snail control to improve harvest



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10-year AG plan announced

THE Australian Government has released its comprehensive government Ag2030 plan in support of the farm industry's target of \$100 billion in farmgate value by 2030.

Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management David Littleproud (pictured) said the Budget underpins the focus on ensuring that farmers thrive, prosper and create jobs in a post pandemic world, and lays the foundations for industry to reach its 2030 goal.

"Government and industry will need to be clear eyed about the task ahead of us, and work

harder and smarter and adapt the way we do things," he said.

"The Government has identified seven priority key areas of action that will support the industry's vision.

"They are: trade and exports, innovation and research, human capital, fair, strong and resilient supply chains, stewardship, biosecurity and water and infrastructure.

"I am confident that if the government focuses our efforts on these priority areas, we can create the environment needed for industry to reach this ambitious objective."

Drought recovery on track

AGRICULTURE's crop-led recovery from drought remains on track but falling prices and global economic uncertainty from COVID-19 is forecast to temper earnings.

Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences' (ABARES) September Agriculture Commodities report released recently finds the gross value of production is forecast to stay unchanged at \$61 billion despite a significant rebound in crop production.

ABARES executive director Dr Steve Hatfield-Dodds said the agricultural industry is set up for a recovery after three years of drought-affected production and is in a solid position to see out falling prices and a pandemic-induced economic downturn.

"The value of crop production is forecast to increase by 17 per cent to over \$32 billion on the back of much improved seasonal conditions, particularly in New

South Wales," he said.

"But while crop production volumes are forecast to grow strongly, they will be offset by a hit to earnings brought about by strong global supply and COVID-19 induced lower prices.

"The rebuilding of herds and flocks will also begin to hit overall production with the value of livestock production forecast to fall by 14 per cent to \$28.9 billion.

"These developments will hit the sector's exports significantly, with falling commodity prices, reduced livestock product exports and grain stock rebuilding expected to shave 10 per

cent off the value of agricultural exports, which are forecast to fall to \$43.5 billion in 2020-21."

Dr Hatfield-Dodds said agriculture appears to be far less disrupted than other sectors of the economy.



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Spring rainfall ending 2020 on high note

STRONG rainfall across the Riverland, Mallee and Gawler area throughout spring has seen total levels for 2020 come in line, or beat, long-term averages.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) recorded 33.6mm of rain in Renmark during September – compared to an average of 28mm for the month – and 47.2mm last month, compared to the October average of 28.3mm.

BoM also recorded 38.2mm of rain in Loxton during October, with just 3.3mm throughout the same month in 2019.

Loxton saw a total of 27.6mm of rain in September, largely in line with the month's long-term average of 27.1mm.

Lameroo received 43.6mm of rainfall during October and 45.2mm in September, in comparison to the 35.2mm that fell across the same two-month period in 2019.

Reports from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, produced earlier this month, show total active storage levels (Dartmouth, Hume and Lake Victoria) had reached 61 per cent capacity.

This marked a 140GL increase on the previous week, and an increase of approximately 1530GL compared to the same time in 2019.



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Avocados see strong seasons ahead

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ERIN WILLIAMS

INTERNATIONAL imports, higher Australian-wide demand, and a lower fruit yield has led to a “strange but strong” avocado season, according to a local grower.

Ramco Heights grower Justin Loffler (pictured) said while this year has yielded a lighter avocado crop than last year, the fruit picked has been of a larger size.

“Every season is different, but this year has been particularly unusual on the marketing side of things rather than just the growing,” he said.

“COVID-19 spread before this year’s season started, so as growers, we were able to take in the impacts the virus was having on markets and guessed what would impact us personally.

“The virus delayed the Queensland harvest this year, and SA growers were happy to wait as we knew our crops were going to have a smaller yield this year than last.

“Personally, while we had a lighter crop than last season, the fruit we’ve yielded has been of a larger size. It’s been a good, stable season.”

Mr Loffler said the “strong” avocado season has been helped by external factors.

“The market saw Chilean avocados imported into Australia for the first time this year, which has thrown a spanner into the works,” he said.

“It has the potential to disrupt the Australian market, but right now, the demand for avocados is more than we are growing locally.

“The backbone of the Australian market is New Zealand fruit at the

moment. But going forward, I’d like to see more Australian fruit in the market.

“Hopefully, we’ll get a big enough supply so we can tell people to buy Australian, but right now, we do need those imports so that the price doesn’t skyrocket. We want to see good support for everyone at the shops – not just for growers and packers, but for consumers.”

With the international imports keeping avocado prices from reaching a premium, Mr Loffler said the forecast for next season was “already” looking positive.

“It’s been a strong, if strange, season, and next season is looking to be the same, while hopefully being on the higher end of yields,” he said.

“COVID-19 has led to an increased demand for all produce – any fresh produce. During health scares, consumers will make more of an effort to eat healthy, which drives up the demand for fresh fruit and vegetables.

“I’m hoping more people will be mindful of their health going forward when planning their meals and doing the grocery shopping.”



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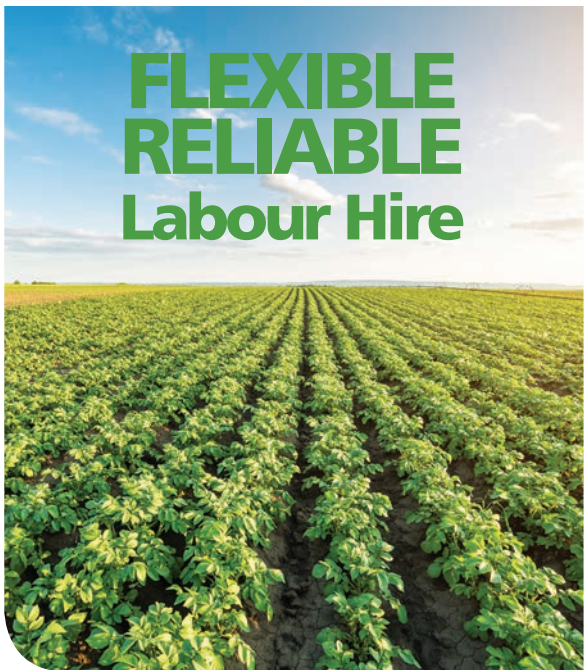
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The shiraz was planted two years prior to my birth in 1969, the same month Neil Armstrong landed on the moon



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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JOSH BRINE

A SMALL Riverland winegrower is continuing a five-decade family legacy while making his own mark on the local wine industry.

Bruce Heward (pictured), who owns Top Block Wines in Monash, has maintained a 51-year-old patch of shiraz, planted by his father John in 1969, since he bought the property 13 years ago.

Mr Heward said the block had been worked for over a century since being handed out as a soldier settlement after World War I.

"Before my dad bought this place in the early 1960s, this block was owned by Roy Whitelaw who was a returned soldier," he said.

"The shiraz was planted two years prior to my birth in 1969, the same month Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, and they did really well initially.

"It started off just beautiful, like everything did back then.

"The trellis was a T trellis, and the vines were hand-pruned and hand-picked, so they were just beautiful looking vines.

"But then you went through the crazy 90s where grapes were worth so much and they put machines through and belted the vines to bits.

"You had to have two people on top of the machine picking up broken canes as it went through and another person in the truck picking up sticks as it got tipped in there as well.

"Each year Dad said he wouldn't do it again, but it was so much easier than employing pickers.

"So, they went from being beautiful, hand-picked and hand-pruned to getting fairly belted."

Once Mr Heward bought the block from his father, he thought about removing the shiraz vines, but "fate" led him to keep the patch.

"No-one would buy the contract," he said.

"CCW had contracts that were pretty good, but one of these harvests was rejected because of too much wood and junk in the harvest, which is fair enough, but that was almost the straw that broke the camel's back because the prices were lousy then anyway.

"I decided I couldn't do another year of work for free for these old vines, but after a while I calmed down a bit and decided to go one more year.

"There's a bit of nostalgia to it and I'm pretty stubborn so I didn't want to give it up."

Mr Heward, with some help from his family, hand-prunes and hand-picks the 13 rows of shiraz, each about 300m long.

Some of the plants have been damaged by white ants, with the trunk of the plant completely hollowed out, but are still growing strong.

"It's just amazing how a 51-year-old vine can still produce beautiful wine with the right input," he said.

"You don't get the same tonnage as the newer root stock varieties but you still get a nice crop."

Mr Heward, his wife Leah and their two daughters, Alessandra and Sammi, live on the property next to about 12 acres of grapes, with one hectare of vines hand-pruned and picked for Top Block wines.

"We were going to try and make wine and we thought we couldn't compete with big wineries who machine-pick huge tonnages," he said.

"We see them as a completely different category and don't worry about how inexpensive their wines are – we just try to do things from start to finish really carefully.

"I know there are a lot of people who won't touch a \$25 bottle of wine, which is fine, but



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FOLLOWING the untimely passing of his Father, Daryl Sherwood and wife Kristy have made some adjustments to the TRURO AGENCIES business.

Drive-through, under-cover pick-up facilities ensure prompt, safe service, and new phone and computer systems have enhanced the customer experience.

Servicing the Barossa Valley, Riverland, Mid-Murray, Light and South East regions, a comprehensive range of farm equipment, fencing, rural hardware, animal health products, feed supplements and pet food are all at TRURO AGENCIES.

Daryl Sherwood has a passion for the business's "Shearing Ready Program;" a pre-season check of equipment and the supply of all shearing needs for the woolshed. With the addition of a new service truck and crane, on-farm services ensure sheds will operate efficiently and safely.

An expanding supply chain including TePari, Arrowquip and Prattley allows TRURO AGENCIES to find the best possible animal handling solutions for each client. The Wool Press range includes both TPW and Macbro, and with the trading of reconditioned presses, the business can always match shearing shed requirements with cost-effective, efficient equipment.

A well-equipped workshop reconditions and repairs woolpress and animal handling equipment. Trade-ins of wool presses has resulted in development of a "Total Reconditioning Program", where each machine is assessed and refurbished ensuring high safety standards and reliability.

Managed by Kristy Sherwood, the shop has seen an increase in farm clothing and apparel, including farm boots and kids' high vis wear and much of the range will be included in an online convenience outlet in coming months.

TRURO AGENCIES is independent of multinational corporates and has a team of local knowledgeable staff who can tailor solutions for individual farms, without being locked into brand selling.

With the assistance of a strong supply chain, the second generation of Sherwood's are looking to serving their loyal customer base for the years ahead.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

we're not chasing that market.

"We are trying to do something that is a bit more traditional and a bit more careful."

Mr Heward said his experience working on his father's block has helped him run Top Block on a small budget.

"When I grew up, there wasn't a lot of money in grapes, so Dad had all these little tricks to save a few bucks here and a few bucks there, and I've remembered them all," he said.

"Things like joining wire together without clamps and saving \$2, or if you have a dead vine you can take a cane from the vine next to it and bury it underground and that will then grow into its own vine and have its own root system, and I've been doing a lot of that and it saves me \$6 a vine.

"I didn't realise at the time, but there were lots of tips and tricks that I picked up along the way as a kid."

Mr Heward said recent rainfall has led to the block being "the best it's looked since we've owned it".

"I can't believe the number of potential bunches there are at this stage – it's just prolific," he said.

"We do need to keep an eye on the negative impacts of the rain.

"You have to put your hand in your pocket for some pretty decent chemicals if downy mildew comes along.

"It's all about having your finger on the pulse and being ready to spray.

"The grape prices have also increased and that makes us feel like we can breathe a bit easier.

"I hope prices remain the same and I hope our tonnages remain the same, which is not huge compared to others but it's enough to make some money to keep us going each year, with a bit of leftover money for a bit of fun.

"Dad passed away just as we were starting to think about opening the cellar door, but he would be interested in what I'm doing.

"He was a pretty quiet man who didn't say too much, but I hope he'd be proud of where we are going."

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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JANE KUERSCHNER

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Corner Estate owner Will Swinstead has gone from a hectic all-year round growing and harvesting schedule to honing his craft to find a healthy work-life balance for his family.

The property – based on a bend of the Murray River next to Lock 3 – is home to rolling hills of watermelon crops and aisles of wine grape vines.

Will, wife Taylor and children James, 9, Sophie, 7, and Charlotte, 16 months, call the river-side patch of paradise their home.

The land was snapped up by Will's parents in the '80s and has seen a wide-range of crops,

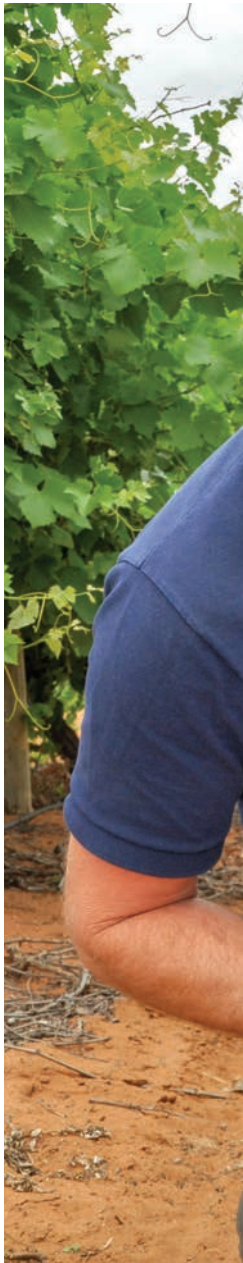
including citrus, pumpkins, various other vegetables, and now watermelons and grapes.

Will says he decided to focus on watermelons and grapes because they work well together.

"We're trying to get a better balance in life and trying to do less better," he explained.

"I think it's a better business for us and we've had a lot of opportunities to get bigger in watermelons.

"The two crops work well together from a growing point of view. We are spraying, picking and growing all at the same



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Will, Taylor and Charlotte Swinstead, 16 months.

time, but then you do get that down time in the off season."

The down time is a welcome change after a previous growing and harvesting schedule, with little break between each crop.

"It used to be we finished grapes and watermelons, then you're picking pumpkins and storing them, then you're packing pumpkins, then picking oranges, then you're back to planting watermelons, so it was really non-stop," Will said.

"And especially now with a young family, I think it's really important to have some time to step back."

Like anything new, trialling watermelons was somewhat of a risk for Will, who decided to start off small and see where it would take him.

"One year I tried watermelons and they did fairly well, then the next year it developed further," he said.

"Hopefully people think we supply a good product."

"We've had bad years too, but you do



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realise that you can't pick what year is going to be good, so supplying a good product long term becomes really important.

"We've had a lot of opportunity with watermelons, and as we've gotten bigger we've been able to go direct with Coles and Woolworths, which has been huge for us."

Will's watermelons will be ready for harvesting around mid-December, and he says the crop is looking positive.

"We stagger our plantings from middle of August right through to Christmas, then we start harvesting from around the middle of December, then harvest right through until around April, so it's a pretty long season," he said.

"The season got off to a reasonable start... planting early is risky with frosts, but if you get into it before Christmas you can do well."

Will says growing in the Riverland comes with risks, with watermelons vulnerable to frosts.

"You do take a big risk with frosts in this area," he said.

"Watermelons hate the cold weather and they absolutely love the heat."

Will began using a plastic planting method with his watermelons around 10 years ago.

"We plant everything in plastic," he said.

"And it's drip irrigation, so using sub-surface drips under the ground.

"It helps suppress the weeds, saves the moisture, and I guess as we've got bigger it's really hard to keep up with weed control unless you do something like this."

Will has also embraced technology saying it makes sense to use any tools available to grow a better product.

"The way we do everything has changed a lot," he said.

"From irrigation systems to monitoring, it's like anything, you can get everything on your phone.

"The information we get sent back from the irrigation system is pretty incredible.

"We constantly have information at our disposal about high flows, low flows, valves on, valves off, pressure, temperature, there's so much you can get.

"The efficiency of it all has really improved.

"I still think there's a lot of old school farmers, but I think a lot of the young ones in the game are embracing it."

Will says his favourite part of being a grower is delivering a high-quality

product to consumers.

"I enjoy growing the produce, seeing a good crop, supplying good fruit and hearing good feedback about Overland Corner watermelons," he said.

"And growing food for people... it's pretty rewarding from that point of view."

Will says while there are many positive aspects to being a grower, it doesn't come without its significant challenges.

"It's a constant balancing act and it takes all your energy," he said.

"The past 10 years it's taken a lot of focus and commitment.

"We're at a stage now where we have good staff and that is key to the business."

Overland Corner Estate will use up to 30 employees in peak harvesting season, while the off season is run by around four staff.

Will says time will tell how the COVID-19 situation will affect staffing levels for his business.

"We really rely on backpackers and we don't know how we'll go until December," he said.

For now, Will's focus will remain on growing fabulous produce in time for Christmas, while looking forward to some much-deserved family time.



The season got off to a reasonable start... planting early is risky with frosts, but if you get into it before Christmas you can do well.

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UTILISING protective netting installed with grant funding has helped a local couple bring a unique crop to the Riverland.

Barmera growers Peter and Ann Brooke (pictured) established an organic cherry crop – and the business Riverland Organic Cherries – on their farm in 2019.

Mr Brooke said the recent installation of netting over his trees – through the Federal Government's Horticultural Netting Infrastructure Grants promoted to local growers by Member for Barker Tony Pasin – would protect the cherries from harsh weather conditions and birds.

"I think we were one of the first people in the program," Mr Brooke said.

"We had no idea about doing it. Because it cost so much we hadn't even contemplated it.

"Now the birds can't eat them all. Last year we only picked the bottoms and didn't pick any with ladders, because the birds ate all the top ones.



Last year we only picked the bottoms and didn't pick any with ladders

"It will stop the hail and ease the wind a bit."

Mr Brooke said up to 300kg of fruit per day could be picked from the 2000 cherry trees on their property.

"They love the sun," he said.

"They don't like the real hot weather because it can soften (the cherries) a bit.

"We had nowhere near as big a crop last year. It was maybe a tenth of what we have this year."



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Mr Brooke – who also grows sweet potatoes, grapes and peanuts – said minimising contact with ripe cherries was crucial when harvesting. “We never actually touch them (when picking),” he said.

“They pick it by the stalk, twist it and then put it in the crate, so the cherry isn’t touched at all.

“I take them down to the cool room and dump them in freezing water with a bit of organic disinfectant, because you can’t have bacteria.”

Mr Brooke said there was high demand for their cherries at Adelaide supermarkets specialising in organics, and the weekly Farmers Market held at the Wayville Showgrounds.

“We sell to two Foodlands in Adelaide at Pasadena and Frewville,” he said

“They love that they are organic.”

Mrs Brooke said freezing the cherries allowed her to utilise them in cooking throughout the year.

“We take the (stem) off and freeze them whole, then anytime in the year you can put them in a smoothie,” Mrs Brooke said.

“Cherry muffins are nice because you don’t add sugar. There’s also cherry cheesecake.

“Just eating them straight off the tree is really nice.”

Mr Brooke said Riverlanders would be invited to pick their own cherries at the property during summer.

“They are great for picking your own,” he said.

“The children come in and they can reach them on the tree. There’s millions of cherries out there.

“We only advertised it on Facebook (last year) and it was huge.”

For further information and inquiries regarding Riverland Organic Cherries visit the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Riverland-Organic-Cherries-106370544144752) or email (pdae-brooke@hotmail.com).

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