

# SA Farmer

TAYLOR  
GROUP MEDIA

AUTUMN 2024



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continue**

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# Welcome to SA Farmer, autumn 2024 edition

Four times a year, the hard-working Taylor Group Media team of journalists based in the Riverland and Lower North produce SA Farmer. Within these pages each quarter, we tell the stories of home and hobby farmers, business owners and primary producers.

The 2024 autumn edition starts with an insight into Singing Magpie in Monash, a quintessential Riverland business, how feral deer are causing problems in primary production, the history of Jimmy's Barossa Valley produce, the thriving business of a Black Angus producer in the Barossa and the success of two Barossa winemakers.

Agricultural news at a state and national level in this edition includes CFS volunteers threatening to walk away if the Harvest Code changes, the news that point of sale discount eID tags have commenced, South Australian farmers finishing 2023 on a more positive note, a spray forum

to be held in Freeling, and more.

Something new in this farmer is a recipe we have included, which highlights some of the produce on offer in the Riverland region.

Rounding out the feature stories for the autumn edition have us reading about a date farm in Gurra Gurra which is celebrating its 20th year, a Loxton man who is growing and preserving his own produce, a Barossa's man passion for garlic which has now resulted in him growing and selling his garlic to the community, a dinner in the Mallee region which will highlight all the area has to offer, and the ongoing success of a Riverland pistachio grower.

Four industry experts give their updates on stone fruits, almonds, wine grapes, and citrus for this time of year.

Summerfruit Australia board member Jason Size hones in on how recent colder conditions have

impacted fruit and some of the challenges of transporting fruit at the moment; Almond Board of Australia CEO Tim Jackson speaks of how the almond yields will look for this year's harvest; Wine Grape Council of SA's Adrian Hoffman talks about this year's vintage harvest and what conditions winemakers are facing; and Citrus SA chair Mark Doecke discusses what varieties are being harvested at the moment and what factors are most important for tree and fruit health at the moment.

The publication would not be what it is without the added support of advertisers, and the production team behind the scenes.

We hope you enjoy the 2024 autumn edition of SA Farmer. We look forward to seeing you again for our 2024 winter edition coming out in May.

Until then, keep updated online by visiting our free-to-read website: [www.safarmer.com.au](http://www.safarmer.com.au)

- The SA Farmer team

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**Kilkea Barossa Garlic's David Rutley with his hand-build drying rack.**

**COVER PHOTO: IMOGEN EVANS**

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# Telling the story of the Riverland

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ALEXANDRA BULL

ONE-hundred-and-three years ago, Sue Heward's grandfather returned from WWI to Monash as a soldier-settler, planting shiraz grapes on the block.

Fast forward to 2024, the vines are now gone but in return flourishing fig and quince orchards have been created by Sue and her family, providing Sue with some of the key ingredients for her business: Singing Magpie.

Singing Magpie started out in 2017, after Sue returned to Monash after venturing around Australia and internationally.

The plan started with semi-dried figs and quinces, which has now expanded to sticky quince syrup and figs, other local sun-dried produce, fruit

enrobed in premium dark chocolate couverture and local giftboxes.

With two types of figs on the block, white Smyrna figs, which were planted over 80 years ago, and black Genoa figs, with harvesting of the figs beginning in late January for Sue's family and their team, and will usually run until the start of April.

Sue said one of the keys to a good white Smyrna fig is seeing if they have cracks in the skin or not.

"Usually when you pick a good fig, you look for cracks and when you are in the shops, you don't get them like this," she said.

"The black Genoa figs are usually the first ones to crop and then maybe a couple of weeks later the white Smyrna figs will crop.



The Heward family orchard in Monash. Pictured is some of the orchard's black genoa fig trees.



"How big the harvest is depends on the year, so this year we are looking at about 30 tonnes of figs, which will mostly be the white Smyrnas.

"If you've never had a fig straight off the tree, you've never had a fig."

Sue's parents, who are in their seventies, continue to grow the figs on the families block, with Sue purchasing the figs off her parents and drying them for her business.

Sue has a team of local women who help her with the drying out of the figs, which occurs just across the road from the block of trees on a series of drying racks.

"Obviously we work together," she said.

"We will dry maybe about five tonnes of figs.

They take about three to five days to dry.

"So what we do is we dry them, then we refrigerate them and once we actually sell them we wash and pasteurise them, which just prevents any mould.

"Lots of people ask us do the birds come and eat them?

"They aren't really bothered because I think there's just so much fruit grown around there is enough to go around; we have guards on the drying racks so the mice can't get up and we have to put a bit of ant-rid to stop the ants but generally speaking our hot, dry weather is perfect for drying fruit.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



***This year we are looking at about 30 tonnes of figs, which will mostly be the white Smyrnas.***

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"These drying racks are brilliant. So the girls just come along and we sort through them. From Singing Magpie's point-of-view, we either sell them online through our website in giftboxes or wholesale direct to chefs."

Due to the current Riverland fruit fly outbreak, the family don't do any fresh figs, as figs also aren't very robust making it hard to transport a good fresh fig.

"So probably two thirds of the figs go across the road where we have a packing

shed and the girls cut them in half and weigh them and then they go off and get frozen and transferred out for cooking and then the other third I take for Singing Magpie."

Along with the figs, there is also a quince orchard with approximately 50 trees.

"These quinces are magnificent. They won't be ready until May, so they still have a bit of growing to do," Sue said.

"Some of these quinces will be 800

grams; they will be massive and bright yellow, and very fragrant.

"We don't spray any of our figs or quinces. We aren't organic but we don't do any spraying whatsoever.

"We are the only ones in Australia who sun-dry quince, because it's quite arduous. They get picked to be made into quince paste mostly, so we send them to New South Wales to get cooked there and then they are sold to food manufactures like Maggie Beer and Beerenberg."



Sue Heward's grandfather established the property more than 100 years ago.







***We are the only ones in Australia who sun-dry quince, because it's quite arduous.***

When it comes to Singing Magpie, Sue has built a business that showcases not only what her family has to offer, but the Riverland as a whole.

"We do things like giftboxes, which are a real story of the Riverland," Sue said.

"We buy peaches, pears, apricots, nectarines, plums and jujubes. We use Almondco almonds, we buy other people's citrus and it's just a lovely story of the Riverland, there's just so much to offer.

"There's so much produce in the Riverland that it's endless what you can do really. So Singing Magpie is kind of like the valued side of our family orchard basically.

"It's a wonderful opportunity really and you can just tell the story of the Riverland."



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Northern and Yorke  
Landscape Board general  
manager Tony Fox.

# Dear oh deer: pest problems continue costing primary producers



WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY AIDAN CURTIS

FERAL deer are continuing to cause headaches in primary production as efforts to control their numbers in the landscape ramp up under a state-wide strategic plan.

In late 2023, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) released its updated 10-year Strategic Plan for the South Australian Feral Deer Eradication Program.

As the name suggests, the plan aims to eradicate feral deer from South Australia by 2032 to avoid a catastrophic impact on the state's primary production economy.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Clare Scriven said the plan to eradicate feral deer was vital as the pest species cost South Australian producers around \$36 million in the 21/22 financial year.

Ms Scriven said a BDO EconSearch

analysis found that figure could balloon as far as \$241 million a year by 2031 if feral deer were left unchecked.

"In 2022, there were an estimated 40,000 feral deer in South Australia, with an estimated 24,000 of these occurring on the Limestone Coast," she said.

"Since May 2022, over 11,000 feral deer have been culled as part of the SA Feral Deer Eradication Program, with about 6,800 of these from the Limestone Coast region.

"Anecdotal reports from landholders in the areas where feral deer culls have been targeted are saying there are far fewer deer in the landscape compared with before the program started."

According to modelling in the strategy, PIRSA wants to see a 38 to 55 per cent reduction in the feral deer population each year until 2032.





## In 2022, there were an estimated 40,000 feral deer in South Australia...

Ms Scriven said while the biggest population of feral deer was currently in the state's south east, the numbers were getting to be a problem further north.

"There is a significant and expanding feral deer population in the mid-north, particularly around the Clare region, as well as in the southern Flinders Ranges," she said.

"There were an estimated 5,000 feral deer in the Northern and Yorke landscape region in 2022, and this was estimated to increase to 36,000 by 2031 without the eradication program.

"A recent aerial cull at Buckland Park saw 373 feral deer removed from the area. More aerial culls are planned for the mid-north region in 2024."

Northern and Yorke Landscape Board (NYLB) general manager Tony Fox said primary producers up north had started seeing the impacts of those growing populations.

"Primary producers don't like deer on their properties because they're grazers, and they're not harvestable from a primary production perspective – unless you've got a managed deer farm," Mr Fox said.

"When they're entering into a farming property, particularly a grazing property, they'll be competing with the sheep for the grass – and deer eat a lot of grass.

"They ultimately are a risk as well, because if we, for example, have an outbreak of foot and mouth or Johne's bovine disease, they're potential vectors to carry that across the landscape."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Populations of fallow deer will continue to grow in the mid-north region if left unchecked.  
PHOTO: Steve Bourne.

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Mr Fox said they also had a significant impact on the efforts to boost biodiversity on primary production land.

“Many primary producers are embracing the diversity that retaining and valuing native vegetation contributes to ecosystems, and feral deer do damage that quite significantly,” he said.

“They selectively eat things, so if you’ve got a good diverse patch of vegetation, they’ve got their tastiest plants; just like roos do, they’ll continue to go back to those plants until they’re removed from the system.

“When their antlers are coming off, they just rub them so vigorously against young saplings and small trees that they strip the bark and basically kill the trees.”

He said the impacts of that were felt with fewer native pollinators and beneficial insects doing the work for farmers, along with decreased shelter belt effectiveness making erosion a concern.

With producers’ bottom lines on the line, there has been support across the board for tackling the feral deer problem.

In November 2023, Livestock SA showed support across the board for the strategy and chief executive Travis Tobin said at the time producers were already seeing benefits.

“Producers have already seen the benefits of the 2022 culling program with a reduction in feed competition from feral deer, which will become more evident as we likely enter drier seasons ahead,” he said.

“This investment into a coordinated approach represents a modest cost compared to the significant economic impact posed by the feral deer species on the industry.”

**“With producers’ bottom lines on the line, there has been support across the board for tackling the feral deer problem.”**



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Steven Zimmermann shows off the variety of Zimmy's products, from fresh honey, to pickled onions, and much more.

# No gherkin around: Zimmy's do things the right way

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY LIAM PHILLIPS

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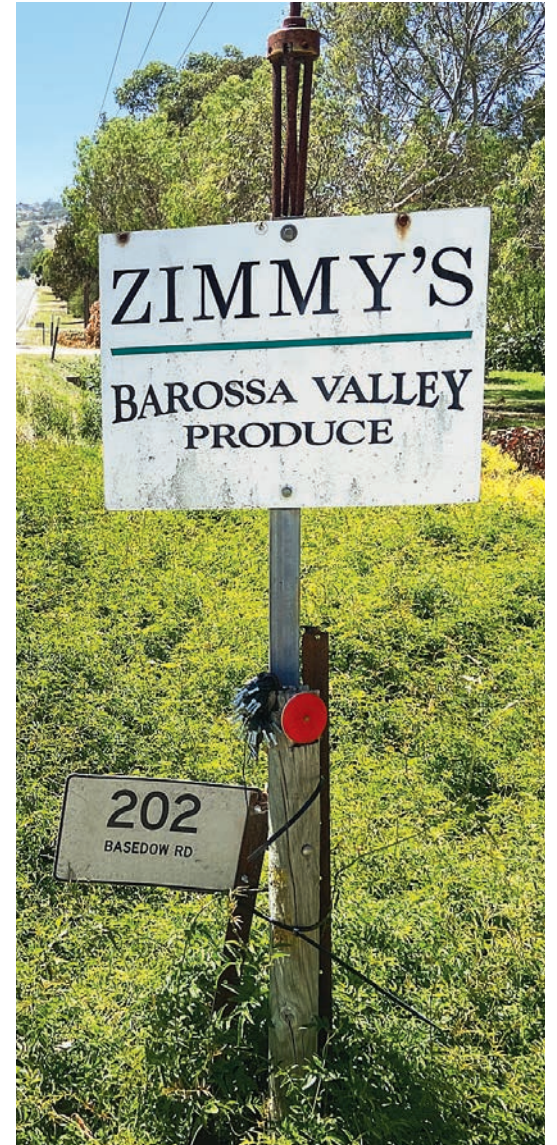


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THE STORY of Jimmy's Barossa Valley Produce dates back to the late 1800s when German couple Ferdinand and Bertha Zimmermann immigrated to South Australia.

After searching for a location that reminded them of home, the Zimmermann family eventually settled in the German-influenced Barossa Valley, where their recipes live on to this day.

Located in the heart of Tanunda, Steven Zimmermann says he loves being able to continue the legacy of his grandparents, who feature on the business's official logo.

"For as long as I can remember my father had made these nice homemade condiments," he said.

"Things like horseradish, beetroot, dill cucumbers, pickled onions and sauerkraut.

"When I was around 20 years old, I said to my father 'let's just make some products for the locals' – and from there we just started with a couple of local supermarkets in Tanunda.

"Our first products were horseradish, beetroot and dill cucumbers, and it's still the same sort of recipes that were passed down from my grandparents.

"It was just a hobby, but it just kept getting busier and busier until in 1985 it became a business, and around 1990 we went full-time and haven't stopped."

While tasty treats are part of what Zimmermann strives to produce, he strongly believes in the health benefits of his creations due to his non-industrial production methods.

"Sometimes with volume you need to convert the way you're handling the product, but pretty well the recipes and methods haven't changed," he said.

"We still use the authentic, natural way.

"I tend to believe in keeping the products as close to their full nutrients levels as possible, which you don't see a lot with the modern way commercial producers do things.

"A lot of commercial producers will not have the natural way of processing – natural ferment is good for you – and even though it might taste good, you don't get the benefits that should come from eating a vegetable."

Instead of huge factories and production lines, the Jimmy's operation consists of only three workers on his farm, with everything done by hand.

"The dill cucumbers are a typical product, because it just ferments, it cures, rather than gets pickled in a vinegar brine," Zimmermann said about the difference in his methods.

"When it naturally ferments it turns into a lactic acid after it's finished – and that's very, very good for your whole digestive system. Cucumbers are known to rehydrate the body.

"Once they're picked and in the shed, we wash them, chill them, brine them up in barrels with salt, dill and a few other little bits of herbs and spices, and then they take around another six weeks to cure in those barrels before we can begin to pack them into buckets ready for the market.

"With our beetroot, we mince it after we've skinned it, and it only gets to a boiling point and thickens with a natural corn starch, which is gluten free. Because it only mildly cooks, it's got a huge amount of nutrients in it.

"In large canneries they steam the beetroot very hard to get the skin off, and then they slice them, drop them into the can, and then pasteurize. When you pasteurize, you've killed all the natural enzymes, amino acids and nutrients which are great for your body.

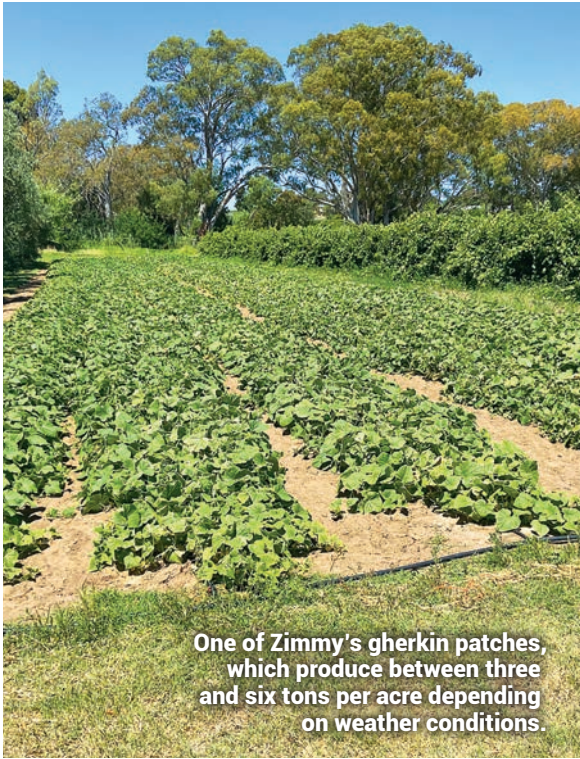
"It's night and day really."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

**A freshly picked batch of gherkins getting washed.**







One of Jimmy's gherkin patches, which produce between three and six tons per acre depending on weather conditions.



Horseradish, along with beetroot and gherkins, have become one of Jimmy's main three focuses.



Steven Zimmermann shows off the Jimmy logo featuring his grandparents Ferdinand and Bertha Zimmermann.

As well as their primary natural produce – which Zimmermann said these days is gherkins, beetroot and horseradish – Jimmy's also makes small batches of health products using fresh honey, garlic and home-made apple cider vinegar.

"Back in the early 2000s when I needed to do a food technology course I was looking at a different style of product," Zimmerman said.

"That's where we came up with this idea about what my father had always had – apple cider vinegar, honey and garlic – so we made a product called Trinity, and that was in remembrance of him.

"It was all to do with well-being, and things that are good to give you vitality. Garlic is a bacteria cleanser in the body, so I figured if we were making these products for our own use, why not share them with the population?

"I do get encouraged by a few of our customers when they come in and tell us that it's helped them in their lives – especially the Doc Away (combination of honey and apple cider vinegar) – where it's helped them with ailments like arthritis, diarrhoea and chronic headaches."

Another aspect of what makes Jimmy's such a unique South Australian operation is how few local farmers are producing gherkins.

"There are not a lot of players (in the industry), it's mainly all imported product," Zimmermann said.

"There's very few making anything in Australia like that, mainly because of the cost.

"It's a lot cheaper to import the product than what it is to produce it here in Australia, but when you're importing it you're not getting that natural fermentation, which makes a huge difference."

Zimmy's products are highly regarded for their quality and are used at notable Barossa Valley restaurants, and they can be found locally in stores such as the Tanunda Foodland and Nuriootpa's Barossa Fresh.

They are also sold both online (at [www.gourmetgoodies.com.au](http://www.gourmetgoodies.com.au)), and interstate in both New South Wales and Victoria through specialty food store Essential Ingredient.



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# New \$8m on-farm emergency water rebate extends to state wide disaster recovery

PRIMARY producers across South Australia will be able to access funding to install on-farm water infrastructure with the opening of a new round of the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme.

A further \$8m, co-funded by the state and federal governments, is available through the scheme, with eligible primary producers able to claim up to 25 per cent of the cost of approved critical infrastructure, capped at \$25,000.

Initially launched in 2018 to support drought-affected primary producers, the scheme has been expanded to all council areas across the state and includes those impacted by natural disasters occurring after 1 January 2022.

In particular, the scheme will now be available to primary producers affected by the 2022/23 River Murray flood.

“South Australian primary producers

have already seen the benefits of this scheme and it’s great to see the support now available for primary producers affected by natural disasters,” Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Clare Scriven said.

“Expansion of the scheme provides support to livestock and horticulture producers in repairing and replacing infrastructure damaged by natural disaster and continues to support build resilience of primary producers to drought.”

Up until this round, the fund had only been available to drought-affected council areas.

Applications close on 30 April 2024, or when all funds are allocated.

For further information on the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Scheme visit ([www.pir.sa.gov.au/onfarm-water-rebate](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/onfarm-water-rebate)).

**The scheme will now be available to primary producers affected by the 2022/23 River Murray flood.**

# Updated essential herbicide manuals released

GRAINS Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) has released updated editions of two essential herbicide manuals for Australian grain growers: ‘Soil behaviour of pre-emergent herbicide in Australian farming systems’ and ‘Understanding post-emergent herbicide weed control in Australian farming systems’.

These manuals, first published in 2019 and 2020, have undergone a revision that incorporates the latest in herbicide research and practice, including the transition to an international numbering system for herbicide mode of action.

This change aligns Australian agricultural practices with global standards, ensuring that Australian farmers and agronomists have access to the most current and relevant information.

According to GRDC manager chemical regulation Gordon Cumming key updates include the incorporation of new herbicides and modes of action in the pre-emergent herbicide manual.

“Notable additions are new modes of action such as Group 13 bixlozone (Overwatch), Group 23 carbetamide (Ultro), Group 30 cinmethylin (Luximax), Group 32 aclonifen (in Mateno Complete), and Group O napropamide (Devrinol),” he said.

“These additions highlight the growing range of pre-emergent herbicide options available to Australian growers in managing weed challenges.

“The post-emergent herbicide manual has seen fewer changes, with minor improvements in understanding certain herbicide modes of action, however, new research improving our understanding of the Group 10 herbicide glufosinate has been included, which is an increasingly important non-selective knockdown herbicide.”

ICAN senior consultant Mark Congreve says both manuals aim to simplify the complex interactions of pesticide chemistry with environmental conditions.

According to Mark Congreve, senior consultant with Independent Consultants Australia Network (ICAN), both manuals aim to simplify the complex interactions of pesticide chemistry with environmental conditions.

“They are valuable resources for agronomists, researchers and growers, providing insights into the behaviour of herbicides under various conditions, the interaction of different products, application techniques, crop safety, and environmental dissipation,” Mr Congreve says.

Complementing these manuals and in collaboration with ICAN, GRDC offers specialised workshops to further assist agronomists in putting this information into context. The 1.5-day workshops focus on the principles of herbicide biochemistry and their practical applications.





# AG NEWS



## Point of sale discount eID tags have commenced

As part of the implementation of a national electronic identification (eID) traceability system for sheep and farmed goats, South Australia's primary producers are now able to receive a point of sale eID tag discount.

Discounted tags will be available to South Australian producers following an agreement with the following manufacturers of National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) accredited eID tags – Allflex Australia, Enduro, Leader Products and Shearwell - to provide a \$0.95 discount per tag, with tag arrangements being finalised with Datamars (Zee Tag).

The point-of-sale discount scheme is being funded by the State Government as part of its commitment to supporting producers in the

transition to mandatory eID for sheep and farmed goats.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Clare Scriven said "having the best possible traceability system is a key platform in protecting our \$2.96 billion livestock industry".

"It is why the State Government established these support programs to assist in the transition towards the new national NLIS eID system for sheep and farmed goats," she said.

"Moving from the current visual device and mob-based approach to eID for sheep and farmed goats on a national level is significant. The outbreaks of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Indonesia has highlighted the need for reliable traceability.

"The new point of sale eID tag discount scheme allows South Australian sheep and farmed goat producers to access this support in a fast and convenient way."

Early adopters of eID will benefit from being able to access discounted tags for breeding stock being kept beyond 1 January 2027, when it will be mandatory for them to be eID tagged before leaving their property of birth. Sheep and farmed goats born on or after 1 January 2025 will need to be eID tagged before moving off property.

South Australian sheep and goat producers should see this discount passed on to them when purchasing fully accredited NLIS eID tags from rural retailers and from tag

manufacturers that supply directly to producers.

As a point-of-sale discount, producers will not be required to complete any application forms, but the discounted tags must be aligned to the NLIS year of birth (black for 2024 and white for 2025) and are only available to producers with an active property identification code (PIC) registered with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA).

The point-of-sale tag discount scheme will be open from 1 January 2024.

The eID Device Rebate (2023) remains open to producers for eligible tags purchased between 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

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# SA Farmer

## Rainfall accelerates summer spraying program

GRAIN Producers SA (GPSA) and the Wine Grape Council of SA (WGCSA) are putting wrongdoers on notice as recent rainfall accelerates summer spraying across South Australia.

All primary producers, including grain producers, grape growers, spray contractors and other landholders are being reminded to avoid spraying in

hazardous inversions.

GPSA CEO Brad Perry said “unpredictable summer rain has prompted weed growth and fast-tracked the summer spraying program”.

“Particularly for grain producers, the summer spraying program really ramped up following the most recent rainfall events,” he said.

“The majority of farmers do the right thing but it’s those who continue to deliberately flout the law that are impacting on people’s livelihoods and communities.

“GPSA is reminding farmers that awareness around spray drift is heightened like never before and those not doing the right thing must

understand the consequences with spraying when the conditions aren’t right.

“We thank the Department for Primary Industries and Regions for accepting our calls to implement random spray record audits, but we also need more surveillance on the ground to identify and act on the practices of any wrongdoers.”

WGCSA CEO Lisa Bennier said “hazardous inversions can be monitored in real time through the Mesonet”.

“Technology has made it simpler for farmers to monitor hazardous inversions,” she said.

“If you’re a primary producer applying chemicals, you should be following the label and if you are not, there’s really no excuse and you should be prosecuted.

“All primary producers have a responsibility to keep their sprays in their paddock and in doing so, protect the environment and human health.

“It’s not just fellow farmers that are impacted by spray drift, there are widespread consequences, including for communities.”

PAGE 22 GPSA FORUM






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# AG NEWS



## AgPick launches ID fraud-prevention facial recognition app

INNOVATIVE agritech provider AgPick Technology has launched a facial recognition app to protect growers from ID fraud.

The new AgPick ID app uses advanced biometric technology to verify worker images and immediately identify them, so they can match to registration details in the AgPick data store, including name, visa status and payment methods.

AgPick Technology CEO Henrietta Child said "AgPick ID provided an extra layer of security which would primarily protect growers, suppliers, and pickers from the implications of ID fraud".

"Growers want to know who is on their farm. This technology uses commercially available AI functionality to ensure people on a farm are who they say they are and if they have a legal right to be there," she said.

"The technology is an extra layer of security to protect growers from Fair Work breaches, support their insurance coverage, and protect them from ID fraud. It also saves admin time and ensures accurate payment.

"At induction, pickers are registered and three images of their face are loaded into the AgPick system using AgPick ID. From then on, sign in is with a face option, simply take a photo and press start. The image is compared with the unique meta data attributes of their face and matched to their personal details which are already in the system. If the ID doesn't match, the worker either shouldn't be there or hasn't been registered."

The technology enables supervisors

to use any Android device to capture the images – a process that is proving to be quick and easy while reducing a reliance on crew ID cards.

"The process will obviate the need for workers to carry crew ID cards which can be misplaced, lost, or used by someone else," Ms Child said.

She added that independent workers on hourly rate jobs could easily move between jobs around the farm, using the face scanner at each point.

"AgPick ID is a mobile application that had been designed for use in any environment. It also saved workers time from reporting to the office to sign on and off, was mobile, highly flexible, and easy to use," Ms Child said.

AgPick ID, launched at a Central Queensland farming operation, was already achieving a high success rate by saving time and ensuring workers were who they said they were.

"We had some uncertainty as to whether this new check would slow the operation down. But we couldn't have been more wrong," Ms Child said.

"Before we knew it, they had ditched the cards for all time bookings because it was quicker."

The AgPick ID app is integrated with the AgPick system, so that all data captured about a worker's activities and their performance is reported in AgPick Reporting Portal.

"At a granular level the system records activities and time spent on a block and allows companies and supervisors to make better, more informed decisions," Ms Child said.

## Caring for stock in challenging weather conditions

PREPARE for changing weather and ensure your stock are well cared for with the use of a stock containment area (SCA).

Agriculture Victoria land management extension officer Clem Sturmfels said "caring for stock during a drought or following bushfires or floods can be challenging, and an SCA can help to minimise loss or illness and reduce farmer stress".

"A SCA is a small, fenced section of a farm set-up to hold, feed and water livestock," he said.

"Typical pens measure 50 by 50m and hold approximately 500 sheep or 170 cattle and ensure stock have room to move around and spend time on their own."

Mr Sturmfels said having animals close makes feeding, watering, and management easier and more efficient.

An additional benefit of containing stock is maintaining ground cover across the rest of the property, protecting soils, water and pastures.

"It's important that stock enter a SCA healthy and in good condition. They should be drenched, vaccinated, and conditioned to a grain-based diet," Mr Sturmfels said.

"Diseases and health issues can spread quickly in containment, so regular inspection and monitoring is essential. Common issues such as acidosis and shy feeders need to be identified early, with affected stock being moved to a pen of their own.

"It's vital stock have enough feed and supply of fresh water, plus shade during the hotter times of the day.

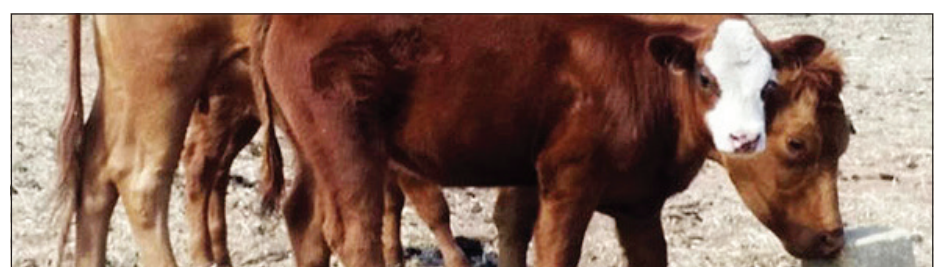
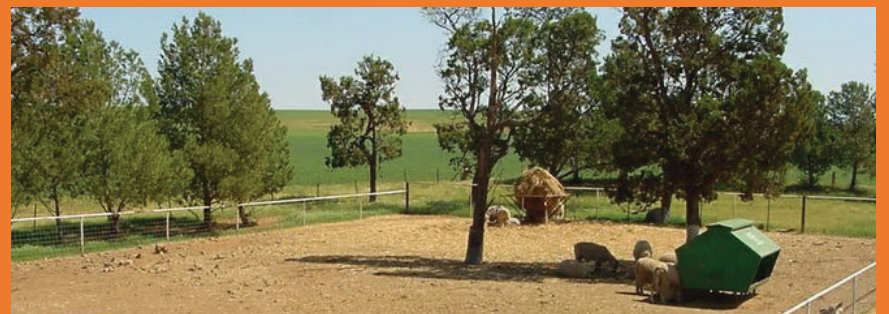
"A good understanding of the nutritional needs of different classes of stock is essential, along with a knowledge of the energy, roughage and protein mix of various feed sources.

"Siting and layout of a SCA involves thought and planning. Ideally, a SCA should be close to existing feed and stock handling facilities, and away from houses, waterways and dams.

"Consider what feeding system you plan to use as this will impact the pen design and layout."

Check with your local council planning officer before starting construction as a planning permit may be required in some situations.

For more information on SCA visit ([www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/land-and-pasture-management/stock-containment-areas-for-emergencies](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/land-and-pasture-management/stock-containment-areas-for-emergencies)).



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# South Australian farmers finish 2023 on more positive note

SOUTH Australian farmers finished 2023 on a more optimistic note, reporting an upswing in confidence in the last quarter, the Q4 Rabobank Rural Confidence Survey has shown.

The survey found 15 per cent of SA farmers expect the agricultural economy will improve over the next 12 months, up from seven per cent with the view in the previous quarter, while 38 per cent believe conditions will remain stable.

Fewer also expected the agricultural economy to worsen (45 per cent, back from 50 per cent).

Although still at negative levels – with more respondents pessimistic than optimistic in their outlook for the year ahead – sentiment among the state's farmers was the highest in the nation, neck and neck with Queensland.

SA, Queensland and New South Wales were the only states to record an uplift in rural confidence via the survey.

Optimism about rising commodity prices was found to be the most significant factor for those South Australian farmers with a positive outlook on the year ahead in the survey, nominated by 81 per cent.

Significant rainfall in recent days across many parts of the state – South Australia's heaviest December rain in 75 years – was likely to have further boosted

farmer sentiment, according to Rabobank regional manager for South Australia Roger Matthews.

The survey found commodity prices were also a source for pessimism among other farmers in the state, continuing to be the main – and growing – reason for those with worsening expectations – nominated by 86 per cent, up from 64 per cent last survey.

There were also heightened concerns about drought for those farmers with a negative outlook, following the September declaration of El Niño, with 29 per cent listing this as a reason for their pessimism, compared with 20 per cent in the previous survey.

Slightly more of the state's farmers listed input costs as a concern (28 per cent of those farmers expecting the economy to worsen, up from 24 per cent), however worries eased about interest rates and overseas markets/economies (both were 23 per cent last quarter, now 17 per cent).

Mr Matthews said the latest lift in confidence was in line with long-term trends in the state, where a dip in spring is often followed by an improved outlook coming into summer.

"The third quarter survey falls in the middle of uncertainty around what the crucial spring period will deliver for the

state's grain growers. However, the fourth quarter results capture how farmers are feeling now they have a handle on crop quality and yields," he said.

"The survey may also have captured sheep and cattle producers' response to the uptick in livestock prices beginning to be seen in November."

While confidence is still in negative territory Mr Matthews said "SA farmers have moved away from the uncertainty of spring and are hopeful the end is in sight to the downward cycle of livestock prices".

Harvest outcomes were also captured among the relatively small percentage of SA farmers with a positive outlook, with grain growers citing improved commodity prices as a reason for their positivity.

"In a season like this, where harvest started early across the state and SA grain growers had already delivered one million tonnes in October, the lift in confidence rides on the back on better-than-anticipated quality and yields in many regions," Mr Matthews said.

The survey found there were regional differences when it came to sentiment about the seasonal conditions ahead.

Mr Matthews said drought was more a concern for growers on the Eyre Peninsula and from the Upper North where it was cited by just over half who believed



business conditions would worsen. "It reflects the impact of a drier year for these lower rainfall regions, following the forecast that El Niño conditions are set to return after a run of La Niña years," he said.

Dry conditions were less of a concern moving down to the south-east, where respondents listed a good season as a reason for conditions to improve.



# AG NEWS

With the recent declaration of El Niño, respondents this quarter were asked about the strategies that will be important to manage the impact to their farm business over the next 12 months.

In SA, a quarter of farmers indicated they would de-stock or adjust stocking rates, and 18 per cent plan to build on-farm feed reserves of hay, grain and silage. However, 19 per cent were confident they are prepared and don't intend to make any major changes in response to the El Niño forecast.

SA's livestock producers were less concerned this quarter about the threat to the live export market with it listed as a cause for worry by seven per cent of those with a negative view on the year ahead, back from 12 per cent in the previous quarter, but more were now concerned more generally about government intervention/policies (20 per cent, up from 14 per cent).

"Sheep producers in SA remain mindful of the anticipated phasing out of the live export of sheep," Mr Matthews said.

Rising input costs continue to put pressure on the bottom line, edging up as a concern for 28 per cent of farmers with a pessimistic outlook, from 24 per cent in the quarter three survey.

The impact of seasonal and market factors saw only nine per cent of the state's farmers confident their farm

incomes will increase over the next 12 months (down from 13 per cent in the previous survey), while 69 per cent expect incomes to decrease (was 61 per cent).

However, in line with the overall increase in confidence, there was an improved investment outlook in SA, where 18 per cent of farmers expect to increase investment in their farm businesses in the next 12 months – compared with 12 per cent the previous survey. Those intending to decrease investment was relatively stable at 16 per cent, compared with 15 per cent the previous quarter.

There was heightened appetite for farmland, with an increased number of those intending to increase their investment over the next 12 months earmarking this for property purchases to expand their operation.

"Stronger interest in investment goes hand-in-hand with more confidence in the economic outlook," Mr Matthews said.

"Although there was almost unsustainable appetite for land over the past couple of years, this has moderated in recent times, but there's still a significant number of the state's farmers who indicate they are in a position to take on more land."

More SA farmers who are increasing their investment in the coming year will

spend on farm infrastructure – such as fences, yards and silos – although there was a decline in intention to invest in irrigation/water infrastructure and increasing livestock numbers.

Labour remains a concern for SA farmers and was listed by a third as the most pressing issue facing the vitality of their local rural community. More intend to invest in increasing labour.

There was an increase in the number of SA farmers who will take on more debt in their business, with 29 per cent of respondents this survey, compared with eight per cent the previous quarter. More than half will use this debt for working capital (52 per cent, up significantly from 20 per cent), reflecting reduced cashflow in many businesses from softer commodity markets.

A comprehensive monitor of outlook and sentiment in Australian rural industries, the Rabobank Rural Confidence Survey questions an average of 1000 primary producers across a wide range of commodities and geographical areas throughout Australia on a quarterly basis.

The most robust study of its type in Australia, the Rabobank Rural Confidence Survey has been conducted since 2000 by an independent research organisation. The next results are scheduled for release in March 2024.



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## GPSA forum to explore spray best practice

A FORUM focused on planning for best practice agrichemical spray application in the South Australian grain industry is being held at Freeling in March.

The forum is free for Grain Producers SA (GPSA) members and will feature a range of experts in the field of spray application, including internationally renowned expert in spray drift management, Dr Andrew Hewitt, and weeds expert, professor Chris Preston.

The one-day forum will be held at the F.A.R.M Centre at Freeling, on 7 March with GPSA members able to access free tickets and non-GPSA members' tickets being \$50.

GPSA CEO Brad Perry said "the Spray Forum will provide a compressive full day program of expert speakers and discussions".

"GPSA's Spray forum will be a full day where grain producers can come together to not only hear from world renowned experts but have the important discussions that need to be had on agrichemical application," he said.

"It is positive to see targeted focus on best spray practices with workshops on the Yorke Peninsula, Mid North, Murraylands and Fleurieu in the coming months and we want to build on that momentum by holding the Spray Forum.

"GPSA is taking leadership in spray application through or complain with the tagline 'Don't Spray Your Dollars Away', reminding producers that off-target spray doesn't just impact livelihoods and communities, but it can cost that farmer financially."

The Forum will cover education and awareness through topics such as social licence, droplets and nozzles, market access, optimizing spray effectiveness, hazardous inversions, weather stations and broom sprays.

To register or purchase tickets, visit ([www.sprayforum.eventbrite.com.au](http://www.sprayforum.eventbrite.com.au)).

## Grain producer CFS volunteers threaten to walk away

A NUMBER of South Australian grain producers who are SA Country Fire Service (CFS) volunteers have stated in a Grain Producers SA (GPSA) survey that they may walk away from their membership if any changes are made to the 2m work height Grassland Fire Danger Index (GFDI) measurement under the Grain Harvesting Code of Practice.

Almost 400 South Australian grain producers responded to a GPSA survey undertaken during the period the CFS were proposing to correct the GFDI of 35 at 10m instead of 2m late last year.

After sustained advocacy from GPSA and grain producers opposing the proposed changes, a decision was made by the Minister for Emergency Services Joe Szakacs and the SACFS in August 2023 to continue current adopted practice under the Grain Harvesting Code of Practice. This decision was welcomed by GPSA.

The outcomes of the GPSA survey of 376 South Australian grain producers conducted during this period found:

- ❑ Eighty-six per cent of grain producers stated they measure wind speed under the South Australian Grain Harvest Code at two metres. Just three per cent measure at 10m and four percent measure at 2m converting to 10m.
- ❑ When asked whether they support a "correction" to the Grain Harvest Code to GFDI 35 measured at 10m, 90 per cent said no, with just 2 per cent saying yes.
- ❑ Grain producers replying to the survey were also asked whether they tested out the Fire Behaviour Index (FBI) guide of 40 last season, with 50 per cent saying they didn't, demonstrating the confusion around a national system roll-out.

GPSA Chief Executive Officer Brad Perry said "nearly 60 per cent of South Australian grain producers surveyed indicated they were CFS volunteers".

"Our survey data shows that any change to the cease harvest threshold that impacts grain producers' business

is likely to also hit CFS volunteer numbers," he said.

"Grain producers proudly volunteer their time for the CFS to help their community and they don't take their membership lightly. However, comments throughout the survey demonstrated just how angry grain producers were about the proposal to move to GFDI 35 measured at 10m instead of current practice at 2m. As a result, growers indicated that many of them would have seriously considered walking away from the CFS."

Some of the comments made by grain producers in the survey:

"If (the) CFS proposal goes ahead I will remove four family members from the CFS."

"If the change comes in, I will be reassessing my CFS membership."

"I'm very disappointed in the CFS taking this approach. I believe that the current system works very well. I will reconsider my CFS membership if the current system is changed."

"I'd be disappointed if CFS pursue this. I have been a Brigade Captain for 6 years and Deputy Group Officer for 10 years. I anticipate a large loss in volunteer numbers in farming areas if this goes ahead, possibly including myself. The current system of ceasing harvest at FDI 35 is working well in our local area."

"Any changes with the system will promote a large number of CFS volunteers to step down, leaving the district extremely vulnerable."

"CFS have lots of farmers as volunteers. I'm seriously thinking of leaving if they change the current system, this will make it hard for us to get our harvest off in a timely manner and could have serious financial consequences."

"CFS will lose members on a large scale if they change the GFDI."

"To be honest we will be seriously considering our position in relation to our multigeneration membership of CFS if there is a change."

"We have 5 CFS members in our family, maybe we won't volunteer. Farmers need to be able to harvest."

"Due to the high percentage of grain growers volunteering in the CFS, if this rule was to change, the Government will lose any respect remaining and I myself would leave the CFS and advocate for as many others to do the same."

"As a former Captain of my local CFS, and a current volunteer, I cannot understand why as farmers we are continually ignored with all of this. The CFS cannot afford to alienate a major part of its volunteer base, which it is in danger of doing. The system has served us well and adopted widely in the industry."

"Our family and staff will resign from the CFS if their proposal is to go ahead, as will many others."

Mr Perry said "the current system works well because grain producers can measure the cease harvest threshold at working height in their paddock under relevant conditions and continue to harvest safely under the Code".

"After another successful harvest under the Grain Harvesting Code of Practice measuring GFDI 35 at 2m and with the results of this survey, there is no evidence-based case that can be made to change current practice," he said.

In the survey, GPSA also requested grain producers provide information on what else they do for fire safety outside of the equipment required by law. There were hundreds of responses ranging from the purchase of ex-CFS fire trucks, installation of firefighting equipment on chaser bins, additional water tankers, adding fire extinguishers and utilising farm firefighting units.

"From the feedback in the survey, it was made clear that many farms are equipped with thousands of litres of extra water in case of a fire, and they maintain and check their machinery and fire breaks," Mr Perry said.





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Barossa Angus co-owner Julian Maul with some Black Angus cattle on his Mount Crawford property.



# Breeding quality Angus cattle on the Barossa's doorstep

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JEM NASH

SITUATED at Mount Crawford is a small but thriving Black Angus producer with a focus on breeding high-quality cattle that will go the distance.

Barossa Angus began more than 20 years ago, when Julian and Jane Maul made the move to South Australia from Sydney with the goal of opening a country guesthouse.

They purchased a property at Lyndoch and built Abbotsford Country House, which they ran for 19 years.

While running the guesthouse, they began breeding cattle and started a paddock to plate business.

"We had been predominantly vealer producers when we first started running cattle and then we started to breed Black Angus cattle and that's what

we sold with our paddock to plate business," Julian said.

Their cattle production led to a small side hustle of creating traditional Christmas puddings to be sold at local markets and through online orders, which Jane still runs to this day.

"We would process some of our beef for our own consumption... but all the suet from that would be used for the production of Christmas puddings," Julian said.

"We've been doing that for 20 years."

When the paddock to plate venture became too physically demanding, combined with running the guesthouse, the focus shifted to seedstock production.

Julian realised there was nowhere in the Barossa and Hills regions that sold the best Angus genetics, so they began selling bulls privately and have continued down that path for about the past 10 years.

They have now sold their Lyndoch property and ceased operating the guesthouse and have been operating out of their Mount Crawford property for the past two years.

"We're not a big breeder, but our focus has always been about breeding quality on our doorstep," Julian said.

"You don't have to go down to the southeast. There's some fantastic studs down there, no doubt about it, but I just felt that someone should be doing it up here."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26





The Black Angus cattle split times between Mount Crawford and Lyndoch properties, ensuring they are bred under tough conditions.

While they no longer run the guesthouse, the couple have still been able to utilise the Lyndoch property.

The cattle are solely pasture fed and they split time between the two properties, ensuring they are bred under tough conditions.

"We winter up here [at Mount Crawford] but we summer at Lyndoch," Julian said.

"Lyndoch is hot, dry country. Up here it's cold, it's wet... so there's nothing cushy about the way we run our bulls.

"That gives us a lot of confidence that our bulls can go into any kind of environment."

Julian explained that they effectively sell their bulls to three different markets.

There is the heifer market for producers who want an easy carving solution for their heifers, plus the breeders who keep cows and are after bulls that will focus more on growth and carcass qualities.

Finally, there are the breeders who want more of a balanced option.

Julian said breeding decisions are based on the cow and it is about finding a bull that suits that particular cow.

"We inseminate on the basis of the cow's qualities and what we can build from her," he said.

"Every bull is effectively a consequence of a breeding decision where the focus is, in the first instance, on what the cow brings and then we build on that with a sire selection."

Like any industry, cattle breeding, and more specifically Angus breeding, continues to evolve and Julian said the science is advancing at a rapid pace.

"The tools that we now use, not just simply for making breeding decisions but also to verify an animal's parentage and the potential breeding outcomes of its progeny, along with being able to identify any potential genetic defects... it's a very different world than it was 10 years ago," he said.

"It may not necessarily be what you had anticipated the outcome of a particular breeding decision was, but we're actually now better able to forecast the breeding outcomes."



Barossa Angus began back in 2000 as a paddock to plate business.

**We focus on producing correctly verified, genomically enhanced, structurally sound bulls that will go the distance.**



All of these developments allow potential buyers to make much more informed and accurate decisions.

"When you go to a bull sale and you see that the animal has been parentally verified as well as genomically advanced – in other words the genomic workers have been able to enhance or verify what the true breeding outcomes are likely to be – it gives the buyer greater confidence in the bull that they're buying," Julian said.

There are still challenges, with the agricultural sector unable to escape the cost-of-living pressures.

However, Julian believes the cattle, and particularly Angus industry, will continue to prosper, with the Australian beef sector inspiring confidence internationally, with overseas breeders also very interested in Australian genetics.

"Angus is a breed that generates a premium and part of that premium for the producers is we have the genetic diversity that allows us to basically put an Angus bull into any breeding system that you might have," he said.

"No matter where you are and no matter what market you're delivering to, there's Angus genetics that will meet your market.

"Unfortunately, there are a lot of other breeds that just don't have the sheer scale or the breadth in the scale of our genetic pool.

"It's just enormous and it wouldn't matter whether you're someone from the Victorian high country to far northwest Queensland, there are Angus genetics that will meet your production system."

Barossa Angus might not be the largest breeder but its passion for quality is what sticks out.

"We focus on producing correctly verified, genomically enhanced, structurally sound bulls that will go the distance," Julian said.



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Rob Gibson's Bin 60 started out as a birthday project but has become much more than that, earning a remarkable 4.8 rating on Vivino.



# No pour decisions from Barossa barons

WORDS BEN LENNON

A PAIR of Barossa winemakers entered the new year on top of the world following rave reviews for a duo of drops from South Australia's famous region.

Rob Gibson (Gibson Wines) and Ben Glaetzer (Glaetzer Wines) entered 2024 with the unique honour of sharing top spot in the ranking system of Vivino, the world's leading wine app.

Gibson's Bin 60 and Glaetzer's Eye of Ra each hold 4.8 out of 5 stars for their Barossa cuvees. The pair sits equal top with a Châteauneuf-du-Pape bottling by French vintner Pierre Usseglio, of which just one barrel is made.

Produced in 2008, Gibson's Bin 60 is similarly scarce, with just 100 bottles remaining at the winery's cellar door.

The drop goes for nearly \$400 a pop, but for Gibson, the Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz has plenty of sentimental value.

"It was made on a wing and a prayer

and it wasn't really market-based – nobody really asked for a \$300-plus wine," he said.

"It was really made for my birthday and to share with my mates and just to see what we could do in terms of a fine wine.

"Being a long-serving Penfold employee I've got an idea of what this level of wine should look like.

"It was a bit of a risky move, but it was about knowing that I could drink it with my mates."

Despite not being made for the mass market, the Bin 60 has been a hit with consumers around the globe.

It serves as tangible proof that the saying of 'ageing like a fine wine' is on the money, with Mr Gibson heralding its maturation as a key factor in its success.

"The wine was made for ageing – we released it as an aged wine," he said.

"It demonstrated what happens if you mature a wine of that quality.

"I wasn't surprised and I think it was a good vintage – I just took the cream of the crop. It always had potential but releasing it with age and maturity was really helpful I think."

Glaetzer's 'Eye of Ra' Shiraz is Ben Glaetzer's attempt to "create the perfect wine".

It sells for \$650 per bottle and is limited to three per customer.

"It took over 30 years of learning, hard work and discovering the potential of the vines before the Eye of Ra became possible," Mr Glaetzer said.

"I always knew it would be hard work, but well worth the effort. I'm glad that other wine lovers agree."

Consumer satisfaction has long been a focus at Gibson Wines and Mr Gibson said it was "special" to match it with the best of 245,000 wineries of the world on Vivino.



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## Custom Design Solutions

In Central NSW, a new Stainless Steel receival hopper design and manufactured by edp was installed by the company, meeting tight deadlines for the customer's annual maintenance shutdown.

The challenge included doubling production while addressing existing safety concerns, both of which were successfully achieved within the set timeframe and budget.





"It means a lot because we always focus on consumer votes," he said.

"We don't chase gold medals and we love getting consumer votes so we're pretty chuffed about it.

"It's people becoming aware of the quality that we can produce.

"I've enjoyed a pretty interesting career and in a way I've always had an international view of wine style because of my travels.

"Vivino is very much an international assessment, so I think I'm in tune with that.

Gibson has spent over half a century in the wine game and will undertake his 51st vintage this summer.

He has crossed paths with Mr Glaetzer on occasion and believes the fact a pair of locals can make it big on the world stage is a testament to what the region can produce.

"We've bumped into each other over the years," he said.

"It's pretty much a Barossa community of winemakers and we bump into each other every now and then.

"He travels a lot and I used to travel a lot so it's surprising how little you see one another.

"The world loves Barossa Shiraz and they will continue to love it."

Others in Vivino's top ten include two from Australia - Penfold's Grange and Torbreck The Laird - plus fine wine collectables from Schrader (Napa Valley, USA) and Antinori (Tuscany, Italy).



South Aussie winemakers Rob Gibson (left) and Ben Glaetzer entered 2024 on top of the Vivino world rankings thanks to their much-loved drops. PHOTOS: supplied



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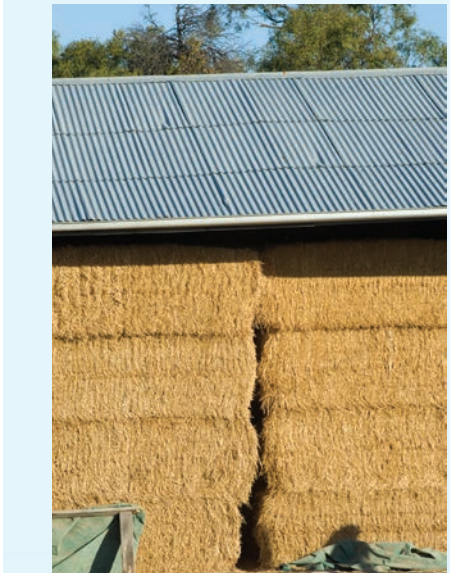
# AG NEWS

## Are you feeding your livestock sufficiently?

Agriculture Victoria is advising livestock owners to assess their livestock feed situation, warning them that failing to provide proper and sufficient feed to livestock is an offence under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.

Agriculture Victoria's Morgan Cassell said producers need to make appropriate decisions regarding their livestock and ability to provide adequate feed.

- She said livestock owners and managers should ask:
- ❑ What are the nutritional requirements for the class and number of livestock I keep?
  - ❑ How much feed do I currently have on offer and is it meeting my livestock's energy and protein requirements?



- ❑ How much supplement feed do I need to be feeding?
- ❑ Will I have enough? Will I be able to source more?
- ❑ What alternative options do I have; agistment, destocking?

"If you aren't sure of any of the answers to these questions, you need to seek advice or do your research," Ms Cassell said.

"There are many free resources and tools available to help and once you know the answers you can then make an informed decision, plan and take action."

For information on feeding livestock visit Agriculture Victoria's Feeding Livestock website ([feedinglivestock.vic.gov.au](http://feedinglivestock.vic.gov.au)).

"You will find information on sheep and cattle nutrition, tools to help calculate feed-on-offer and interpret feed test results and templates to create a feed budget," Ms Cassell said.

"Otherwise, you can also put in a call to your local Agriculture Victoria livestock extension officer on 136 186.

"Agriculture Victoria will investigate any allegation which concerns an owner or person in charge failing to provide proper and sufficient feed to an animal."

Anyone wishing to make a specific complaint regarding livestock welfare can contact Agriculture Victoria at [aw.complaint@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:aw.complaint@agriculture.vic.gov.au) or on 136 186.



Whether feed is meeting livestock's needs is a critical question for ag farmers.  
PHOTOS: Agriculture Victoria

# INDUSTRY EXPERT UPDATE

Journalists Hugh Schuitemaker and Alexandra Bull spoke with key agricultural industry figures to gain an insight into their respective seasons.

### Mark Doecke Citrus SA chair

#### What varieties of citrus are being harvested at the moment?

The only variety left in the Riverland at this time are Valencia Oranges, some for the local market and the rest for juice.

#### How is the quality and quantity of fruit looking at the moment?

The crop coming for 2024 looks good with less quality issues due to a warmer spring and summer.

#### Is the popularity of the cara cara variety increasing nationally and internationally?

Our packers continue to market this variety to sell the its positive attributes . The unique textures and flavours make the Cara Cara popular with all who taste it.

#### Were there any impacts to citrus fruit from the rain over January?

The rain that we have had since November benefits citrus as there is no better quality water than rain water.



#### How are pricing returns for citrus currently?

Prices for Valencia are high at the moment as supplies are tight and the world stocks of orange juice are low mainly due to citrus diseases in Florida and Brazil.

#### What factors are important for tree health in the coming months?

Growers need to constantly monitor the trees supply of water. Check the crop loads in the orchard and maybe adjust your fertiliser program. Talk to your reseller of agronomist if you need specific information.





## Adrian Hoffmann

Wine Grape Council of SA Region Two chair

*NOTE: This interview was conducted before the 2024 vintage began.*

### Has vintage begun in the Barossa area?

I haven't heard of anyone starting the harvest, but everyone has their machines ready. Maybe some of the really early sparkling stuff has started to be picked, but most people will be cranking up in the next week or two.

### Is there confidence in the quality and quantity of fruit?

I would say this year is more a winemaker's year. Yields are a little bit lower, so winemakers are looking at the quality. The balance on the vine is quite good. The impact of the cold weather in spring is quite evident, with the lower yield in some blocks, but overall cane pruned vines faired better than spur pruned vines. The industry probably didn't need a big vintage this year, and needed that quality coming through.

### Have we seen similar conditions to the 2021 vintage?

I think it's leaning a bit more toward 2019 from that yield point of view. There's a little bit of disease kicking around, so growers have to be diligent on that. We had a mild summer, and I think we'll see vintage come along quite early

and it will go quite quickly.

We'll be quite busy on the vineyard, but I think the wineries will have the capacity to handle a smaller vintage.

### What varieties will be in demand this year?

There's been an increased demand for grenache. There's overall demand for everything apart from shiraz and cabernet. Shiraz will be tougher to get rid of this year... there will be a little bit of fruit hanging on the vines at the end of the season, but once winemakers realise how lean the vintage is, that will get bought on the spot market.

### How important is communication between growers and winemakers this year?

The communication needs to be kept up. I don't think we'll have a large window of opportunity to pick like last year and ripening will happen quite quickly with the smaller yields.

### What factors are most important for vine health after vintage?

People have to look at how much water they have in the system, and maintaining that canopy for as long as possible after vintage. The vines didn't have a solid shut down last year and have been working pretty hard this year.

## Tim Jackson

Almond Board of Australia chief executive officer

### How are the almond crops looking this year?

Almond orchards have bounced back to average yields across Australia's five growing regions. Nationally it's estimated that 164,00 tonnes (kernel weight equivalent) will be produced. This figure is almost 60 per cent higher than the 2023, which was affected by poor weather conditions.

### Are you confident there will be high yields for Riverland growers?

Almond yields in the Riverland are looking good. A significant increase in almond volumes, alongside improved pricing, is needed by all growers after such a tough season in 2023.

### Have summer rainfalls impacted the almond crop at all?

The rain over Christmas and the New Year period has slowed the start of harvest. Splitting is a bit later than everyone would prefer, so we want nice warm, sunny days so harvesting can get started in the coming weeks and produce high-quality product.

### How are export markets looking?

Export demand for Australian almonds remains strong. Nine months into the 2023-2024 almond season (March to February), Australian sales have already exceeded the actual crop intake for the year. Substantial carry-over from previous seasons has bolstered the sales number to an unprecedented level. At the end of November 112,096 tonnes was shipped. Increasing the demand for Australian almonds remains a high priority. China, India, Europe, the United

Kingdom, Middle East and South East Asia are regarded as our high value markets. The ABA's marketing team will make its first overseas trip for the year in February, attending an Indian Nut Conference in Delhi and also Gulfoods in Dubai, which is now one of the largest food trade shows in the world. The new trade conditions in India will see unprecedented volumes being shipped to India this year. We have a 50% reduction in tariff under the AI-ECTA and we would be surprised if the 34,000 tonne quota for that rate is not fully subscribed in 2024.

### What will be the key to a successful 2024 for growers?

Everyone is hoping for dry weather conditions, so the crop can be shaken from the trees, swept off the ground and placed into storage or delivered to processors in a speedy manner. Maintaining a US dollar exchange rate in the 60s and continued uptick in global pricing are the key elements for growers this year. They need to maximise their return after such small crops last year, so those two key market fundamentals need to align to ease the pressure on many almond businesses. The key to maximising returns on the orchard will be having a clear dry run so the best quality can be produced through the various processing plants.

### Any new words of advice for Riverland growers?

Preparations are well underway for the Australian Almonds Conference in Adelaide from October 2-4. Growers and others involved in the industry are encouraged to come along to hear about R&D projects, almond marketing and other issues affecting the industry. It also provides a valuable networking opportunity.







Steve Brauer's Barhee date trees at his Gurra Road property.



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# All in the date for Steve

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY  
LACHLAN DAND

SITUATED just off Bookpurnong Road, connecting Riverland towns Berri and Loxton, is Gurra Road.

A few kilometres down Gurra Road, the Riverland Date Garden, run solely by local Steve Brauer, is found.

The garden will celebrate its 20th year in 2024, when it begun by originally planting 15 Barhee dates.

Mr Brauer's inspiration came via an Israeli backpacker, who asked why there were no dates in the area, and as they say, the rest is the history.

"Him asking why there were no dates really got me thinking and looking into it all," Mr Brauer said.

"After all, it's a family farm and we had the land to do something about it.

"It's definitely been a big learning curve because it's a crop that isn't really grown in Australia, so there's not too much knowledge around it."

As has been well documented, the Riverland region was swept by a rampaging flood in the latter stages of 2022, which Mr Brauer says created challenges.

However, enough measures were in place to save a lot of the produce, ensuring income wasn't damaged.

"With Barhee dates, hypothetically, a hectare averages between 150-200kg per tree, so there are roughly 120 trees to a hectare," he said.

"The current value is anywhere upwards from \$20, so you don't need to have a huge amount of acreage to have a decent return.





Riverland Date Garden owner Steve Brauer at his property on Gurra Road.

"Last year we got wiped out with the flood, so I tried salvaging what I had on the crop, and luckily enough I had the pumpkins there.

"The freight charge to get the supply to Sydney was \$300 per pallet, so the dates went on top of the pumpkins to cover the freight charge and I got a great return."

Upon starting the business, Mr Brauer had five separate date varieties, with a high amount of trial and error involved.

He says advances in technology, particularly the use of soil monitoring, have helped his business grow in considerable fashion.

Exporting is the next big step for Mr Brauer, with other Australian states beginning overseas exports in 2023.

"Soil monitoring these days is important for any horticultural crop, because you've got the prices of water and electricity, so you don't want to over-irrigate," he said.

"You put the nutrients out because you don't want to push the water past the active profile.

"Certain varieties didn't adapt well to the conditions so they got put on the backburner.

"I'm just concentrating on the Barhee because I see us looking to produce to the counter-seasonal, so

if we have enough fruit we can start exporting.

"Alice Springs started exporting last year to overseas countries, and the Barhee's became really popular in the Middle East.

"Technology advances have helped me keep an eye on the soil monitoring and weather stations I have set up.

"It means I can get my business out on to my website and social media platforms such as Facebook, and I do a lot of sales through there that go direct to the public.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

*It's definitely been a big learning curve because it's a crop that isn't really grown in Australia...*

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"It probably took up to 10 years before we got frequent sales through, but social media has definitely been good."

Mr Brauer says the conditions play a significant role, ensuring his products are not susceptible to becoming dried out overtime.

Keeping control of the weather can bring obvious challenges, which is one of the main reasons why Mr Brauer places protective bags over his dates.

"As well as the Barhees, we also concentrate on Medjools because there is a reasonable market for the Australian-grown ones," he said.

"I don't let my Medjools get as dry as what you might see in Coles and Woolworths where they're imported, because they need certain specifics to get into the country, so I have a bit of an advantage," he said.

"You don't want to get over confident and try too many different varieties."

Fruit fly has, and always will be an issue in the Riverland, with more than 45 outbreaks occurring.

However, Mr Brauer says while fruit fly does play a factor, it isn't always the main concern, with other issues arising.

"Fruit fly hasn't been a major drama as of yet, but we have been warned the Barhees are susceptible to fruit fly, so we put our bags around them," he said.

"Marketing is a bit more difficult because I keep having to say no to customers in Adelaide who want to purchase them, because you have to follow the rules.

"I never spray the date trees so there aren't any chemicals going on the tree itself, and they only attract minimal pests.

"We try and minimise the risks of natural causes like rain hitting the fruit, and we only had about 5 per cent damage over Christmas.

"The main time we don't want rain is when it's nearly ready to harvest, but I work on what's coming and do what I can do."

For more information, see Mr Brauer's website ([riverlanddates.com.au](http://riverlanddates.com.au)).



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Rain levels

Storages

(as at 1 February)

**RENMARK**  
1 November 2023 to 1 February 2024: 85mm  
Rainfall to February 2024: 41.4mm  
Rainfall to February 2023: 11.8mm

**LOXTON**  
1 November 2023 to 1 February 2024: 52.2mm  
Rainfall to February 2024: 21.8mm  
Rainfall to February 2023: 15.8mm

**WAIKERIE**  
1 November 2023 to 1 February 2024: 90.6mm  
Rainfall to February 2024: 19mm  
Rainfall to February 2023: 14.6mm

**LAMEROO**  
1 November 2023 to 1 February 2024: 166.6mm  
Rainfall to February 2024: 21.6mm  
Rainfall to February 2023: 8.2mm

**GAWLER**  
1 November 2023 to 1 February 2024: 111.8mm  
Rainfall to February 2024: 22.6mm  
Rainfall to February 2023: 4.2mm

**MENINDEE LAKES:** 62 per cent full

**DARTMOUTH:** 98 per cent full

**HUME:** 85 per cent full

**LAKE VICTORIA:** 94 per cent full

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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY

STEPHANIE THOMPSON

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Loxton man Jim West with his Fowlers Vacola preserving kit and some of his preserved jars of fruit and vegetables.

SOME do it for the economic benefits, while others do it out of tradition, but for Loxton man Jim West, growing and preserving his own produce is all about the flavour.

Growing up in the Riverland, Mr West said he developed a love of fresh produce early, but only began preserving his own about seven years ago.

"Mum used to do it when I was a kid," he said.

"When I was growing up, everyone preserved.

"Out on the fruit blocks, they all had preserving outfits."

Aside from the flavour benefits of growing his own fresh fruit, Mr West said he was also conscious of food miles.

"Back years ago, once the fresh apricots finished, that was the end of them," he said.

"Whereas now, if you want to pay the money, you can get them in from America and places like that in the northern hemisphere in the off season.

"Those block houses all had a pantry and most of them would be choc-o-block full of preserved fruit."

Mr West's backyard orchard has all the old favourites like peaches, but also has some peculiar fruits too, including blackberries and kiwi fruit.

"I knew nothing about blackberries," he said.

"If I have too much of something, I just think of what I can do with it."

Now picking ice cream containers of blackberries every few days, Mr West said he was compelled to put them to good use.

"I call it ice cream topping, but it's called coulis," he said.

"I boil it and get the whisk stick in

and bottle it up.

"I am probably going to have to make some blackberry and apple jam, too."

Mr West said the fruit and vegetables grown in his backyard orchard were incomparable to those bought in supermarkets.

"You can't buy ripe fruit," he said.

"People don't even know what ripe fruit tastes like.

"They've grown up their whole live buying them in a supermarket.

"With things like peaches and tomatoes, you never get the flavour in the bought ones."

Mr West said each year, he tries to preserve apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums and sometimes cherries.

Years ago, Mr West picked up a second-hand Fowlers Vacola kit, which he uses to preserve all his fruit.

While common at local garage sales, brand new stainless steel electric Fowlers Vacola preserving kits can be bought online for about \$700.



“

**People don't even know what ripe fruit tastes like. They've grown up their whole live buying them in a supermarket.**



Kilkea Barossa  
Garlic's David  
Rutley with  
his hand-build  
drying rack.

# Barossa's garlic guru

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY  
IMOGEN EVANS

WHAT started as a weekend activity 20 years ago has turned into a "hobby gone mad" for one Barossa resident who is now growing and selling his own garlic to the community.

Having packed up the city life for a quieter country area, David Rutley planted some store-bought garlic with the aim to "see what happened".

He quickly found a love for growing the potent vegetable, where he started producing enough for himself and friends.

During Covid-19 lockdowns, Rutley was able to dedicate more of his time to growing and packaging the vegetable and began selling his produce to local food markets.







PHOTOS: Supplied

Rutley said since he started putting love and care into the process, he has found joy in selling to the community under the name Kilkea Barossa Garlic.

"The people at markets are always so helpful and very friendly," he said.

"Garlic will last people ages and you can safely freeze it as well.

"I can go to the first market of every month and people can stock up for those few weeks, so it's worked out really well."

The brand also carries with it sentimental value, with the name featuring the 'Kilkea' castle in Ireland, which holds a special place in his family history.

Kilkea Barossa Garlic is now selling a wider range of garlic products, including multiple varieties of the vegetable, garlic salt and powder.

Although still working full time as a consultant in the meat industry, Rutley said his small business has the

potential to grow.

"Right now this business is my weekend job," he said.

"It definitely has the potential to grow a lot bigger though, I just have to learn how to market myself more."

Rutley grows all produce on his own land in the Barossa, alongside his chooks, which give him "handfuls of eggs" every morning.

The Barossa local is also working hard to build his own commercial kitchen to accompany his shed where he dries and processes the Garlic.

Rutley said he also makes an effort not to use any harmful chemicals while growing the garlic, to ensure a sustainable farming method.

Kilkea Barossa Garlic sells at the Barossa Market the first week of every month.

If you want to place a direct order, or follow Rutley's garlic journey, head to ([www.kilkeabarossa.com.au/](http://www.kilkeabarossa.com.au/)).



Kilkea Barossa Garlic sells to the community at Barossa Markets the first week of every month. PHOTO: Imogen Evans

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# Mallee dinner to showcase local produce

WORDS PAUL MITCHELL

The Southern Mallee deserves a better reputation as a food-producing region – and an upcoming dinner aims to help address that anomaly.

That's the view of Janet Flohr, project manager for the Southern Mallee Producers Dinner, to be staged in May by Lamerook Forward Inc., featuring entirely Mallee-sourced produce.

While the inaugural 2022 event was a sell-out success, the region is often unfairly overlooked for its produce, Mrs Flohr explained.

"We're actually a massive producer and an event like this helps spread that news beyond our region," she said.

"We're very proud of our local produce and sometimes we get a bit overlooked as a food-producing area.

"For this dinner, we're accessing as much local produce as we can, and that's an important part of the event.

"We're trying to raise our profile, which in turn brings benefits to the area."

The 2024 dinner will be led by a "cosmopolitan cook and artist duo".

After 10 years in Cambodia and previous decades living in Sydney, France and the USA, international cookbook author Robert Carmack moved to the Mallee recently and will be chef for the 2024 dinner.

"He will craft Farm Gate to Fire Pit – an exciting salute to Mallee culture, customs and victuals, beginning with snacks warming around the fire and followed by a sit-down dinner of foods with French flair," Mrs Flohr said.

"He's got some unique and

innovative ideas about the food, and it's going to be a great surprise on the night for everyone there."

Mr Carmack's Tasmania-born and Alice Springs-bred partner Morrison Polkinghorne will impart his artistic background on the dinner, designing the evening's unique decorations and table settings.

The duo collaborated on award-winning *The Burma Cookbook*, while Mr Carmack is also the creator of a further five recipe collections.

Mrs Flohr said local farmers and enthusiastic beer connoisseurs were concocting another unique beverage from a local grain that could outperform the highly rated Dry and Dusty from 2022.

In addition, local gin maker Mallee Spirits, a two-time bronze medallist at the Tasting Australia Spirit Awards, will have locally made beverages available to purchase during the evening.

Completing the line-up of local produce, organisers recently put the call out for local cooks to submit their favourite home-made jar of chutney, relish, pickle or kasundi.

The idea is to include a bottle of home-made condiment on each table, as part of the mission to showcase local produce – and as a tribute to local home cooks.

To be held at the Lamerook Memorial Hall on Saturday 4 May 2024, the dinner is part of the statewide Tasting Australia initiative.

The Southern Mallee event will include a four-course dinner and paired beverages, while other drinks will be available for purchase.



ROBERT CARMACK



MORRISON POLKINGHORNE



MALLEE SPIRIT







# The pistachio potential

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY HUGH SCHUITEMAKER

INCREASING harvest volumes and demand in Australian markets is driving the ongoing success of a Riverland pistachio grower.

Third generation Paringa-based grower James Simpfendorfer – operator of Permedah Fruits – is preparing to harvest his 2024 pistachio crop.

Mr Simpfendorfer said he preferred to let the pistachios ripen as much as possible before harvesting.

“We’ll start harvesting at the end of February or early March,” Mr Simpfendorfer said.

“We probably pick earlier compared to other growers, but we tend to say you should wait about a week after you think it’s time to start.

“Then you get more ripe nuts. If you start picking greener nuts that haven’t quite opened or sized up, then you’re losing money on that.”

Mr Simpfendorfer said the harvest required a combination of some machinery and picker workers.

“We have four other workers helping with the harvesting process,” he said.

“My dad, Martin, my brother Theo, and myself operate the harvesting machines, and the others work on the ground.

“It’s about three, three-and-a-half weeks’ work during harvest.”

Mr Simpfendorfer said ongoing maturation of younger trees was expected to increase the volume of this year’s harvest, however wet conditions in spring last year had posed some disease risk.

“Some of our younger trees are bearing more nuts this year and generally it’s looking like it will be a reasonable harvest,” he said.

“We’re estimating more volume this year.



**Paringa man James Simpfendorfer, who operates Permedah Fruits with father Martin and brother Theo, is preparing for increased volume in the upcoming 2024 harvest.**





"About a decade ago we had a very wet spring, summer and autumn and that did a lot of damage but since then we've worked out a good fungus control program. If you have a dry spring, summer and autumn, then the pressure is off."

Mr Simpfendorfer said high Australia demand meant the majority of his pistachios were sold domestically.

"We're still mainly selling inside Australia," he said.

"There are some overseas markets, but they aren't our main markets.

"When pistachios were first grown in Australia it

was to replace overseas imports, because before that everything had to come from overseas.

"Australian production has gone up, but the consumption still hasn't been met by our volumes."

Mr Simpfendorfer said younger trees beginning to fruit would expand his crop, with other Riverland growers also seeing potential in pistachios.

"We've got some trees that haven't quite started bearing yet, but next year they will have a bit more on them," he said.

"There's quite a few new growers in the Riverland as well."



**Australian production has gone up, but the consumption still hasn't been met by our volumes.**

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# Savoury orange salad

SERVES THREE TO FOUR AS A SIDE

FEW scenes are more synonymous with the Riverland autumn than sprawling citrus orchards full of freshly grown fruit. From oranges, to lemons and mandarins, we are fortunate to have fresh citrus at our doorsteps.

This recipe for a refreshing and simple savoury orange salad is a unique and eye-catching use for some of our local favourite citrus, and is best served alongside seafood, lamb, or with charcuterie.

## INGREDIENTS

3 oranges  
1/2 red onion  
1 tbsp olive oil  
2 tbsp red wine vinegar  
large handful kalamata olives  
1 tbsp parsley  
1 tbsp dill  
1 tbsp tarragon  
Salt and pepper

## METHOD

- 1** Remove skin and pith from oranges and slice thinly into rounds, slice the onion as fine as possible. Chop the olives.
- 2** Arrange the orange slices on a flat platter, drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper.
- 3** Scatter red onion slices over and add vinegar.
- 4** Finely chop the herbs. Add olives to the salad and sprinkle over the herbs to finish.



# SA Farmer autumn gardening guide

AUTUMN'S the ideal time of year to plant because air temperatures have cooled, soil temperatures are still warm and hopefully there's been some rainfall to increase soil moisture.

First consider the state of your soil, because this is the time to undertake any soil improvements, such as mixing in soil conditioners, prior to planting. When the soil is warm and moist, new plantings will establish good root growth before slowing down in winter.

You'll see benefits again in early spring, when the plant – which has had time to establish – puts on wonderful new growth

ahead of next summer's heat.

Autumn's also a good time to begin transplanting any shrubs or trees, and to make new plants from cuttings.

Take 10cm cuttings from hardwood herbs such as rosemary and bay or natives such as banksias and grevilleas. Remove the lower leaves, dip cuttings into hormone powder and pot in small containers of premium potting mix. Keep just moist and shelter from strong wind and sun.

There are lots of plants that you can sow in autumn, including cabbage, broccoli,

cauliflower, Asian greens, lettuce, rocket, silverbeet and spinach, plus sweet peas and Australian wildflowers.

It's time to top up the mulch on your veggie patches, herb gardens and ornamental beds, but it's best to do this after watering. It's also time to reward your garden with an organic seaweed fertiliser and rockdust to increase trace minerals.

As conditions are mild through autumn, crops are often easier to grow and the fresh harvests just as rewarding. Once you choose which veggies to plant in autumn, you can grow from seed if you're patient, or plant

seedlings for a head start.

When planting, always follow the recommendations on the packet or label for correct spacing between plants to give them enough room to grow. To keep the harvests coming over a longer period and avoid a glut of produce all at once, make several small plantings two to three weeks apart.

Veggies grow best in rich, fertile soil in full sun with protection from cold winds. Keep plants growing vigorously with regular watering – especially if the weather is warm or dry – and liquid fertiliser applied every 7 to 10 days.



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BEETROOT

Direct sow seeds in early autumn to harvest in 10 to 12 weeks. Keep plants growing strongly for a tasty crop. Harvest when beetroot is a good size. The top of the root will be visible on the soil's surface.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
2cm

  
GERMINATION  
10-14 days

  
PLANT SPACE  
15cm

  
HARVEST  
10-12 wks



BROCCOLI

This is the easiest of all the brassica crops to grow. Sow seed, or plant seedlings, throughout autumn for harvest in 12 to 16 weeks. When the large main head of broccoli is removed, side shoots will continue to provide a good crop.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
10cm

  
GERMINATION  
5-10 days

  
PLANT SPACE  
15-30cm

  
HARVEST  
12-16 wks



BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Plant seedlings in early autumn for harvest in 16 to 20 weeks. Keep plants well-supported and growing upright with firm soil – if necessary, stake them. Sprouts form on the main stem and mature from the lower part of the stem upwards. Pick when sprouts are firm and a good size.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
6mm

  
GERMINATION  
10 days

  
PLANT SPACE  
60-70cm

  
HARVEST  
16-20 wks



CABBAGE

Both forms of cabbage make fantastic veggies to plant in autumn and grow throughout winter. Sow seed or plant seedlings in autumn. Expect to harvest in 8-16 weeks depending on the variety. Harvest when heads are large and firm.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
6mm

  
GERMINATION  
6-10 days

  
PLANT SPACE  
40-70cm

  
HARVEST  
8-16 wks



KALE

Plant seedlings in autumn and begin harvesting leaves when the plant is well-established, around 7 to 8 weeks from planting. There are many kale varieties available, so select your favourite or opt for a mixed punnet.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
1cm

  
GERMINATION  
5-8 days

  
PLANT SPACE  
30cm

  
HARVEST  
7-8 wks



LEEK

If you prefer a milder onion flavour to your dishes, try leeks. They're easy to grow, and grow well through winter from autumn plantings. Leeks are ready for harvest in 12-20 weeks.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
6mm

  
GERMINATION  
10-14 days

  
PLANT SPACE  
15-30cm

  
HARVEST  
12-20 wks



ONION/SPRING ONION

All members of the onion family grow well through winter from autumn plantings. Onions can be harvested in around 24-32 weeks, but spring onions are ready much sooner in just 8-12 weeks.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
50mm

  
GERMINATION  
10-25 days


  
PLANT SPACE  
30cm

  
HARVEST  
24-32 wks




PEAS AND SNOW PEAS


Peas are a very rewarding crop to grow in autumn and winter with harvests extending in to spring. Tall growers need support, or grow bush varieties. Harvest when pods are well formed, or for a faster crop grow snow peas.

  
POSITION  
Full sun

  
SOW DEPTH  
3-5cm

  
GERMINATION  
7-10 days

  
PLANT SPACE  
10cm

  
HARVEST  
9-11 wks

OTHER FAVOURITES  
TO PLANT IN  
AUTUMN INCLUDE:

Potato	Lettuce	Radish
Capsicum	Oregano	Rocket
Carrot	Pak choy & bok choy	Rockmelon
Cauliflower	Parsley	Spinach
Celery	Parsnip	Sunflowers
Chives	Pumpkin	Sweet potato
Eggplant		Tomatoes

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AG NEWS



Cracking the case for non-glass wine bottles

WOULD you be happy to pour your friends a glass of wine from a cask or sip your favourite red from an aluminium can?

Traditional glass bottles have long been the preferred choice of packaging among wine lovers due to the belief that wine looks and tastes better in glass. While glass bottles have been the wine industry's go-to centuries, they are not the most carbon-friendly option available.

Researchers from the University of South Australia's Ehernberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science and the University of Adelaide's Business School have explored people's wine packaging choices, and how attributes such as price, brand and messaging can influence them.

Lead researcher Jakob Mesidis said "previous wine packaging research has largely focus on wine label and closure (cork or screw-top) preference, but little attention has been paid to the format of the packaging.

"We know that consumers weren't buying alternatively packaged wine at the same rate they were buying it bottled, so we wanted to know what we should change to motivate them to choose more sustainable options," he said.

Conventional glass wine bottles are the wine industry's largest source of carbon emissions, with the manufacture of a single bottle generating 1.25kg of carbon dioxide.

In total, the production and transport of glass wine bottles make up more than two thirds of the wine industry's total carbon output.

Australia's main alternative wine packaging formats are the 'bag-in-box' (cask wine) and aluminium cans, although new formats, such as flat plastic wine bottles, are gradually entering the market each day.

These alternative formats are up to 51 per cent more carbon efficient than glass, but Mr Mesidis said "Australian consumers are resistant when it comes to these more environmentally friendly options".

"These are some underlying prejudices in relation to alternative wine packages as they are seen as the cheaper, low-quality option compared to glass bottles, which come with a sense of heritage and luxury," he said.

"Canned wine has seen a rise in popularity but is still a small portion of the market. Flat bottles have only recently been introduced to Australia but have grown in popularity overseas."

So, what can the wine industry do to bring consumers on board?

In a survey of 1200 Australians, the Eherenberg-Bass Institute found that cask wine and flat plastic wine bottles were the most preferred formats after traditional glass bottles.

Cans were the least preferred, as they were closely tied to specific

occasions, such as drinking outdoors.

Results also found that package format was the biggest influence on people's choices. Price came second, while the important of brand and eco-messaging varied depending on the respondent's age and how many eco-friendly behaviours they claimed to engage in.

Alternative wine formats were also typically bought more by younger people. Consumers were found to be more likely to choose alternative wine packaging when it is priced at a mid-to-low price range and if it comes from a well-known, prestigious brand.

"If a smaller, less-known winery's mission is to grow its brand as much as possible, relying solely on alternatively packaged wines is not the way to go. Most Australians – for the time being – are still going to reach for a glass bottle when they're at the shops," Mr Mesidis said.

"Larger, more prestigious brands are likely to see more success with alternatively packaged wine. Ultimatley, this research provides wine marketers with a foundation for their low-carbon wine packaging strategies, rather than blindly navigating this relatively new field.

"Research in this space is still young and there is exciting work to be done to better understand this burgeoning part of the wine industry."

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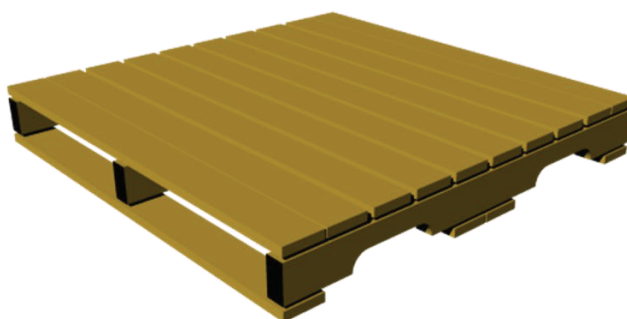
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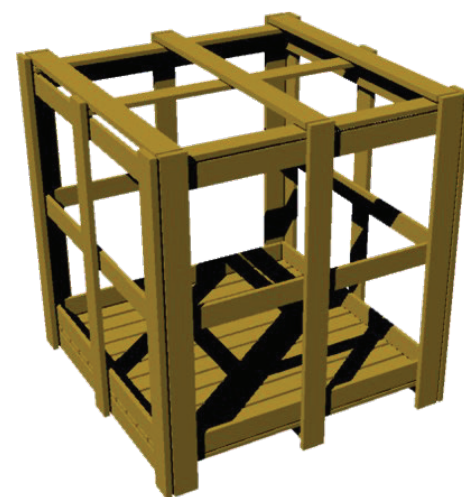
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