

SA Farmer

TAYLOR
GROUP MEDIA

SPRING 2024



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Welcome to SA Farmer, Spring 2024 edition

Welcome to the spring 2024 edition of the SA Farmer publication.

SA Farmer is produced by the hard-working team at Taylor Group Media, with Riverland and Lower North-based journalists dedicated to finding stories worth telling about the regions' primary producers, business owners and industry experts.

This edition includes a look at an initiative promoting increased fitness among farmers, upgrades at the Cadell Training Centre's dairy production facility, a chat with a Monash pecan grower expanding his offerings, and an examination of new technology being used in the potato industry.

A Barmera-based farming couple's new venture into the world of turmeric is discussed, and a long-time Renmark grower showcases how he is combining his produce

with everyone's favourite treat – chocolate.

The regular Ag News section showcases what is happening in the agricultural industry at a state and national level.

A select few include in-depth looks at the current threat of bird flu across Australian farms, and the benefits of using double-strength mouse bait on grain farms.

A breakdown of the Wine Australia 2024 National Vintage report illustrates current trends in the wine industry, and how ongoing challenges continue to affect production across South Australia.

A number of industry experts once again give their updates on wine grapes, almonds and citrus at this time of year.

Wine Grape Council of SA's Adrian Hoffman talks about the 2024

vintage and vine health; Almond Board of Australia CEO Tim Jackson highlights the benefits of increasing overseas demand, and Citrus SA chair Mark Doecke discusses current harvests and international demand.

The popular SA Farmer growing guide once again provides readers with information needed to grow the best spring fruit and vegetables, while the regular rainfall report gives an insight into how rain levels are comparing at this time of year compared to 2023.

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 spring 2024 edition of SA Farmer and, until next time, keep updated online by visiting the free-to-read website (www.safarmer.com.au).

- The SA Farmer team

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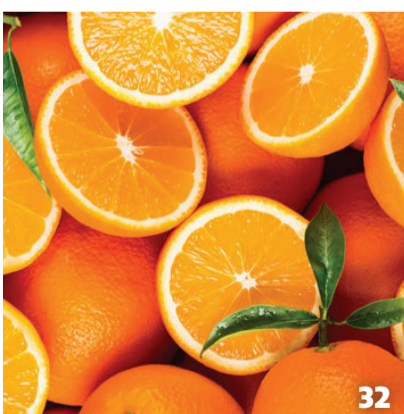
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Luca Farmer in the lush greenery at Kangaringa.

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LIAM PHILLIPS**

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Brenton and Sharlene are hoping to have their on-farm butcher operational by the end of the year.



Brenton Karger and Sharlene Sampson-Karger manage Gilberdale, a sheep operation just outside Kapunda.
PHOTOS: Jem Nash.

Changing mindsets through regenerative farming

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY
JEM NASH

LOCATED just outside Kapunda, Gilberdale is applying regenerative agricultural practices to offer high quality lamb products to the region.

Brenton Karger and Sharlene Sampson-Karger purchased the 57-hectare property about 18 months ago, and immediately put an emphasis on regenerative processes and Australian White lambs.

For the couple, their main focus since taking over the farm has been all about the soil.

Brenton said the plants and weeds

that grow in the soil help them to understand what the soil needs.

“Rather than how can I spray that weed to kill it, how can I feed that weed that well that it doesn’t need to do that job,” he said.

“Each weed will tell you what the soil is lacking,” Sharlene added.

“So if you’ve got a heap of soursofs, it’s calcium deficient and you don’t have enough so they’re trying to bring calcium up to the surface level.



Gilberdale runs Australian white sheep.

"Therefore, if you put more calcium out, the soursob goes 'I don't need to do this job anymore' and it will go away by itself."

They have stopped using glyphosate and started making their own biofertilisers to go into the soil.

Their foliar nutrition of the soil includes consumable ingredients that are often found in the home, including Epsom salts, molasses, wood vinegar, among others, that helps add to the flavour of the meat.

"By putting something that we're able to consume directly, if the sheep's consuming that as they go along and eat all the grass... it then goes into the meat and that's going to make it better," Sharlene said.

With better tasting meat through their regenerative practices, they have been able to convert some people who don't normally eat lamb.

As a 'paddock to plate' business,

the couple has also recently gained approval to create an on-farm butcher shop.

This will allow them to do the cutting and packaging themselves, which will help them tailor their orders to each customer and cut out the 'middle men'.

"Even with your middle men, rather than it being a competition, have it be a collaboration," Brenton said.

"Work out a system and a collaboration... because we're doing the sheep, we want to bring on somebody to do the beef, somebody to do the pork, and get some diversity happening around the area."

Regenerative agriculture is not anything new, but Brenton said modern technology has allowed the process to be improved immensely.

With chemical bills increasing and reports of glyphosate being unsafe for users, Sharlene added there is some renewed interest within the farming

community.

"I think there's a bit of a renewed interest from our generation that are actually now looking at it going, 'is that the best choice we can make, what else is available'," she said.

These principles do come with some challenges, the major being a change of mindset for some farmers.

"There's an easy road and then there's the right road and they don't always line up," Brenton said.

With regenerative farming, the input expenses are typically lower, and while the output might not be as high compared to other methods, the difference between the two can be greater, but there are still learning curves.

"We've had absolute failures and we've had absolute successes, so no different to any other farmer," Brenton said.

"There's two catalysts for change, one is opportunity and one is desperation... and most people doing regenerative ag are on one of those two.

"We treated buying here as an opportunity to really make a change.

"Every industry is thinking a mindset similar to regenerative ag, it's just that agriculture touches so many people every day that we've kind of been thrown into the front line.

"I think that's the main focus of regenerative ag is a change of mindset and it's not easy... because one paddock could be perfect, the next paddock not so.

"You've got to phase one out to phase another in. If you try and do it too rapidly, you'll end up with crashes in the system."

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Those challenges come with enjoyment for Brenton and Sharlene, however, as every day brings a new learning opportunity.

Sharlene said it has forced them to become more creative.

"I never looked at biofertilisers before so I've done a couple of courses on them, how do I do it, where do I start, and the equipment for it is as simple as can be," she said.

"Then you tweak it depending on what it is you need, so if you need more calcium or magnesium, then you put those nutrients or elements in."

With their on-farm butcher hoping to be open by the end of the year, there are also plans to alter the fencing on the property.

The current setup includes four large paddocks, but Sharlene said they want to turn that into 12, which would allow the sheep to shift around more regularly and receive fresh feeds.

"A big bonus of doing something like that is because they're always getting fresh grass and nutrients, they're not putting their waste out where they're eating, which is where

you get all your worms and parasites and everything like that," she said.

"So if you're giving them fresh grass, the worms and parasites die out, therefore you don't have to put more chemicals into the sheep, which again, we're eating."

"What we're trying to set up here is a bit of a trial," Brenton added.

"This is what happens if you fence on a ridgeline, this is what happens if you fence on a contour, this is what happens if you fence on a downward slope.

"Then we can see what's happening and other people can come and have a look... see what they can take from here to go and implement it somewhere else.

"For us, it's not about being the best or the top of the line or the top of the food chain, it's about getting the food chain cleaned up."

Surrounded by a great team of other farmers and agronomists around them, help is never far away, and it always comes back to the soil.

"Your plants won't grow fantastic unless you've got the soil right, your sheep won't do fantastic until the plants are right, and until the soil is right," Sharlene said.



We've had absolute failures and we've had absolute successes, so no different to any other farmer...



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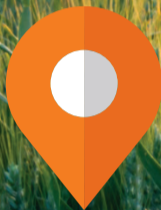
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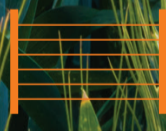
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Peter and Anne hand-dig every root and stem, this being a unique and forgotten practice nowadays.



Transforming Riverland turmeric into a sought-after delicacy

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY SEBASTIAN CALDERON

NESTLED on Barmera's south side, the 70-acre property looks unassuming, but once you realise what a husband-and-wife team are farming and how they are doing it, everything you see starts to dazzle the eyes.

Barmera's Peter and Anne Brooke are a thriving example on how to expand a small farming business into a well-known product.

After trying to grow different crops on their farm, they found that sweet potatoes and turmeric thrived in the dry soil and weather conditions of the Riverland.

Famous for its variety of crops and vegetables, Riverland farmers have attempted to grow different crops that are not common for this weather.

Only a handful of farmers, like Peter and Anne, decided to venture themselves into turmeric for commercial purposes.

The decision came about with the need to grow something innovative that would allow them to create a niche market in their weekly

trips to the farmers market in Adelaide.

"We get all our produce into our van and drive to the Adelaide Showground market every weekend, where we sell basically every crate we bring," Ms Brooke said.

"Some weekends when turmeric is really needed, we can get almost \$60 per kilo".

Learning about turmeric and its farming process was a bit of a raffle.

While the pair had been farming for nearly twenty years, they developed a unique process over the past couple of years with YouTube videos and extensive farming experience.

The couple then decided to allocate a tenth of an acre for turmeric and worked to see where things went.

100 days later, a mature crop had appeared which is something, even today, still surprises them.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



"It was tricky trying to get them out of the ground without scratching or breaking them," Mr Brooke said.



Turmeric once it has been air cleaned, it is ready to be stored or sold at the farmers markets.



"We make a tonic by blending 100 grams of turmeric, a tablespoon of black pepper, a tablespoon of honey and some lemon juice," Ms Brooke said



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Peter and Anne Brooke at their farm in Barmera.



Turmeric is dug out each week and we divide the days of the week into digging days, which are Mondays and Tuesdays.



Acres of Turmeric and Sweet potatoes at the Burke's Farm in Barmera.

"It was tricky trying to get them out of the ground without scratching or breaking them," Mr Brooke said.

A total of seven years have passed and now they have developed a technique to grow turmeric and sweet potatoes, without damaging the produce or the soil in the process.

"The farming process for both vegetables is almost identical, mounds and cuttings are formed (turmeric's are called rhizomes) and the planting process is done during the summer," Mr Brooke said.

"One dose of organic fertiliser, called rapid raiser, is given to the plants through a reusable drip after the first weed crop is removed".

Weeding is one of the biggest tasks when growing organic vegetables and spices, since it's a continuous job that needs daily attention to protect the entire crop.

"We grow about 1000 plants of turmeric every year, but we prefer to dig them in the second year, where we can get up to a kilogram of turmeric from each plant," Ms Brooke said.

When the harvesting process is due, an undercutter is used to loosen both crops at the same time.

Peter and Anne hand-dig every root and stem, this being a unique and forgotten practice nowadays.

"We found it more practical to use compressed air, since water used to leave many residues, but with air we can get the turmeric really clean and beautiful," Mr Brooke said.

At this point, all the collected produce is organised in plastic crates, carefully handpicked and placed into storage for the next weeks.

Turmeric can be farmed between March and October, dividing the days of the week to better organise this two-people operation.

"Turmeric is dug out each week and

we divide the days of the week into digging days, which are Mondays and Tuesdays, and washing days which are reserved for Wednesdays and Thursdays," Ms Brooke said.

Summer is dedicated to planting the seeds and looking for overwatering during hot days.

The turmeric plant blossoms a beautiful white cone-shaped flower that is being used for flower arrangements, weddings and dinner events.

"We store turmeric for the next weeks and months since it doesn't go bad, and we sell it as needed until November or December," Mr Brooke said.

The Barmera couple currently farm two varieties of turmeric, with the orange one being the most common one, used for cooking and spices.

The second type carries a yellow tone, which is a desired vegetable due to its apparent medicinal purposes, increasing its value by more than 35 per cent in the last two years.

"Everyone is aware of the benefits of turmeric, but having it fresh, magnifies its benefits," Ms Brooke said.

"I'd say if you have the possibility to grow one plant in your garden, it would have to be turmeric."

"It is one of the easiest plants to grow and the health benefits are amazing."

"We make a tonic by blending 100 grams of turmeric, a tablespoon of black pepper, a tablespoon of honey and some lemon juice," Ms Brooke said.

"We then put this mix into a jar and store it in the refrigerator, which we then have one tablespoon every morning, but I add a quarter of orange juice."

Turmeric is also sold at the Adelaide Showground Farmers Market in 100 gram lots for \$6.

While the Brooke's could try to sell their product at a much bigger scale, they are aware about the fierce competition from Queensland's farmers and are conscious that their product is grown and sold for local markets only.

Their company Sweet Potatoes were the first to be Certified Organic in Australia and with their hands and impeccable work, have stayed as one of the top turmeric and sweet potatoes farmers in Australia.

"Growing food organically, without all the nasty chemicals is how we like to eat our food," Ms Brooke said.

"Unfortunately, main stream agriculture is all about mass production and the big corporations care mainly about their bottom lines."

"It would be nice to do the full circle and go back to small farms".



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Farmers sow seeds of fitness

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY IMOGEN EVANS

A LOCAL group of farmers are swapping the work boots for sneakers and hitting the gym as part of a program to get workers up on their feet.

A new partnership between grassroots health initiative Fat Farmers and The Hospital Research Foundation Group is aiming to boost the physical and mental health of rural communities.

Founded 12 years ago in the Yorke Peninsula, Fat Farmers was first

created when three 40-something farmers joked they were getting 'fat' once their footy careers ended.

Since then, the fitness venture has grown to be in 18 towns across South Australia, including an office headed by Will Holmes in the Barossa.

Mr Holmes is a grape grower in the Barossa who has been working hard to bring the name of Fat Farmers throughout the region.

Mr Holmes said his group focuses on getting anyone involved in the farm or agriculture industry of any age, to get off the land and focus on their physical and mental health.

"Our group goes for walks every Sunday – people can get out and about, get some outdoors and sunshine and socialise in a group," he said.

"Once you get to a certain age in rural areas, you tend to drop off from sports and fitness in general.

"A lot of people focus on work too much which I think everyone is guilty of."

Across the country, Fat Farmers accept all people regardless of whether they are 'fat', thin, or just needing additional motivation to get active.

The Hospital Research Foundation Group has recently come on board as Fat Farmers' Major Health Partner, to help the program expand into more regional towns.

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Mr Holmes said his group hopes to address the taboo surrounding health in the farming industry and regional towns.

"We want to build awareness that it's ok to feel overwhelmed by work and get some help for yourself and your physical wellbeing too," he said.

"People don't often realise how intertwined physical and mental health is, it really goes hand in hand.

"There are so many success stories in the group, too many to name actually.

"We've seen a lot of people completely turn their wellbeing around."

Co-founder Ben Wundersitz said Fat Farmers had received exceptional feedback from participants since it started, with many new joiners saying it completely turned their lives around.

"We are a group that was established by farmers, for farmers, and it's been surprising to see how much exercise benefits your mental health as well," he said.

"We're a bit quirky, we have fun and don't take ourselves too seriously. It's all about community, connection and living a better lifestyle, particularly for blokes but we accept everyone.

"The Hospital Research Foundation Group is passionate about improving health and wellbeing and they have recognised the potential of our group, which is quite humbling to be honest considering our modest beginnings.

"If anyone is interested in starting a Fat Farmers group in their town, please reach out to us and we can help you."

Paul Flynn, CEO of The Hospital Research Foundation Group, said the two-year partnership was all about improving health in country areas.

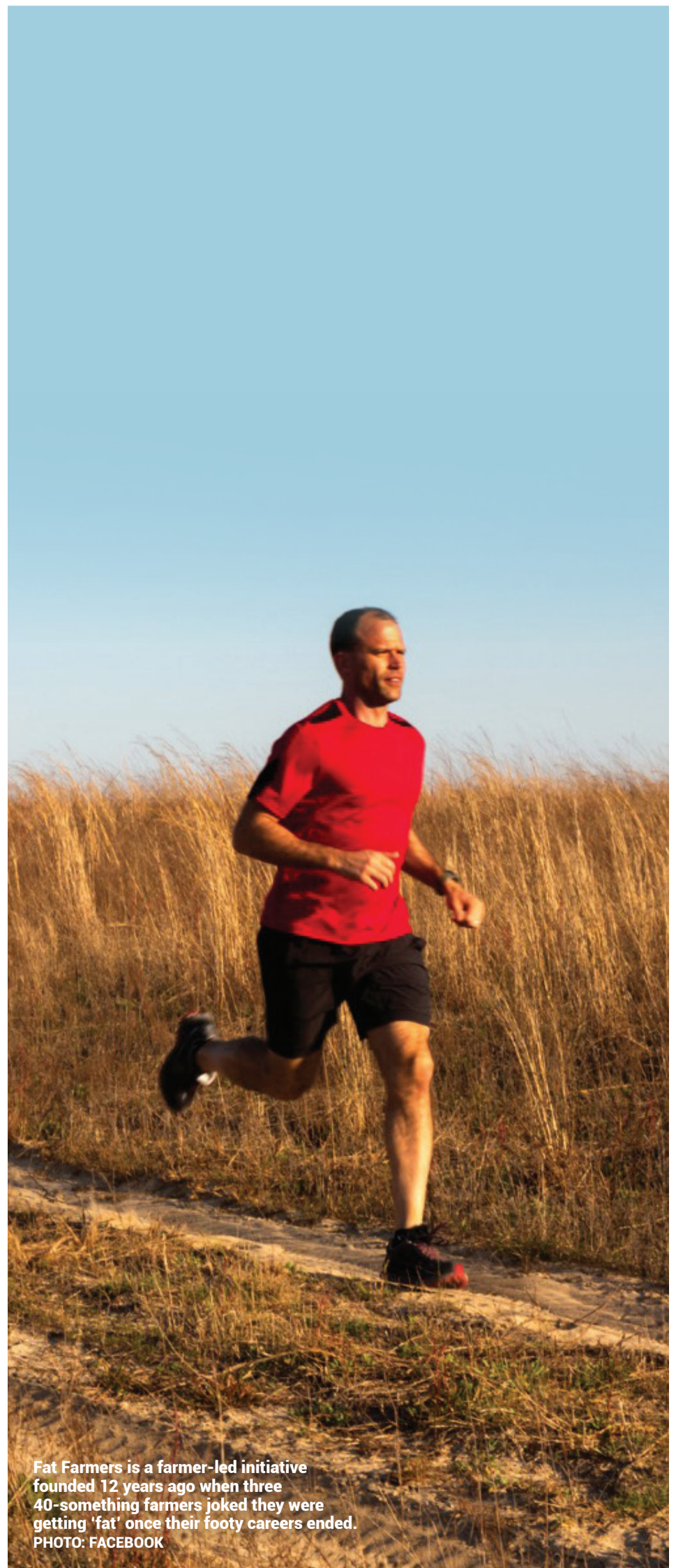
"It's no secret that regional communities have poorer health outcomes due to reduced access to GPs, services and delays in care," Paul said.

"If we can get in at the prevention stage, helping people to live a healthier lifestyle and be active, then we're one step closer to improving the overall health of regional communities.

"Fat Farmers is a great vehicle to improve not only physical health, but mental health and wellbeing. Men don't always have to catch up at the pub, we can flip that idea on its head and set a great example for the next generation."

If you're interested in starting a Fat Farmers group in your town, learn more at www.fatfarmers.com or call 0436 281 875.

If we can get in at the prevention stage, helping people to live a healthier lifestyle and be active, then we're one step closer to improving...



Fat Farmers is a farmer-led initiative founded 12 years ago when three 40-something farmers joked they were getting 'fat' once their footy careers ended. PHOTO: FACEBOOK

New biosecurity scheme freshens up stink beetle controls

DESIGNED to ensure overseas providers target the right pests with the required treatment, the new pre-border scheme was announced on the first week of July.

The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry is launching AusTreat, a new system that will provide specific measures to prevent undesired pests from entering Australia.

The department Deputy Secretary of Biosecurity and Compliance Justine Saunders said, "AusTreat will enable a more efficient, future-ready biosecurity system to protect Australia from hitchhiker pests like the brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB)."

"If the department has more confidence in treatments conducted on goods before they arrive in Australia, it reduces the need for manual intervention at our borders," Ms Saunders said.

Pests are estimated to cost Australia tens of billions over coming decades, but with the new system, they will now find it much harder to enter the country.

AusTreat is a government-to-industry scheme that will replace the existing

Offshore BMSB Treatment Provider program and will set the conditions for the regulation of pre-border biosecurity treatment providers.

"By redirecting resources to higher risk pathways, we can streamline border clearances for industry and consumers," Ms Saunders said.

"BMSB threatens our agricultural industries and way of life," Ms Saunders said.

"It feeds on more than 300 agricultural and ornamental plant species including fruit and vegetable crops," Mr Saunders said.

"AusTreat is a holistic, integrated scheme that is designed to respond quickly by targeting emerging biosecurity pests," Mr Saunders Said.

"In the future, AusTreat could expand to incorporate other existing schemes, as well as measures against future biosecurity risks," Mr Saunders said.

"This gives us the flexibility to respond to risk changes over time and increase our oversight of treatment providers in other countries," Mr Saunders said.

"AusTreat isn't just good for Australia, it will also help improve best practices for industry both here and overseas," Mr Saunders said.

For more information about hitchhiker

pests and AusTreat, visit the website (<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare/treatment-outside-australia/AusTreat>).



AusTreat, a new system that will provide specific measures to prevent undesired pests from entering Australia. Photo: Supplied





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AG NEWS

Digging deep – value of the soil microbiome unearthed

HISTORY of soil biology is helping researchers to better understand how the soil microbiome works and to ensure a sustainable broadacre farming within the future.

Researchers from the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), the University of Adelaide and Flinders University have been digging deep into South Australia's history of soil biology for the past couple of years.

SARDI Senior Research Officer for the Agronomy program Dr. Andong Shi recently published an article in *Advances in Agronomy* titled 'Impact of agronomic management on the soil microbiome: A southern Australian dryland broadacre perspective'.

As the soil ecosystem is one of the key components of a farming system, Dr. Shi said it is crucial to understand the effects past changes in land management practices have had on current farming systems to help improve future structures.

"The aim of the article is to increase awareness of the importance of soil biology in farming systems, as it is often ignored, particularly when compared to the traditional soil analysis where the chemical and physical properties are often measured and monitored," Dr. Shi said.

"We hope that by learning from the past, we can harness the benefits of soil microorganisms in sustainable farming practices to help increase soil fertility, reduce environmental footprint and maintain or enhance crop productivity," Dr. Shi said.

The soil microbiome is a collective concept including all the microorganisms in the soil, living or dead, as well as their metabolites and genetic materials in the close vicinity.

"Our management of soil has a direct influence on shaping how the soil microbiome functions," Dr. Shi said.

"Management practices alter the food source, water availability and accessibility, as well as the shelter for the

soil microbiome," Dr. Shi said.

"As a result, the changes in these elements exert feedback on the whole soil ecosystem," Dr. Shi said.

A core aim of this project is to determine whether the diversity and composition of soil communities from past farming systems differ from those of present farming systems.

To investigate this, soil DNA samples collected over the past 20 years from Southern Australian farms have been analysed. The goal is to assess changes in the soil microbiome alongside the evolution of broadacre cropping management practices in the Southern Australian farming zone.

"Therefore, the way that we manage the soil reflects on how healthy the soil ecosystem is, how well it functions, and how productive and sustainable it will be for crop and pasture production in the future," Dr. Shi said.

This study is part of a larger soil microbiome project called 'Past, present and future drivers of soil change', which is co-led by SARDI's A/Prof. Rhiannon Schilling, and University of Adelaide A/Prof Stuart Roy. Also Dr. Krista Sumbly from the University of Adelaide and Flinders University Prof. Timothy Cavagnaro.

The project also involves Birchip Cropping Group in Victoria, Kalyx Australia in Western Australia and the Thomas Elder Institute.

Dr. Krista Sumbly said the findings to date for the soil DNA have revealed changes in the soil microbiome composition over the past two decades.

"We are currently untangling if and/or how this correlates with changes in climate and broadacre cropping practices over the same time period," Dr. Krista said.

The project has secured more than \$3 million in funding from the Federal Government's Soil Science Challenge program, run by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).



The soil microbiome is a collective concept including all the microorganisms in the soil, living or dead. Photo: Supplied.

Rebates on eID tags for farmers

DISCOUNTS of 50 per cent will be available from 1 July on electronic identification tags for sheep and farmed goats.

The South Australian Government expanded the rebate for sheep and farmed goat electronic identification (eID) tags purchased between 2023 and 2025 that are not aligned to the corresponding year-of-birth colour.

This will allow producers who were not following the year-of-birth colour system to access a discount for applying National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) eID tags to their sheep and farmed goats born between 2023 and 2025.

Starting on 1 July, the program will cover tags purchased between 1 January 2023 and 30 June 2025.

All colours within the NLIS scheme will be included in the rebate.

The discount will be aligned with the earlier eID program, which entitles farmers to access a 50 per cent discount capped at \$0.95 (GST exclusive) for each participating tag.

Pink post-breeder tags, non-NLIS accredited devices and colours outside the year-of-birth scheme, such as brown or grey, are excluded.

Black NLIS eID tags that align with the current year and have been purchased between 1 January and 31 December 2024 can apply for the discount scheme for \$0.95 at the point of sale.

White NLIS-accredited eID tags are also within the rebate scheme if they are purchased between 1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025.

The NLIS year-of-birth colour system is used by producers for management purposes and remains voluntary in South Australia.

Producers must have an active PIC and be registered with PIRSA to claim the rebate.

The Expanded eID Device Rebate will close on 30 June 2025.

Applications must be made via the website (<https://pir.sa.gov.au/expanded-eid-rebate>).

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RIVERLAND

GrainGrowers survey reveals continuing workforce difficulties

A GRAINGROWERS Annual Policy Survey has given insight of the challenges that the South Australian grain workforce faces, delivering data on ongoing issues impacting the sector.

Surveying 663 growers across Australia, answers to the workforce and recruitment questions provided a snapshot of the problems that exist and explored options to address the range of issues.

“To effect change we need accurate data to underpin our requests and to support our discussions,” GrainGrowers CEO Shona Gawel said.

“This survey has delivered that foundational information and is an important step forward for the grains industry in terms of workforce and recruitment.”

The breakdown of those who advertised and successfully filled positions highlights a continuing shortfall in available workers.

Of those growers seeking workers, 77 per cent advertised for grain farm workers, yet only 47 per cent successfully filled the position. For the position of tractor/harvester operators, 45 per cent of growers advertised, while 58 per cent filled the position. The third top category of workers required was truck drivers, with 31 per cent advertised and 45 per cent successfully filling the position.

Further, the survey revealed greater demand for labour from larger farms, with 45 per cent of farms greater than 3000ha seeking employees.

“While some of the issues are common to seasonal roles, there remains a large number of full-time, ongoing or permanent positions that are simply unable to be filled,” Ms Gawel said.

“For grain farm workers, three-quarters of respondents advertised for full-time positions, with 62 per cent for ongoing or permanent positions and just 39 per cent for seasonal roles. This data highlights a real gap in the grains workforce, and we need to carefully consider how this can be addressed across the longer term.”

The survey confirmed that an important component of grain farm labour was access to overseas workers. Nationally, one in five respondents were looking overseas for workers with 35 per cent of the responders being from Western Australia. Highlighting a diversity of countries with similar cropping supply chains and workforce skills, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, New Zealand, and Denmark were listed as the top five countries of origin for overseas workers.

“The results show the need for tailored solutions for different cropping regions and the opportunity to establish accessible migration pathways to assist how the grains industry can access international labour,” Ms Gawel said.

“We are committed to improving the position of growers by driving change and building a more sustainable and profitable industry, and grower surveys like this allow us to fine-tune our approach to these essential issues.”

Further details on the survey and a copy of the report are available on the GrainGrowers website: www.graingrowers.com.au



Exclusive training program for exporters

DAIRY industry to enhance exporter skills and knowledge with a new course focused on enhancing the participant's ability to establish internal monitoring and verification systems to meet dairy regulatory requirements.

The course Culture: Growing Dairy Exports is an innovative learning tool.

Deputy secretary for trade, Tina Hutchison spoke about how this free program will support Australia's dairy exports.

“The 5-module training course will upskill industry and develop their knowledge of export regulatory requirements,” Ms Hutchison said.

“The training focuses on the whole of system thinking that improves participants,” Ms Hutchison said.

3D animated scenarios will show the participants any future impacts on their exports due to non-compliance and the effectiveness of root-cause analysis and communications.

Different toolkits were developed to assist in the implementation of skills gained during training into different roles within the dairy industry.

“These toolkits provide guidance and practical tools to help build and maintain company culture and quality assurance processes, and emphasise the value of a proactive systems-based approach for managing export regulatory requirements.” Ms Hutchison said.

The course Culture: Growing Dairy Exports, was developed in partnership with Dairy Australia and Charles Sturt University.



AG NEWS

Rural partnership continues to build mental health support

FARMERS and rural communities could see increased access to mental health services through a new partnership between a global animal health brand and one of the nation's biggest mental health support providers.

Zoetis Australia and Beyond Blue are teaming up again to tackle the increased need for mental health support across rural Australia.

With the partnership already spanning eight years, Zoetis announced it aimed to raise \$100,000 for Beyond Blue by the end of the year by donating \$5 from each vaccine and drench sale.

Zoetis senior vice president Australia

and New Zealand Lance Williams said the partnership went beyond "just financial support".

"It's about fostering a culture of hope and resilience, ensuring that those facing mental health challenges know they are not alone and that help is available," he said.

Mr Williams said the mental health journey was a collective effort, with many forms of support out there for each person.

"Every act of kindness, no matter how seemingly small, carries immense significance," he said.

"Whether it's a simple check-in with a neighbour, a supportive conversation with a friend, or a compassionate gesture towards a work colleague, these actions contribute to building a community where mental health is prioritised and stigma is dismantled.

"By fostering connections and creating safe spaces for open dialogue, we can collectively normalise conversations about mental health and encourage help-seeking behaviour.

"It's about recognising that each person's experience is unique and valid, and that seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness."

Beyond Blue board member Derek Schoen said it was vital for farmers and people in rural communities to maintain hope amidst adversity.

"Country people are resilient and tough, but the many challenges we face can take a toll on our mental health," Mr Schoen said.

"The repeated extreme weather events we've seen at the start of this year have added to these stresses.

"I would encourage people to not lose hope and to seek support early."

For Crystal Doyle of Mount Barker, access to mental health support was a lifesaver.

Ms Doyle said building connections was one of the keys to maintaining good mental health.

She said years of physical health issues took a toll on her social life and, subsequently, her mental health.

"I was constantly worried, on guard and anxious," she said.

"I withdrew from family and friends and developed chronic insomnia, uncontrolled hyperactivity and obsessive thinking.

"I had no label for what I was feeling, as I had had these same patterns all through my childhood.

"I didn't recognise that I needed help."

Following a GP referral to a psychologist, Ms Doyle said the relief was "unbelievable".

For more information on how to support Beyond Blue and other mental health services, visit the Beyond Blue website.

Anyone experiencing mental health distress is encouraged to contact the Beyond Blue support service on 1300 22 46 36.



Beyond Blue board member Derek Schoen encouraged those living rurally to seek help early.

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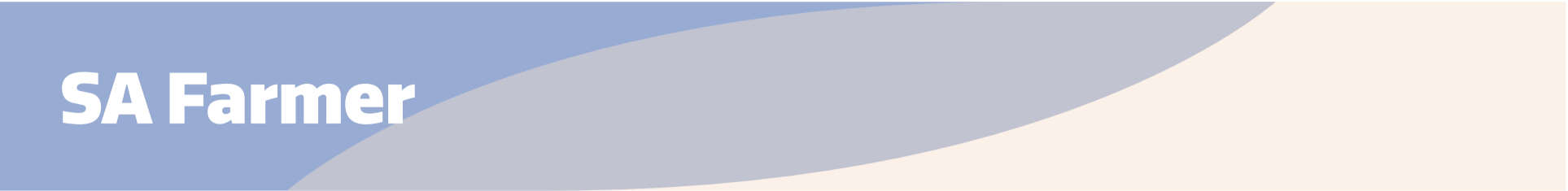
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2024 Vintage Report reveals a downward crush

DECREASED red wine grape production in the Riverland has followed a recent downward trend.

The 2024 National Vintage Report has revealed grape harvest numbers have continued a declining trend, with the crush result of 1.73 million tonnes falling well below an established 10-year average.

"This is the third vintage in the past five that has been below the 10-year average. As a result, we've seen the five-year average decrease by over 100,000 tonnes in the past two years," Wine Australia manager Peter Bailey said.

"However, the reduction in the crush doesn't necessarily reflect a decrease in the underlying supply base. There is no indication that the vineyard area has declined significantly, so the potential for a large crop still exists without active management of yields."

The overall year-on-year increase in the crush was 112,000 tonnes.

The increase was driven entirely by white wine grape varieties, which increased by 19 per cent to 722,000 tonnes. Yet, despite the 19 per cent increase, the white varieties crush was still 10 per cent below the 10-year average and the second smallest in 17 years.

The crush of red grapes declined 1% to 705,000 tonnes, the smallest since the drought-affected 2007 vintage, and 40 per cent below its peak of 1.2 million tonnes in 2021.

The white wine grape share of the crush increased to 51 per cent – the first time since 2014 that the white crush has been higher than the red crush.

"The overall reduction in the red crush is entirely driven by shiraz, which decreased by nearly 48,000 tonnes while most other red varieties increased. This decrease was not just from the inland regions, with the Barossa and Clare Valleys accounting for one-third of the reduction," Mr Bailey said.

"Seasonal factors have contributed to 2024 being another small vintage. However, the significant further reduction in the red crush can be largely attributed to decisions made by grape growers and wine businesses to reduce production. These decisions are being driven by low grape prices, significant red wine stock overhangs and reduced global demand for wine."

Shiraz decreased by 14 per cent to 298,000 tonnes – its smallest crush since 2007. However, chardonnay increased by 31 per cent to 333,000 tonnes, overtaking Shiraz to resume the title of largest variety by crush size.

South Australia accounted for the largest share of the national crush size at 49 per cent. All other states except Western Australia increased their crush compared with 2023, with Tasmania increasing by 42 per cent to a record estimated crush of 16,702 tonnes.

The grape crush value of the 2024 vintage is estimated to be \$1.01b, a 2 per cent increase over the previous year. This was a result of the 9 per cent increase in the tonnage being offset by an overall decrease

in the average value from \$642 per tonne to \$613 per tonne.

Across the warm inland regions, both reds and whites declined by 5 per cent in average value, while in the cooler regions there was a small increase of 3 per cent in whites, while the average value for reds was flat.

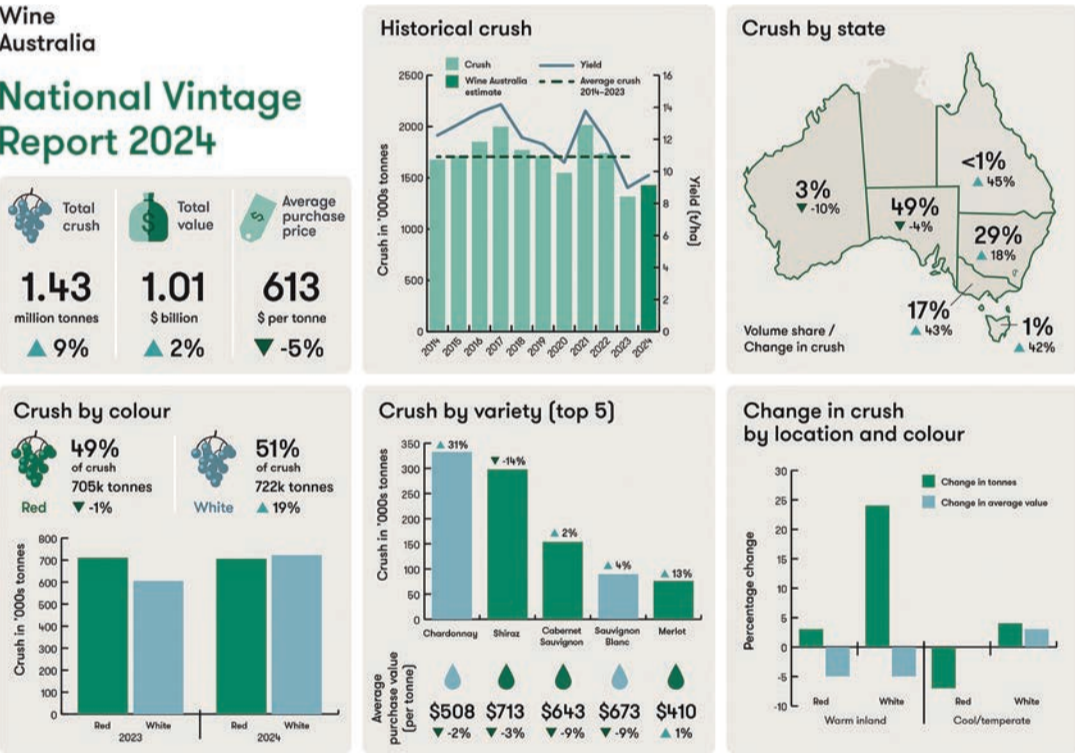
The overall decline in the average value was driven by a decrease in average grape prices paid for both red and white grapes from warm inland regions, combined with an increase in the share of tonnes

from these regions.

"It's important for growers to look at the price changes for individual regions and varieties, to get a true picture of the market signals," Mr Bailey said.

"However, the overall 2024 results, particularly the ongoing decline in prices for the major inland varieties, indicate that there is no shortfall in supply from the inland regions, despite the successive low vintages."

To read the full National Vintage Report visit: (www.wineaustralia.com).



2024 Vintage Report breakdown. PHOTO: supplied.

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AG NEWS



Survey highlights transformative opportunities

HIGH numbers of South Australian grain growers are operating profitably, and are positive about the industry's future, according to a recent major survey.

The Annual South Australian Grain Producer Survey Insight Report 2023, recently released by Grain Producers SA (GPSA), underscored a generational transition of farm ownership underway within the grain industry, presenting unprecedented opportunities for transformation.

With a record number of respondents – 300 grain producers from across the state – the survey provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities shaping the future of South Australia's grain sector.

GPSA chief executive officer Brad Perry said a key finding of the 2023 survey was the significant number of grain production businesses undergoing succession, presenting both challenges and opportunities.

"The younger generation's familiarity with technology, having grown up with it, presents a unique opportunity for the adoption of greater innovative farming practices, setting the stage for long-term sustainability and growth," he said.

"More than one third of grain producers in South Australia who responded to our survey said they were going through a succession process and this number is increasing year-on-year."

Key findings in the survey included:

- ❑ 94 per cent of grain producers feel their business is profitable and sustainable
- ❑ 76 per cent are positive about the future of the South Australian grain industry
- ❑ 40 per cent identified finding, attracting and retaining staff as challenging
- ❑ 78 per cent said they were better

prepared now than they were for the last drought

- ❑ 67 per cent say operating costs remain the biggest challenge
- ❑ 33 per cent identified technology adoption as their biggest opportunity
- ❑ 64 per cent said actively managing spray drift when spraying is a high priority
- ❑ 48 per cent do not have reliable connectivity
- ❑ 22 per cent reported having an accident with powerlines

"Despite the challenges posed by high input costs and climate stress, most respondents reported a profitable year for their farming operations in 2023, buoyed by three consecutive strong harvests in most areas of the state," Mr Perry said.

"However, the survey results showed that concerns persist regarding the future of the Grassland Fire Danger Index of 35 measured at 2m, the state of regional roads, and ongoing market access."

The survey highlights the industry's readiness to tackle drought, with many growers reporting improvements in farming systems and practices. Furthermore, proactive measures to control spray drift underscore the growing reliance on better understanding weather conditions.

"As the representative voice of South Australian grain producers, GPSA is committed to addressing the key issues and opportunities identified in the 2023 survey," Mr Perry said.

"We are encouraged by the high level of satisfaction expressed by respondents regarding GPSA's effectiveness in representing their interests."

For more information, and to download the full Insight Report, visit the website (www.grainproducerssa.com.au).

GRDC urges growers to assess silos ahead of harvest

INDUSTRY experts are calling on grain growers across the Riverland to assess and either maintain or decommission older silos.

Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) grain storage extension team specialist Chris Warrick offered the warning in the wake of several serious, on-farm incidents involving the collapse of silos in southern Australia.

Mr Warrick said while well maintained silos could last in excess of 30 years, growers needed to effectively check, assess and recognise when critical storage equipment was no longer fit for purpose or had been structurally compromised.

"The potential risks to family members or farm staff if a silo fails is very serious, there are also implications for grain or other losses, so this is an issue that growers need to pay attention too," he said.

"If a silo is not structurally sound, we strongly encourage growers to seek an alternative storage option, make repairs or decommission the silo to prevent further damage, injury or catastrophic failure of the silo."

"Storing pulses and fertilisers can be higher risk than cereal grains, with higher bulk density and different flow characteristics placing greater loads on silos which can cause them to fail if structural weak points are apparent in either the design, materials, corrosion, damage or modifications undertaken."

"These commodities require stronger wall sheets and/or wall supports and stronger cone bases than for cereal grains. Cracked concrete bases, unlevel bases, damaged silo legs or wall sheets, corroded rivets or bolts are known contributors to silos failing under load."

The well-known Australian expert said a checklist for growers assessing silo integrity should include:

- ❑ Is the foundation the silo is sitting on stable?

- ❑ Are the support legs and base rings free of damage and rust and in sound condition?
- ❑ Are the wall sheets free of damage and rust?
- ❑ Are all fixings (rivets and bolts) in sound condition?
- ❑ Is the ladder structure (if applicable) in sound condition for safe use?
- ❑ Does cleaning and operating the silo pose a safety risk?

North GRDC Grower Relations Manager Graeme Sandral also urged growers to take extra care when out loading fertilisers as fertilisers absorb more moisture than stored grain.

"Growers should be aware that the northern and western sides of silos often have lower moisture, with higher moisture in the southern side of the silo," he said.

"This can present risks when out loading with the dry side generally emptying first in the worst-case scenario this can lead to silo collapse."

In addition to structural integrity, Mr Warrick encouraged growers to consider safe operation as part of the assessment.

"Whether it be for maintenance or monitoring grain, access to the top of silos is necessary so safe access is a requirement," he said.

"Many older silos have unsafe ladders, some silos have been purchased without ladders, so the decision is to install safe ladders or an elevated walkway or use a mobile boom lift."

"Silos being fit for purpose includes a safe way to access the top."

Mr Warrick encouraged growers to considering writing a maintenance or decommission plan for silos immediately following loading or out loading when any issues were front of mind.

"The decision to maintain or replace silos is critical for safe farming operations and needs to happen well in advance of harvest," he said.

For more information visit (www.storedgrain.com.au).

Whether it be for maintenance or monitoring grain, access to the top of silos is necessary so safe access is a requirement...



Global demand for Australian beef on the rise

AUSTRALIA'S market share in Japan and Korea is continuing to lift in the Riverland as the United States emerges as the number one export destination for beef in Q1 2024, according to a new global market update from Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

MLA's latest Global Beef Market Update (GBMU) has shown that the outlook for Australian beef in the global market remains strong.

MLA's global supply analyst Tim Jackson said that overseas supply dynamics have a strong impact on the Australian beef industry.

"Australia exported over 70 per cent of beef production in 2023," Mr Jackson said.

"Although a small part of global production, Australia is a major player in export markets.

"So far in 2024, the United States has emerged as the largest market for Australian beef.

"A long running destock in the US has driven American production down. This has boosted demand for Australian beef in the United States itself, but also in Japan and South Korea, where the US competes with Australia for imported share."

The GBMU was developed to provide a clear picture of the global market in an accessible format. The report includes information about beef production and trade from the major beef exporting countries, as well as analysis of the global economy, weather and input prices.

Mr Jackson noted that the outlook for Australian exports is strong according to the report.

"Alongside the decline in US production, South American slaughter has been very high as drought conditions persist in key cattle producing regions. As conditions normalise, production is likely to

decline, further reducing the global supply of beef," Mr Jackson said.

"Despite low consumer confidence, unemployment remains low in most advanced countries, and inflation has been falling in most of our export markets. At the same time, a weak Australian dollar has made Australian beef more competitive on the global market."

A key consideration for the rest of the year is the economic performance of China.

China is the world's largest beef importer and second largest economy. It has seen a slowdown in key economic indicators, as well as below-trend consumer sentiment since mid-2022.

This has impacted import pricing and has markedly slowed import volume growth. According to the report, if export volumes into China begin to materially decline, it would accelerate the diversification of South American exports further and likely put considerable pressure on global cattle supply.

Both Australian exports of grass fed beef and grain fed beef grew so far this year, but grass fed exports grew substantially more.

Grain fed exports increased by 7 per cent from Q1 2023 to 115,834 tonnes carcase weight equivalent, while grass fed exports grew by 29 per cent to 263,546 tonnes.

In general, grain fed export volumes are considerably less variable compared to total production, while grass fed exports, which are relatively more exposed to variance in the cattle cycle, would be expected to increase more as production increases.

"On the whole, the global picture looks strong for Australian beef. With production set to rise, lower supply from our competitors will boost demand for the remainder of the year," Mr Jackson said.

Commodity prices, production and exports 'beefing up'

CONSUMER pressures are expected to ease with commodity prices, production and exports having broadly lifted in the first half of the year.

With an overall favourable outlook for the second half of the year, despite some variability across sectors, the Rural Bank's Australian agriculture mid-year outlook 2024 (the Outlook), released 9 July, expects some cost-of-living relief to reach beyond the farm gate.

Rural Bank head of agribusiness development Andrew Smith, says "farmers experienced varied conditions in the first half of the year."

"But among the many positives in the performance of the six industries analysed – cattle, cropping, dairy, horticulture, sheep and wool – and for Australian agriculture broadly, beef was a highlight."

"Australian beef exports to the US for the year to date were up 85 per cent on last year," Mr Smith said.

"Elevated export demand from the US – which has seen its lowest herd since 1951 – and key Asian markets is providing stability in beef prices and opportunities for continued export growth moving forward," Mr Smith said.

Some cost-of-living pressures are expected to get a relief for consumers with the Outlook projecting increased fruit and vegetable volumes.

"Some easing in produce pricing for consumers is expected in the coming half, though prices will stay above longer-term averages," Mr Smith said.

Global freight rates remained elevated and are forecasted to persist due to tight vessel supply and strong global demand, but the Outlook showed a low Australian dollar that provided support for export markets and has expanded trade access into target markets.

"Exports have been very promising, with India's recent removal of tariffs on Australian chickpea imports until March 2025," Mr Smith said.

"Strong pricing signals are expected to see chickpea growers increase their planted areas by 80 per cent up to 730 thousand hectares – 24 per cent above the 10-year average," Mr Smith said.

While dry weather persisted across Western and South Australia, with challenging winter crop planting conditions and pasture growth also impacted, the east coast reported much more favourable soil moisture conditions.

"Australian winter crop production should increase nine per cent to 51.3 million tonnes in 2024/25, with increased production forecast to be met with strong domestic and export demand," Mr Smith

said. "Further price rises are expected for lamb, adding to gains in the first half of the year," Mr Smith said.

"Strong demand from both domestic and export consumers is expected to provide support for increased prices amidst a high supply environment," Mr Smith said.

Farm input costs are reported to be easing despite remaining above long-term averages.

"Fertiliser and diesel prices will sit lower than the second half of 2023, with water set to remain affordable," Mr Smith said.

"A rising unemployment rate is also expected to result in greater seasonal labour availability, particularly in Q4, giving Australian farmers a bit of fixed price relief, all round," Mr Smith said.

To view the full analysis in the Australian mid-year outlook 2024, visit the website (ruralbank.com.au/outlook).

Exports have been very promising...



Rural Bank Head of Agribusiness Development Andrew Smith

AG NEWS



Annual farm survey to embark on another year of research

THE Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) is about to embark on its annual farm survey program collecting data from hard-working producers across Australia.

Executive Director of ABARES Dr Jared Greenville said two surveys will be conducted – the Australian Agricultural and Grazing Industries Survey, and the Australian Dairy Industry Survey.

The information collected each year

is integral in supporting decision-making about the future of Australian agriculture.

The Australian Agricultural and Grazing Industries Survey has been conducted continually since 1977-78 – this survey covering broadacre farms provides our longest time series with at present 46 years of data. The current sample is around 1,600 farms.

"The farm surveys are a core part of the evidence base that industries

and governments across Australia use to provide a health check on the sector, develop policy and respond to challenges, such as drought and trade disruptions," Dr Greenville said.

The interviews will cover questions about farm structure, land use and the production and economic profile of the farm business for the 2023-24 financial year. Selected estimates for 2024-25 will also be collected.

"The success of the survey, and hence

its value to industry and government, depends on the cooperation of participants selected to represent their industry," Dr Greenville said.

ABARES officers will be undertaking face-to-face interviews with about 1,900 selected farmers throughout Australia from mid-July to December.

For more information, farmers can contact ABARES Survey Collection by telephone 1800 026 308 or email (surveysabares@aff.gov.au).



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New revenue opportunities for rural industries

KNOWN revenue streams that apply to all regional industries have become outdated, according to a new project by AgriFutures Australia.

A recent AgriFutures Australia study has revealed what drives new revenue opportunities for Australian rural industries, offering a roadmap for resilience and growth.

This interesting piece of research highlights the importance of tailored support and investments, ensuring that every unique sector can thrive amid a rapidly changing agricultural landscape.

Commissioned to align with one of the 16 strategic priorities laid out in AgriFutures Australia's Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2022-2027, namely "identifying new revenue streams", the new revenue opportunities for AgriFutures Australia rural industries was the first major piece of work under these strategic priorities.

The study was designed to help understand where and when new revenue streams could exist and be developed across 28 of AgriFuture Australia's levied and emerging rural industries.

In many ways, new revenue streams are important for these industries, since they provide income diversification, innovation and promote sustainable practices.

They also foster economic growth and the establishment of important jobs in rural areas, which will strengthen Australia's competitive position in the global market.

Associate director of consulting and implementation services, Mike Pepperell, who delivered the report, was focused on determining the key drivers

and enablers of revenue opportunities that could reflect where industries, within agriculture, think these opportunities are going to be.

"What we rapidly realised was that each of these sectors were at different stages of maturity, and our interviewees had different levels of propensity to embrace change and new opportunities," Mr Pepperell said.

In a comprehensive study involving over 130 interviews across all Australian states and territories, new opportunities which aligned to six common themes as drivers or enablers emerged:

- consumer expectations
- value-add, export and niche markets
- collaborating along and across value chains
- carbon, biodiversity and natural capital markets
- genetics
- agtech

"After lots of testing, nearly every opportunity we saw fell into one of those six categories, but they weren't mutually exclusive," Mr Pepperell said.

The report also indicated having a clear roadmap for research and development is crucial for encouraging innovation and technological advancements that are aligned with the identified revenue streams.

"It was quite clear from the tremendous variability in the conversations we were having that RDCs, governments and researchers need to have a greater appreciation of the individual circumstances of each industry sector, and tailor their investment plans in the knowledge that

there's not one size that fits all," Mr Pepperell said.

Going into the specific needs and circumstances of each industry, at each life-cycle stage, the report found that it can support more effective growth and diversification.

AgriFutures senior manager for rural futures, Peter Vaughan, emphasised as a key government player in the sector "AgriFutures must continue to be flexible, adaptive and approachable to be able to support industries at various life-cycle stages, especially when opportunities for growth, sustainability and renewal exist at each juncture".

"The key here is to understand where different industry participants fall on the innovation adoption curve so we can communicate the best opportunities for our producers in the most effective way," Mr Vaughan said.

Researchers also investigated producers' different approaches and current barriers to adopt new revenue opportunities.

"The power of changing consumer behaviours is also having a significant influence on product choice, and consumers are seeking different things than five or 10 years ago," Mr Pepperell said.

"The ability for growers and farmers to be able to respond quickly enough is a challenge that falls upon RDCs – to be able to stay across those changing trends and communicate them to relevant sectors".

After the mentioned findings, it became clear to researchers that nurturing a skilled and capable workforce is one of the critical enabling powers to assess, adopt and implement

the opportunities.

"At the end of the day, to take on a new revenue opportunity that is different to what you've been doing in the past, having skills, experiences, capabilities and resources is one of the leading factors that can hold the individual business back," Mr Pepperell said.

"We've identified these amazing opportunities, but the people who stand to benefit the most from them may not be able to, even if they have the willingness and desire to.

"The insights from this extensive study demonstrate that business as usual and 'one-size-fits-all' strategies will no longer suffice.

"Regardless of their maturity, needs and circumstances, each industry contributes to the breadth, diversity, resilience and vibrancy of Australia's rural landscape in a unique way, and it's vital that we develop strategies with this in mind."

Giving an important priority to relevant opportunities with the adequate support, Australia's rural industries can unlock these important revenue streams that are uncovered in the report, giving our farmers and producers real and accurate returns, as well as preparing them to thrive into the future.

For more detailed information, download the report online (www.agrifutures.com.au/product/new-revenue-opportunities-for-agrifutures-australias-rural-industries/).

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Milk flows at Cadell Training Centre

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY
CHRISTINE WEBSTER

CADELL Training Centre has boosted the quantity and quality of the milk it produces through its \$12.2m dairy complex that was officially opened in May.
The David Oates ACM

Dairy is named after the late David Oates, a former Cadell Training Centre general manager, who lobbied for many years for new dairy and milking facilities to be built at the prison.





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CAPACITY
1,000 L
hopper



ELEVATOR
100 l/min
max. capacity



POT HEIGHT
300 mm
max. size



POWER
1.5 kW
installed



WEIGHT
360kg
unit weight

SOIL MIXER
MC2120



VIEW PRODUCT





CAPACITY
1,150 L
hopper



CYCLE
900 L
per cycle



ROTOR
23 rpm
speed



WATERING
86 l/min
max. capacity



POWER
4.8 kW
installed

POWERFOGGER
TB10



VIEW PRODUCT





CAPACITY
12 liters
per hour



AIR
50 meter
throw



DROPLET
32-48 µm
size



TANK
10 liter
agent tank



POWER
400v pump
1.5kW



Mr Oates retired in 2020 after more than 30 years of service to the Department for Correctional Services and passed away in 2021 after battling illness for two years.

Construction of the complex began in November 2022 and was completed in January by South Australian company, Mossop Construction + Interiors.

The state-of-the-art facility was officially opened by State Minister for Correctional Services Dan Cregan at a ceremony at the prison that also featured a milking demonstration and a tour of the new processing plant.

Riverland Aboriginal elder Sheryl Giles also conducted a Welcome to Country.

Mr Cregan said the 24 prisoners who were employed at the dairy were being given the opportunity to become involved in the entire dairy production process from paddock to plate.

He said this enabled them to become accustomed to a structured

working day and develop new skills and responsibilities as part of their rehabilitation.

Mr Cregan said gaining these skills helped offenders give back to society and build a sense of purpose, leading to better employment outcomes and wider community benefits.

South Australia has the lowest rate of recidivist offending out of any jurisdiction in Australia.

Department for Correctional Services chief executive David Brown, paid tribute to Mr Oates tireless lobbying to have the dairy complex upgraded.

"David Oates, during tours I had of the training centre, would point out all the features of the old dairy," Mr Brown said.

"This included all the rubber bands, cable ties, and gaffer tape," he told the official opening, attracting some laughter from the audience.

Mr Brown said the new dairy complex was a testament to Mr Oates

commitment to the prison.

"He was an absolute passionate professional who lived and breathed everything there was to do with Cadell Training Centre," he said.

"He would never hear a bad word about the place and he was always committed to the staff and its operations."

Mr Oates' wife Joanne and his two sons and two daughters unveiled a

plaque at the opening of the new dairy complex, with State Minister for Correctional Services Dan Cregan and Chaffey MP Tim Whetstone.

Mrs Oates said it was an amazing honour to have the dairy named after her late husband.

"This was his passion and his baby," she said.

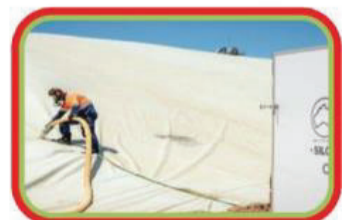
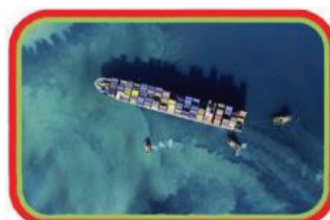
CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



He was an absolute passionate professional who lived and breathed everything there was to do with Cadell Training Centre...



Joanne Oates, the wife of the Cadell Training Centre's longest serving general manager, the late David Oates.



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The dairy complex was completed in January by South Australian company, Mossop Construction + Interiors. PHOTO: Brad Griffin - Department for Correctional Services.

"I don't think David would have expected this, but he would be humbled."

Mr Brown congratulated the Cadell Training Centre's industries manager Marcus Wills and the prison's industry officers for their role in the development of the new complex.

"The heart and soul of the training centre is its industry program," he said.

Mr Wills said the old dairy had been about 50 years old and had well and truly gone past its used-by date.

He said it had featured an eight-bay walkthrough compared to the new 16-bay herringbone dairy, which complements a new milk processing centre.

"We've brought ourselves very rapidly into the modern day," Mr Wills said.

"The dairy has 137 in its milking herd and in the old dairy, milking took about an hour and a half."

"In the new dairy, the herd is milked in 45 minutes."

Cadell Training Centre supplies milk to Barossa Valley Cheese and La Casa Del Formaggio.

It also supplies milk to most South Australian prisons, including Yatala Women's Prison, Adelaide Pre-release Centre, Adelaide Remand Centre, Mobilong Prison, and Port Augusta.

The milk is also donated to the Hutt Street Centre in Adelaide, and the Rotary Club of Waikerie.

Mr Wills said the modern technology and equipment at the new facility had increased the amount of milk produced.

The dairy produces an average of 1800L to 1900L of raw milk each day and produces 900kg of cream per week.

The complex also features advanced monitoring systems to ensure cleaning and pasteurisation processes are carried out effectively.

Temperature sensors, pressure gauges, and automated monitoring software continuously track critical parameters to detect any deviations that could compromise food safety.

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I don't think David would have expected this, but he would be humbled...



Department for Correctional Services chief executive David Brown (left) and Cadell Training Centre industries manager Marcus Wills celebrating the official opening of the \$12.2m dairy complex in May. PHOTOS: Christine Webster



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CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) in Geelong, Victoria. PHOTO: supplied



The following is a Q and A with World Organisation for Animal Health Reference Laboratory expert in avian influenza **FRANK WONG...**

What's going on with bird flu in Australia?

THE world is currently experiencing a bird flu 'pandemic' – a pandemic of birds.

This devastating global outbreak is being caused by a particular strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus, called H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b.

It is affecting wild birds and poultry, and some mammals, on every continent except Australia.

Meanwhile, three separate strains of bird flu – H7N3, H7N9 and H7N8 – have been detected across poultry farms in Australia.

As Australia's national reference laboratory, CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) is playing a key role in testing, determining virus strains and keeping Australian authorities informed.

What's the difference between low pathogenic and highly pathogenic bird flu?

Dr Wong: The virus strains are classified as either low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) or high pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses. LPAI infections in birds may cause only mild illness or no disease at all. But HPAI infections in poultry can cause outbreaks of severe disease, resulting in many sick and dead birds in affected farms. Some H7 and H5 strains start out as low

pathogenic in wild birds but they can become highly pathogenic through virus mutation in infected chicken flocks.

How much of a risk does highly pathogenic avian influenza virus pose to people?

Dr Wong: Bird flu is basically a virus that affects birds with occasional spill over to other animal species. There have been rare cases when people have caught the virus, usually from working directly with the infected poultry or affected farms. As it is still a bird-adapted virus, we normally do not see avian influenza being transmitted from person to person or mammal to mammal. The risk to people is still considered low at this time.

Has Australia ever had an outbreak of bird flu before now?

Dr Wong: Australia has had previous outbreaks of the disease 'HPAI' in poultry, including in 2012, 2013, and again in 2020. In each instance, the outbreaks were quickly contained and the strain causing the highly pathogenic outbreak was eradicated. Australia's previous outbreaks were of H7 bird flu. We've never had an outbreak of H5N1 here, which is the strain causing havoc overseas.

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BORN TO FARM

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

What strain of bird flu is causing Australia's current outbreaks?

Dr Wong: There are currently two states and one territory affected by bird flu outbreaks. While there are three separate strains involved, they are all H7 strains of the virus. Outbreaks in Victoria have been caused by H7N3 HPAI, impacting egg farms in the Meredith region, and H7N9 HPAI in one farm in the Terang region. The HPAI outbreaks affecting farmed chickens in the Hawkesbury region of NSW and in the ACT have been caused by the H7N8 strain.

What strain of bird flu is causing the devastating outbreaks around the world?

The bird flu strain causing havoc overseas is known as highly pathogenic H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b. It emerged sometime in 2020 and has spread to every continent except Australia, affecting millions of wild birds and domestic poultry. This virus has even killed wild birds and marine mammals in Antarctica.



What is different about this H5N1 strain?

Dr Wong: Clade 2.3.4.4b H5N1 has picked up the ability to infect a much wider variety of bird species than other HPAI strains previously. Scientists have also noted that wherever H5N1 spreads, it has mixed with local bird flu strains. This seems to have allowed it to adapt to new environments and may explain its ability to infect many new bird species. It has also spilled over into several mammal species such as foxes, and marine mammals, such as sea lions and elephant seals, and on rare occasions it has spilled over into cats and dogs. It was reported in farmed minks and fur farms in Europe and since March this year, the virus was detected in dairy cows for the first time in the USA.

What is the risk that H5N1 will reach Australia?

The main hosts that carry bird flu viruses over long distances are migratory ducks and geese. As Australia isn't in the flyways of these migrations, the risk of H5N1 reaching Australia is relatively low. However, the risk has slightly increased because of H5N1's ability to infect additional species of wild birds. This increases the chance of introduction through regional or bridging species.

What is CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness doing to prepare for a possible incursion of H5N1?

At CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, we assist with Australia's surveillance efforts and conduct research to characterise the virus to understand it better. We're helping keep track of bird flu and which strains are spreading through poultry and wild birds, not only in Australia but in our region and globally. Australian state and territory laboratories rely on ACDP to conduct testing on bird samples to confirm the presence of avian influenza. We then do genetic sequencing of the virus and use this information to identify the exact strain and understand if and how it is changing. This way we know if the virus is a local virus already present within Australian wild birds, or whether it could be a strain introduced from overseas. We then provide this information and advice to authorities and animal health working groups to support them in making decisions for responding to outbreaks.

For more information on the current disease situation visit the website (outbreak.gov.au).

This site has links to state and territory-specific information, and information about how to protect your birds.



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Feedback sought on SA Grain Sustainability Roadmap

RIVERLAND grain producers and stakeholders in the industry supply chain are being urged to provide feedback on a draft of a South Australian Grain Sustainability Roadmap released today.

Grain Producers SA (GPSA) commissioned experienced South Australian sustainability consultant Edge Impact to develop the draft for industry consideration.

As part of the next phase of the project, feedback from the wider South Australian grain producer community and key stakeholders is being sought and considered before the Roadmap is finalised.

GPSA chief executive officer Brad Perry said establishing a Sustainability Roadmap for the South Australian grain sector is about getting on the front foot as governments, consumers, financiers, and markets throughout the global supply chain are increasingly demanding credentialed sustainable grain.

"The demand for the grain industry in South Australia to reduce emissions and meet particular climate related targets continues, and will continue for

years to come," Mr Perry said.

"In order for us to do that, we need to work together with industry to enhance our positioning and map out current challenges and opportunities when it comes to sustainability.

"We've commissioned Edge Impact, who also worked on the Emissions Reductions Roadmap for the Australian Wine Industry, to undertake a comprehensive process to draft a plan for consideration for the South Australian grain industry.

"GPSA is looking to not only better understand where we can provide education and support for producers to meet demands, but also communicate to the consumer the already well-established sustainability credentials of South Australian grain."

Feedback on the draft Roadmap can be provided via email (info@grainproducerssa.com.au) or by post at 431 King William Street, Adelaide 5000 SA.

For more information and to read the draft South Australian Grain Sustainability Roadmap, visit: (www.grainproducerssa.com.au).



INDUSTRY EXPERT UPDATE

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



Tim Jackson
Almond Board of Australia chief executive officer

What factors are most important for tree health coming out of dormancy?

Action taken in almond orchards between January and May will impact the energy the trees have for flowering and leaf out by utilising carbohydrate stores. During dormancy an oil spray ensures that disease and mites are controlled. Dormancy is also a good time for irrigation system maintenance, to ensure equipment is in top condition when it's needed most.

Is there confidence among Riverland growers ahead of the next season/harvest?

Yes, there's several reasons for this. Almond prices have increased, the Australian dollar exchange rate with the US dollar is low, the Australian crop is larger than last season and demand is strong based on early season sales. It is also pleasing that almond quality has improved and this is due to mostly dry weather conditions during harvest.

How beneficial has increasing demand from China been for the Australian industry?

China is one of the established markets for the Australian almond industry. Demand in China has increased by 89% on last year. This is due to the improved quality of our almonds, especially inshell.

Are stable water allocations for Riverland growers helping production volumes?

It is helping with cost of production. Lower

prices in the short-term lease market are helping with profitability, but it is unclear how long this will last as the Federal Government's water buybacks program reduces the amount of water available to irrigators.

Are there any other growing export destinations for Australian almonds?

Australia exports to more than 50 countries each year. The industry divides its marketing resources into three categories – established, emerging and new markets. India was one of the largest export markets for Australian almonds last year and sales are up 19 per cent on last year.

It's also pleasing to see sales increasing in other markets including New Zealand and Thailand. The Almond Board of Australia is also focusing on emerging markets in the Middle East and Turkey. There's also greater activity in markets across South East Asia, due to its proximity to Australia and the low consumption rate of tree nuts. The region has a large population base and while these countries aren't traditional almond consumers, there's a growing interest in healthy eating.

How are current input costs for Almond growers?

Input costs are still high and challenging for growers. Many products like fertilisers are imported, so the exchange rate isn't working in growers favour when it comes to buying products from overseas. Labor, power, fuel and pollination costs continue to present challenges for growers as they attempt to drive on-farm efficiencies to remain profitable.



Adrian Hoffmann

Wine Grape Council of SA Region Two chair

How is the quality of the wine coming out of the 2024 vintage?

Quality of the wine is actually very solid. It's got good power – it had good hang time on the vine, so most varieties performed quite well. For me, the really good performers are probably some of the later varieties like grenache mataro. Also with whites, we saw some nice softness due to the fact we didn't have those prolonged heat periods during the summer months as well. Everyone was predicting that hotter summer, but we ended up with a nice warm summer and some exceptional quality fruit all the way through.

Did warmer temperatures over summer have an effect?

It was positive from a ripening point of view. Shiraz was probably a little bit lighter on this year from a yield point of view, but we were predicting a little bit of wet weather in that March period, which we did get. We did have a run of hot weather in March, but that actually helped some of those later varieties get over the line. We didn't see vintage drag out like the previous season.

How were the volumes of fruit harvested in the region?

Volumes were good. With most people getting, shiraz was a little bit down, but grenache mataro were quite fruitful with cabernet being solid as well. In general terms, the yields most probably matched the fruit required from the season.

Is there much optimism in the

Barossa region surrounding the return of exports to China?

There's definitely a cautious amount of optimism with the Chinese market reopening. We've seen quite a number of containers leave the Barossa bound for China. It was a key market and still will be a key market, but we have to make sure we don't start sending all our wines to China and make it a one market again. We need to make sure we share that risk and look at all markets and expanding markets right through south east Asia, the Asian markets, but also the US and Europe as well.

What are input costs currently looking like for grape growers?

Cost of production is most probably a lot higher than it has been. All our costs are going up – electricity, diesel, water. Hopefully though they have stabilised. It's still going to be another couple of tough years yet and growers have to be prepared to weather that storm.

At this stage in the season, what's really important for the health of the vines?

Basically setting the vines up for the coming season – bud numbers and pruning. It was discussed earlier, I'm pruning for a dry season, less bud numbers per vine. We most probably don't need big yields yet either. Pruning the vines back a little bit harder to decrease yield a little bit, but also increase the vine health as well. Spring is going to be quite wet, but then it will dry up again.

Mark Doecke

Citrus SA chair

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

Mid-season navels, like the Washington navel, are only weeks away from being finished. Mid-season mandarins, like amigo are also nearly finished. We then move on to afourer mandarins and late-season navels.

Are growers confident in the volume and quality of fruit at this stage?

This year's fruit quality is very good because the growing season in 2023-24 was mostly 'normal' compared to the last few years. The volume of citrus produced in SA is slowly growing as more younger plantings come into production.

Has water allocation stability for 2024/25 benefitted Riverland growers?

We're happy to have 100 per cent for the 2024-25 year, but the water buybacks the Labor Government has just commenced is a real worry for citrus and every other commodity grown in the Murray-Darling Basin. Any water purchased for the environment is less we as growers can access, so this will increase the price of leased water for growers.

Is the increased demand for Australian citrus in Asian countries continuing?

Asia is our biggest destination and all reports say we are struggling to meet orders from that region.

Are price returns from supermarkets financially challenging for growers?

Prices so far are much better than last year mainly because the quality of our fruit is better and also the world shortage of juice puts some money in the grower's pocket. We await the results of the supermarket inquiry held by the ACCC.

What should growers be doing to ensure tree health at this time of year?

In winter we use the season to maintain trees like pruning, also winter is a good time for any irrigation upgrades or maintenance. Tree health is what we concentrate on in the growing season.

Any advice for fellow growers?

Growers should use any time they have in winter to maintain irrigation, prune trees as required and prepare for the spring which is only weeks away.



Matthew Farmer and his son Luca are continuing the Farmer potato legacy four generations later.



Farmer by name, farmer by nature for Virginia potato empire

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY LIAM PHILLIPS

SOUTH Australia is the heartbeat of the Australian potato industry, and the Farmer Group – headed by Matthew Farmer and his son Luca – are changing the game with exciting new technology.

Farmer Group's roots date back to 1956, when Matthew Farmer's grandfather Jack Farmer began selling the potatoes he grew on his Virginia settlement.

Four generations later the business has continued to go from strength-to-

strength, expanding from the original 40 acres to 85,000 acres. In fact, the purchase of their south-east property Kangaringa in 2003 has allowed the family to grow the plantings from 141 hectares to 1600.

As well as potatoes – which makes up around 70 per cent of the business – Farmer Group has invested in complimentary products including onions, broadacre crops and Black Angus cattle, with chief operating officer Jessica Avery explaining how they all work in harmony.

“When you look on a farm, we could have 130-plus pivot sites on there, but you can't grow potatoes on the same pivot site every year,” she explained.

“There's a five-year cycle. When we plant onions they have a shallow root system, so what it does is it leaves all the nutrients in the middle section of the pivot so that you can come in and plant a potato crop following the onion crop, and it will actually utilise any chemicals or nutrients or any goodies that remain in the soil.

“It's really just about having a complimentary business. We then cycle through broadacre crops as well, so out here at Kangaroo Flat we will always plant a canola crop before we plant a potato crop.

“A canola crop has a really large taproot in it, and it also releases goodies into the soil that mitigate any risk of rhizoctonia (a soil-borne fungus that causes rot) – so a good canola crop in there will then open up the soils ready for the potatoes to come in.



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"After you harvest those potatoes, left in the ground is still some leftover potatoes, so rather than seeing them rot through into the ground you can actually move your livestock into the pivot and they will eat out the potatoes. They also relieve themselves in that paddock, which brings more nutrients and organics back into the soil."

Farmer Group clearly has a deep understanding of the science behind farming, and the business has also recently turned to technology to advance their state-of-the-art potato packing facility, which features specially designed machinery not found anywhere else in the country.

The facility was first built in 1986, but in recent years Farmer Group has collaborated with some of the world's top minds in the automation industry to create one of Australia's most impressive, high-tech packing operations.

"In the past five years we decided it was 'go time', so we managed to start designing a line that would fit in (our custom-built packing shed), and we managed to find funding for it," Ms Avery said.

"We did apply to many different government agencies and grants and things like that, and we were unsuccessful, so the Farmer family then found a way to generate the income themselves for the \$55million investment.

"Then we worked with some world leaders in automation. (Matthew's father) Barry Farmer spent a lot of time overseas in the Netherlands having a look at different types of automation, different types of cool rooms – it's always been a passion of his.

"It really has been the last two years that things have started to come together. In October 2022 our first shipping containers started to land, and we had 88 shipping containers land within a three-month period.

"By the following October we were running potatoes through there, so a 12-month turnaround to be able to stand all of that equipment in the packing shed was quite an achievement for us.

"Now 12 months on we are still astonished at the sheer volume and the quality of what we can put through the processing line, and we're going to continue to evolve and develop – and even that isn't the end for us, it's looking at what comes next now.

"In the past when we were always striving and looking for more, we were having to say no to different things because we just couldn't meet the turnaround, whereas now we don't have to say no – we can fill a 40-foot shipping container in around three hours. It's a total game-changer.

"Now that we've got better control over the potatoes that are coming through the line, it's now about 'how do you then commercialise more of that?' and 'what's next for the Farmer

Group in the way of potatoes?"

A recent innovation that has proven a smashing success has been the introduction of Farmer Group's new 'baby potatoes', which were once considered unfit for sale, but are now marketed as an easy microwavable alternative.

It is not just baby potatoes that have come into fashion, but the entire potato industry has enjoyed a strong uptick since the pandemic.

"Pre-Covid times the potato industry within Australia was actually in decline, but since then and as the economy has started to struggle the way that it has, the potato industry is in growth now," Ms Avery said.

"It is one of the most cost-effective commodities on the supermarket shelves and we are finding that the consumer demand for it has grown. Generation Y coming through are completely different compared to the rest of the generations and they are larger consumers of potatoes in Australia.

"Internationally the consumer demand for potatoes is on an increase, so where in the past the Asian nations were large rice consumers, they are actually becoming substantial consumers of potatoes.

"The largest producer of potatoes is China, and with the consumer market there increasing, so is the hunger for Australian potatoes... if you travel overseas you will see that their table potatoes look completely different to a table potato in Australia.

"Australian potatoes have incredible skin quality, we've got immense farming lands, and how we grow potatoes and the care that goes into it is completely different to the rest of the world."

To continue the next generation of the business, Farmer Group is looking for the next generation of farmers to get on board.

"To anyone local in the area that is looking for employment, we are always looking for skilled labour here now," Ms Avery said.

"We are particularly looking for that next generation, that youth, to get involved in farming.

"It's one of the greatest struggles that we've got – horticulture and farming is not appealing to the youth, they don't understand what we've actually got available in the shed.

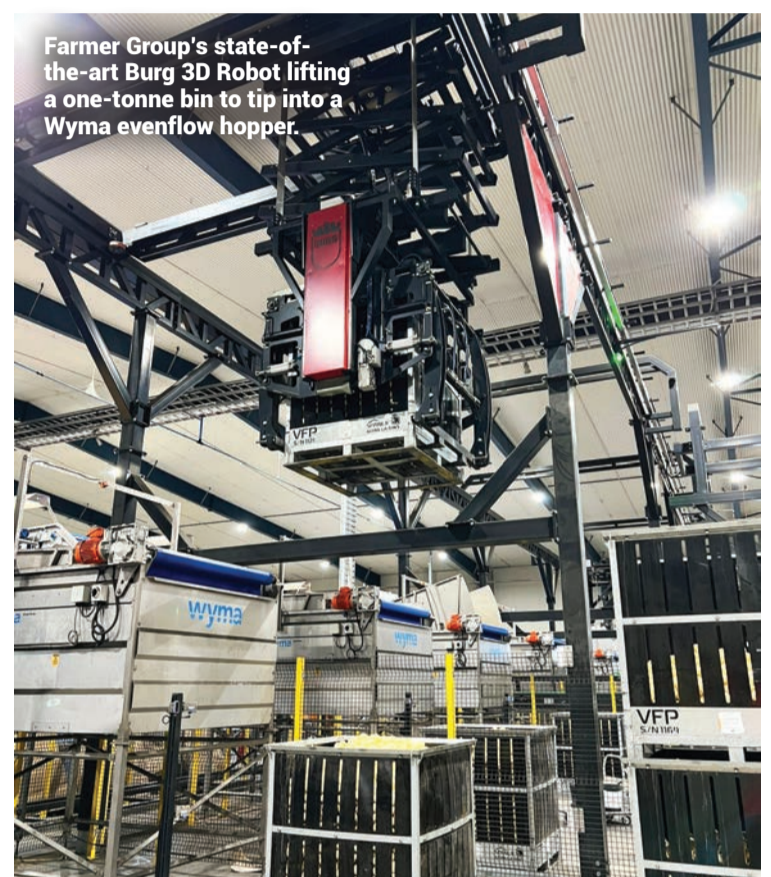
"There's a pre-conceived notion about what a potato-packing shed looks like versus what it actually is, which is state-of-the-art, amazing technology.

"It's the same when you start going onto the farms, trying to get more children involved in farming. Honestly, if you want an opportunity to drive a piece of equipment worth \$1.2million? Go farming."

To find out more about Farmer Group and its products, head to (virginiafarmproduce.com).



We are still astonished at the sheer volume and the quality of what we can put through the processing line...



Farmer Group's state-of-the-art Burg 3D Robot lifting a one-tonne bin into a Wyma evenflow hopper.



Farmer Groups' centre pivot irrigator working on one of their picturesque potato crops. PHOTOS: Supplied



John Deere self-propelled sprayer makes its way through a potato pivot.

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Ahrens

Michael Roy (left) and Michaela Saville stand alongside the Great Southern Chocolates stand at their Renmark property.



The generation of farming

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY LACHLAN DAND

HAVING been in business for more than 170 years, Roy Farms has had a significant impact across the globe.

Initially beginning in Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills region, the family moved across the border before landing in Renmark.

Currently having a focus on dried fruit, Roy Farms has established a brand name known to more than 1,000 customers.

Owner of the business, Michael Roy, said the business is continuing to grow, and is planning for its next steps.

"I've recently purchased the house next door, so we're going to be having a shop, my offices, and a function centre and that helps with horizontal integration," he said.

"There's a lot of history on the main block, and we've kept everything at this stage fairly quiet to help eliminate risks.

"We're going to be investing a lot in security and surveillance, because our products are delicate and we're tripling in size so there is very fast growth.

"There's a lot of potential, and we need to get product but we've noticed the quality hasn't been as good when we get it from other growers.

"Speed over the last five years has been generated through customer demand, and that has been strong for quite a few years.

"We were suppliers to Riverland Food Co-operative, but when they were only using four per cent of our product we backed away."

Mr Roy said his family moved to the Wimmera region in Nhill in Victoria with a focus on wheat, before following the Chaffey brothers to Renmark.

"Lobethal was a very wet area and it was hard to grow fruit and cereal there because of rust and other diseases coming in, particularly with no available chemicals," he said.

"They moved to the wimmera area in Nhill to grow wheat and fruit in a drier climate, but the plague of rabbits came through and that had a massive impact on the business.

"When the chaffey brothers started

here, one of them told the family to come over and it just went from there.

"We lost a lot of family members during the wars, and that restricted our growth in the earlier times, and the fruit was worth a lot of money in those days."

Recently a 51st fruit fly outbreak was announced, and although Roy Farms focus on dried fruit, Mr Roy said it is still a threat to the business.

"Fruit fly is a significant risk in our business now and I have grown fresh fruit for 30 years, but I decided there is too much risk involved.

"We found it in our fruit in January which we've never had before, and because of the value of the fruit I've become more conservative and utilised the fruit.

"We have to spray now, and hopefully the sterile flies will have some effect as well as the monitoring of everything.

"Movement of fruit has been difficult, so we've been forced to plant in one area so we don't have movement problems.

"Our family has always been one which puts property in areas to overcome risks of hail, rain and different soil types.

"We've always wanted to grow various crops so we can fluctuate between what's in demand, and a balance of income.

"Growing in different areas reduces weather risks, and changes the amount you can plant in different areas."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

We're trying to use as much Australian product as possible...



Mr Roy standing alongside the stand of premium riverland dried fruits for sale through Roy Farms.

Mr Roy is set to expand the business further into chocolate, with a museum set to open in the coming weeks.

"I've bought another chocolate business to value add to all of our products, and if we're doing that we're maximising value, and the least amount of wastage the better," he said.

"People love eating chocolate with fruit and nut which we're doing, and we're trying to use as much Australian product as possible.

"We're trying to provide the consumer with a healthy product as much as we can, so we're using toffee and honeycomb which is another big part of the business.

"We're in a repricing stage at the moment to cover our costs, and the first year we had the product I put the price up by 30 per cent, and two years later that's not enough.

"That's the realistic fact of the issues we're dealing with now, and

product loss has recently crept in too.

"We're going to be able to sell directly from here, and give people the ability to have tastings and to enjoy the product.

"We'll be having a chocolate museum and a dried fruit museum, which will explain a lot of the history around packaging and advertising.

"I'm not aware of something like that in Australia, and we're working on making it really presentable, ready for our opening shortly.

"We're very focused on websites, because we're finding a lot of people are online shopping, particularly since COVID.

"We're looking at employing people into roles to help manage the online market, and we want to grow there."

Customers interested in purchasing a product with Roy Farms can do so via the website (www.royfarms.com.au/shop).

Ms Saville in the chocolate factory at the Renmark property.



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Pick of the Pecans

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY MADISON EASTMOND

SOUTHERN Sky Pecans is one of the Riverland's only pecan farms.

Since taking over the Monash farm roughly seventeen years ago, Dave Otto de Grancy has had to transition the property's nine acres of grapes and citrus to seven different varieties of pecans.

"When first bought the property, the grapes and trees were going really well," Mr Otto de Grancy said.

"But, that same year we had a horrific frost and it just frosted everything.

It was during the devastating process of ripping out the dead crop that Mr Otto de Grancy noticed that one tree had been unaffected.

"I noticed the big pecan tree was doing just fine. The poor tree – it was already 60 years old when we bought the property and it had never been maintained – but it was growing pecans flat out."

After being able to do some groundwork via the American family tree of his wife Stacey, Mr Otto de Grancy then began his journey with pecans.



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"I got in touch with my uncle-in-law and had a good chat about growing pecans," he said.

"Then we started looking into varieties that were growing in Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico because I thought that they would be similar climates to (the Riverland)."

After much research Mr Otto de Grancy eventually ended up with around 100 pecans trees and decided to give the process two years to "just see what they did".

"For the first year they did nothing, but the second year they took off like a rocket. Once we could see they were growing well, we decided we would get more trees and change varieties," he said.

Since that first planting, Mr Otto de Grancy hasn't looked back.

In 2017, Southern Sky Pecans won Australia's best pecans, and in 2019 were the runners up — only missing out by one vote.

Mr Otto de Grancy also now has an arrangement with Adelaide business of Bottega Gelateria, his pecans used in a maple syrup gelato.

"Everyone who tries it thinks it's beautiful and it's (Bottega Gelateria's) award winner and best seller," Mr Otto de Grancy said.

"(These things) have just let us know the quality of the oecan's we are able to grow are the best."

Though having some setbacks with mother nature — a hailstorm in 2018 causing a 100 per cent loss and again, two years prior, hail causing a 50 per cent loss — Southern Sky Pecans are on track.

"Right now, I have around seven varieties on the property and have mucked around with root stocks...now I have a great combination," Mr Otto de Grancy said.

"It was a good harvest this year, we collected 9 tonnes...and the quality of the pecans looks great."

As Mr Otto de Grancy tries to grow as organically as possible, all that is left to do for this cycle is to wait for the weather to clear up.

"I am just waiting to get them in through the system to dry them — all of that is done outside."

Looking to the future, Mr Otto de Grancy said he wants to expand Southern Sky Pecans.

"Our plan is not to increase our plantings, instead I want to work on a nursery....and increase our ability to process the pecans by scientifically expanding our processing plant.

"If other growers are growing in the area, we can either purchase the pecans off them and sell them under our label, or they can process their harvest through us.

"It's a big move to expand, but we're hoping for it to happen in the next year or two.

Mr Otto de Grancy said he also has some "good ideas" he wants to get started on in order to expand the use of his product.

"Pecans can be used in so many ways and are a fantastic substitute for any nut dish.

"I am looking into branching out into making pecan butter...and pecan oil.

"I am hoping this crop will get us in front so I can start to investing in these further steps."



Pecans can be used in so many ways and are a fantastic substitute for any nut dish...

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Rain levels

Storages (as at 20 July)

RENMARK

1 May to 20 July 2024: 58.8mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2024: 107.2mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2023: 109.4mm

LOXTON

1 May to 20 July 2024: 63.6mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2024: 94.9mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2023: 113.9mm

WAIKERIE

1 May to 20 July 2024: 52.9mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2024: 102.4mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2023: 90.8mm

LAMEROO

1 May to 20 July 2024: 61.4mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2024: 90mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2023: 203.6mm

GAWLER

1 May to 20 July 2024: 85.4mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2024: 103.4mm

Rainfall to 20 July 2023: 180mm

MENINDEE LAKES: 64 per cent full

DARTMOUTH: 94 per cent full

HUME: 70 per cent full

LAKE VICTORIA: 79 per cent full

FLows INTO SA: 9,400ML/day

High support for double strength mouse bait

SOUTH Australian grain producers have found double strength mouse bait extremely effective in combatting mice on farm, according to a recent survey of growers undertaken by Grain Producers SA (GPSA).

Last year, Grain Producers Australia (GPA) applied to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) for another extension of the permit, which was first approved in May 2021, at the height of the mouse plague, to provide access to ZP50 (50g/kg zinc phosphate) products.

This extension application – adjusted for minor use rather than the original emergency use purpose – was unapproved, however, and the permit subsequently expired on 31 December 2023.

To better understand dealing with mice in high numbers and baiting on-farm, GPSA surveyed grain producers throughout March and April 2024, and received 148 responses.

GPSA chief executive officer Brad Perry said the survey demonstrated when South Australian grain producers had access to the double strength mouse bait, they found it extremely effective.

“According to the survey, South Australia grain producers that used the double strength mouse bait under permit rated it as 90 per cent effective, compared to the single dose at only 50 per cent effective,” he said.

“Feedback in the survey from some growers highlighted that mice numbers are breeding in areas out-side of their farm and then re-infiltrating paddocks during seeding.

“It is clear from the comments in the survey that grain producers believe the double strength mouse bait is not only more effective than the ZP25 (25g/kg zinc phosphate) but also more efficient.

“While mouse numbers are being reported as patchy across the state, many grain producers in the survey were concerned about timing of access to a stronger bait if numbers grew quickly.”

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Key points from the survey include:

- ❑ 78 per cent of grain producers had crop yields impacted by mice in the past two seasons
- ❑ 64 per cent of respondents used ZP50 mouse bait under permit in 2023
- ❑ On average growers rated the double strength mouse bait effectiveness as 9 out of 10
- ❑ 47 per cent found ZP25 to be effective in controlling mouse numbers
- ❑ Growers who use ZP25 rate its effectiveness as 5 out of 10 on average

GPSA understands the importance of respecting the independent process of the APVMA and maintaining the integrity of that system.

GPSA is continuing to work with and respond to the APVMA to explore options to allow the permit to be extended, so growers can access ZP50 products, to help them control mice and protect their crops.

Here's a selection of what SA grain producers said in the survey:

- ❑ "Had to bait up to three times last

season until we had the double strength."

- ❑ "If mice population is allowed to build up, then you are expecting the bait at 1kg per hectare to do a near impossible task with one application."
- ❑ "Mice are consistently an issue each year. Higher 50gm strength bait is essential for effective control."
- ❑ "(Last year) Mouse damage in the Cowell, Cleve, Mangalo, Rudall areas was devastating. Farmer feedback at recent SARDI grower meetings raised the permit issue on several occasions, with all reporting the 25gm was not effective in managing numbers."
- ❑ "I wasn't aware how ineffective the 25gm bait was in controlling large mice numbers and we suffered catastrophic losses even though we baited four times"
- ❑ "We found the 50gm bait to be way more economical, as we only had to bait once and not three to four times as we do with 25gm baits. It ends up costing us \$12 per hectare, versus \$5 per hectare using the 50gm bait"
- ❑ "The double strength bait did the job the first time and there was no need to reapply as we have had to do with 25gm previously. We were baiting two to three times with the 25gm."
- ❑ "The 25gm bait does reduce

numbers, but certainly not as effective as the 50gm, and at the rate of breeding, prompt effective action is necessary for control."

- ❑ "With the 25gm we are not getting good enough control and needing to bait multiple times, sustaining damaged crops due to this prolonged and costly practice."
- ❑ "Mice are becoming shy to the 25gm bait and populations are building up. Where we have used 50gm bait we are not seeing large numbers of mice."
- ❑ "This year only a few paddocks have high mice numbers, but canola must be baited because canola is so attractive to the mice, seeding rates are low and replacement seed is so expensive."
- ❑ "The 25gm bait was inefficient and required multiple spreading. We lost 80 per cent of our crop to mice and had to resow."
- ❑ "Any integrated pest management system will recommend never to use sub-lethal doses of treatment."
- ❑ "We are in desperate need of 50gm bait after seeing the 25gm bait being less effective. We do not want to return to burning stubbles and tilling the soil until its bare to reduce mice numbers."
- ❑ "There is head loss due to wind at harvest and even after grazing

and rainfall events. Particularly for barley there is a lot of hard seed which won't germinate, making a huge problem at sowing time with the extra food source for mice. The 50gm bait is far, far better."

- ❑ "Once mice get bait shy, it's very hard to control them in crop. We strongly feel that to give our crops the best protection for the whole season we need to get the best control at seeding. Any mice that go bait shy or get through the winter not only impact the crop later in spring, but they have a head start to breed up for the following year's crop."
- ❑ "With less stock grazing in certain areas to preserve soils, it can allow more mice to build up in non-grazed stubbles."
- ❑ "We found the double strength bait essential for good timely control of mice, as a larger number of shy feeders resulted at times with the lower strength bait use and adequate control was not then achieved."
- ❑ "We need 50gm mouse bait going forward for effective mice control as anything else is not effective enough and therefore costly and prohibitive to production."
- ❑ "Mice are becoming our biggest threat in our cropping system."

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Berri Barmera Landcare hosted five tree planting events in the Riverland for Planet Ark's National Tree Day on Sunday 28 July, and School's Tree Day on Friday 26 July.



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RWS offer auditing services, documentation building and editing, facilitation of toolbox meetings, various WHS training sessions, online reporting systems, incident management and reporting, injury return to work, mental health first aid support, drug and alcohol testing, test and tag of 240v items and much more...

We assist organisations in becoming ISO certified and improving all levels of understanding across industry. Safety and quality work hand in hand and it's important to understand how effective management of these critical areas can develop the right practices and culture.

We currently operate out of Clare and Adelaide in South Australia with works recently expanding to WA and Victoria.



Your Spring growing guide

SPRING often can't come soon enough for gardening enthusiasts.

As the temperatures increase from the brisk winter cold, the sun is ready to start shining again to help your garden flourish.

You will also usually notice lower rainfall compared to the previous months. These are the two key elements we must take into consideration when getting you ready to plant those seeds and seedlings.

Waiting until the frost lifts will allow for the greatest success when it comes to your garden.

Make sure you have harvested your remaining veggies from winter and remove any unwanted weeds that may have grown. This will allow you to have a fresh

garden bed to start that spring planting.

We recommend hand picking out your weeds rather than using a herbicide. The next step is to do the prep work with compost and fertiliser, which work together to load your soil up with the good stuff.

Young plants (seeds and seedlings) are very needy and require a boost of organic matter and micronutrients to grow into healthy, established, productive plants.

Adding a layer of mulch, before the temperate starts to soar, will assist in conserving moisture in the soil from the downpours of winter while also assisting in minimising the regrowth of weeds.



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FRESH HERBS

Spring is the perfect time to plant and cultivate herbs, including parsley, coriander, thyme, basil, marjoram, dill, and sage. Plenty of sunlight, regular watering and quick drainage will see your herbs flourish.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
1cm



GERMINATION
14-28 days



PLANT SPACE
30cm



HARVEST
1-2 mths



TOMATOES

There are many different types of tomatoes to choose from and a great variety in the fruits they produce. Some are better for cooking others best straight from bush to salad or sandwich.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
25cm



GERMINATION
1-2 wks



PLANT SPACE
60-90cm



HARVEST
3 mths



ROCKMELON

With its juicy flesh and sweet fragrance, rockmelon is a favourite fruit that grows on a sprawling vine and thrives in the heat. It's best to get plants started as early as possible in spring. If you live in a cooler climate, start seeds indoors and plant them out when the danger of frost has passed.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
1-2cm



GERMINATION
6-12 days



PLANT SPACE
60-100cm



HARVEST
16-18 wks



CUCUMBER

Cucumbers need a fair amount of love and tenderness, but they reward the grower with beautiful fruit. Home grown cucumbers are usually a bit knobbly and may not be as perfect as the shop bought, but they make up for that in their taste and texture.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
1-2cm



GERMINATION
6-10 days



PLANT SPACE
30-40cm



HARVEST
7-10 wks



CELERY

Celery likes full sun with afternoon shade and protection from strong winds. The soil needs to be rich with plenty of organic matter, but it doesn't have to be your best drainage bed. It also thrives in wicking beds and self-watering pots that are filled with compost-enriched soil or potting mix. Starting celery from seed requires patience, so consider established seedlings.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
1cm



GERMINATION
14-21 days



PLANT SPACE
30-40cm



HARVEST
12-18 wks



STRAWBERRY

Strawberries are available as bare-root runners that are best planted in the spring or as young potted plants. If you're a strawberry fan, there are many varieties easy to grow at home, allowing you to enjoy the perks of harvesting ripe fruits from your own garden.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
3mm



GERMINATION
14-56 days



PLANT SPACE
30-45cm



HARVEST
3-5 wks



SPRING ONION

What we traditionally know as spring onions are technically green onions or scallions – they do not form a bulb and instead have stiff white stalks with stringy roots. True spring onions, or salad onions, are an immature onion, form a small, rounded bulb and are harvested in spring or early summer. Regardless of the species, both are easy to grow and versatile kitchen ingredients.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
.5cm



GERMINATION
10-14 days



PLANT SPACE
5cm



HARVEST
8 wks



AVOCADO

As an evergreen tree, the avocado will shed leaves in cold weather or during dry periods. In warmer regions, an avocado will grow steadily throughout the year. In cooler zones, it will be more likely to have a couple of obvious growth surges in spring and summer. Avocado trees become very handsome, so plant yours where you'll appreciate its appearance.



POSITION
Full sun



SOW DEPTH
2cm



GERMINATION
2-6 wks



PLANT SPACE
6 mtrs



HARVEST
2-3 yrs

OTHER FAVOURITES TO PLANT IN SPRING INCLUDE:

Sow Beans	Lettuce	Rhubarb
Beetroot	Okra	Rosella
Broccoli	Onion	Silverbeet
Cabbage	Parsnip	Squash
Capsicum	Potato	Sweet Corn
Eggplant	Pumpkin	Sweet Potato
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AG NEWS



Emission become increasingly important for Aussie farmers

UNDERSTANDING the “basics of emissions” is becoming increasingly important for Australia’s farmers as the sector faces growing expectations to measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions on farm.

According to agribusiness banking specialist Rabobank, large corporations – including food and agribusiness companies – become more active in managing climate impact across their full supply chain, this is expected to have increasing market access implications for farmers.

Author of the report Anna Drake said understanding the basic concepts around emissions measurement – including the different scopes of emissions, what a farm’s greenhouse gas footprint is made up of and the significance of key emissions metrics – is becoming important in preparing farmers for these

fast-approaching changes.

Ms Drake said many farmers reported feeling confusion and uncertainty when it came to the topic of GHG emissions.

“This includes how to measure and reduce emissions and why this is likely to be relevant to their business,” she said.

The guide was designed to provide the bank’s clients with a foundational overview on the topic of emissions as it relates to agricultural supply chains and the expected impacts on farmers.

“With growing focus on emissions in agriculture and the widespread introduction of company emissions reduction targets that include on-farm emissions, it is important farmers are well informed so they can best position themselves to respond to changes ahead, including potential future market access impacts,” Ms Drake said.

From a farm level, measuring the emissions “footprint” of farming operations – calculated using purpose-designed modelling tools – can provide farmers with a starting point to engage with the supply chain on GHG emissions and to weigh up their reduction options.

Ms Drake said measuring “emissions intensity” was a key metric for supply chains as it enabled them to understand the emissions produced relative to a unit of product.

“Reducing emissions intensity is strongly connected to improving efficiency and productivity, and is essentially about doing more with less emissions,” she said.

“For example, this could involve achieving heavier sale weights for stock over the same period as previously achieved, effectively spreading the emissions over a larger product quantity.”

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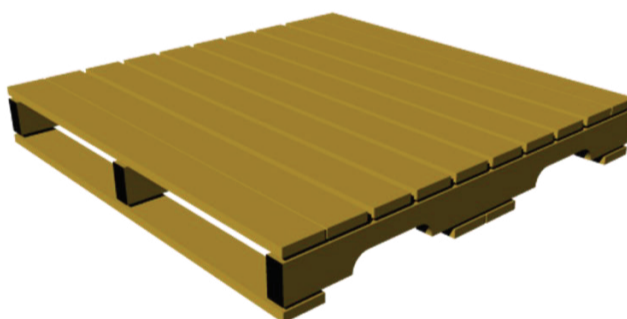
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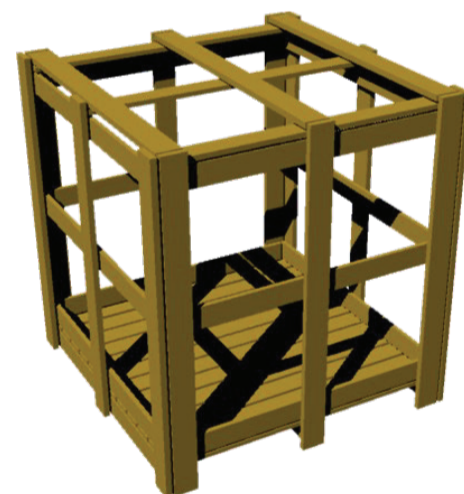
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