

SA Farmer

TAYLOR
GROUP MEDIA

WINTER 2023



**Potato shortage
clear as spud**

Page 8

**Honey honey,
how you thrill me**

Page 34

**Still on track to
eradication**

Page 42

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Welcome to the winter edition of SA Farmer

AS always, SA Farmer has come together by the hard work of the Taylor Group Media team of journalists who have scoured the Riverland, Mallee and Lower North to find primary producers, business owners and industry experts to share insights into South Australian agriculture.

We delve right in to this edition with a mixed bag of feature stories, including a Riverland grain producer corroborating the record-breaking year growers had across the state, a regional school teaching agriculture for future generations, a South Australian company's take on the potato shortage and what the near future looks like for fresh markets, exotic mushrooms taking the place of a vehicle manufacturing line in Elizabeth, and a Barossa legacy of family wines.

The regular ag news section showcases what is happening at a state and national level.

This edition sees a vaccine created to protect pigs from a mosquito-borne disease, growth in SA carbon farming, a look at current farmer concerns and rural sentiment, agricultural research and development investment, SA wine hitting the US markets, and support for farmer mental health and wellbeing, among others.

Rounding out the feature stories for this edition we look at: a Riverland West legend recognised for his lifetime of dedication, a family mixing it up in the world of lettuce, a Craigmore man's beekeeping and honey journey, a love of native plants in Loxton, a winemaker's venture into straw wine and the history behind a special range of wines, and finally locally roasted coffee in the Barossa.

Four industry experts have spoken with journalist Hugh Schuitemaker to provide an update on almonds, dryland farming, wine

grapes and citrus.

Almond Board of Australia CEO Tim Jackson talks recent wet conditions affecting harvest times; Mallee canola farmer John Lush gives insight into sowing and genetically modified (GM) crops; Wine Grape Council of SA's Adrian Hoffman talks about the 2023 vintage and exports to China; and Citrus SA chair Mark Doecke discusses fruit volume and quality, plus the ongoing battle against fruit fly.

The SA Farmer publication and free-to-read stories on the website continue to flourish thanks to our devoted readers, advertising supporters and primary producers willing to share their stories with us.

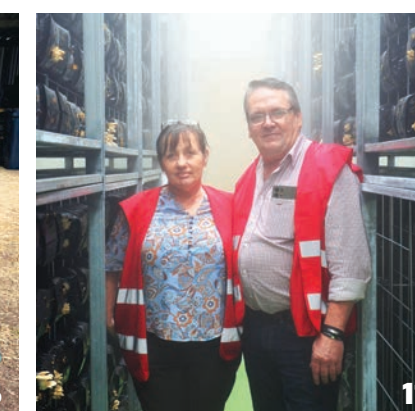
We hope you enjoy the winter edition of SA Farmer and, until next time, keep updated online by visiting: www.safarmer.com.au

- The SA Farmer team

INSIDE



6 Teaching Ag for the future



11 Mushrooms grow in former lion's den



16 Ag news



24 Citrus leader's lifetime of dedication



30 Industry experts



37 Planty of love for native species



Jason Tomlinson in his bee suit with his smoker, next to his hive.

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Ashlea Miller-Pickersgill

SA Farmer

EDITOR
Paul Mitchell

DESIGN
Kirsty Frahn

ADVERTISING
8586 8000
ads@murraypioneer.com.au

Tony Swan
Paul Miles
Megan Rees
Glenda Malinovski
Elise Christopher
Paul McCormick
Caitlin Bruce

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Grain growing starts again after record-breaking year

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JOSH BRINE

IT was a tale of ups and downs for Riverland collaborative grain producer Bulla Burra's last harvest.

On the positive end, the business completed one of its "best ever years" for growing, with yields high and prices strong according to general manager Robin Schaefer.

But with input costs – particularly of fertilisers and chemicals – on the rise, the crop was also the "most expensive" the local growers have ever produced.

"Prices were generally pretty good but they needed to be too," Robin said.

"A lot of chemicals had risen in price because of flow-on issues from Covid and China, because a lot of our chemistry comes out of China.

"Worldwide plants trying to compensate couldn't, which drove the

pricing of chemicals up.

"Also fertiliser prices just went through the roof because of the conflict in Ukraine. A lot of fertiliser comes out of Russia, so that impacted us to some extent.

"China also shut down a lot of fertiliser manufacturing, which was probably the bigger one for us.

"A lot of our fertiliser pricing doubled, and then some, and the same was true of some of our key chemicals like glyphosate.

"Plus, with a wet spring, we had to protect our crops from higher pressure from pests and disease populations than what we normally would need to, so there was a lot more cost in those crop protection products as well."

Despite the challenges, Robin said

legume yields were "unprecedented", along with strong wheat and barley crops, which helped the state to record grain production and farm gate value in 2022/23.

"We're pretty fortunate in the grain industry because we have on any day here probably 10 to 12 different exporters that we can deal with for all of our cereal crops," he said.

"I think it's a lot more of an open market and it's easier for us to store our product if we're not happy with the price.

"Our selling period can be anywhere from February the year before harvest right through to May or June the year after harvest.

"You're trying to pick the better times in the market and trying to stay away from the troughs."

The size of last year's crop, along with weather factors, contributed to a late finish for the 2022/23 harvest, which also caused a late start for seeding this year.

Robin said seeding on his farm started just after Easter, as opposed to his usual start time at the beginning of April.

"We weren't quite ready then because of the challenges thrown at us due to the late harvest..." he said.

"The growing season last year was so long and the rains continued later than usual.

"It was a very cool and mild spring so the crops took a long time to fill and finish, so we started (harvest) quite late.

"Last year the crops sowed and

There's no point growing a product if there's no market at the end.

germinated very early so we were thinking it would be an early harvest.

"We had quite good harvesting weather but the big yields meant everything goes a bit slower, which we don't complain about.

"Normally we like to be finished before Christmas, but it was just after mid-January we finished, and some farmers around the district were well into February before they were finished.

"A reasonable amount of summer weed management, and staff changes too, have added some extra challenges."

Since the launch of the collaborative farming venture in 2009 with the joining of executive director John Gladigau's family farm in Alawoona with the Schaefer farm in Loxton, Bulla Burra have also been prominent in assisting research into new technologies.

"We've embraced technology, and the scale (of the collaborative venture) has allowed us to do that," Robin said.

"We've been at the forefront of that as far as machine technology goes.

"We've had a lot of research done on our place because we've embraced the opportunity for researchers to come and do their research on new varieties and farming techniques.

"I think a lot of farmers throughout the district have benefitted from that."

One area of technological innovation within the grain industry that is yet to trickle down into local farms is genetic modification (GM).

A statewide moratorium on the cultivation of GM crops in South Australia was lifted in late 2020 – except for Kangaroo Island where the ban remains.

"We haven't seen anything specifically on our farm," Robin said.

"A lot of that technology is very expensive for our environment.

"It's a wait and see game. A lot of the newer technology that they're using now bypasses the GM technology anyway, (but) it'll be interesting to see where it goes in the future..."

"At the end of the day, it's not only about what we do on our property, but also the market for it as well.

"There's no point growing a product if there's no market at the end.

"It's a combination of asking does it fit into my production, is it a useful tool that's going to make my business more profitable, and are we going to end up with a product we can still market?"



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Karoonda Area School students at their mini show day in 2021. PHOTOS: supplied



Karoonda Area School students have been involved with the Cows Create Careers program, introducing students to the opportunities for both vocational and university pathways in the dairy industry.



Karoonda Area School students with their prize-winning pen of three wethers.

Teaching Ag for the future

WORDS DEIRDRE GRAHAM

SUE Pratt and Carolyn Johnson have a few things in common, but a shared passion for teaching agriculture would probably top the list.

Sue is South Australia's lead agriculture teacher – a role appointed last year to help boost agriculture teaching in the state – and Carolyn is Karoonda Area School's ag teacher.

Sue said teaching agriculture in schools was "crucial" for the future.

"Students are more disconnected than ever from where their food and fibre comes from, and as consumers many are making buying decisions without personal experience of farming," she said.

"An agriculture program can explain different production systems and encourage informed debate based on facts not emotions.

"We know that many schools do not have teachers with experience or confidence in teaching this area, so programs like the one Carolyn is delivering at Karoonda are beneficial for the students and highly valued by the community.

"There are also incredible career opportunities within agriculture and

having ag as a subject at school can be the key to exposing students to the possibilities and sparking the interest that leads them into rewarding and interesting careers."

Karoonda Area School has long had an agriculture program, starting as far back as in the 1970s under the stewardship of Sandy Loffler.

It is a compulsory part of the middle school curriculum, relating to other STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects, along with being highly relevant to Karoonda's farming community.

"Students learn about a diverse range of agriculture, with a focus on local industries," Carolyn said.

"Topics include farm safety, rearing poultry, agricultural zones, rearing calves, sheep and cattle, broad acre cropping, vegetable gardens, farm management, ag tech, biosecurity and more.

"Students find it relatable but it also helps context them with job opportunities in our community as well as expanding their experiences to jobs they may have not heard of.

"Some students thrive due to the



The practical nature of agriculture in schools can be very important in providing balance for students in their school day.

increase of engagement in their learning, as it is a way for them to apply knowledge in a practical way."

Karoonda students learn the entire paddock to plate experience, including cooking the end products, and exhibiting at the Royal Adelaide Show – where the school has had considerable success, for example bringing home overall champion school wether fleece and best presented show team.

"We have a small orchard and vegetable garden where we harvest apricots, peaches, plums and zucchinis to produce jams, pickles, and sauce," Carolyn said.

"It is driven by wanting the students to see the paddock to plate complete process, where students participate in producing raw commodities and then value add to produce a saleable product to our community.

"Students always enjoy practically learning new skills and applying the theoretical concepts that they learn.

"Preparing animals for the Adelaide Show is always a highlight, and in recent years we have added our

school's Show Day where students showcase what they have been learning in agriculture to peers, school community and parents."

Sue said learning agriculture also teaches key skills such as teamwork, taking responsibility and problem solving.

"The practical nature of agriculture in schools can be very important in providing balance for students in their school day," she said.

"Having the opportunity to be outdoors and working with their hands is very beneficial on many levels like keeping an active body and mind, (while) engaging with living things is always therapeutic.

"I have certainly seen that students really appreciate how ag can provide perspective and purpose in ways that are not so easily achieved in other subjects."

She said with food production having to double within our lifetime to feed the world, ag studies were becoming increasingly important.



Karoonda students and goats at the Royal Adelaide Show in 2021.



Karoonda's champion school fleece at the Adelaide Show in 2022.

"Learning about agriculture at school is absolutely vital to attract the best and brightest minds in agriculture and help solve this global problem in ways that take care of the people, the environment and the future," Sue said.

"I would like all South Australian schools to have strong ag programs that reflect the innovative and tech-rich nature of commercial food and fibre production.

"This would mean a serious



The school's award-winning jam at the Adelaide Show last year.

investment in training more ag teachers and also infrastructure for school farms to ensure programs are vibrant, engaging and meeting industry expectations.

"If you work in primary production or anywhere across the food and fibre production chain, contact your local school and see how you can help to make sure every South Australian student is learning about farming, how it is evolving and where it can take them."



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Potato shortage clear as spud

WORDS BEN LENNON

REPORTS of a widespread potato shortage had chip-lovers in a panic last year, but the status of potato supply in South Australia may not be as clear cut as media reports suggest.

While some growers have felt the pinch, locally run Mitolo Family Farms has experienced an upturn in demand since the beginning of the new year.

Head of sales and marketing at Mitolo, John Tselekidis, believes that the reports have created a "misconception" about the industry.

"There have been differing reports in regards to what's causing the shortages," Mr Tselekidis said.

"There are two distinctly different types of growers.

"One set of growers grow for the fresh market, which Mitolo is a big part of.

"That's anything from your supermarkets, your green grocers and your wholesalers that go across Australia to supply food service outlets as well as the

veggie boxes like HelloFresh.

"Then you've got the processed growers which is a large, independently based network of growers in Victoria and Tasmania, and they either grow contractually for the likes of PepsiCo, snack brands, McCains and those guys."

Large-scale weather events in Tasmania and Victoria, specifically in Ballarat – one of the richest areas for potato growing – have brought about difficult conditions for the processed growers.

This led to reports of a shortage, with growers unable to meet the demand placed on them by the mass production companies they serve.

"They just couldn't grow plants, and you need ideal conditions for land prep and planting," Mr Tselekidis said.

"If you miss your window then there's no point because you don't get the yield and you're always chasing the crop. The margins in that processing harvesting environment are exceptionally tight."

Mitolo, one of the leaders in the fresh market, has thrived where its processed-growing counterparts have failed.

The economic outlook in Australia has meant a greater demand for fresh potatoes in recent times, something Mr Tselekidis expects to continue into the winter months.

"With borders open we saw a massive amount of people leaving the country in the middle of last year and volumes were down from a production perspective," he said.

"But, they've been gradually building back up over the past four months or so.

"They're predicting interest rates to go up another one or two points which increases financial pressure so people's expendable incomes will diminish.

"They'll start to tighten the reins on trips away and eating out frequently.

"Come June, July and August when 2.5 million people come off fixed-rate home loans and their payments effectively double or triple, there's going to be a big strain on the amount of disposable income people have, so I only foresee the demand going up for the fresh market."

With a number of farms across the Riverland and Mallee regions and a main processing plant in Virginia, Mitolo is able to grow for 11 months of the year.

To keep up with increasing demand, the family-owned farm has had to employ new-age technological tactics, along with its tried and trusted traditional techniques.

"You're often just looking for the little one per-centers to constantly improve the way you do your growing and your harvesting to maximise your yield," Mr Tselekidis said.

"That's anything from fertiliser and chemical programs to watering programs.

"You've got different ag-tech around precision planters and GPS technology systems to improve all of those practices that are traditional techniques but get a better result from a yield perspective.

"We're still harvesting the way we always have in the sense that there's a trailer that follows the potato harvester, but the number of rows that we harvest at a time is increasing."



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Epicurean Food Group's Kenneth King and Leanne McGrath.

Mushrooms grow in former lion's den

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY IMOGEN EVANS

THE lion's roar was heard for the last time in October of 2017 when the iconic Elizabeth Holden plant shut its doors.

The Holden plant was operated on the business precinct site, now known as Lionsgate, since 1960 and was part of the development of a new satellite city to Adelaide.

Now, the iconic space is set to become the exotic mushrooms capital of Australia with Epicurean Food Group

(EFG) setting up a \$110 million growing and processing facility.

The former lion's den is able to grow and process more than 20,000 tonnes of exotic mushrooms each year, and has bought a massive boom to Elizabeth's employment opportunities.

Epicurean Food Group has successfully opened Australia's only existing vertically integrated plant, with the site providing supermarkets with a constant supply of locally grown

mushrooms to areas that rely heavily on once internationally imported stock.

The plant is specially designed to grow exotic kinds of mushrooms, such as the oyster, shitake, enoki, king oyster and the appropriately named lion's mane.

Small-scale production of exotic mushrooms on site is already underway, with the project now home to six growing rooms.

During a visit to the site, EFG's chief executive officer Kenneth King told SA Farmer he has been in the business since he was only 5 years old.

"I've been in this business for a long time, and there's a whole lot that I've learnt," he said.

"If there's one thing I want this site to tell the community, it's that we aim to be innovative, and become a circular business."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



- TOPCON - JADAN - SPREAD-A-BALE - RENN - QUICKE - GRIZZLY - SHEARER - AGROWPLOW - MACDON - SIMPLICITY
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From the specially built growing rooms, each with columns up to 13 meters high, to the substrate and materials used, Ken said the business uses techniques that others do not.

Waste product is taken from farms across the state to be turned into high-value substrate before returning back into the "circular business" to create green energy.

The site's mushrooms are not only exported to local restaurants and suppliers, but are also used in EFG's kitchen creating quality gluten and dairy-free food like the 'shroom burger'.

EFG has quickly become a go-to staple for mushroom lovers across the state, with the group delivering and distributing gluten and dairy-free food since 2000.

Ken said despite the site's historic connection to the city, locals had been great spore-ts.

"We've been asked by many in the community to respect the former Holden site," he said.

"Obviously people have a love for the space, and are also interested to see what it gets used for."

Once fully operational, the site expects to employ 305 workers, including former Holden staff.

"All of the employees we have are locals," Mr King said.

"The production offers a whole range of jobs, and everyone in this process is important."

"There's truly a wonderful workforce here in Elizabeth."

EFG's chief scientific officer, and Ken's partner, Leanne McGrath echoed the CEO's comments, and said the locals have taken nicely to the pair.

"The community really love it from what I've seen," she said.

"They're happy to see people using the site, and mushrooms are a big thing at the moment too."

Leanne also said the business was grown from the combined talents of both herself and her husband's long history with working in food production and science.

"Ken comes from a farming and mushroom background and I come from a science background, so we work really well together," she said.

"We went around asking supermarkets and farmer's markets what they need, and we got exotic mushrooms as the response."

"With both of our backgrounds, it just made sense for us to merge those skills and create this business."

Minister for Trade and Investment Nick Champion has also said he's impressed by South Australia's innovation.

"Repurposing one of the state's most revered manufacturing sites is proof that the sector remains strong and adaptable," he said.

"Nothing like this facility exists interstate."



The production offers a whole range of jobs, and everyone in this process is important.



Burge wines showcase the best of the Barossa on the world stage

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY KAYLA DEN HOLLANDER

A photograph of three people standing in a vineyard. On the left is an older woman with short red hair, wearing a black top and a gold necklace. In the middle is a man with short brown hair, wearing a green jacket. On the right is an older man with white hair, wearing a blue shirt. They are all smiling and looking at the camera. The background shows rows of grapevines with green leaves and some yellowing leaves.

STORY ON PAGE 14

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The Sentek logo, which consists of a stylized 'S' made of two overlapping shapes, one blue and one green, followed by the word "Sentek" in a sans-serif font.A line graph showing the relationship between granular fertiliser applied, leaching fertilisers beyond the active root zone, and irrigation beyond field capacity over time. The x-axis represents time from 10/01/2020 to 10/01/2021. The y-axis represents the amount of fertiliser or irrigation. Three lines are plotted: a blue line for "Granular Fertiliser Applied", a red line for "Leaching Fertilisers Beyond Active Root Zone", and a green line for "Irrigation Beyond Field Capacity". The graph shows that as irrigation increases, the amount of leaching fertilisers also increases, and this is related to the amount of granular fertiliser applied.

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A photograph of a large, yellow, self-loading feeder wagon in a field. The wagon is parked next to a large, white, cylindrical silo. In the background, there are more silos and a tractor.A QR code located in the bottom right corner of the advertisement.

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THE Burge name is a Barossa legacy, through and through.

Take a drive through the region's winding roads, and you'll find their vineyards dotted all across the Valley's sprawling landscape.

But their passion transcends state borders and international waters, as they showcase their wines on the world stage.

The need to expand overseas comes after winemakers suffer the fallout of strict tariffs imposed by China on wine exports, forcing them to hurriedly saturate other international markets.

One of those markets is North America, prompting the State Government to launch its Explore Canada program.

Showcasing the best of South Australian wine, local producers will learn how to hit the ground running in the Canadian export market, helping them connect with Canadian buyers and retailers to secure international orders.

The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reveals about 73 per cent of Australia's wine exports to Canada are from SA – and that number is set to grow.

Trent Burge, of Barossa Boy and Corryton Burge wines, is set to represent some of the best Barossa wines as part of the initiative, which is spearheaded by the Department of Trade and Investment and Wine Australia.

They will be joined by a host of other Barossa labels, including Hart of the Barossa, Lou Miranda Estate, Gibson Wines and Teusner Wines.

The Barossa Valley, renowned for a world-class shiraz, is home to some of the oldest continuously producing vines in the world.

While Corryton Burge and Barossa Boy Wines have already made the foray onto Canadian shelves, Trent said it was a tough market to crack, as its provincial governments own and control distribution of international wine imports.

South Australia is heralded as the nation's leading wine producing and export state, with 70 per cent of exported Aussie drops made right here.

While Barossa Boy and Corryton Burge did not venture into the Chinese market, Trent said it serves as a cautionary tale.

"If we can learn anything from the China effect where people are putting these big tariffs on, it's that we can't have all our eggs in one basket," he said.

"We've been indirectly affected by China, because people who were selling their wine to China now have got wine that they need to sell in other markets, so I think everywhere – especially the domestic market – has become a lot more competitive."

But for Trent, it's all about diversifying into different markets.

No stranger to exports, his brands are already sold in multiple international destinations, such as Singapore and South Korea, with an Ireland debut on the horizon.

Speaking to The Bunyip newspaper and SA Farmer, he said the distinct flavour of a Barossa drop is sure

to stand out among the rest.

"The biggest thing that I see is the fruit... Australian wine and especially Barossa wine has an amazing knack for getting a lot of fruit character in our wines, and they're quite powerful and enjoyable," he said.

"Whereas if you go to a lot of other places around the world, they're not quite as fruit driven as what Australia and the Barossa can bring to the table."

"You can see the new world versus the old world."

"When you look at the more traditional markets like France, they are more powerful wines but they don't look quite as bright, and I think Australia can really bring that to the table."

Trent said that the worldwide representation of Barossa wine speaks volumes about the region as a tourist destination.

"We're such a great area with the diversity between food, wine and accommodation," he said.

"We have a great area for people to visit and enjoy what we have."

Barossa Australia CEO James March said the region fosters winemakers to remain competitive on the world stage.

"Barossa Australia has put in place several strategies to support our export growth," he said.



Barossa Australia has put in place several strategies to support our export growth.



Helen, Trent and Grant Burge are set to bring the best of the Barossa to the Great White North, as part of a state government and Wine Australia-led initiative to link more wine producers to international markets.



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Dr Jody Hobson-Peters looks at cells used for the vaccine manufacture in culture in a container held by Dr Jessica Harrison.

Vaccine created to protect pigs from JEV

SCIENTISTS at an Australian university have developed a novel vaccine for Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) in pigs to help stop the spread of the disease.

The mosquito-borne disease can severely affect humans, but cannot be passed from pigs to people, and commercially produced pork products remain safe to consume.

The University of Queensland's Dr Jody Hobson-Peters, from the School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences, said the new vaccine will help keep the virus at bay.

"Japanese encephalitis virus can cause production problems on pig farms, but more alarmingly it can lead to serious neurological symptoms in humans that are sometimes permanent or fatal," she said.

"When pigs are bitten by virus-carrying mosquitoes the virus is amplified, increasing the risk to people who may be bitten by a mosquito.

"By vaccinating pigs and stopping them from contracting the virus we'll help stop this pathway to humans – hopefully saving lives as well as keeping pigs healthy."

University of Queensland-developed chimera virus technology was used to make a 'hybrid' version of the virus, using a harmless-to-humans, mosquito-only Australian virus – the Binjari virus.

"The resulting chimeric, or hybrid, virus looks identical to JEV but can only grow in mosquito cells and also happens to be dead in this vaccine, so is very safe to use," Dr Hobson-Peters said.

"When injected into pigs or other species, the hybrid virus is recognised as JEV by the immune system which generates antibodies and provides immunity.

The project – supported by Australian Pork Limited – conducted efficacy trials on pigs at the Elizabeth MacArthur Agriculture Institute, and University of Queensland's Professor Roy Hall said the vaccine performed "extremely well".

"More than 90 per cent of the young pigs in the trial were protected from JEV infection, and we expect the same in other species like humans and horses," Professor Hall said.

"The researchers are now working with veterinary company Treidlia Biovet on manufacturing the vaccine so it can undergo safety trials on a larger scale.

"Pending successful outcomes, we hope to roll the vaccine out commercially later in 2023 – a fantastic outcome."

Professor Hall said the development of an effective vaccine in Australia is now critical, with JEV likely to be here to stay.

"This dangerous virus will remain a major health threat to humans, and a big problem to the pig and horse industries," he said.

"Australia's current weather patterns are conducive to its further spread here, so it's crucial that we have a safe and effective Australian-made vaccine available.

"We're proud that Australian science can be at the forefront of tackling this virus."



Growing SA is back this August

SOUTH Australia's premier grain and livestock conference will return at the end of August, with a new venue and engaging topics for producers.

Growing SA will be held over one jam-packed day on August 30, at the Adelaide Convention Centre, making it more easily accessible for the anticipated 300 attendees.

The new format will be heavily focused on important current issues, research and policy information for grain and livestock producers.

Grain Producers SA chief executive officer Brad Perry said the full day conference will offer an array of speakers, attracting local and interstate guests.

"Growing SA is a conference for grain and livestock producers created by grain and livestock producers and that's what makes it so unique," he said.

"Off the back of a record grain season and with livestock production positive, we are excited to be bringing Growing SA to the Adelaide Convention Centre where producers and key industry stakeholders will traverse for a full-on day of education, innovation, and creativity.

"Some of the key issues that will be canvassed during the conference will include input costs, sustainability, biosecurity, connectivity, labour and market access."

Livestock SA chief executive officer Travis Tobin said the Growing SA event was about bringing broadacre agriculture together, exchanging ideas, challenging current thinking and continuing to advance the state's livestock and grain industries.

"Growing SA is an opportunity for producers, industry service providers and stakeholders, politicians and policymakers from across South Australia to engage in a two-way dialogue regarding policy issues and network at a once-a-year event," Mr Tobin said.

"Biosecurity has been a key issue for the South Australian livestock sector, and we will have a focus on biosecurity in break-out sessions at Growing SA."

Alvan Blanch has joined as Growing SA's event partner, and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) returns as a platinum sponsor.

Visit the website (growing.sa.com.au) for more information or to purchase tickets.



Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Clare Scriven, at the 2022 Growing SA conference.



South Australian carbon farming growing strong

MORE than \$600,000 will be awarded across multiple projects helping to build the carbon farming market in South Australia.

Seven projects demonstrating commercial carbon farming activities, as well as measurable environmental, social and economic co-benefits for SA, will receive between \$43,000 and \$100,000 in funding as part of the Growing Carbon Farming pilot.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Clare Scriven, said it was an exciting initiative and "is supporting South Australian primary producers to realise opportunities within the developing carbon farming sector".

"Carbon farming can assist in mitigating or managing the risks that climate change poses to the resilience of South Australia's primary industries by restoring landscapes, improving agricultural productivity, and generating new sources of income, along with delivering a range of social and economic benefits for regional communities," she said.

"This is the first program of its type in South Australia and another important step in developing South Australia's carbon farming sector and reducing greenhouse gas emissions attributable to agriculture."

Located around the state, the projects span horticulture, livestock, cropping and dairy, and range from soil carbon sequestration and revegetation, to animal effluent management project activities.

Through the pilot, carbon farming methods with application to SA production systems will be demonstrated, helping to increase awareness and adoption of carbon farming among primary producers across the state using methods suitable to South Australian conditions.

The program is intended to assist primary producers to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by carbon and environmental markets and market access in a low-carbon economy.

The successful projects are:

- ❑ **Mallee Sustainable Farming (\$96,500)** – Development and assessment of large-scale cropping systems-based soil carbon sequestration through soil amelioration practices for the Murray Mallee.
- ❑ **Duxton Apples (\$43,990)** – Soil carbon sequestration in alley-crop production systems through cover cropping practices.
- ❑ **Thomas Elder Institute (\$99,400)** – Capturing carbon neutral opportunities for livestock production systems in the Upper South East of South Australia.
- ❑ **Upper North Farming Systems (\$99,726)** – Applying whole-of-farm carbon project methods for climate resilience and diverse co-benefits in low rainfall farming systems of the Upper North.
- ❑ **Cloud Agronomics (\$85,000)** – Applying clay amendments to sandy soils for improved soil quality and diversified revenue streams, while establishing an independent Cal/Val site for innovative soil carbon quantification technologies, on a property in the Upper South East.
- ❑ **Thomas Foods International (\$100,000)** – Improving carbon sequestration on Mount Schank grazing land for extension in the Thomas Foods supply chain.
- ❑ **South Australian Dairy farmer's Association (\$100,000)** – A biogas electricity generation facility combining a Covered Anaerobic Lagoon (CAL) to collect and generate electricity by burning accumulated/collected methane on-farm.

The funding will help cover establishment costs for carbon farming, including technical advice and carbon measurements, for the 12-month-long projects.

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Inaugural grain sustainability baseline report released

MORE than 85 per cent of South Australian grain producers are taking action on environmental sustainability, according to an inaugural report.

In 2022, South Australian growers were surveyed specifically on environmental sustainability credentials

and attitudes at farmgate level for the first time.

The responses were collated for Grain Producers SA's (GPSA) South Australian Grain Industry Environmental Sustainability Baseline Report.

GPSA chief executive officer, Brad

Perry, said the baselining survey was completed by 120 grain producers across the state.

"This initial survey is an important step in looking at how South Australian grain producers are approaching environmental sustainability on-farm," Mr Perry said.

"Consumers, financiers, and markets through the global supply chain are increasingly demanding more sustainable grain and as the peak representative body for South Australian grain producers, we want to be able to better understand where we can provide education and support for producers to take advantage of these demands.

As far as practical applications on-farm are concerned, the survey found that 44 per cent of respondents believe having access to genetically modified (GM) crops is important to achieving sustainability objectives, and 55 per cent consider growing legumes to be part of their sustainability practices.



When it comes to soil and crop nutrition, 15 per cent of respondents said they use split nitrogen applications and 12 per cent use soil analysis to optimise nutrient application.

The full report can be read online by visiting: grainproducerssa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Grain-Producers-SA-Sustainability-Baseline-Report.pdf

Commodity prices, emergence of drought among farmer concerns

RURAL sentiment among Australian farmers was recorded at its lowest level in more than four years at the start of 2023.

The latest quarterly Rabobank Rural Confidence Survey, released in March, found sentiment in the rural sector fell as farmers continue to navigate a range of economic and financial uncertainties.

Results of the survey showed the number of farmers expecting the agricultural economy to improve over the coming 12 months dipped to 11 per cent in the first quarter of 2023, compared to 15 per cent in December 2022.

Commodity prices were the main factor driving the negative outlook, with 68 per cent of respondents expecting conditions to worsen, which was a significant increase on 21 per cent previously. Rising interest rates were also an increasing concern (20 per cent, up from 11 per cent previously).

While some relief was felt around the high cost of farm inputs – such as fuel, fertiliser and energy – it remains a concern for 35 per cent of farmers (down from 49 per cent last quarter) expecting conditions to worsen over the next year.

An increased confidence in overseas markets/economies contributing to good economic conditions was nominated by 26 per cent – up from 18 per cent – as cause for their positive outlook.

Rabobank Australia CEO Peter Knoblanche said the latest survey reflects the combination of commodity prices, global economic challenges and high production costs facing farm businesses.

"Despite having their resilience tested throughout 2022, most Australian farmers ended last year on a high, buoyed by seasonal conditions and high commodity prices which saw our industry break farm production value records for the third year in a



Rabobank Australia CEO Peter Knoblanche.



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"This survey captures their realistic expectations that commodity prices will likely not return to the highs this year..."



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Agricultural research and development investment on the rise

AN investment increase in Australian agriculture's research and development over the past ten years has contributed to productivity growth, competitiveness, and sustainability for Australian farmers.

ABARES (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences) executive director Dr Jared Greenville said the rise in funding was a welcome sign for the agricultural sector, with private sector funding growing at a faster rate than public.

"Total agricultural research and development funding in 2020-21 was \$2.20 billion, with an average annual growth rate of 4.35 per cent from 2011-12 to 2020-21," he said.

"Private sector funding has grown at an average annual rate of 5.63 per cent from 2005-06 to 2021-22, exceeding the 2.02 per cent annual growth rate of public sector investment.

"The private sector has increased its share of total agricultural research and development funding from 29 per cent in 2005-06 to 42 per cent in 2020-21.

"While this is welcome news, one note of caution is that a lot of private sector investment relies on underpinning publicly funded research and development."

US market opened for South Australian wine producers

WINERIES across South Australia will receive expert support to enter and expand into the growing market in the United States.

Wine Australia's US Market Entry program matches local producers with US buyers and retailers, expanding local producers' industry knowledge and connections to secure orders and break into the international market.

The State Government will co-fund a record 30 places, more than any other state, in this year's program which runs for 12 months from July.

"South Australia has a strong reputation for producing premium wine, and we want the world to know," said Nick Champion, Minister for Trade and Investment.

"The US is already a crucial market for our wine makers, so we want to ensure even more South Australian producers are tapping into these export opportunities.

"This is another example of how the government is promoting and supporting local industry to succeed on the global stage."

In the last US Market Entry program, local producers received \$1.8m worth of opening orders sales.

According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data, the US is the second-largest destination market South Australian wine exports.

Wine Australia regional manager Americas Aaron Ridgway said more Australian wineries are exporting to the US "than there have been in over 10 years, including at higher price points".

"We've seen fantastic growth with premium wines as Barossa and McLaren Vale shiraz and across a diverse range of regions and varieties," he said.

"South Australian wine regions of Adelaide Hills, Clare Valley and Langhorne Creek are all experiencing significant growth."

In the 12 months to December 2022, the state's wine exports have risen by 43 per cent to \$184.9m.

Clare-based Knappstein Wines was "fortunate enough to be successful" in the previous US Market Entry program, according to global sales director Andrew Thiele.

"The 12-month program was very well structured," he said.

"It was great to have the opportunity to work with the Market Entry team, who are very experienced professionals with invaluable market insights and great industry knowledge and connections.

"We found the program very helpful in navigating through the complexities of the US market and formulating correct long-term strategies for our brand.

"At the end of the program, we have not only shipped some volume of wines that exceeded our initial expectation, but also have commenced a hopefully long-term supply relationship with a partner in the US market."



Grassroots support Taking Stock of farmers' mental health

ENSURING mental health and wellbeing in rural communities stays a top priority is the aim of a grassroots prevention tool launched earlier this year.

Taking Stock, a free online multimedia site, has been designed by and for Australian farmers to help them tackle the everyday struggles of living on the land.

The outcome of a three-year nationally funded University of South Australia research project – Tailoring Suicide Prevention Strategies to Men in Farming – Taking Stock helps farmers break down barriers for seeking help and provides information about community-based support services.

The study was undertaken across the Yorke and Eye Peninsulas in South Australia, plus Tatyoon, Victoria and Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

The website hosts resources tried by other rural groups that communities can download and use or adapt.

Farmers will also be able to recognise that the distress, mental ill health and/or suicide ideation they may have experienced is also experienced by other farmers, helping them understand they are not alone.

In Australia, farmer suicide rates are nearly 59 per cent higher than non-farmers, and was up to 94 per cent higher in 2018.

Project lead and director of the National Enterprise for Rural Community Wellbeing, UniSA's Professor Lia Bryant, said the needs of rural communities were at the heart of the Taking Stock initiative.

"Rural people have tremendous knowledge about the challenges and opportunities that they face in rural areas, so working with farmers and support groups was absolutely essential to create strategies that have meaning and are more likely to be used," she said.

"In this project, we interviewed more than 50 farmers and three local suicide prevention groups – SOS Yorke, Mellow in the Yellow, and Riverina Bluebell – to better understand the complexities of farmer distress and the local supports those farmers felt they needed.

"We found that on top of key stress factors that affect farmers in general – things like weather extremes, physical isolation, intergenerational issues, and financial pressures, to name a few – there were additional shared risk factors that farmers in the same region (or farming the same commodity) experienced.

"If we want suicide prevention strategies and early prevention to hit home then it was critical that we worked together to co-design a resource that directly addressed the key needs raised by farmers.

"Wellbeing is more than an individual experience. It is created by strong community connections and having local support. Rural communities understand reciprocity: the giving and receiving of support in good times and in difficult times.

"Taking Stock shares the stories and lived experiences of farmers and explains their journeys from different perspectives. And, because it's created by farmers and rural communities, for farmers and rural communities, the content is relevant and specific to their needs."

Multiple resources including films, interviews and podcasts of farmer experiences, how to set up a local suicide prevention group, and how to connect and engage with communities for early approaches to suicide prevention are all available on the Taking Stock website (<https://takingstock.community>).

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Riverland West citrus leader's lifetime of dedication

WORDS CHRISTINE WEBSTER

CITRUS Australia has recognised retired iconic Waikerie citrus grower Mike Arnold's leadership, vision, and commitment to the industry by inducting him into its Hall of Fame.

The 85-year-old started in horticulture in 1954 during a period when growers had a mixture of fruit, including stone fruit and winegrapes, on their properties.

Mike was presented with the prestigious award at the Citrus Australia Market Outlook Forum Conference dinner at Mildura in March this year.

Due to the fluctuations in demand for winegrapes, Mike and his family decided growing citrus was a more viable option.

"As things progressed, we realised we had to specialise in something," he said.

He has seen many developments in horticulture over the years.

"I started just at the end of the horse era and tractors were just starting to come in," Mike said.

"They were nothing near what a modern tractor is nowadays, most of them you had to crank start."

Mike said irrigation and citrus picking had also become far more efficient since he began in horticulture.

"A lot of time was spent using furrow irrigation," he said.

"We had nearly 40 acres, which was quite large at the time, and we irrigated day and night.

"Nowadays you can just press a button, pop it on your phone and you can pump and irrigate."

Instead of picking citrus and placing them into boxes, fruit are now placed in bins, which are picked up by the packing sheds.

Mike played a pivotal role as the chairman of the Auscitrus organisation until he retired in 2021.

The group was formed in 2001, when the Australian Citrus Propagation Association (ACPA) and Australian Citrus Improvement Association amalgamated.

Prior to 2001, Mike was Australian Citrus Improvement Association chairman for several years, plus he was a founding member of the South Australian Citrus Improvement Society and chaired that through to his retirement in 2021.

Citrus Australia said Mike was always adamant that industry bodies such as Auscitrus should be governed by growers and nurserymen with "skin in the game".

"He did his best to ensure equal representation between growers and nurserymen in the governance of Auscitrus," the national citrus industry body said.

"He was determined to ensure the people making decisions on behalf of the industry were relevant to the industry, with current practical experience."

Mike encouraged the importation of dozens of public citrus varieties, many of which are now key varieties in Australia.

In particular, he has a special interest in niche varieties and their marketing.

This included introducing blood orange citrus originating from Italy into Australia, and the development of the Arnold Blood variety, bearing the family name.

Mike said people from Mediterranean backgrounds were already familiar with blood oranges and the fruit had become popular with Australian consumers.

"Blood oranges have been successful and there are a lot planted now," he said.

"There is still a demand for them and demand for blood orange juice."

Mike always put a high value on travelling to other citrus-producing countries to see what they were growing and how it was best grown.

Through the years he has co-ordinated and led group tours to investigate citrus around the world, opening business opportunities for the industry.

South Africa, the United States and Italy are among the countries Mike and his citrus industry colleagues have visited to learn from their growers.

He has also hosted many international grower trips and facilitated many technical visits to Australia in a bid to share knowledge, strengthen relationships and advance the citrus industry.

Mike was instrumental in leading the growth and development of the Auscitrus seed and budwood program based at Dareton in far south west NSW.

It also features a greenhouse complex constructed to exclude any future incursion of the Asian Citrus psyllid or other exotic pest/diseases.

Citrus Australia said Mike "oversaw the movement from a small operation largely run by NSW Department of Primary Industries employees to the financially strong and business focused program that it now".

Under Mike's leadership and vision, Citrus Australia said the country now had a world-class facility that was globally recognised for its excellence.

Mike also served on the board of Waikerie Co-operative Producers, a citrus packing company, for almost 20 years.

The Co-op is now privately-owned by the Knispel family under the banner of Nippy's Waikerie Producers.

Mike is also a former Chairman and life member of the Ag Bureau of Waikerie.

He retired from the CFS after 60 years of service and is a recipient of the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal.

Top: Mike pruning a citrus tree for budwood in the 1990s. PHOTO: supplied

Right: Mike and his wife Meredith on their citrus property at Waikerie. PHOTO: Paul McCormick



Auscitrus manager Tim Herrmann (left) and Mike Arnold who was installed into Citrus Australia's Hall of Fame at a conference in Mildura earlier this year. PHOTO: supplied





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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ELLOUISE CRAWFORD

FULL STORY ON PAGE 28



Rainbow Fresh's Joe Giangregorio (right) among the coloured lettuce with daughters Maria Colangelo (left) and Juliet Tripodi.



THE Giangregorio family know a thing or two about patience, perseverance and commitment.

Together Joe and Antonietta, along with daughters Juliet and Maria, are Rainbow Fresh – a salad growing business out on the Adelaide Plains.

Their 300 acre Lewiston farm is where 500 tonnes worth of lettuce and other loose-leaf blends are grown each year, washed and bagged on site ready for distribution within 24 hours of harvest.

The open paddock farm has been in operation for 55 years, ever since Joe turned his passion for growing produce into a business.

Joe migrated to South Australia from Italy in 1960 and by 1968 was growing carrots, potatoes, lettuce and onions in Lewiston as G & A Giangregorio.

In the mid-1980s the family began trialling different lettuces at a time when both salad and good meal presentation were growing in popularity.

“The science behind horticulture also started changing, there was different seeds for different seasons, and with those sort of factors, we started specialising,” Juliet said.

“We went from seasonal growing to coloured lettuces and doing them hydroponically, then moving in to salad mixes and then specialised in that.”

The business spearheaded the introduction of washed leafy salads into the South Australian market, after Antonietta had discovered their popularity during a visit to Italy.

“We tried all different things and it didn't happen overnight,” Joe said.

“We tried some fancy lettuce we called a delicacy lettuce, and we started to do a mix. We would pick it by hand and wash in a trough and slowly we improved.”

Then during the '90s, Joe became known as 'The Rainbow Man' for his colourful lettuces and the 'Rainbow

Fresh' branding was born.

Sisters Maria and Juliet joined the business in an official capacity some 20 years ago, Maria taking charge of processing and Juliet sales and distribution.

Juliet said the taste of their product and long shelf life have contributed to Rainbow Fresh's ongoing success.

“That's because of the region and because of the growing and the skillset that is there,” she said.

“We plant weekly and we will harvest daily, and it's all machine harvested but we have a team who have a certain skillset – you have to be able to identify weeds and understand what is in your paddocks.”

“Our packaging shed is in the middle of the property and they will bring it in within the hour of harvesting, where it gets washed and processed.

“Then that evening it will be on a truck to come to the produce markets, which I will sell from 1am to 6am.

“It will then go to shops and is on the shelf by 8am when the shops open, hence why we talk about a 24-hour turnaround.”

Juliet said she believes a unique passion is needed to thrive in the produce industry, which can be unpredictable and filled with highs and lows.

“That's what we've got and that's what you get when you hand down a business through generations; it's this passion and it's a pride,” she said.

“My sister and I have both probably at some point or another gone off and done our own thing, but now we come in together knowing that we want to do this together at a different stage of our lives.”

Rainbow Fresh is sold at Foodland, Drakes, IGAs and at some independent green grocers.

They also supply salads direct to the hospitality industry to be used in restaurants and cafes.



During the '90s, Joe became known as 'The Rainbow Man' for his colourful lettuces...



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INDUSTRY EXPERT UPDATE

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

Tim Jackson

Almond Board of Australia chief executive officer

NOTE: This interview was conducted at a time when the 2023 almond harvest was still ongoing in the Riverland region.

Have recent wet conditions resulted in a later harvest?

Ongoing rain events have slowed harvest across all regions of the industry.

The reality is you cannot shake until the almonds are ready, and you don't want to be shaking when they are too green or too wet.

We started harvesting in perfect conditions and moisture levels of kernels were ideal for both inshell and kernel markets.

Unfortunately, after getting off to a flying start the weather has turned and an early season break in the weather has slowed harvest, hulling and shelling. Growers and processors are now dealing with excessive moisture levels in product stockpiles and on the tree.

We are receiving reports some growers will still be harvesting into May and June unless we get a good break in the rains.

Have the wet conditions impacted almond quality at all?

The quality of almonds early in the season were pleasing processors, but in more recent times the moisture levels are slowing everything down and drying product presents its own set of challenges quality-wise.

Will this result in lower volumes being harvested?

Even before the rains arrived,

it was clear that predicted yields for the 2023 crop were going to be overestimated.

A poor pollination followed by very mild growing conditions and issues with water quality due to the floods have all played a part in reducing crop potential.

The Almond Board of Australia is still working with key stakeholders to revise the January pre-season crop estimate of 156,200 tonnes. The information received across all growing regions suggests the number will be well below that. We hope to release a new estimate at the end of April once enough pollinators have been harvested.

What impacts did the recent flood have for almond growers?

There's been challenges with infrastructure where you're trying to suck poor-quality water through filters.

This alone has made it really difficult to deliver sufficient water and in-line fertilisation at the appropriate rates.

How are current global market conditions?

Global pricing remains low although it has stabilised (recently). All eyes are on the Australian dollar exchange rate with the US dollar. That can have a significant impact on grower returns.

Pricing over the past 18 months has been terrible and presented additional challenges to growers already facing high production costs and now, lower yields.

It is looming as another very tough year for almond growers.



John Lush

Mallala canola farmer, Adelaide Plains councillor

Have you begun sowing crops this year?

We started sowing canola (on April 13). One of the big parts of seeding is getting ready for it, and then once you get everything organised like chemicals, fertiliser, machinery and maintenance, the seeding of the crops is the easy bit.

If you've done all your preparations and have everything organised, then you can progress without having any hiccups and get the crop in on time.

There's a saying from an American agronomist that 90 per cent of the yield is set by seeding. In other words, if you've got your preparation right, if you've done your soil testing and the fertiliser is there, your seed cleaned, inoculated and you're sowing at the right depth, that preparation leads to 90 per cent of your success down the line.

Did recent wet conditions allow you to begin sowing earlier than 2022?

We were a bit later last year. We're just putting in some early canola, then we'll stop for a while before we sow wheat.

We've got enough moisture on top for a canola crop to come up with the rain forecast, so we can take a gamble on a couple of paddocks.

Are input costs still increasing?

The pricing structures for grain have been good, but on the other hand we've got record input costs as well.

We're getting back to more sustainable levels with some of our prices (though), and the price of urea (fertiliser) has come off.

The cure for high prices is high prices. When things are extremely costly, you tend to pull back as much as you can and buy as little as you need, and that lessens demand and the price.

What has been key to the record

value for SA grain crops recently?

It's supply and demand, and a bit of uncertainty around the world. There's the stuff going on between Russia and Ukraine, and maybe some crops weren't as large as expected in some countries.

It doesn't take much to change the balance of supply and demand. As soon as the market senses there might be a shortfall in a country, someone else has to make up for it.

Will you utilise more genetically modified (GM) varieties this year?

We're not rushing headlong into GM. The current conventional varieties of canola we've got are performing really well. We had up to four tonnes per hectare last year, which is pretty amazing in this part of the world.

We're really happy with the varieties we're growing, but if we run into a problem we can't deal with other than by using GM, then we'll use GM.

As time goes by, I think we'll start seeing more important qualities in some of the GM varieties... We'll see things like frost tolerance, higher yields, more nutrition in the grain and more consumer benefits, which will drive prices.

When we talk about the world population increasing, then GM is one of the methods that might help us produce that amount of food.

I'm really looking for frost tolerance, drought tolerance, yield increases and crops that will survive better in our marginal rainfall areas delivered by GM technology.

Is it still difficult to obtain farming equipment?

There's still a fair wait for equipment. You can get it, you've just got to be ordering a long way, like 12 months, ahead.

You can't get things in a hurry, but if your planning is good enough, you can get it over time.



Adrian Hoffmann

Wine Grape Council of SA Region Two chair

NOTE: This interview was conducted while the 2023 vintage was still ongoing in the Barossa region.

Is it looking like vintage will run late this year?

In the Barossa I think we'll be going well into May at this stage. Eden Valley is just picking around the edges of reds and, while I know a few people are starting to finish up in southern and central parts of the Barossa, there's still quite a bit of fruit to be picked in those areas.

People aren't panicking, but everyone's watching the weather pretty closely to see whether they should pick or let it hang.

We're probably around a third of the way through, so we've got a fair bit of fruit to go.

Did wet conditions in spring and summer result in the later vintage?

We're sort of battling now with leaf conditions. We had a very mild frost recently and we're into April now, so with the cooler weather a lot of leaves are going into autumn conditions. The vines are functioning as well as they should.

However, the flavours have developed quite early. Winemakers are waiting for a bit of sugar, and we're getting that through concentration with really good natural acidity.

Some of the parcels of fruit I've seen are exceptional, but then you've also got the blocks that will struggle to ripen a bit.

Have grape prices improved from estimates we saw earlier

in the year?

I think there's going to be a bit of fruit left hanging in the Barossa. I was expecting average to slightly below-average crops, and have gotten slightly above average. Wineries have taken a bit more fruit to counter that and help out growers a bit.

Will vineyard management change with an El Nino year expected in 2023?

A lot of people left a lot of grasses to grow because of the wet spring. We've got good subsoil moisture there this year, so it all depends how the weather holds out. We're looking at a later break to cold conditions, so hopefully we can get through most of vintage before the weather really comes in.

I don't think a lot of management will change, but I think people will take the opportunity to re-work some of those blocks, or remove blocks that aren't paying for themselves, and look at a change in varietal or resting the ground.

Is there any optimism returning surrounding exports to China?

I'm not hanging out too much hope of China opening up sooner, but we're closer to when it will open up again.

Even if they do open up, it won't be the grapes that benefit first. It will be the bulk wine market.

Hopefully once the bulk wine starts moving and the tanks start emptying that creates a bit of optimism among the purchasing as well.

Any onus we can get for selling wine, not just to China but anywhere, is going to be helpful for the grower.

Mark Doecke

Citrus SA chair

Which citrus varieties are currently being harvested, and which will be harvested over the winter?

At the moment only very early mandarin varieties are being harvested. Early navels like M7 and Navelina started around the end of April.

How have cooler temperatures in spring and summer impacted the development of fruit?

The cold spring experienced in 2022 had a big impact on early fruit size as these varieties need to grow early to finish early.

Other varieties have benefited from the cooler summer with a reduction in sunburn and more mild temperatures to help growth rates.

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

The fruit volume is above average and the quality is good as SA growers always strive for the best quality possible.

Will there be an increase in total volumes compared to last year?

Volumes will be up slightly as more young plantings start to produce and this trend will continue in the coming years.

Are citrus growers still confident fruit fly can be eradicated from the region?

The fruit fly fight has become fairly lengthy over two years and some growers are becoming negative, but with the resources PIRSA and industry have put into fight this pest we will win the battle.

Our most effective tool is Sterile Insect Technology flies and, as production of these is about to double, the outlook for controlling fruit fly is very positive.

Have challenges surrounding international shipping eased?

Shipping has become more available and prices to ship internationally have dropped to pre-Covid levels, so that's one win our industry has had for the 2023 season.

What factors are most important for tree health during winter?

During winter, trees slow right down and growth is very minimal. As we head into spring, growers need to be aware of their nutrition program to ensure healthy trees.



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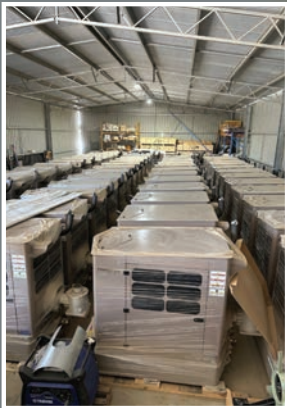
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AUSTRALIAN frost fans



A community united against fruit fly

LOCAL horticultural professionals and backyard growers say the fruit fly eradication battle needs support from the whole Riverland community.

The latest phase of the Department of Primary Industries and Regions' (PIRSA) 'Don't let fruit fly under the radar' awareness campaign highlights locals involved with the region's response effort against the pest.

State Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Clare Scriven said many local growers and gardening enthusiasts were "doing all they can to prevent and eradicate fruit fly".

"From growers like Dino and Anthony who are involved with industry groups dedicated to fruit

fly eradication to Raj, who has participated in (PIRSA's) grower self-baiting program where they have either applied organic bait or deployed lures supplied for free in their crops to kill fruit fly," Ms Scriven said.

"To the residential backyard fruit growers, including garden club member Vicki, who are keeping fruit trees pruned, picking or collecting fruit as soon as it is ripe or falls to the ground, inspecting for blemishes and calling the hotline if they suspect fruit fly.

"Even our teachers and children are playing a part, such as not taking to school home-grown fruit at risk from fruit fly from red outbreak area properties. These simple yet effective steps together with PIRSA's efforts will help the region work towards eradication."

Locals behind the fruit fly awareness campaign:

<p>Raj J&J Dreams, Renmark stonefruit grower</p> <p>I am a commercial peach and nectarine grower in Renmark. We are spending money on chemicals, extra spraying and transport for waste disposal because of fruit fly outbreaks. It's so disappointing not being able to share our fruit with friends and family and that visitors to the region cannot enjoy buying directly from growers. Outbreaks are affecting everyone, and we must all understand what impact fruit fly is having on our beautiful Riverland region. Please understand what you need to do and protect the Riverland from fruit fly. Keep your backyard and blocks clean, remove ripe fruit and pick up fallen fruit.</p>	<p>Dino Cotsaris Cherries, Renmark cherry grower</p> <p>I grow commercial cherries and wine grapes in Renmark. Fruit fly outbreaks have affected our cherry business as we've lost access to sensitive domestic and international markets. Horticulture is the backbone of the Riverland's economy – it employs not just growers but pickers, packhouses, traders, horticulture retailers and local businesses. I would like all Riverlanders to be more aware of how they can help with fruit fly eradication, so as a community we can fight this pest. Getting rid of fruit fly will not only benefit growers, but it will help keep the whole Riverland prosperous.</p>	<p>Anthony Waikerie grower</p> <p>I'm a commercial citrus, winegrape and avocado grower in Waikerie. Fruit fly outbreaks have increased my operational costs and reduced my profits. I also have backyard fruit trees at home, and I can no longer share fruit with friends. I am really concerned that if we don't get rid of fruit fly in the Riverland there is a possibility I may not be able to grow fruit and vegetables in my backyard. This is not just an issue for commercial growers. We all need to support fruit fly eradication... The Riverland will be a different place if we let fruit fly become rampant. Please, pick your fruit as soon as it is ripe and prevent an outbreak in your backyard.</p>	<p>Vicki Renmark Garden Club member and resident</p> <p>We grow lemons, limes, oranges, cumquats and loquats at home. We live in a red outbreak area and cannot share our fruit with family. Our family members use our lemons in the jam they sell, and they can't do that at the moment. Fruit fly can devastate family businesses and cause financial hardship. It affects everyone in the Riverland – growers, pickers, sellers and buyers. I wanted to be involved in the campaign to raise awareness of this devastating pest and to help keep our fruit fly free status. Please don't be complacent with fruit fly – pick ripe fruit, collect fallen fruit and check fruit for signs of fruit fly.</p>	<p>Penny Loxton High School teacher</p> <p>Many of my friends, neighbours and students come from fruit-growing families and they have been significantly affected by fruit fly in the Riverland. The impact and strain on local growers, businesses and our Riverland economy is concerning. As an educator, I feel it's necessary to encourage people to do the right thing in how they mitigate this issue. Fruit fly prevention is essential and such a simple thing for everyone to enact. Complacency is one of our biggest hurdles as a community and the job to protect our region comes down to all of us playing our part.</p>
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Jason Tomlinson in his bee suit with his smoker, next to his hive.

Honey honey, how you thrill me

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ASHLEA MILLER-PICKERSGILL

BEING of the adventurous type results in having a plethora of hobbies, and for Craigmores's Jason Tomlinson that looks like hiking, motorcycle riding and DIY projects galore.

However, among these hobbies, Jason for the last six months has owned a hive of bees after saving a swarm found at his full-time job.

"I got my hive, it was ready to go and I had organised with a couple of people to get my bees, but there was quite a long waiting list," he said.

"A friend of mine at work is into bees. He's the one that got me into it - he's just a hobbyist - and he contacted me and said there's a swarm of bees at

work if you're interested.

"We went to have a look while I was actually at work, (my partner's son) actually brought my little nuc, the portable beehive, to me and we literally just put the swarm of bees in the nuc. And then I bought them home.

"The next day, I transferred them into my actual beehive."

When catching a hive in the wild, there is a fear of not capturing the queen, which can be detrimental to the hive's survival and success.

"Generally speaking, if there's a swarm there will be a queen, but obviously as part of the process of transferring the swarm into a nuc, there

is a risk that you can lose the queen," Jason said.

"She could fly off or you might drop her on the ground, but the only way you can tell is if the bees go back to the nuc, that's a good indication that you've got the queen.

"Then you monitor the nuc or the hive for the next few days, just to make sure they're returning there and it looks healthy.

"Luckily my queen was in there, so I ended up with quite a healthy hive."

After considering obtaining bees for a while, Jason spent hours upon hours doing research before becoming a beekeeper.

"I did a beginner's beekeeping course, all they do is basically tell you the minimum requirements for keeping bees, you have to keep records, how to care for them, how to inspect them, and they talk about registration," he said.

"You've got to register the fact that you're a beekeeper and you have to have your registration letters, which I've got on my beehive, JBT.

"There is some compulsory reporting for the varroa mite obviously, but that's not common around here. The other one is a moth that can invade the hive but generally if the hive is healthy and strong the bees will just take care of that."



Now well into his beekeeping journey, Jason understands the risks of changing climates for bees, and preaches the importance of daily, weekly and fortnightly checks to ensure the hive's survival.

"In summer a big risk to the bees is climate, so it can get too hot and you can lose your hive or your bees wax can melt..." he said.

"If it's too cold, (and) the bees aren't able to regulate the temperature in the hive, the nit can get too cold and they can die. Temperature is a key thing.

"Daily, it's just quick inspection to make sure they're okay and check water and the fact that nothing's damaged or the weather hasn't damaged them.

"Then weekly and fortnightly stuff, there's a tray in my type of hive that you can take out and inspect, and you're supposed to do an internal inspection because that's the best way to check that (the hive is) healthy, there's no mould, mites or that sort of stuff.

"If they've not got enough honey reserves, you can make the decision to feed them, you can just give them sugar water... If they've got a healthy supply of honey, they're better left off eating their own honey. That's healthier for them."

Almost six months in, Jason's hive has successfully produced several batches of deliciously rich honey.

"There's a ton of honey in there.

I'm just saving it for winter for them to make sure they survive through winter," he said.

"Because it's my first year I won't harvest this year, I'll harvest next year. I'll give them the best chance of survival over winter."

With the future of his beekeeping endeavours continuing to be solely hobby-based, Jason is content with this for now, with his current situation being "the limit of (his) ambition at the moment".

"The future will just be maintaining it as a hobby. I don't have any ambitions to do it beyond that," he said.

"I'll just use the honey for self-consumption, family and also to make some mead."

On the other end of the spectrum, Phil Marshall is on the road to retirement, downsizing his 10-year-old endeavour and three-year-old business, Barossa Honey and Adelaide Bee Sales.

Phil started out in the bee industry in the exact same way Jason did, and has come a long way since that exciting moment.

"I have been beekeeping for 10 years. It all started with catching a swarm and having one hive in the backyard," he said.

"I moved to full-time beekeeping at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic... My other work ended because of Covid, so I launched

my business with the help of a government program."

Phil enjoys the industry and "being his own boss", but many other perks add to the love of being a beekeeper, aside from handling the ever-important insect.

"I enjoy being my own boss, working outside, being a primary producer and working with bees," he said.

"The apiary industry is small and dispersed across the state... I do enjoy the friendships that I've developed between beekeepers.

"You meet interesting and diverse people in beekeeping and work with rural landowners with pollination services and honey production."

Now preparing for retirement, Phil is in the process of downsizing his business - not saying goodbye completely just yet.

"I have decided to transition towards retirement... I want to spend more time with family and friends and reduce the hours at work," he said.

"I will downsize my business and keep it going part time... I want to travel more."

From Top: Jason Tomlinson completely suited up, tending to his bees. The bees working on the honey in the hive. Bees flying in and out of the hive, showing Jason's required registration letters on his hive. PHOTOS: Ashlea Miller-Pickersgill

A bee enjoying the water within the birdbath. A pot of Jason Tomlinson's honey. PHOTOS: Jordan Tomlinson



A worker in a black shirt and cap is working on a large metal wheel in a factory. Sparks are flying from the wheel as it is being worked on. The background shows other wheels and machinery.

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A field of golden wheat under a clear blue sky. The wheat is tall and has a golden color. The sky is a deep blue with a few wispy clouds.

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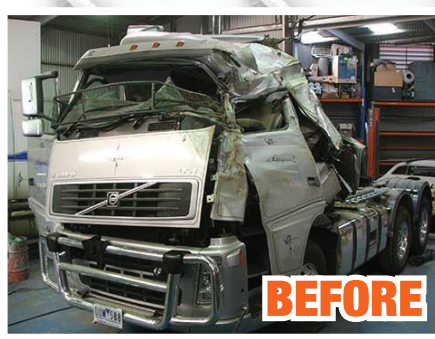
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Plenty of love for native species in Loxton

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ALEXANDRA BULL



THE last couple of years have seen locals' love of native plants grow to new heights, with Riverland Native Plants flourishing with the new-found demand.

The Loxton North-based nursery, owned by Tim Field and his wife, has been in operation since 2018 and specialises in growing over 300 varieties of plants and, as the name suggests, mainly are native species.

"My background is as an ecologist in the public sector, so I had learnt a lot and worked with a lot of threatened species which includes propagating and collecting materials, so I developed quite an interest," Tim said.

"I was just growing and collecting plants for our own place and we just kept growing. In 2018, the Berri Nursery came up for sale and we started to think we could buy that business and that might be an option for us, but we just didn't quite have the flexibility to do it.

"We sort of kept ticking along here,

and pretty much since that shop shut and Covid-19 happened things blew up, so we kept expanding to meet demand.

"I would say it's fairly organic. We only expected to be doing small batches to grow-to-order and now we are doing anywhere between 50,000-70,000 plants a year at the moment, and by the time we finish setting everything up we should have around 100,000-110,000 capacity if we need it."

Tim expects Riverland Native Plants to be fully set up within the next two years, with wholesalers in Adelaide pretty keen to get their hands on some of Tim's plants, as the nursery grows a lot of species that are otherwise unavailable to wholesalers in the city.

Tim has also spent a lot of time in the Riverland landscape, so he knows the native species like the back of his hand, finding a lot of plants that you rarely find in nurseries, with the aim to grow the natives to then sell to wholesalers and the public.



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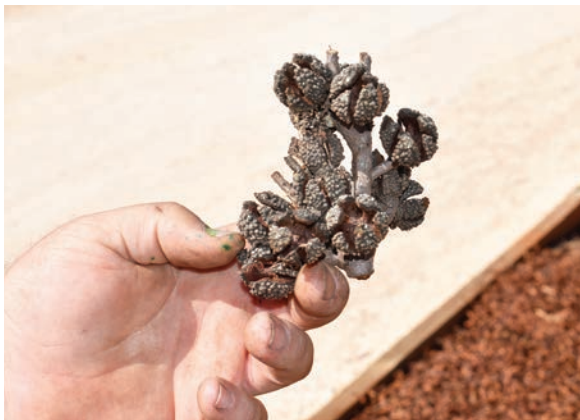
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CONTINUED ON PAGES 38 & 39



He often spends two to three days a week across the Riverland, Mallee, Mid Murray and even the Mid North collecting seeds to take back to his property to prepare to sell, grow or use for other projects.

The nursery sells over 300 varieties of plants, including callitris, redgums, riverbox, saltbush, wattles and local Mallee species, all of which are extremely popular, especially with people on acreage wanting a bit of a windbreak.

"I quite like callitris (native pine trees), mainly because they are slow growing, but they are very long living and there are not many young ones in the landscape," Tim said.

"If you can give people the opportunity to plant things which they wouldn't otherwise have, it's really nice to see.

"You drive around and go, 'Oh there are some of our callitris growing back in the landscape'."

Tim said working in the Riverland landscape for a long period of time has fuelled his love for native plants, as he has a greater understanding of the landscape and how certain natives work with others, including what suits local soils.

"A lot of things that aren't from Australia or are brought in, there's no reason why you can't grow them but you have got to do a lot more for them to thrive in some gardens especially up here where it is so hot," he said.

"We have to accommodate that and we have to accommodate frost in winter. Our soils are very sandy so you might have to add a lot of materials to it.

"Whereas if they are natives and they are from the Riverland, or even central Australia, everything we grow here has to cop 40-degree heat, it has to go through sub-zero temperatures because we don't have frost protection, so pretty much if it's not hearty enough, then we don't grow it."

However, the nursery is starting to get requests for non-native plants, with a number of plants asked for on a regular basis.

Tim said non-natives such as leucadendrons and proteas grow well in the Riverland, and are quite popular.

"That's probably the thing that has surprised us a lot, how much interest there has been," he said.

"When we first started to convert more to the retail side of things, it was very busy at the start with people checking out a lot of new things and you're not sure if that will be persistent or if it will tail off, but I think it's been ongoing. There is quite a demand for the natives."

Tim said the process for growing each native is different. Sometimes he may collect the seed from a native pine in November but it may go unsold until the following April. From then it potentially might be another 12 months before the plant gets to a point where it's close to being ready.

"Some things you can turn around in a short period of time. River redgums are fairly fast growing, depending on

when you grow them, and native pines probably take the longest, anything that is really long-lived is slow growing," he said.

"That's the risk you are taking when you're growing something that you might be sitting on for a few years, as it's taking up space instead of something else that could be turning over quicker.

"Whilst we are a business, it's also a bit of an enjoyment and if you can give people that opportunity, it's kind of nice."

If you can give people the opportunity to plant things which they wouldn't otherwise have, it's really nice to see.



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Ashley's glass-half-full approach to drying racks

WORDS ELYSE ARMANINI

WINEGRAPE drying racks left behind at a vineyard in the Riverland will result in a new wine added to a special range for Ricca Terra winemaker Ashley Ratcliff.

Despite not looking to purchase a vineyard at the time, when Ashley and his wife Holly were told of the century-old soldier settler block on Jury Road, Berri, in 2021, it was hard to pass up.

Ownership of the land changed multiple times from 1922 until 1939, when Carl Pech purchased the property. After 82 years of Pech ownership, Ruth and Robert Pech sold the property to the Ratcliffs.

"There were a couple of really old shiraz vines there, and some riesling – which is pretty rare in the Riverland at the moment – plus it had a house and

shed," Ashley explained.

"The property had two drying racks on it – which hadn't been used for 35 years – and one was in a state of disrepair, but the other was in reasonably good condition. So, we kept the second one, did it up and essentially put a roof back on it."

With a patch of "really old" gordo – also known as zibibbo – grapes next to the drying racks, Ashley decided he would try his hand at making a straw wine.

"It's a wine that is traditionally made on straw," he explained.

"The picked grapes are put on racks, dried and then taken to the winery.

"You might make a dessert wine out of it... That's the kind of style that you make.

"I just thought, why not have a crack

at it and do it, because I don't think anybody else is doing it in this manner in the country."

According to Ashley, the benefits of rack drying grapes is seen in the final product, with drying reducing the fruit moisture content, concentrating the flavours and sugars, and producing a "more intense" wine.

The straw wine will be part of Ricca Terra's Soldiers' Land range, which celebrates, and aims to preserve, vineyards planted by returned soldiers in the Riverland.

"If you've got an old vineyard, it's treasured because it's history," Ashley said.

"But in the Riverland a lot of them are just pulled out because no one puts value in them. I thought, 'There are a lot of stories behind these vineyards that

are planted by people who have come and settled the region'.

"Soldiers' Land is a range that preserves the past, because we want to preserve these old vineyards, but it's also for the future.

"We donate part of the profits back to RSL SA. It's not tens of thousands of dollars – well, it will be if we sell more wine – but we donate each year and this year we're supporting the Barossa RSL."

The wines – two shirazzes, a grenache and a riesling – have scored well in recent judging, plus the June/July issue of Halliday magazine will feature the Soldiers' Land Riesling in the 100 New Tasting Notes section.

Ricca Terra's vintage looked to be shaping up well in early April, with just three weeks to go in a longer-than-

usual vintage for Ashley and his team.

"It's been a long one, we were picking every day, but we're happy with the way things look," Ashley said.

"We've had reasonably solid crops, which is good, and the quality is exceptional, because of the weather.

"Tongue in cheek, I've said to my friends down in the Barossa (the Riverland is) the new cool-climate region of Australia, because they can't ripen their fruit and have had problems with disease.

"We've had an absolutely amazing growing season this year. Heat does tend to burn off flavour for some varieties, like riesling or sauvignon blanc, but we haven't had that this year. We've got wines in tank that look like cool-climate."

Since purchasing their first property in Barmera in 2003, the Ricca Terra business model over the two decades has "always been about diversification" for Ashley and Holly.

"We have 50 different winemakers and about 45 to 50 different grape varieties," Ashley said.

"We have our own logistics and refrigerated trucks. We truck fruit from here to Queensland and all through NSW, so we spend a lot of time on the road delivering fruit.

"Our business is always very vertically and horizontally integrated, and that generally allows us to react. If someone up in Brisbane wants 5 or 10 tonnes of fruit, we can deliver it door-to-door because the current freight business doesn't do that very efficiently."

Ricca Terra has fared well in the recent challenges faced by the wine industry, with many winegrape growers experiencing uncertainty and having to make decisions on removing vines from properties or letting fruit go to waste.

"We're very fortunate with our

commercial stuff – our shiraz, chardonnay, and cabernet – because we supply to major wine companies in Yalumba and Treasury, and they have been exceptional in regards to dealing with them," Ashley said.

"They understand the plight of the grower, because their businesses don't run without growers.

"Everybody takes a snapshot of what the environment looks like now, where everything is doom and gloom, but you've only got to cast your eye back to four years ago when the industry was booming and then before that it was bust.

"I always look at this sort of period as a way to ensure that our business continues, and it's a good time to actually strengthen the business.

"I've been around. I'm 52 and I've worked for corporate companies, and you could write the best business plan in the world but very rarely do they come to fruition.

"I do sit back sometimes and pinch myself. You have those moments sometimes where it's like, 'How the hell did this happen?'

"But it happens through hard work and when you actually believe in the region and in what you're doing."

With three children showing interest in different sides of the Ricca Terra business, Ashley and Holly's vision could grow with the next generation of winemakers.

"I hope Ricca Terra is around for a lot longer, because the next generation might have a bit of a crack," Ashley said.

"One of the challenges for the wine industry, and in particular the Riverland, is you need to continue to reinvent.

"The only way to reinvent yourself is by bringing new people on board who come along with new ideas."



Ricca Terra vineyard manager Matt Thompson and owner Ashley Ratcliff. PHOTO: supplied



Gordo, or Zibibbo, grapes on drying racks at the Jury Road vineyard in Berri. The grapes will be made into straw wine and sold as part of the Ricca Terra Soldiers' Land range. PHOTOS: Elyse Armanini





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Still on track to eradication

WORDS HUGH SCHUITMAKER

WHILE Riverland growers continue to battle against ongoing fruit fly outbreaks, those involved in the region's response against the pest say complete eradication is still achievable.

PIRSA representatives and local horticulture experts provided an update on the current fruit fly situation in the Riverland at community meetings held earlier this year in Loxton, Berri, Renmark, Waikerie and Swan Reach.

PIRSA Fruit Fly Response Program incident controller Rob Baker said while the total number of outbreak areas was increasing, many had low fruit fly activity.

"Out of those (about 40) outbreaks, we haven't had any fruit fly detections in 5 of those areas over the past three months or longer and there has been very low fruit fly activity in 6 other areas," Mr Baker said.

"So although we still have (about 40) outbreaks,

there are some that are very active and some that have had no activity for a period of time as well.

"Once we've undertaken the active controls, like baiting, and we start to see a reduction in fly numbers, we then use the Sterile Insect Technology over the top."

Renmark stone fruit grower Tim Grieger, who also presented at the meeting, iterated the pest was still contained to a small percentage of the Riverland Pest Free Area (PFA).

"When you transpose (the outbreaks) onto a map of the PFA... it gives you the impression fruit fly is everywhere, but it's not," Mr Grieger said.

"We're talking about a tiny portion of the PFA where these flies are. They're not everywhere.

"We've not lost it. Support the program of eradication – that's what we want to achieve."

Mr Grieger advised residential garden owners

needed to "scale back" backyard fruit trees.

"We've got a great team at PIRSA that are fully committed to eradication, and we've got a Minister (for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Clare Scriven) who's fully committed to eradication," he said.

"We need the community to be similarly committed.

"Only grow in the garden what you can use... We've had a variety of everything because we could, but that's changed.

"Just grow what you need and scale back to that."

Chaffey MP Tim Whetstone said the nearby Sunraysia region provided an example of what impacts uncontrolled fruit fly had on the horticultural industry.

"If we look across the border at what happens when horticultural export districts give up on fruit fly, it becomes an unmitigated disaster," Mr Whetstone said.

"Doubling the production of sterile flies should be a priority.

"We're seeing more pressure on our borders, and if we walk away from this we could see a carbon copy of what's happening in Sunraysia.

"We need to see more awareness. We can't have fruit being moved across the region."

However, Mr Whetstone said continued co-operation between the State Government, industry and Riverland communities would result in eradication being achieved.

"We need to be vigilant and focused on eradication, and then the inevitable end will present itself," he said.

"If we work on it as a community the rest will take care of itself."

From Left: A Cera trap being used in a Riverland backyard garden. A MAT Cup fruit fly trap deployed in a tree by a Riverland commercial grower. PIRSA fruit fly detector dog Rylee looking for the pest in a local orchard. PHOTOS: supplied



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"After water treatment, the minerals become a valuable asset because they are better able to be metabolised by plants and animals."

Paul said the HydroMAX unit was capable of working on "very hard water" in large pipe flows used for flood irrigation and centre pivots.

"Dave Prosser in Marcolatt SA, was about to retire his pivot due to poor lucerne growth and pivot corrosion when instead, he fitted a 225mm HydroMAX system and saw a rapid response on water of 3550 conductivity as his crop yielded more than he had seen for years," he said.

"The salts on soil inside the drop zone disappeared, also he reported that the same treated water used around his homestead on lawns and gardens had

them all take off.

"Similarly, in Tintinara, SA, centre pivot grower Michael McCabe, who used a screwdriver trial to assess soil hardness, saw the white salts on soils rapidly disappear.

"His crop yielded 25 per cent more, greater flowering and vigour was observed by his agronomist also and his screwdriver slid into soils instead of taking great pressure to push into soil as had always been the case prior."

Paul said that meant healthier livestock and increased crops for all types of farmers and for all property sizes.

Hydrosmart is a family business, as Paul and both his sons Zac and Jai Pearce are taking on the next generation of water care.

Paul said farmers used the Hydrosmart system to address a range of water issues for stock, pasture, crops and horticulture.



After water treatment, the minerals become a valuable asset because they are better able to be metabolised by plants and animals.



Zac, Paul and Jai Pearce, of the Hydrosmart team.
PHOTO: supplied

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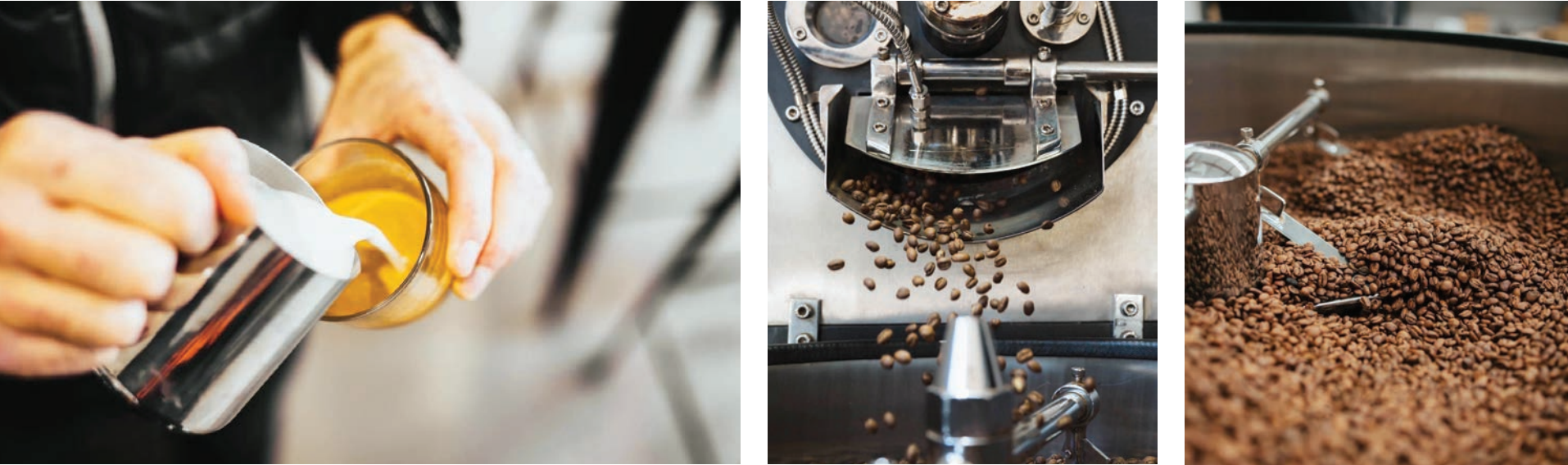
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Quality at the core for Charlie Black

WORDS LUKE MARCHIORO

WHEN you think of the Barossa Valley, premium locally roasted coffee is not the first thing that comes to mind.

However, Charlie Black Coffee Company is aiming to change that, basing itself in Greenock and priding itself on producing a high quality product with a local flavour.

"When we started, our goal was to provide the Barossa Valley with the highest quality speciality coffee possible," owner and founder Michael D'Aloisio said.

"Our mission was to make it

approachable and deliver a quality product and experience to those who taste our coffee."

Michael walked away from a sales representative position in the coffee industry, instead pursuing the chance to roast his own coffee through Charlie Black.

Charlie Black began its operations in the Barossa Valley town of Greenock in September 2020, partnering with El Estanco Restaurant to create a unique experience blending food and coffee.

"Coffee has always been a passion

for me and I think I needed a change to get the chance to step out and express it more," he said.

"In being able to prepare and roast our own blends, it makes it really fun and it's a really exciting process to be a part of."

Michael began roasting coffee beans in the back of the El Estanco premises, using the roaster to create a signature blend for the site while also experimenting with other different blends.

Using a mix of local and international

products, Michael said the process was arduous at times but overall extremely rewarding.

"It takes a lot of tinkering and practice to make sure that you get exactly the right blend with it," he said.

"I really care about the quality and making sure it's a really high quality product is the most important thing because we want to be making the best coffee possible."

Coffee beans are seeds from cherries found on a bush-like plant called the coffea plant. There are more

than 120 different varieties of plant and each produces a different type of bean.

The majority of coffee consumed across the globe, though, comes from two different beans, arabica and robusta.

For Charlie Black's roasts, beans are sourced from around the world including Brazil, Kenya and Colombia.

The signature El Estanco blend, crafted over two years, is best described as sweet and clean with notes of milk chocolate, caramel and hints of fruit, while other blends like Paradise White had also grown popular.

While roasting and producing coffee locally had been a focus for Michael and Charlie Black, the company was also running coffee training courses.

These courses include the basics like perfect coffee extraction and milk pouring, cleaning the machine and calibrating the grinder to more advanced techniques like latte and coffee art.

Michael said knowing how to get the most out of the coffee was also a key part of what they were trying to do.

"We produced a really high quality product and we want people to be able to enjoy that at home to the same quality," he said.

"The training and courses we provide are key for that because it helps people to get the best out of the coffee."

Along with the training and the El Estanco site, Charlie Black is

featured in some of South Australia's best restaurant and cafes who are sourcing a high quality local product.

The demand in the past 12 months has seen Michael be joined in the Charlie Black venture is his father Angelo, with the pair combining for more than 50 years in the industry.

Michael said his father's experience would be an asset to the continued growth of the company,

"Between my father and I, we have a love and dedication to our craft and to coffee," he said.

"We have a lot of experience in the industry and a lot of people would even say that we have coffee in our veins."

With the experienced duo at the helm, Charlie Black is continuing to grow from its humble beginnings in the rear of the El Estanco premises at Greenock.

Michael has now set up a second warehouse in Pooraka, with new on-site teaching facilities also allowing for more growth in the business.

"To see where we have come from in just over two years is pretty incredible and we are continuing to grow every day," he said.

"To see where we are going and the quality we are producing it's really exciting and I can't wait to see where we end up in the future."



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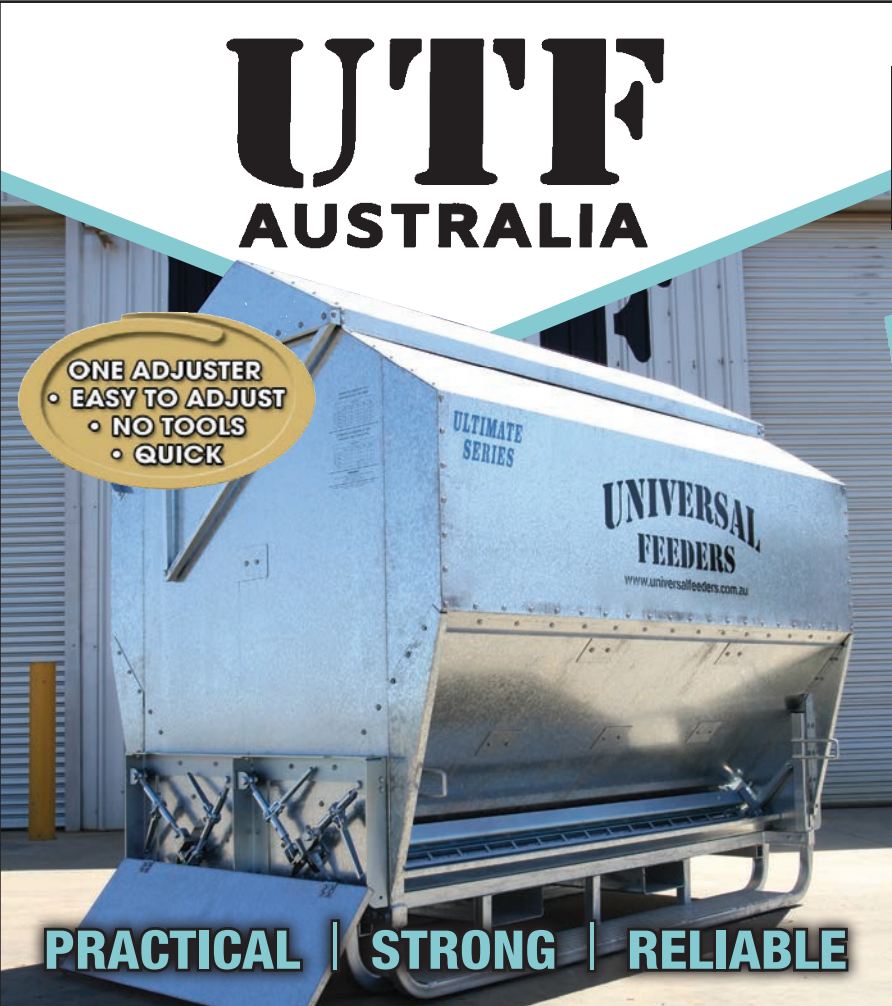
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Snapshot shows strength behind numbers

THE Australian agricultural industry continues to grow and perform strongly in a number of key areas including exports, incomes, and risk management, according to latest ABARES Snapshot.

The ABARES (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences) Snapshot of Australian Agriculture 2023 report describes the current state of agriculture nationally, with the aim of providing key information and statistics.

The report shows industry production and export values are forecast to hit record levels in 2022-23, with farm cash incomes for broadacre and dairy producers remaining well above historical benchmarks.

ABARES executive director Dr Jared Greenville said the numbers only tell part of the performance story.

"These results were made achievable through past reforms, investments in productivity, and changes in what we produce and export," Dr Greenville said.

"These factors have placed the sector in a strong position to take advantage of the unusual combination of high commodity prices and recently favourable climate. Perhaps more importantly, they put the sector in a good position to respond positively to future opportunities and challenges.

"While the recent climate has been quite beneficial to the agricultural sector, we're anticipating farms facing pressures to adapt to the negative effects a changing climate will have on profit.

"In addition, sustainability is an increasingly important attribute to both consumers and investors in all markets, including agriculture, and sustainability credentials are being included in trade policies and investment criteria in many countries.

"On many criteria, Australia's agricultural industries are already very sustainable compared to our competitors in global markets. We need to be careful to ensure we maintain that advantage."

Dr Greenville said the run of high rainfall years was expected to end and weather conditions would likely shift back toward normal rainfall patterns.

"Despite the deteriorating conditions, strong soil moisture, full water storages and the rebuilding of our herds and flocks will provide a buffer for overall production, giving us another year in the high country," he said.

The ABARES Snapshot covers eight aspects of Australian agriculture: its role in the broader economy, trends in production, farm incomes, industry structure and productivity, climate change impacts and risk management, agricultural employment, sustainability and trade, and is available to download on the ABARES website (agriculture.gov.au/abares/products/insights/snapshot-of-australian-agriculture).

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