

SA Farmer

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GROUP MEDIA

WINTER 2024



**School project
leads to life of
cultivating**

Page 12

**Riverside practising
sustainable farming**

Page 36

**Son of the Onion
King pivots to
'fancy lettuce'**

Page 24



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FARM FENCES.**SORTED.**

Welcome to SA Farmer, winter 2024 edition

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

The 2024 winter edition starts with an insight into Taldra grain producer Travis Flight's successful lentil production, a honey creating mother and daughter duo, stats showing the South Australian grain harvest was still strong last year, and a Sunlands horticulture specialist's love for jujubes.

Agricultural news at a state and national level in this edition includes latest crop disease guides that are now available for growers, the new steps for South Australia's eID traceability system, a new podcast to help keep South Australia safe from biosecurity risks, results from a survey highlighting transformative

opportunities for grain producers and the launch of a new research-focused Oat Grain Quality Consortium marks a pivotal moment for the oat industry.

Once again, we have included a couple of recipes for you to try, along with a growing guide.

Rounding out the feature stories for the winter edition have us reading about a bustling flower farm in Taylorville, a look into a native plant farm in Monash, how Riverside Farm is practising sustainable farming methods, how the Renmark Paringa Community Museum continues to showcase local agriculture and a new definitive guide on water for dryland cropping produced by the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

Summerfruit Australia board member Jason Size chats about what stage of development the Riverland is in for stone fruit

varieties; Almond Board of Australia CEO Tim Jackson speaks about the growth the almond industry is experiencing; Wine Grape Council of SA's Adrian Hoffman explains how he sees the scrapping of China tariffs impacting the Barossa wine region; and Citrus SA chair Mark Doecke discusses what varieties are being harvested at the moment and how the ongoing fruit fly outbreaks are continuing to impact local growers.

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

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

Until then, keep updated online by visiting our free-to-read website: www.safarmer.com.au

- The SA Farmer team

INSIDE



7 Mother and daughter duo a buzzing success



14 Riverland made jujube vinegar an Australian first



16 Ag news



26 Fabulous flowers in Taylorville



30 Industry experts



42 A link to farming history



Ellen Chatterton manages Riverside Farm, which spans six generations and has been in the family for more than 175 years.

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The lentil way



WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY
STEPHANIE THOMPSON

MORE lentils are being sown into the ground this year, with many local dryland farmers seeing the benefit of the crop in their rotations.

After finding success with lentils last year, Taldra grain producer Travis Flight said he has doubled the amount sown to give a total of 800ha.

“We’ve gone whole hog into it really to try and make them work,” he said.

“We are on the hunt for the perfect rotation for us.

“We are trying to find the right legume structure that will give us low inputs, low risk, but high returns.

“We are trying to see if lentils will fit that role.”

Mr Flight said in comparison to other crops, such as chickpeas, lentils were showing good signs of being easier to manage.

“With our chickpeas, we had a lot of rain, had to spray them heaps and ended up having a really bad-quality year,” he said.

“We had to hold them for nearly 12 months before we could move them and it was too hard to get rid of them.

“But within two weeks of harvesting the lentils, they were gone and we got really good money for them.”

Mr Flight said seeding began at the start of April, with lentils sown after vetch and lupins.

“They like being in early,” he said.

“Around the 20 to the 25 of April is their optimum window from all my agronomy reports that I’ve been getting.”



Along with previous success, Mr Flight said growing lentils has other benefits.

"Another advantage out of them is that while the dollar value on their seed is still high, you only sow 45kg per hectare, whereas chickpeas you sow at 100kg per hectare," he said.

"They throw up an agronomic advantage, too.

"With chickpeas you can only grow them once every four years in the same paddock as they get ascochyta blight and there's no real protection for it.

"Lentils get ascochyta, but nowhere near as bad and the strain is controllable and you can treat for it.

"The lentils also fix a bit more nitrogen being a

legume, so they give us a bit more back."

Mr Flight said the main lentil they grow is called Nipper, a small red variety.

"We even managed to score a tonne of a brand new variety, called Thunder," he said.

"It's only been out a few years and meant to be a higher-yielding variety.

"See if we can give that a crack and get some success from that, too."

While lentils have many positives, Mr Flight said they still have some disadvantages with the crop difficult to harvest.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



We are trying to find the right legume structure that will give us low inputs, low risk, but high returns.



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"The plant is very small," he said.
"We bought a fancy new header front as well that we can put on the deck (ground).
"We had to buy a steel roller as well because they don't grow very big.
"That has always been the downside to having lentils in this area, especially if we have a drier finish or a drier season."
Along with vetch, lupins, chickpeas, field peas and lentils, traditional crops like barley and wheat were also sown.
"We had about 12mm on Easter Monday and prior to that we had about 10mm," Mr Flight said.
"So 22mm at the start of April, you couldn't ask for a better start really."

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A white and orange plastic container, likely a chemical drum, is shown in the foreground. It has a green recycling symbol on the white part.

A wide-angle shot of a vineyard at sunset. The rows of grapevines are neatly planted in a field, and the sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The trees in the background are silhouetted against the bright sky.



Sweet Honey Fusions create its unique flavours with the help of family and friends putting in the hard work in the kitchen.



Mother and daughter duo a buzzing success

WORDS IMOGEN EVANS

A MOTHER and daughter duo has been converting people across South Australia into honey lovers with their unique and sweet infusion creations.

Since its beginnings mid last year, Sweet Honey Fusions has been experimenting with a huge variety of flavours to create a brand new honey experience.

With the pair's top sellers including garlic honey and their chocolate fusion, the business has been gaining attention across local hotspots including the Barossa Farmers Market.

Daughter Eilish said the business began after her mum Barb and stepdad ventured into beekeeping.

"They started off with just a couple of hives and quickly grew from there,

we're now sitting at well over 130," she said.

Having to leave work due to an injury, Barb was determined to turn her honey-hating daughter into a follower of the sweet treat, and decided to experiment with Eilish to create different flavours.

"Honey is something I've always wanted to like, but it's just always been too strong and too sweet for me," Eilish said.

"Due to some health issues, I needed to change some things in my diet and mum's always been at me to try their honey.

"Then in doing the infusions, it's helped me really develop that taste for the honey as well – I've been able to switch out the bulk of my sugar intake with all my cooking and baking and things with our honey."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

“

I've been able to switch out the bulk of my sugar intake with all my cooking and baking and things with our honey.



The mother and daughter duo have created over 20 different products ranging from simple raw honey to garlic and chocolate infusions.
PHOTOS: Supplied



People have walked past saying, I'm not a honey person, but I tell them to just do me a favour and try a flavour that looks interesting and to not think of it as honey.

The pair has since discovered the many health benefits of switching processed sugar with the natural sweetness found in honey, and said they've been able to convert others to join their honey-loving hive.

"We have two chocolate flavours that are very popular as Nutella alternatives because they're nut free," Eilish said.

"Our strawberry has been very popular as well as a strawberry jam alternative because it's two ingredients, honey and rehydrated strawberries.

"We were happy to convert a lot of people into honey lovers, myself included."

Barb also made it clear the business is not shying away from some more "out there" flavours, with their newly introduced smoked chili being among their best sellers.

"A lot of people are unsure when they first hear flavours like the garlic and chilli, but it's been really popular for things like just sweet garlic bread, putting over your pizzas, in your veggies, like when you're doing your roast and things like that," Eilish said.

"People have walked past saying, I'm not a honey person, but I tell them to just do me a favour and try a flavour that looks interesting and to not think

of it as honey," Barb said.

"I have to say, we've actually converted quite a lot of people and I love to see the look on their faces as they go 'oh wow'.

"It's a really rewarding experience."

With the business growing to introduce over 20 different flavours of the sweet treat, Eilish said the team has been able to showcase some of the best local produce on offer.

"We try and source everything as local as possible and try and do the least amount of intervention with everything as we can to keep it as natural and organic as healthy," she said.

"It has been really fun working with the Barossa markets and being able to connect with all the growers and businesses in the area.

"A large part of my childhood was spent growing up in the nature around that area and the hills, so it's been good to reconnect with the community there."

Sweet Honey Fusions are now offering free tastings at all future market events which can be found via its Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok page.

The Sweet Honey Fusion team said they've enjoyed getting back to their roots and working with the community of the Barossa Famers Market. PHOTOS: Supplied



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NTS Rural senior
agronomist
Richard Noll.

“

With seeding about to get underway in many areas of South Australia, grain producers face a nervous wait for much needed opening rains.



Saving moisture for a ‘grainy’ day helps growers

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY AIDAN CURTIS

THE agricultural industry is breathing a sigh of relief after stats showed South Australian grain harvests were still strong last year despite limited rainfall in a number of areas and late frost.

According to the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA), crop production sat at around 8.7 million tonnes for the 2023-24 season.

The numbers were slightly below the previous season, but still showed stronger results than 2021-22.

PIRSA said the estimated farmgate value was \$3.3 billion, which Grain Producers SA chief executive Brad Perry described as positive overall.

“Off the back of a record harvest, the 2023-24 grain season finished with an average yield but importantly, a more than \$3 billion contribution to the state’s economy,” Mr Perry said.

“Last season showed that South Australian grain producers continue to be resilient and produce impressive crops, even with little finishing rain.

“With seeding about to get underway in many areas of South Australia, grain producers face a nervous wait for much needed opening rains.”

For the lower Mid North and Adelaide Plains regions, growers were pleased with better-than-expected yields considering an overall lack of rain.

NTS Rural senior agronomist Richard Noll, based in Kapunda, said stored moisture from 2022 kept growers afloat, with yields hovering around the average mark.

“Cereal yields would have been average, or slightly better, and pulse yields were probably the ones that suffered a little bit,” Mr Noll said.

“We probably got out of jail a bit with some late frosts... in October, which actually didn’t do too much damage in this area compared to other areas further north of here.

“Overall, I think most farmers were pretty happy considering the price of grain the last harvest, gross margin-wise.”

Mr Noll said farmers in the region seemed pretty positive looking at the upcoming growing season, but there was still some uncertainty around fertiliser supply.

“That’s probably a thing that’s our biggest issue, is getting product on time, it’s becoming harder and harder every year,” he said.

“World events affects a lot of fertiliser supply, shipping costs, and it’s all sort of stemmed back from Covid.

“The chemical side of things has freed up, there’s not too many shortages on that side of things.”

Mr Noll advised growers to keep on top of things to make sure they targeted improved efficiencies.

“You’ve got to be efficient, is really key, and being on time with planting and harvest,” he said.

“Those are basically the two things that really help.”

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School project leads to life of cultivating jujubes

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTINE WEBSTER

Sunlands horticulture specialist Ben Waddelow's love affair with jujubes began as a student at Urrbrae Agricultural High School in Adelaide.

His studies led to the 45-year-old becoming a specialist in the fruit that is native to Southern Asia.

"Over 25-years ago, it was a project during my studies in years 11 and 12," Ben says.

"We had to research an interesting fruit and I decided to choose the jujube," he says.

"I sort of became addicted to it back then."

Ben discovered that not much of the fruit, also known as Chinese date, was grown in Australia.

After he finished school, Ben started growing jujubes and teamed up with a friend, Roger Meyer who was a specialist in the fruit in the United States.

"We started importing rootstocks into quarantine and this led to the eventual development of the jujube industry in Australia," Ben says.

Roger was part of the rare fruit growers association in California and was an early founder and promoter of jujube growing in America.

Unfortunately, he passed away seven years ago.

Roger had visited Australia many times and spoke to the Australian rare fruit grower groups in SA and in Queensland.

Ben has continued his friend's legacy and has been a member of the Rare Fruit Society of South Australia for over 20 years, which has about 800 members.

He says he has gained a lot of experience and knowledge from this society, which has assisted him at his arboretum at Sunlands, west of Waikerie.

Ben also shares his expertise internationally on online forums and he has travelled to China and India to pass on and develop his knowledge.

The warm and sunny Riverland climate, ideal for growing jujubes was the drawcard that led to Ben relocating to the region from his urban block in Adelaide.

"Our family friends who lived in the Riverland invited me to come up here," he says.

Ben says a shortage of suitable properties in the area led to him initially growing his Chinese dates on his friends' block near the property he finally purchased 15 years ago.

He now grows 40 different types of jujubes on his Sunlands property.

Ben's jujubes have become a family affair with his dad, uncle, and stepson all now part of the business.

They also sometimes employ backpackers to help with the hand picking of the fruit during harvest, which usually runs from February to May.

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Over 25-years ago, it was a project during my studies in years 11 and 12.

The Waddelows' fresh jujubes are in high demand especially among Australia's Asian community with most purchased by orders via Facebook or WeChat groups.

Some are also sent to Adelaide's Central Market and markets in Melbourne.

The family also supply dried jujubes to customers in Australia's Vietnamese community who use it in their tea making and various soups.

"We have a waiting list of orders," Ben says.

The Waddelows also run a nursery and supply grafted jujube trees to nurseries across Australia.

"We are doing some research on brand new commercial varieties," he says.

Ben's latest venture is his Australian Wild Jujube Vinegar that he produces on his property from the seconds of his Chinese dates and has bottled at Waikerie providore, Illalangi.



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Riverland-made jujube vinegar an Australian first

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTINE WEBSTER

Ben Waddelow is using a 3000-year-old technique developed in China to make a vinegar from the wild jujube he grows on his Riverland West property at Sunlands.

The international jujube expert spent seven years perfecting the fermentation process that he

learned from a brewer while visiting China.

He says despite the language barrier, the man was able to pass on his secret recipe to him.

"There were lots of hand movements used during the communication process," Ben says.

"The techniques he used are not even written down," he says.

"I brought that knowledge back to Australia with me and decided to make use of it here."

The Waddelows were already growing wild jujubes on their property and using this variety of rootstock for propagating.

"When we strip the seed out of it, all the flesh is left over and that is what we use to make the jujube vinegar," he said.

Ben says the seconds of the wild jujubes, not suitable for commercial use is also used to produce the vinegar.

The Australian Wild Jujube Vinegar is brewed on site in specially designed sterilised plastic drums.

The fruit is washed and steamed and fermented to about four per cent alcohol.

After four days of fermenting, the liquid is removed and a mother culture is added, which removes all the alcohol and turns it into acidic acid.

Ben says the brewing process takes about a year.

The jujube vinegar is then transported to Waikerie providore, Illalangi for bottling.

Ben says those that have tried the product love its fruity flavour and it is already in high demand among locals.

The vinegar tastes a bit like balsamic vinegar but is a bit lighter and can be used on salads, to add flavour to sauces or dishes while cooking, or as a health supplement.

The jujube vinegar is available from Illalangi and Ben has also received interest in it from a health food wholesaler in NSW who is keen to stock it in the future.



Owner and operator of Sunlands Jujubes Ben Waddelow with the wild jujubes he uses to make an ancient type of Chinese vinegar.

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GPSA looking to the future

A FRESH committee is set to empower young people to get involved in policy surrounding the future of grain production.

Grain Producers SA (GPSA) recently launched the Young Grain Producers committee, aimed at fostering the next generation of leaders and policy makers in the industry.

The committee is open to young farmers aged 18 to 45 and will allow members to engage in policy development, leadership initiatives and industry advocacy.

It will report directly to the GPSA board and chief executive Brad Perry said it was important to ensure young farmers “have a seat at the table”.

“At GPSA, we understand the importance of cultivating and empowering the next generation of grain producers to not only become leaders but most importantly, contribute to

industry policy and initiatives,” Mr Perry said.

“Members of the committee will play a vital role in contributing to GPSA’s policy agenda, advocating for the interests of young grain producers, and driving positive change within the agricultural community.

“We encourage all grain producers aged between 18 and 45 years who are passionate about the future of the South Australian grain industry to apply and join us on this exciting journey.”

Grain producers interested in becoming a part of the committee can apply by completing a form online (www.grainproducerssa.com.au).

Applications will close on 30 June 2024, with up to six positions available to active grain producers and up to two positions available to grain industry members in the supply chain.

“We encourage all grain producers aged between 18 and 45 years who are passionate about the future of the South Australian grain industry to apply...”

GPSA undertakes multi-pronged projects

IN a bid to address ongoing challenges around agrichemical spray application, Grain Producers SA (GPSA) has appointed a consultant to review options to strengthen best practice in the industry.

Experienced South Australian businesses, Hydra Consulting, has been appointed to lead the multi-pronged project on behalf of GPSA.

In addition, GPSA has commissioned a team of experienced researchers from the University of South Australia to undertake a project on the attitudes and behaviours of farmers to mitigate spray drift.

GPSA CEO Brad Perry said the two projects are designed to think outside the square when it comes to minimising off-target damage.

“The consultant will be looking at benchmarking agrichemical spray application across Australia and the world to provide options for things that we, as the grain industry in South Australia, can do better when it comes to spraying,” he said.

“We know most growers spray agricultural chemicals under the appropriate weather conditions, but we are constantly battling with how we

reach those few who do not.

“This season we’ve seen a perfect storm where weather and timing has culminated in challenges around applying spray during the appropriate windows.

“These new projects, along with our recent media campaign and Spray Forum in Feeling, showcase how determined we are to tackle this incredibly important issue.”

Agricultural chemicals protect crops from pests and disease, but their incorrect use can have adverse effects on health and the environment; a key component in helping to change the actions of those who do not adhere to regulations for spraying is through behavioural change.

“The Uni SA team of researchers are reviewing more than 650 pieces of historic literature to provide GPSA with an understanding of effective strategies for inducing in behaviour and attitudes to minimise off-target spray drift,” Mr Perry said.

“This important work will also provide a rigorous research evidence base to support current and future policies on spray drift management.”



AG NEWS



Survey highlights transformative opportunities for grain

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

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

GPSA CEO Brad Perry said "a key finding of the 2023 survey was the significant number of grain production businesses undergoing succession, presenting both challenges and opportunities for our industry".

"The younger generation's familiarity with technology having grown up with it, presents a unique opportunity for the adoption of greater innovative farming

practices, setting the stage for long-term sustainability and growth," he said.

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

Key findings in the survey were:

- ❑ 94 per cent of grain producers feel their business is profitable and sustainable
- ❑ 76 per cent are positive about the future of the South Australian grain industry
- ❑ 40 per cent identified finding, attracting and retaining staff as challenging
- ❑ 78 per cent said they were better prepared now than they were for the last drought
- ❑ 67 per cent say operating costs remain the biggest challenge
- ❑ 33 per cent identified technology adoption as their biggest opportunity

- ❑ 64 per cent said actively managing spray drift when spraying is a high priority

- ❑ 48 per cent do not have reliable connectivity

- ❑ 22 per cent reported having an accident with powerlines

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

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

The survey highlights the industry's readiness to tackle drought, with many growers reporting improvements in farming systems and practices.

Furthermore, proactive measures to control spray drift underscore the growing reliance on better understanding weather controls.

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

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

Moving forward, GPSA remains dedicated to listening to the concerns of grain producers and championing policies that enhance productivity and profitability.

The organisation will continue to advocate for initiatives that support innovation, improve infrastructure and strengthen market access for South Australian grain producers.

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Latest crop disease guides now available

NEW and updated crop disease guides are now available for Australian growers.

In early April, Agriculture Victoria released the 2024 editions of its cereal and pulse crop disease guides to keep growers informed around their disease management decisions.

Agriculture Victoria plant pathology research leader Joshua Fanning said the updated guides complement the latest advice on disease management.

"The 2024 Cereal Disease Guide and 2024 Pulse Disease Guide rank susceptibility of new and commonly grown grains such as wheat, barley, oats, lentils, faba bean and chickpea," Dr Fanning said.

"Growers should consult the current guides for the latest ratings and definitions to plan disease management activities to prevent yield losses this season."

"Disease ratings are the first and most important step in managing disease so it's important to understand the latest resistance ratings of varieties."

"In susceptible varieties disease can develop quickly and require greater management."

"Particularly diseases like stripe rust and Septoria in wheat, net blotches in barley and botrytis in pulses which have been of concern over the last few years."

According to Agriculture Victoria, fungicide resistance in cereals was becoming an increasing concern, which cereal pathologist Hari Dadu said would require a lot of management.

"In addition to this new resistance in Victoria we have resistance to multiple fungicide groups, including some triazole (DMI, Group 3) and strobilurin (QoI, Group 11) fungicides in wheat powdery mildew, and some triazole fungicides in barley net form net blotch," Dr Dadu said.

"To reduce the chances of fungicide resistance continuing to develop, integrated disease management is required, including growing resistant varieties, avoiding growing the same crop in succession, spraying fungicides only when required and rotating fungicide groups."

For more information or to access the disease guides, visit the Agriculture Victoria website.




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AG NEWS

Podcast educating about biosecurity

TO help all farmers play a role in keeping South Australia safe from biosecurity risks, Agriculture Victoria's new podcast season 'Biosecurity basics' takes a deep dive into the fundamentals of biosecurity, including practical things listeners can put in place to play their part in protecting our animals and environment.

Program manager Emergency Animal Disease Industry Engagement, Kellyanne Harris, said listeners will hear from people engaged in biosecurity.

"It doesn't matter how many animals you have, how big or small your property is, biosecurity is everyone's business," she said.

"Every livestock owner or person living on a small or lifestyle farm can make changes today to improve their biosecurity and help protect their property from pests and diseases.

"Created in collaboration with RSPCA Victoria, the new AgVic Talk series features experts from RSPCA Victoria and Agriculture Victoria as well as

farmers who share their knowledge on how people can build biosecurity into their day-to-day farming practices."

In episode one, Erica Smith from Glenstrae Highlands talks about how she went about introducing some basic biosecurity practices when setting up her property in Gippsland, Victoria.

In episode two, Brett Davidson from Agriculture Victoria and Rachael Laukart from RSPCA Victoria cover how both agencies are helping producers manage risk and improve their biosecurity practices.

"Listeners will receive advice on what to include in a biosecurity plan, the importance of Property Identification Codes (PICs) and where to go for tips and advice about biosecurity practices and steps you can take on the farm," Ms Harris said.

You can subscribe and listen to 'Biosecurity basics' on AgVic Talk wherever you get your podcasts.



The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is encouraging landowners to take practical steps in order to preserve native paddock trees. PHOTO: supplied

Tree burn concern

A GOVERNMENT department is urging landowners to take better care of native trees while conducting burns on their property.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is hopeful that by taking a few key actions, paddock trees can be preserved rather than falling victim to fire.

Activities like slashing around the base of the tree to establish an adequate fire break, removing woody debris and wetting the area around the tree before a burn could help save native trees, which in some cases are impossible to replace in a person's lifetime.

DEECA program manager of natural environment programs Adrian

Martins said protecting native trees is "important" for a number of reasons.

"They provide shade to stock, reduce wind impacts to crops, store carbon and provide habitat to important pollinators and birds that feed on pests," he said.

"We encourage landholders to be well prepared before beginning a stubble burn.

"Creating firebreaks around trees and having water and equipment ready to extinguish the fire will ensure you can protect your valuable native trees."

The department advised that any concerns about stubble burning and the destruction of paddock trees should be directed to local council.

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GRDC to capitalise on growing oat market

IN a move to boost Australia's position as a high-quality, value-added oat producer, the launch of a new researched-focused Oat Grain Quality Consortium (OGQC) marks a pivotal moment for the industry.

Designed to capitalise on growing domestic and international market opportunities, the consortium is a collaborative Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) investment aimed at addressing the crucial need for innovation in oat quality research, informing oat quality classification and market positioning.

GRDC managing director Nigel Hart announced the consortium in April, which will see more than \$12.5m invested in oats over five years as part of this collaborative research initiative. The investment includes \$5.75m from GRDC complemented by \$6.7m from research and industry partners.

The consortium will be led by InterGrain and the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI).

These lead organisations will bring together a diverse group of organisations spanning the research, production, processing, and food and beverage manufacturing sectors, each contributing their expertise to drive industry transformation.

Partners include Curtin University, Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University, Agriculture Victoria, Shaanxi Normal University, plus industry partners Unigrain, Wide Open Agriculture, Fancy Plants, Oatly, Sanitarium, Uncle Toby's, Blue Lake Milling, Quaker, Noumi, Seamild, Grains Australia, and Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre (AEGIC).

"We know that the global demand for diverse and nutritious oat-based products is on the rise and there is a clear opportunity for Australian agriculture to lead the way in quality and sustainability. This is why GRDC has initiated and invested in this consortium on behalf of Australian growers," Mr Hart said.

"This research will benefit the entire Australian oat supply chain by providing breeders with new traits that align with market demands, improving efficiency and reducing costs for processors,



SARDI Program Leader for Crop and Pasture Improvement Dr Janine Croser, GRDC Managing Director Nigel Hart, InterGrain Research and Business Development Manager Dr Dini Ganesalingam, InterGrain Cereal Chemist Dr Haelee Fenton. PHOTO: GRDC

and expanding the range of oat-based products that manufacturers can offer consumers globally.

"Ultimately this work aims to position Australian oats as the go-to-product for consumers, both domestically and overseas, which will have significant flow-on benefits for our growers."

Researchers will work with oat millers and food and beverage processors to develop industry-relevant thresholds for traits such as flavour and aroma, groat oil, beta-glucan and protein, and work with breeding programs to identify and provide germplasm and molecular tools to rapidly develop new oat varieties suited to high-value, end-use market requirements.

GRDC genetic technologies manager (barley, oats and sorghum), Dr Michael Groszmann, said "for the investment to succeed, it was critical to have engagement from the post-farmgate sector".

"Pleasingly we already have a high level of direct project involvement from both millers and pat food and beverage manufacturers," he said.

"By innovating across breeding, measurement, quality and nutritional content through this research, GRDC can help the industry set new standards that drive value-added opportunities for milling oats."

InterGrain's Research and Business Development Manager Dr Dini Ganesalingam said "the initiative would use the scale of InterGrain's oat breeding program to create tools that would aid in quantifying oat quality traits for industry classification, via Grains Australia receival points assessment".

InterGrain cereal chemist Dr Haelee Fenton is leading work in the project investigating the trait selection intelligence of aroma and flavour compounds in oat foods and beverages.

Dr Fenton said "the research will be integral to setting targets for InterGrain's oat breeding program".

As part of the project, InterGrain also has a co-design committee, which includes representatives from across the food and beverage sectors.

"This creates a direct line for consultation and feedback on oat processing and product research, which will inform the development of consumer-targeted oat varieties for Australian farmers to grow," Dr Fenton said.

SARDI's program leader for crop and pasture improvement Dr Janine Croser said the initiative had the potential to be truly transformative for Australian oat quality and production research.

"Enhancing shelf life and milling efficiency may open new avenues for

Australian oats in global markets – something that SARDI will be exploring intently in conjunction with our industry consultative committee and research partners," Dr Croser said.

The consortium will also inform the classification considerations currently under review by Grains Australia, with clearer market differentiation helping to drive value in the commodity.

Grains Australia general manager classification Dr Megan Sheehy welcomed the launch of the OGQC, saying it could help inform decisions by Grains Australia's Oat Council and its new oat variety classification framework.

"Outcomes from the OGQC projects will play an important role in assisting the oat industry to map its pathway forward to achieve market-driven outcomes," Dr Sheehy said.

The launch of the OGQC means Australia is poised to make significant strides in oat grain quality research and development.

The initiative will lay the foundations of a prosperous future for the Australian oat industry and contribute to increased choice and quality for consumers globally.



AG NEWS



Growth expected in AR space

A RECENT report from a leading data and analytics company has detailed the potential benefits augmented reality (AR) technology could have on the agricultural sector, despite some short-term hurdles.

GlobalData's Thematic Intelligence report, which tackled a number of industry-based challenges, showed that while AR has the capacity to improve efficiency, its growth in the sector remains an issue.

Associate thematic intelligence analyst for GlobalData, Aoife McGurk, believes that while the benefits of AR are clear, the uptake of the technology is currently hindered.

"Until the last few centuries, the agriculture sector operated in more or less the same way for millennia," Ms McGurk said.

"However, the fourth agricultural revolution brings new challenges for farmers to worry about – especially around limited agricultural resources.

"The use of AR for agricultural training is slowly growing, teaching farm workers to detect disease in crops and livestock and assisting technicians with repairing and maintaining agricultural machinery.

"It is evident that AR has huge potential in agriculture industry. However, lack of knowledge, limited investments and initial high costs are bound to hinder its widespread adoption in the short-term."

According to the report, the AR market is poised to grow from \$22 million in 2022 to \$100 billion in 2030.

McGurk believes if businesses are to implement AR technology, they will be flush with short and long-term benefits.

"The crux of AR's usefulness in farming is its capacity for hands-free data visualisation, allowing farmers to access knowledge and insights without pausing other tasks," she said.

"This has the potential to improve the productivity of all agricultural workers and help farmers increase the productivity of their resources.

"The next frontier for AR in farming is precision agriculture. AR-enhanced precision agriculture can minimise the pollution and resource waste associated with agrochemicals and irrigation.

"By overlaying insights about crop health onto the physical world, AR assists farmers in ensuring these scarce resources are applied prescriptively.

"This prescriptive use of agricultural resources will be key in meeting the growing demand for food while minimizing environmental and climate degradation.

"In the long-run, this will alleviate the looming threats of climate change, environmental degradation, and pressure on limited resources."

Until the last few centuries, the agriculture sector operated in more or less the same way for millennia.

Pilot lands to manage risk

A FRESH initiative is aiming to help ease the stress and pressure on producers and stakeholders in the disaster risk space.

The project, led by Primary Producers SA (PPSA) and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions was launched in April this year, with a view to help both industry and government prepare for the impacts of natural disasters and climate change.

PPSA has engaged three of its commodity group members in the South Australian Forest Products Association, the South Australian Dairyfarmers' Association, and the Wine Grape Council of SA to deliver the pilot.

PPSA chief executive Caroline Rhodes said protecting the state's \$18.5 billion primary industries and agribusiness sector was a key reason for launching the project, which aims to increase understanding of industries' vulnerabilities and the commitment to shared responsibility between government and industry to address gaps.

"Primary producers are on the frontline of climate change, facing an increasing number and severity of single natural disasters every year," she said.

"There are numerous existing industry plans that identify disaster risks, but this project seeks to identify opportunities and gaps to assist industry and government to consolidate disaster risk reduction strategies and identify areas for shared action.

"Government and primary producers understand hazards and have experience

dealing with single disaster events, however the impacts of compounding and cascading disasters which are increasingly likely to occur are less understood."

The South Australian Government is partnering with PPSA to help deliver the project and Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Clare Scriven labelled reducing disaster risk in the sector as "vital".

"This project will help us to understand the vulnerabilities of the entire supply chain and assist behaviour change," she said.

"In the long term, this project is expected to enable agricultural industries and government to identify and implement appropriate strategies that mitigate risk to disasters, emergencies and effects of climate change."

The project received just shy of \$800,000 from the Disaster Risk Reduction Grants Program through the federal and state governments.

Ms Rhodes said many sectors will stand to benefit from the project.

"Primary producers, people working in primary industries and rural communities will benefit from being better prepared for disasters, emergencies, crises, and adversity," she said.

"In addition, emergency services and government at all levels will benefit from having people and communities more self-reliant and capable of meeting the challenges of disasters."



Minister for Emergency Services Joe Szakacs, PPSA chief executive Caroline Rhodes and SAFPA chief executive Nathan Paine at the launch of the preparing primary industries for the impacts of compounding and complex disasters project in April. PHOTO: supplied

SA Farmer



Soccer game raising funds for farmers

THE second annual charity football match between primary industries and the State Government was held recently to raise funds to reduce financial hardship through adverse events for primary producers and small related agribusinesses.

Adelaide United partnered with the South Australian Produce Market (SAPM), Pick a Local, Pick SA!, and Foodland, together with Bank SA and the State Government, including the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia, for the second annual charity match, where all funds raised will be collected by the Rural Business Support Relief Fund.

Adelaide United CEO Nathan Kosmina said "Adelaide United is thrilled to back this cause for a second consecutive year and lend a hand in raising funds".

"The club is proud in making a meaningful difference where it's needed most," he said.

The match saw growers, wholesalers and retailers play against a team of SA Ministers and parliamentarians from all sides of politics and government representatives.

"As an industry, we wanted to show

our support to primary producers affect by and facing hardship," SAPM CEO Angelo Demasi said.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, Clare Scriven MLC, said the match was a wonderful way to provide support.

"This really is a wonderful opportunity to come together and raise money for our hardworking and incredibly resilient primary producers," she said.

The Rural Support Charity Match was supported by: Adelaide United Football Club, Bank SA, Foodland, the Government of South Australia, South Australian Produce Markets, Rural Business Support, 4ways Fresh Produce, Adelaide Venue Management, Agribusiness Recruitmen, AusVeg SA, Bache Bros, Biobin, Costa, K-Roo, Livestock SA Nutirien, Russo Produce, Thomas Foods International, South Australian Forest Products Association, Willoway Farming and Viterra.

"Proceeds from donations for this match will be used by the RBS Relief Fund to provide household relief to growers and primary producers who are finding life tough," Rural Business Support CEO Brett Smith said.

Adelaide United is thrilled to back this cause for a second consecutive year and lend a hand in raising funds.

Next steps for eID traceability system

VITAL next steps for South Australia's implementation of an electronic (eID) traceability system for sheep and farmed goats have now been released.

Mandatory dates for the commencement of eID scanning to record movement data to the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) database have been set to help the supply chain prepare for South Australia's transition to eID.

Following consultation with the Industry Advisory Committee, processors will need to have scanning in place by 1 January 2025, and saleyards by 1 July 2025.

"Setting these dates will provide processors and saleyard operators with a clear timeline to ensure they are ready to meet requirements for eID," Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Clare Scriven said.

"We have worked closely with the Industry Advisory Committee to ensure that saleyards and processors have the time to assess their needs regarding

scanning equipment and installation, as well as site alignment and any changes to business practices.

"The eID system for sheep and farmed goats is essential for improved traceability, enabling a quick and efficient biosecurity response if a disease such as Foot and Mouth occurs in Australia. It would also ensure that recovery from an outbreak would be quicker and the path to regaining overseas market access would be shorter.

"Ensuring we have the best possible traceability system is crucial to protecting our \$4.9b livestock industry."

The new system requires sheep and farmed goats born on or after 1 January 2025 to be identified with an NLS accredited eID device before leaving their property of birth.

The State and Federal Governments are currently rolling out a \$12.8 million eID implementation program in South Australia.

For more information visit (www.pir.sa.gov.au/eid).





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Lettuce do our own thing: Son of the Onion King pivots to ‘fancy lettuce’

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY LIAM PHILLIPS



DINO Musolino grew up in a farming family and when the time came to choose his own path, he made the decision to pivot to hydroponically grown lettuce, establishing Hi Tech Hydroponics and its accompanying store Hi Fresh.

Musolino – whose father Tom was known as ‘Tom the Onion King’ – saw his family’s business growing onions, potatoes, carrots, cauliflower and cabbages grow from its original five acres to close to 1000 acres.

But in 1997 Musolino had learned all he could and made the bold move to go out on his own and establish his own business.

“I decided to leave the family business and start a different journey for me and my family,” he said.

“The reason I moved away from that was to look at the future for me and my immediate family, and looking at ways of ensuring that I provide a livelihood for, first of all myself and my young children, and then for them and their children, and that’s why we’re talking about generations of family tradition.”

The choice of hydroponically grown lettuce came from some independent travel and research, where he took a liking to the largely untapped “ready-to-eat” market.

“I did a bit of traveling before I left the family business and identified that there was a trend in ready-to-eat products, particularly overseas,” Musolino said.

“I looked at that and I thought that the way forward, I think, is about intensifying our farming.

“So we went to hydroponic growing of lettuces in about 1997, and in about 2000 we looked at value-adding and commenced our value-adding business.

“From ‘97 until now we’ve grown our operation from field growing, hydroponic growing, value-adding and wholesaling.

“The method of growing hydroponically still hasn’t changed very much because it was obviously fairly more advanced from soil growing – so it’s all about time.

“You put a plant in to a six-week plant into a hydroponic system and in three-to-four weeks you’re harvesting. You do the same in the field and you’re probably 12 weeks to harvest, so it becomes a more effective and efficient way of producing product or produce.”

A focus of Hi Tech Hydroponics was having as much control as possible “from seed-to-the-feed”, and Musolino is certain that his method delivers a fresher, higher quality “fancy lettuce” to his consumers.

“One of the things that I looked at was to try and manage as much of the chain as possible from the seed to the feed, and so that’s why in about 2000 we opted to sell our own product,” he said.

“So the seed-to-the-feed is where we actually plant it from a seedling and we manage that plant right through until we harvest, we wash it, we pack it, and then we deliver it direct to store.

“Particularly with fancy lettuce in South Australia, there’s only two of us that are still growing fancy lettuce in hydroponic, it’s not growing in field other than maybe some up in the Riverland.

“If you look at the generic lettuce, which is what we’ve referred to as an iceberg lettuce, an iceberg lettuce is your typical round lettuce that is grown predominantly in field, while our lettuce is obviously multi-leafed and coloured

“We still grow cabbages the same way as my father was in 1955, the only thing that’s changed is we’ve gone from open-pollinated varieties to a hybrid variety, which can be grown year-round rather than seasonal.





“So we’re 12 months of the year where we do exactly the same thing, the only thing that changes is volume.

“As you can imagine, in the summer our volumes are far greater because there’s more consumption, and in the winter they generally taper off and some of our winter lines tend to pick up and increase in sales.

“We went from selling our own product, to selling over 140 different lines as a wholesaler in the Adelaide produce market.”

Over the years Musolino has continued to adjust to the shifting demands of the market, and while he acknowledges recent technological advancements, he has no desire to go robotic just yet.

“When you look from when we started in 2000 to where we are today, we were doing one-kilogram and

three-kilogram packs,” he said.

“Now we’re getting down to 120-gram packs and we’re value-adding it with convenience to the consumer.

“There’s probably some of our process that could go robotic, it has caught my eye, however we have not looked into it in any detailed implementation.

“The way we’re doing it at the moment is probably a way of managing it in the scale that we are – if we were to increase our scale we’d need to look at minimizing cost of production and we all know where the bulk of your cost in production comes from.”

With about seven acres of hydroponic setup and around 200 acres of open-field cabbage growing, the Hi Fresh brand is showing no signs of slowing down.

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Fabulous flowers in Taylorville

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY
ALEXANDRA BULL

LOCATED in the town of Taylorville, is an unassuming flower farm, which has been providing the community and its surrounds with beautiful bouquets of flowers for two years.

Florist and floriculturist Naomi Mee, who is the brains behind Nangana Flower Farm & Florist, said the beginning of the farm and florist journey was not premediated, rather it just slowly happened.

"I've just love flowers forever, but life was never at a point of thinking about a flower farm I suppose," Mrs Mee said.

"I started off with thinking maybe I can do sunflowers and sell them wholesale and that's kind of where it started and it just evolved from there really.

"I just became obsessed with buying every kind of seed and trying every kind of flower and it grew from a couple of rows to more, and you just get more knowledge and start to become a bit more familiar with the cut flower scene and it just sort of progressed."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28



Rain levels

Storages

(as at 17 April)

RENMARK
1 February to 24 April 2024: 7mm
Rainfall to April 2024: 48.4mm
Rainfall to April 2023: 47mm

LOXTON
1 February to 24 April 2024: 8.6mm
Rainfall to April 2024: 30.4mm
Rainfall to April 2023: 52.5mm

WAIKERIE
1 February to 24 April 2024: 31.4mm
Rainfall to April 2024: 50.4mm
Rainfall to April 2023: 41.8mm

LAMEROO
1 February to 24 April 2024: 7mm
Rainfall to April 2024: 28.6mm
Rainfall to April 2023: 66mm

GAWLER
1 February to 24 April 2024: 5mm
Rainfall to April 2024: 27.6mm
Rainfall to April 2023: 30.6mm

MENINDEE LAKES: 51 per cent full

DARTMOUTH: 95 per cent full

HUME: 64 per cent full

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A trained psychotherapist, who also balances having six kids, Mrs Mee and her family are also farmers on a family farm, however operations are slowly drawing to a close.

"I sort of slowed down with the flowers for a little while because we were just really focussed on the farm and then that got to a point where it

was obvious we couldn't keep going," Mrs Mee said.

"This has sort of ramped up a lot more and I became far more focused on this and just realised how big the scope for it is I suppose, which is pretty exciting.

"I have grown heaps more stuff and

it's just amazing to keep creating these beautiful arrangements for people.

"I love creating joy for people, that has always been my thing, along with mental health. I just have a real passion to give the next something beautiful for a moment.

"That really drives me, as well as loving flowers and gardening being very therapeutic."

Nangana is home to a variety of flowers, including sunflowers, cosmos, zinnia, dahlias, lycianthes, tatice, snap dragons, amaranth, marigolds, celosia, yarrow and gomphrena.

"Some are better suited to the climate here than others, and there are some that I am like 'nah, I'm not going to do that again,' and just maybe the vase life wasn't great or it didn't suit my style, which is sort of ever evolving," Mrs Mee said.

"I feel like my bunches are like having a walk through a garden, they are very packed.

"I think a lot of floristry and the rules of floristry I don't particularly follow, it just comes from my insights.

"It's a creative process I suppose.

It's a bit like doing pieces of artwork.

"My style is very packed, it's very full and an experience is how I would explain it. It's very country vibes with all those flowers; when you grow it's always different."

Mrs Mee doesn't do wholesale yet but says it is something she will work towards in the future, with the aim to start supplying florists around the area with her flowers.

"I would like to shift towards functions and weddings," she said.

"I've got a few weddings booked. I have done a few, but not the whole experience, I have just wanted parts of it.

"I would like to be able to grow for the wedding. So that's the special thing and then for the couple to be able to choose the flowers and know they have been grown locally."

The farm, which is situated high above the river, with sloping fields leading down to a flood plain, is an ideal area to grow flowers in the Riverland year-round.

"The frost just falls down the front," Mrs Mee said.

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I feel like my bunches are like having a walk through a garden, they are very packed.

"I had a horticulturalist come out not long after we bought the place just to give me ideas of things to grow, and he said 'you are really lucky where you are positioned'.

"A lot of stuff that normally would be killed off by frost over winter even in this region, our mango trees hardly look affected, the salvias which normally sort of die off over winter they just keep going.

"Last winter I was able to grow sunflowers all through winter, so we did overhead sprinklers in the morning when there was a big frost and stuff like that but we are very lucky I think with where we are positioned, which wasn't intentional."

While growing slows down over winter due to shorter days and less sun, there are still multiple things for Mrs Mee to continue to grow.

"As the years go by I would probably put up coop houses and stuff like that just to be able to have a little more piece of mind that flowers won't get affected and even during summer too," she said.

Mrs Mee sells her bunches via Facebook, as well as the Viewpoint Café in Waikerie, and said she is incredibly well supported by the Waikerie and Taylorville community.

"I am generally flat out, orders generally keep me busy. I get a lot of orders and people from overseas and interstate who have got family and then become regulars," she said.

"It's full on. Just the growing could be a fulltime job and just the floristry could be a fulltime job, so it can sometimes feel overwhelming depending on what's going on.

"I guess because it's mixed with doing all the mum stuff and all of that. There is a bit of pressure, which is no different to any job, I really enjoy every part of it.

"I love the creating, I will always do all-nighters for Christmas, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and I just spend a whole 48 hours creating and it's like a buzz.

"Everything sort of has its own little creation process which probably takes longer than maybe a churn out florist but that's okay, it's personal.

"I do love seeing people's faces when they get their flowers I suppose, I love seeing that, just that little moment of appreciating something beautiful."

For more information on Nangana Flower Farm & Florist visit (www.facebook.com/RiverlandBornAndBloomed).



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



Jason Size

Summerfruit Australia board member

What stage of development are we at for stone fruit varieties in the Riverland?

Right now, April, we are at leaf drop with trees going into dormancy. In Autumn growers should have applied their post-harvest fertiliser, traditionally based on leaf analysis or based on historical yield and fruit removal. Growers need to be applying urea or zinc sulphate to remove leaves to ensure there are no carry over diseases from summer. A copper is also applied to protect against leaf curl for next year.

In Winter we will be at the dormant stage where we traditionally prune the trees back further than what we would have already done during spring and summer. Late winter we also apply an oil and follow up with a copper spray as trees come out of dormancy.

Is there confidence around the volume and quality of fruit at this stage?

Yes, most crops last year were ok, albeit some reports of lower-than-normal apricot yields. If the nutritional and fertiliser requirements of the tree were maintained then I would expect similar if not better crops coming into the 2024/25 season. Fruit quality will depend on whether growers have applied enough irrigation during the year and on what the weather patterns

throw at us over the next few months.

Is there expected to be any increases on overall yields compared to the previous season?

From a yield perspective it will depend on the accumulation of 'chill'. If it is a warm winter, chill may be an issue on crop yield and quality. In the absence of rain, irrigation should be maintained. To mitigate against low chill, growers should have a high mid row cover crop to trap in the cold air temperature.

Has there been any challenges in transporting stone fruit to overseas markets?

Fruit fly maintains as a challenge to export markets but there are options open to growers. For export advice, fresh growers should consider contacting and becoming a member of Summerfruit Australia Ltd to ask about exporting country requirements. Each country has strict access and in some cases chemical requirements which growers need to be aware of.

What are the keys for healthy trees heading into the winter?

Healthy buds on clean limbs free of old fruit and dead wood. Maintain the hygiene in the orchard before spring to avoid diseases becoming an issue during harvest.



Tim Jackson

Almond Board of Australia chief executive officer

What stage of the almond season are we at?

The almond harvest has wrapped up for the majority of growers. The almonds will be stored on-farm until they can be accommodated by processors.

We're seeing the almond industry reaching new milestones for production, what has been key to this continual growth?

Late last year it was estimated that 164,700 tonnes would be harvested in 2024 nationally. It will still be some time before there's an official harvest figure. The 2023 crop was only 103,381 tonnes due to challenging growing conditions. Initial indications are that almond production is returning to its long term trajectory, however there are some growers who produced yields well below expectation in 2024 and others had good crops.

Do you expect another overall increase in production in the next harvest?

Given favourable growing conditions and strong pollination, we would expect volumes to increase again next year based on maturing trees and the total amount of bearing hectares increasing. We appear on track to push toward 200,000 (kernel weight equivalent) in the next 2-3 years with the right weather.

How are export markets looking?

Our almond selling year runs from March to February and the 2023-2024 year was a record. Australian marketers managed to sell more than 131,000 tonnes, despite only 103,381 tonnes being grown. Unsold stock from previous years has been cleared out. Manufacturing markets like Turkey and Spain posted huge volume increases. For the first time since 2017, almond sales to China declined, largely due to the reduced availability of high-grade inshell almonds. The appetite for Australian almonds in India remains strong with a 114 per cent increase in sales, due to a 50% reduction in tariffs. In April the Australian almond industry exhibited at the China Nut Expo and Trade Conference. China is Australia's largest market for almonds and 33,434 tonnes were sold there last year. This trade fair attracted several thousand Chinese nut industry stakeholders, with a strong focus on roasting and snacking.

What are the most important factors for tree health at this stage?

Post-harvest nutrition is fundamental to ensuring the health of the tree before it goes into dormancy. Applications of various nutrients will help the tree recover from posting a much bigger crop to last year. We believe the wet year of 2022 is still having an impact on the trees' productivity in various regions so a strong fert program is essential to get the trees back to full health. It was a similar experience to the last La Nina event, where it took the tree 2-3 years to fully recover.



Adrian Hoffmann

Wine Grape Council of SA Region Two chair

How do you see the scrapping of China tariffs impacting the Barossa wine region?

It's good that we've got access back into the Chinese market. It's not going to be a quick fix, but it's definitely an opportunity that I think a lot of wine producers will take up. I think to get some of the premium product back into the marketplace, the market is quite different over in China now after being out for a period of time but I think it will be good for the industry to be able to get access to that market once again.

Were Barossa growers confident in the vintage results?

I call it a winemakers year this year. Tonnages were down and quality was really good. Grenache and Mataro seem to be fairly plentiful this year from a yield point of view, but the quality of fruit that came off the vines this year, you'll see a little bit more concentration in the fruit flavour and character and basically it was a nice, long dry vintage. We're now still waiting on rain but we had a relatively good spring going into a warm, dry summer and into a good drying period. We have disease-free fruit with good concentration and small berried fruit which makes for good quality wine.

What varieties have been popular this year?

Because shiraz is down a little bit, I think most people sold their fruit. Although, they did compromise on pricing for quite a bit of what was out there, it has been extremely tough for a lot of growers. From a shiraz cabernet point of view, grenache was still fairly strong, whites were still fairly strong as well in sales, but I think most of the wineries that I was dealing with, they were looking at what they can perceive

going forward, so some wineries reduced their intake a little bit, but because yields were down, most probably the impact wasn't quite as high and I think there will be a bit of readjustment in the next year because stock volumes have been up. 2021, 2022 and 2023 were all fairly reasonably sized vintages and basically free up a bit of barrel space and tank space for the maturation of wine going forward.

What factors are important for the health of vines going into dormancy?

It would be nice to have a bit of rain. I think most people are doing a post-harvest water, just giving vines a bit of water to shut them down. I think a lot of grape growers will really look at their inputs into their vineyards this year. Most vineyards have been very well looked after. In previous seasons people will look at their costings and what goes into their vineyards, I know I definitely am, and anywhere we can cut back on costs, but also I think pruning was one of the ones that really took effect this last year. Those that did a bit of pruning, some of that detail work as well, you can see the efforts in producing that quality for both the grower and the winemaker definitely paid dividends.

Any advice for local growers?

Make sure you keep communicating with your buyers. If you struggle to find homes for your fruit this year, try and find them homes nice and early, and work out how much you should be investing into your vineyards for market. For those that have got commitments going forward, make sure you keep those relationships alive by talking to your buyers and then go forward from there. If you're looking at selling a bit of extra fruit, make sure you start those conversations nice and early.

Mark Doecke

Citrus SA chair

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

South Australian growers are currently harvesting early Navel varieties like M7 and Navelina. The first varieties of mandarin are not far away.

How far into the citrus harvest are we?

We have been harvesting for about a month being careful to get the start dates right so the fruit is mature enough and maximises taste.

What impact are ongoing fruit fly outbreaks having for local growers?

Fruit Fly still poses as a problem for citrus growers in the Riverland. We deal with extra cost to cold treat fruit and the logistical cost moving fruit to comply with PIRSA directives. The battle against Fruit Fly is positive with really only a couple areas that persist with flies found.

Are growers confident in the volume and quality of fruit at

the moment?

Volumes and quality are good this year. We have had a more normal growing season compared to previous years.

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

Volumes are always increasing slightly. Growers have new plantings coming on stream every year so the states volume will slowly rise over time.

What factors are most important for tree health during winter?

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

Any advice for fellow growers?

Continue to grow the best fruit in the Southern Hemisphere and hopefully enjoy better returns this season.



Dominic looks towards the next generation

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY LACHLAN DAND

WHEN Dominic Smith began work on his Monash farm in 2013 he was unaware a continuing story of success was about to be written.

Mr Smith started with aquaponics, proving to be an early passion, before moving into the cultivation of native plants a little more than six years ago.

Mr Smith received a land conservation certificate when he was 18, having attended Urrbrae Agricultural High School in Adelaide.

It was at Urrbrae where Mr Smith learned the skills of waste water management, and

creating ecosystems, something which he feels particularly strong about.

“I’m all about friendly ecosystems and helping out the environment wherever I can, because that’s the future,” he said.

“No chemicals or pesticides work into my operation, and my plants create their own fertilisers anyway.

“It’s about having minimal impact, but also allowing things to be as they are within their ecosystems.

“The more you manipulate then the bad months will come where something will offset nature, so it’s important to be as one

and be patient.”

Mr Smith is a proud Yuin man, and said his Indigenous upbringing helped him get where he is.

“With everything I source or grow, I work towards having nutritional value or medicinal purpose,” he said.

“That means working with native extracts, which helps give scientific evidence for indigenous people’s knowledge of plants.

“I work with elders across the country and learn about different things which is important to me, too.



Dominic Smith pictured with rivermint on his Monash farm.

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With everything I source or grow, I work towards having nutritional value or medicinal purpose.

"I've just become a qualified nurse, and I want to develop these programs further. I want to get 10 young men and teach them about ecosystems, and what can be used for skin conditions.

"It teaches entrepreneurship skills so they can create their own businesses like mine, and use ingredients which are culturally significant."

Mr Smith created the Pundi Bitters product, which is available to purchase from his website (pundibitters.com.au), in September 2023.

Pundi Bitters reveals the story of a tree suspended in pure spirit. The bitters are all natural and are intended to be added to mineral water as a non-alcoholic beverage.

"Ever since I launched them they've been a great selling point for me," he said.



Dominic Smith stands by his collection of wattle trees.

"I work with Full Circle down in Adelaide, and we came up with a concept of three different bitters.

"One comes from the leaf of the tree, one from the fruit of the tree, and one from the wood, so there is an ecosystem involved."

Mr Smith said that while there are challenges along the way, building a strong network early on has helped him in good stead to continue running a successful program.

"I just started and everything really opened up from there," he said.

"I'm lucky that I networked as well. I

met the right people who had the right knowledge and that kept levelling me up along the way.

"The best part I find is watching the animals come in. I get kangaroos, parrots, lizards, and quail coming in.

"I enjoy nature and that's a big part of why I built this to start with.

"Every business has its ups and downs and you just go with the flow, but I made sure I had backup, so that if I wanted I can do nursing, while I am still building elements to my farm."

Mr Smith said he wants to create similar products in the future, but he

understands the challenges involved along the way.

"I want to have an impact on the ground. It's about people from all walks of life which the program can have an impact on," he said.

"Particularly around drugs and alcohol and mental health. I hope we can have positive change in the community, and help get other farmers involved.

"It's all about the next generation and helping them become better farmers, which is something I really look out for."



Dominic Smith's rivermint stock.

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WORDS ALEXANDRA BULL

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Ellen Chatterton manages Riverside Farm, which spans six generations and has been in the family for more than 175 years.

Riverside practising sustainable farming methods

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JEM NASH

RIVERSIDE Farm has gone through some changes in recent times, but is still focused on employing environmentally friendly farming

methods and diversifying operations. Located just outside Lyndoch, the farm sprawls over 1000 acres and spans six generations.



It was established in 1848 by Joseph Barritt and has been in the Chatterton family for more than 175 years.

Now managed by Ellen Chatterton, Riverside is a mixed farming property with a focus on sheep, crops and vineyards which are leased.

Over the past couple of years, Ellen's brother Richard produced free-range eggs, while she started a sheep dairy, but those ventures have since dissolved.

Ellen said the dairy was impacted coming out of the pandemic, as buyers steered away from local produce due to cost pressures, but it is something she may revisit in the future.

"It was a shame, it worked quite well," she said.

"It was for us, quite sustainable

because we don't have an endless amount of water.

"Dairies, traditionally, you feel like they use a lot of water, whereas being a sheep dairy it was quite easy and feed-wise it was quite easy."

Ellen is now just concentrating on "traditional farming" with crops such as wheat and barley and also sheep, which includes Merino-Dorset cross lambs and breeding Merinos.

She said they employ as many regenerative principles as possible and with a shorter growing season compared to the eastern states, there are some limits, but she is focused on running the farm as efficiently as possible.

"We try and incorporate as much rotational grazing as we can," she said.

Riverside's sheep, which includes Merino-Dorset cross lambs and breeding Merinos. PHOTO: Supplied.



***It was for us,
quite sustainable
because we don't
have an endless
amount of water.***

"We're trying to implement some perennial pastures and also leaning away from some of the traditional fertilisers."

It is a long-term project but Ellen said they are trying to build up the soil as much as possible and limit weeds.

She added there has been a shift in attitude from farmers surrounding using more organic fertilisers and methods.

"It's been the attitude of throwing lots of fertilisers and pesticides on, getting the crop in and getting the crop out, and just rinse and repeat," she said.

"Now they're thinking of the soil a little bit more as something you've got to look after, rather than extract whatever you can."

There are still challenges that Riverside faces, with climate being the biggest.

Ellen said no season is the same so you have to be ready to adapt based on the weather and when the rain comes.

"You can say I did that last year, it should work this year, but generally every year is a new year," she said.

"You've just got to be very flexible, so if it rains, you've just got to be ready to go."

Riverside has also been running a B&B on the property over the past couple of years, which Ellen said is a "real lifesaver".

The cottage provides an extra source of income and she said a lot of farms offer accommodation on their properties, whether it is refurbishing an old worker's cottage or providing camping sites.

"It's hard to find a farm that doesn't actually have accommodation on it now," she said.

"It's that nice, steady income."



The Cottage, Riverside's B&B accommodation which provides a steady income for the farm.



Ellen Chatterton with two of her dogs, Fergus and Logan.



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A link to farming history

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY HUGH SCHUITEMAKER



Entrance to the Renmark Paringa Community Museum. PHOTO: Supplied



Renmark Paringa Community Museum chairman Wayne Howell with a 101-year-old 8hp Blackstone stationary engine.



The museum boasts an extensive collection of stationary engines.

THE history behind the Riverland's agricultural production is showcased at a local volunteer-run museum.

The Renmark Paringa Community Museum, located in Paringa, is home to a wide range of historic farming machinery previously used in the region.

Museum chairman Wayne Howell said many of the museum's exhibits – including a reconstructed shepherd's hut – illustrate aspects of the region's historic agricultural lifestyle.

"The hut is part cellar, part school house and part shepherd's hut," Mr Howell said.

"I always tell the kids there was no electricity, and there's no nails, just wire, because back then the cost of making nails was too high."

Mr Howell said a vintage Fiat tractor, used by a former Monash grower, is a personal highlight of the museum's collection.

"The man, named Con, was from Monash," he said.

"He came to Australia in 1954 as a Greek immigrant and had a shilling in his pocket. He couldn't speak a word of English and had his dad's pants on."

"There was about 10 kids in the family. He went to Queensland



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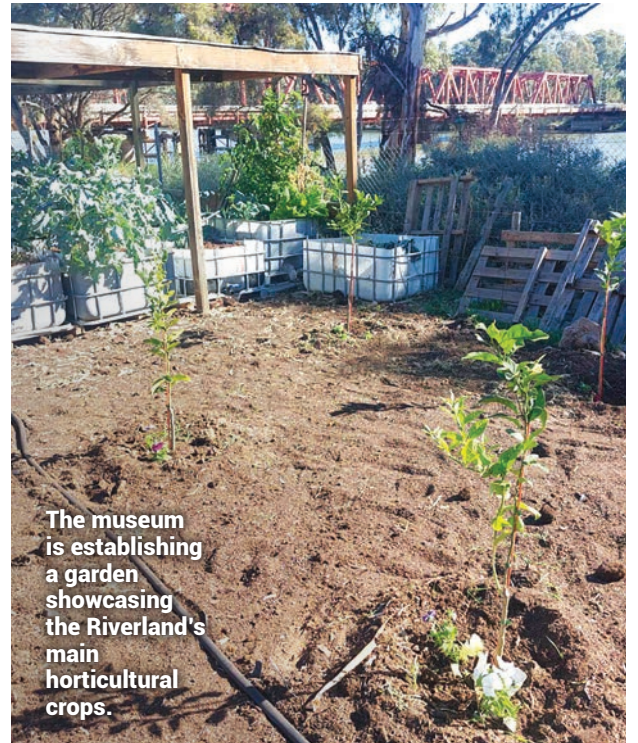
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Vintage tractor scoops used to construct levee banks during the 1956 flood event.



The museum is establishing a garden showcasing the Riverland's main horticultural crops.

originally, and then became a successful grower in the Riverland.

"It's a piece of history."

Mr Howell said the museum's extensive collection of stationary engines included a number of rare items.

"Our rarest engine, a star, was built in Ballarat from my understanding," he said.

"People from the stationary engine club think there's only about four in existence of that size.

"If you were running these back then and it broke down, you had to fix it. You couldn't ring a mechanic.

"They run and run all day and that's what they're for."

Mr Howell said a garden display is also being constructed to showcase the region's horticultural products.

"We want to do a representation of what grows in the Riverland," he said.

"We've got citrus in now, and we're waiting to put some almond trees in.

"We would like to put a couple of date palms in, whatever grows here. People come up here and think we just grow grapes and oranges."

Mr Howell said the museum was still seeking new historic farming

machinery to exhibit.

"Everything here is donated, and we're continually chasing stuff down," he said.

"It's anything to do with the district's history, and we want to promote that.

"We're particularly chasing a grape harvester and tree shaker at the moment."



I always tell the kids there was no electricity, and there's no nails, just wire, because back then the cost of making nails was too high.



A traditional shepherd's hut features early in tours of the museum.

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Four of the expert authors of the recently released Water Smart Farming manual, Peter Hayman (left) Mariano Cossani, Glenn McDonald and Victor Sadras. PHOTO: GRDC

Definitive guide on water use for dryland cropping

WORDS PAUL MITCHELL

A GUIDE released earlier this year aims to help dryland cropping enterprises understand the challenges involved with increased water use efficiency.

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) says managing for increased efficiency requires sound agronomic decisions, based on the latest research for variable soil and crop types, understanding factors such as soil moisture that cannot be seen and pre-empting rainfall forecasts that are uncertain.

An understanding of these challenges helped drive GRDC investment in a 2024 publication designed to simplify the complexities of all aspects of dryland cropping water management.

The publication is entitled Water Smart Farming.

Aimed at being a one-stop-shop for growers and advisors looking to learn more about crop water use and improving water use efficiency, the manual covers a range of topics, including how crops use water, plant-available water capacity, using technology to improve water-use efficiency, and managing risks associated with dryland cropping.

GRDC's sustainable cropping systems manager (north) Mark Callow, said maximising water-use efficiency is more readily achieved when agronomic decisions are based on recommendations derived from the latest research on maximising rainfall and

increasing yield.

"All this great research has led to significant leaps in knowledge," Dr Callow said.

"The Water Smart Farming manual collates the latest knowledge into a single document with sub-topics including soil characterisation, agronomic decisions and climate forecasting."

The manual was written by industry-leading researchers and agronomists from across Australia, including CSIRO principal research scientist Kirsten Verburg and principal scientist of climate applications with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions' research and development arm, the South Australian Research & Development Institute (SARDI), Peter Hayman.

Dr Verburg said the manual was a valuable resource for growers and advisers that combined information from one of her research specialties – plant available water – with that of in-season crop water use. She said it detailed how management can influence both.

"Often the management strategies for these two topics are presented separately," she said.

"This integrated manual is presented as a series of chapters covering different topics (that) growers and advisers can read in order or out of sequence, which is a good approach for a topic as complex and interwoven as farm water use.

"For example, a grower might start by assessing their soils against locally specific databases in Chapter 2, before referring to Chapter 3 to choose how to pick the best reference site for plant available water characterisation.

"They might then choose to refer to Chapter 7 for soil moisture monitoring, before going back to Chapter 4 to work out how to use the soil water information in their variety selection."

Dr Hayman said combining water use with climate forecasts can help growers make practical agronomic decisions.

"In the past we've often written on risk in farming with a general sense that bad things can happen – a sort of 'don't run with scissors' type advice," he said.

"In this manual we have looked at risk assessment from a more quantitative perspective and put numbers to risks in order to demonstrate how growers can use seasonal climate forecasts in decision-making, even though the forecast is uncertain.

"For example, we've included a step-by-step example of modelling urea topdressing based on input and grain prices alongside forecasts, to look at the upside opportunity and downside risk of topdressing."

For more information or to download the manual, visit the GRDC website.



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Barbecue short ribs with pumpkin and salad

SERVES 6

With the weather cooling down, it's time to fire up the barbecue. Nothing beats barbecued beef ribs to share with friends and family for winter catch up and this recipe ticks all the boxes, with veg and salad on the side.

METHOD

- 1 Pre-heat a covered barbeque (hood down) to 140°C. Place ribs in a shallow roasting pan, season and cover tray with foil. Roast in barbeque using indirect heat, or in oven for 6 hours. Spraying with the vinegar solution every hour. Remove and rest for 30 minutes.
- 2 Coat pumpkin with oil and season with salt. Using a sharp knife cut slits into pumpkin crossways about 5mm apart, cutting as deep as you can without slicing all the way through. Place pumpkin on a lined tray. Cook in a closed barbeque on medium-high heat for 40 minutes.
- 3 Add all the ingredients for the dressing to a small bowl. Whisk vigorously until combined. Add some of the cos and spinach to a serving plate. Top with eggs, tomatoes, avocado, feta, chives and parsley. Drizzle with the desired amount of dressing.
- 4 When serving, drizzle ribs with your favourite barbecue sauce.

INGREDIENTS

- 1.2kg beef short ribs
- 1 tbsp cracked black pepper
- 1 tbsp sea salt
- Apple cider vinegar, diluted by 50% with water in a spray bottle
- Barbecue sauce
- HASSELBACK PUMPKIN**
- 1 x 500g butternut pumpkin halves, peeled, seeded
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed

- 3 tbsp chopped herbs (chives, rosemary & parsley)
- Oil to coat
- COBB SALAD**
- 1x cos lettuce, leaves torn
- 100g baby spinach leaves
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, halved
- 250g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 100g feta cheese, crumbled

- DRESSING**
- 1/3 cup chopped flat leaf parsley leaves
- ¼ cup chopped chives
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to season

Whole orange and chocolate cake

MAKES A 22CM-ROUND CAKE.

Flourless citrus cake is a classic. Always moist, never too sweet, and a whole lot more interesting than a sponge cake. This one is made more lush with chocolate and whole citrus. We use oranges but feel free to use other Riverland citrus fruit instead.

INGREDIENTS

2 oranges
200g dark chocolate
100g butter
8 eggs
1 cup caster sugar
3 cups almond meal
1 tsp baking powder

METHOD

- 1** Place oranges in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 30 minutes or until the oranges are completely soft. Drain and allow to cool completely. Break the cooled oranges up a bit, pull out as many seeds as you can, then blend to a pale paste using a hand-held blender or food processor.
- 2** Place a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water, ensuring the bowl isn't touching the water, then add chocolate and butter and melt together, stirring to combine. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.
- 3** Preheat oven to 180C and grease a 22cm cake tin with butter. In a large bowl, beat the eggs with sugar until frothy. Fold in almond meal, baking powder, the blended oranges and the chocolate mixture. Stir gently to combine, then pour into the tin. Bake for 1 hour and 20 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Allow to cool completely before serving.



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Your winter growing guide

WINTER is generally considered a vegetable-growing dead zone in most places, but South Australian winter is actually still a very decent time to grow vegetables.

The one caveat is that during winter, veggies have to get a lot of sunshine, so shaded areas are out for winter growing. If you are planning to plant from seed, full sunshine is doubly important because seeds are activated by heat.

Typically we experience the first

substantial rainfall in late April or early May so if you've planted anything recently, hopefully you've been keeping an eye on them (also watching out for your pot plants drying out).

If your soil has been dry for an extended period it can become water repellent/hydrophobic (look for water pooling on the surface), which can be fixed with a good soil wetting agent and/or seaweed-based additives.

You can grow your winter greens

from seed in autumn or, if you leave it too late, try planting seedlings in early winter.

Having a vegetable garden in the winter allows homeowners to grow crops for use in the early spring. Growing winter crops like kale, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts will allow you to harvest a good yield after the winter if you plan ahead.

Some kale varieties are kale green, kale red Russian and kale Tuscan cavolo nero. Silverbeet varieties include silverbeet five

colour mix and silverbeet fordhook giant.

While winter can be considered the slower time in the garden, you can use this time to sort out problems that have irritated you such as underperforming plants, which you can remove.

Or perhaps you've been pining to add a water feature, a new garden edging or an entertainment area to enjoy your garden? Do some research and get cracking.



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RHUBARB

Rhubarbs edible stalks grow from a central crown and this popular vegetable is most commonly eaten as a sweet! Once established in your garden, rhubarb is there to stay.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	1cm	7-14 days	50cm	2 yrs



ASPARAGUS

Asparagus is a classic garden vegetable. You'll need to wait 2 years from planting before harvesting an asparagus crop - but it's worth the wait, as Asparagus will be in your garden for the long haul! Each plant will keep on producing for up to 15 years.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	15-20cm	2-8 wks	30-50cm	2 yrs



GLOBE ARTICHOKE

Globe artichoke are thistle-like plants that produce edible flowers - harvested and eaten in their bud stage, before they open.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	1cm	14-21 days	90cm	14 wks



SPINACH

Spinach is rich in iron, fibre and other essential vitamins and this easy to grow veg is ready to harvest, leaf by leaf, in just 6-8 weeks.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	2cm	10-14 days	30cm	6-8 wks



CABBAGE

Cabbages are an easy and versatile vegetable for you to grow and enjoy at home! It can be eaten raw, cooked into dumplings, casseroles, stews and stir-fries, and even pickled or fermented into sauerkraut or kimchi.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	1cm	7-10 days	45cm	12 wks



BROCCOLI

Broccoli is a must have in every home veggie patch - it's productive, nutritious and very easy to grow. Although they're considered a cool season vegetable, broccoli plants can be grown year-round in most areas of the Australia.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	5mm	7-14 days	45cm	12 wks



KALE

Kale is an easy to grow leafy vegetable that has become popular thanks to its superfood status because it's rich in essential nutrients. It's closely related to broccoli, cabbage and Brussels sprouts - so it likes similar growing conditions.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	1cm	6-12 days	40cm	10 wks



LETTUCE

Lettuce is an easy to grow, staple leafy green that can be easily grown year-round. You can grow lettuce quickly from seeds or seedlings, planted into a full sun to part shade spot.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	3mm	7-15 days	20cm	1-20 mths



LEEK

Leeks are a sweet and mild member of the onion family. They thrive in cold and warm temperate climates but can be planted in autumn or winter in all regions of Australia.

POSITION	SOW DEPTH	GERMINATION	PLANT SPACE	HARVEST
Full sun	5mm	10-14 days	20cm	5-6 mths

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AG NEWS



Research to investigate prevalence of PFAS in livestock

A NEW national study by the University of Adelaide will seek to understand the prevalence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in Australian livestock, with researchers seeking farmers who have previously applied biosolids as fertiliser to be collaborators in the project.

PFAS have previously been observed in Australian livestock, with higher rates found in areas where PFAS concentrations in the environment are elevated.

This research project will focus on the correlation between PFAS in livestock that grazes on land which has received sewage biosolids or wastewater in the past 10 years.

"In livestock, PFAS primarily trace back to their presence in the environment, notably in drinking water, plant and feed," University of Adelaide School of Agriculture, Food and Wine member Shervin Kabiri said.

"One potential way it can accumulate in the environment is from biosolids and wastewater effluent. These organic waste streams are utilised as fertiliser, recycling nutrients back into agricultural land and reducing the demand for synthetic fertilisers.

"However, the potential for PFAS contamination necessitates a better understanding of the risks involved."

Elevated concentrations of PFAS in livestock could have implications for both animal and human health.

Dr Kabiri and the research team are recruiting farmers from South Australia who have used sewage biosolids or effluent as fertiliser in the past 10 years on fields now used to raise sheep or cattle livestock.

Participating farmers will be asked to provide access to their properties so researchers can collect 30ml blood samples from 20 sheep or cattle, as well as collect water and soil samples.

"We will make sure to keep a high level of privacy and data confidentiality," Dr Kabiri said.

"No individual PFAS results will be shared with anyone besides the participating farmer. However, participating farmers will receive their personal test results with a complementary consultation on what these results mean."

As our understanding of the health implications of exposure to PFAS evolves, it is important to better understand its prevalence in the environment.

"The correlation of PFAS and the application of biosolids in agriculture is a complex field involving environmental samples, livestock sampling, and extensive farmer engagement, which has meant investigations into the issue have been limited," Dr Kabiri said.

Farmers interested in participating in the PFAS in livestock study can register their interest by contacting Dr Salomon via email (matthias.salomon@adelaide.edu.au).

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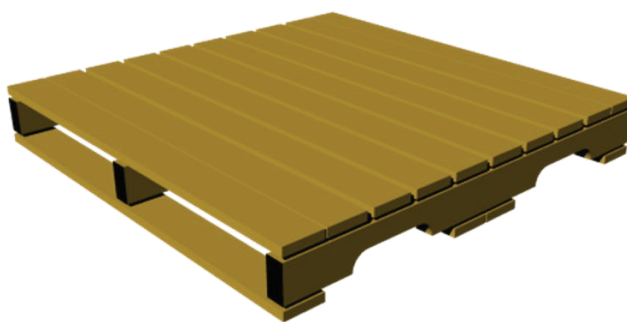
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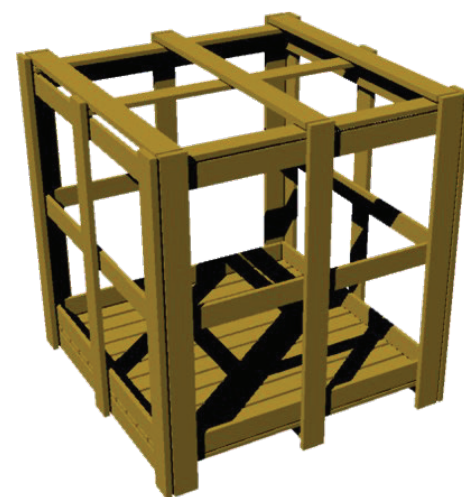
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