

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia well placed for growing global demand for almonds

The popularity of almonds will continue to grow and Australia is well placed to take advantage of the global boom.

That was the exciting message that was consistently delivered during the annual Australian Almond Industry Conference, held in Mildura in November.

More than 180 delegates attended the two-day conference, which featured a wide range of guest speakers on issues such as:

- Marketing initiatives, including new magazine adverts highlighting the health benefits of almonds
- The latest research and development in a number of fields
- Encouraging the next generation into the industry
- Trends in the world market

Despite the prevailing water shortage, conference delegates were consistently reminded by guest speakers that they were well placed to survive and prosper.

The conference's keynote speaker was Californian almond producer Joe MacIrvine, President of Paramount Farms – a company that produces more almonds than the combined Australian industry.

Mr MacIrvine told delegates that Australia's Murray Darling Basin was one of the few places in the world where almonds could be produced. "That puts you in a very strong position as world consumption continues to grow", he said. "Our research shows that eventually almonds will become a staple of many diets around the world because they have taste, flexibility and health benefits. We expect demand to continue to grow for some time yet."

However, Mr MacIrvine also provided several telling insights on water and food regulations. He said working with a reduced irrigation allocation had been considered a fact of life in California for some time and not just an anomaly of drought.

Mr Brian Ezell, managing director of Paramount Farms almond division also warned Australian growers to be ready to deal with ever-increasing food regulations when exporting to Europe. He cited aflatoxins and pasteurisation as two key issues the Australian industry will need to confront in the near future.

Murray Darling Basin Commission general manager David Dreverman gave a frank assessment of the short term availability of water in the basin and the role irrigators had played in the current health of the river system.

Other guest speakers at the conference included ANZ's Head of Economics Tony Pearson, research scientists Tapas Biswas, Tim Pitt and Michelle Wirthensohn, and former Australian Test cricketer Max Walker.

ABA chief executive Julie Haslett said she was delighted with the level of support the conference had received and was excited about what the future held for the Australian industry.

For further information contact:

Julie Haslett, Almond Board of Australia CEO on 0418 958 187 or 08 8582 2055

The Almond Board of Australia (ABA) is a non profit, membership based organisation representing the interests of Australian almond growers, processors and marketers.

As the Australian almond industry's peak industry body, the ABA facilitates further growth of the industry, seeks to maximise its profitability and ensure its sustainability, by providing a platform for industry members to collectively respond to industry-wide issues, invest in research and marketing, share knowledge and interact with government and other stakeholders.

The Australian Almond Industry currently produces 27,000 tonnes of almonds on an annual basis, with a related farm gate value of \$180 million dollars. Production is expected to triple by 2015 as new plantings reach full maturity, with a related value of \$500 million dollars.

Key almond growing areas are located in Sunraysia (Victoria), the Riverland and Adelaide (South Australia) and the Riverina region (New South Wales).

For more information visit www.australianalmonds.com.au or email: admin@australianalmonds.com.au