

## MEDIA RELEASE

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## Almond Industry urges Government to take a proactive approach to water

The Almond Board of Australia (ABA) is urging the Federal Government to broker an affordable water leasing system across the Murray Darling Basin to keep almond trees, and other permanent crop plantings, alive this summer.

ABA chief executive Julie Haslett said today current water shortages are severely impacting on many growers and rural communities.

Mrs Haslett said almond growers urgently need to source temporary trade water to keep their trees alive. "Our growers are faced with both the high cost of water and cash flow limitations.

"If we don't get enough water to keep trees alive, the industry and the many rural communities affected will be set back 10 years or more."

Mrs Haslett said the ABA supported calls for providing cash relief and incentives to growers of annual crops to make their water available for permanent plantings.

"Government initiatives to facilitate water trade would deliver a "win-win" outcome for growers and rural communities by providing much needed cash flow to annual croppers and tree survival for permanent plantings.

The Almond industry urgently calls on Government to consider the following initiatives:

- Interest rate relief, cost subsidies and/or tax incentives that will assist growers of permanent plantings access temporary and permanent water
- Active encouragement for growers of annual crops to temporarily trade water to increase the supply available for survival of permanent plantings
- Facilitate more timely trade between states and regions
- Improve and facilitate communication to ensure growers are fully informed on water supply and availability of trade options
- Allow the temporary use by permanent plantings of water purchased by the Government intended for environmental use until supply improves.

"The Almond industry welcomes Government efforts in providing exceptional circumstances relief to growers, however a more proactive approach is urgently required to ensure the survival of our permanent plantings," Mrs Haslett said.

"The overall cost of maintaining permanent plantings through the temporary trade of water is much less than the potential economic loss of future production, or the cost of a replanting program if our plantings are allowed to die.

"Government investment in this process makes both economic and social sense."

Mrs Haslett said that there was some movement of water via both temporary and permanent trades from annual crops to permanent planting, but it was at inflated prices which are now reaching records levels.

"The price is providing much needed relief to the seller, but this is placing severe cost and cash flow pressures on buyers looking to protect their trees," she said.

Both the Australian almond industry's international competitiveness and the increasing world consumption of nuts have supported a rapid expansion over the last ten years, with investment now in excess of \$1 billion dollars. The industry's young plantings will see annual tonnage triple over the next eight years delivering annual revenue of around \$500 million dollars, with over 50% of production servicing expanding export markets.

This industry expansion has provided a much needed boost to rural communities and will continue to provide employment and economic benefits as the industry further develops.

**For further information contact:**

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*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 25,000 tonnes of almonds on an annual basis, with a related farm gate value of \$150 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](http://www.australianalmonds.com.au) or email: [admin@australianalmonds.com.au](mailto:admin@australianalmonds.com.au)*