

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia set to benefit from increased almond consumption

The Australian almond industry is set to benefit from an exciting marketing strategy by its American counterpart to make almonds 'the nut of choice' among consumers around the world.

It has been revealed at the Almond Board of Australia's annual conference in the Barossa Valley that the world's biggest producer of almonds has an impressive five year plan to make almonds the world's most popular nut.

California produces 80 percent of the world's almonds, while Australia is poised to overtake Spain as the second largest producer.

The Almond Board of California's global marketing manager Shirley Horn told conference delegates that their research indicated that the industry had "enormous" growth potential.

Mrs Horn said that if Australian industry could solve its water supply problems it was perfectly placed to capitalise on significant demand growth on the horizon.

"We have only started to scratch the surface in regard to increasing almond consumption around the world. The almond has everything going for it – people are prepared to pay more for it, there are a wide range of health benefits from eating it regularly and it is so versatile."

Mrs Horn cited China, India and Europe as key markets in her global "nut of choice" plan.

Mrs Horn was one of a number of guest speakers at the ABA Conference who gave timely insights into the issues facing the industry. Others included water scientist Professor Mike Young, the CSIRO's chief bee researcher Dr Denis Anderson, former Reserve Bank economist Jeff Oughton, SA Agriculture Minister Rory McEwen and SARDI's drought irrigation project co-ordinator Mark Skewes.

Key conference messages included:

- Pollination and water security are the two biggest issues facing Californian and Australian industries.
- The world's bee population has declined by 25% in less than 40 years, placing greater pollination pressures on industries like almonds. One third of the world's food production relies on bees.
- Australia is the only country in the world that has not been infiltrated by the deadly mite, varroa destructor, which will wipe out the feral (wild) bee population when it arrives. The mite has already been found in Papua New Guinea and New Zealand and it is considered only a matter of time before it arrives on these shores.
- The formation of Pollination Australia is the first step in structuring an industry that until now has been fragmented and not properly represented at government level.

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- The global financial crisis means growers should be 'stress testing their business' and keeping an eye on the global economy.
- The almond industry is one of the most efficient water users in the Murray Darling Basin, utilising the latest technology in fertigation, sub-surface drip irrigation and soil water monitoring equipment.

ABA chief executive Julie Haslett said the record attendance was a reflection on the quality of speakers who had committed to the conference.

"After listening to Shirley, it is encouraging to know that the Australian industry is right on track in the marketing department.

"The Australian almond industry is winning widespread respect as an emerging force within the horticulture sector. Although we have several major issues to confront both individually and as an industry, we are fortunate that there is a level of co-operation and professionalism among our members that has allowed us to enhance our profile and be heard at all levels of government."

- For further information contact ABA chief executive Julie Haslett on 08 85822055.

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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 or email: admin@australianalmonds.com.au