

MEDIA RELEASE

February 16, 2010

Local almond farmers' harvest gets underway

Almond orchards across the South Australian Riverland region is currently alive with activity as almond growers are harvesting this year's crop which is set to be a significant improvement on last year.

Crop forecast figures released by the Almond Board of Australia (ABA) reveal a 25 percent increase in the 2010 Australian harvest which is expected to produce 46,100 tonnes of almonds, up from 36,500 tonnes in 2009.

ABA chairman and local almond grower, Brendan Sidhu is harvesting the 464 hectares of almond trees at the Jubilee Almonds orchard, located a short drive from the Waikerie township.

Currently in his first week of the six to seven week almond harvest period, Brendan is pleased with the crop outlook.

"Despite the heat spell we experienced last October, which hurt the crop slightly, the outlook is positive," Brendan said.

Over the next few weeks as the harvest continues across the region, almond growers will be hoping for dry weather.

"Rain slows up the harvesting process. The almonds need to dry on the ground before we can come through with machinery, collect and then store the crop. The almonds are ready to be collected when the kernel has less than six per cent moisture and the hull less than 14 per cent moisture. We measure this with the help of a moisture meter.

"When it rains, the hull of the almond acts like a sponge, soaking up the water and slowing down the drying process. Wet almonds can take up to eight to 10 days to dry. With dry conditions, this only takes on average two to three days," Brendan explained.

Almond Board of Australia (ABA) CEO, Julie Haslett said the outlook for the Australian almond industry is positive.

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“The positive 2010 crop forecast figures show yet again that the Australian almond industry is on the rise - and it is only going to continue. Less than 20 per cent of all Australian almond plantings have reached full maturity so there will be a significant increase in almond production within the next decade,” Haslett said.

Key almond growing regions include Sunraysia in Victoria, the Riverland and Adelaide in SA and the Riverina region in NSW.

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

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For further information visit www.australianalmonds.com.au or contact: Julie Haslett, Almond Board of Australia CEO on 0418 958 187 or 08 8582 2055

Background:

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 36,000 tonnes of almonds on an annual basis, with a related value of \$250 million dollars. Production is expected to more than double 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