

MEDIA RELEASE

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Local almond farmers' harvest set to exceed the crop of 2009

Almond orchards across the Sunraysia region are 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.

Local almond grower and Cowanna Almond Harvesting contractor, Neale Bennett is currently harvesting over 1,200 acres of almond trees across the Sunraysia region of Victoria.

Currently in his first week of the six to eight-week almond harvest period, Neale is pleased with the crop outlook.

"The almonds appear to be bigger in size than those of last year. The harvest is looking as though it will be as good as the crop of 2009 which is surprising as we usually experience one good crop and then an average crop," said Neale.

"The success of this year's crop can be attributed to the local farmers across the Sunraysia region's successful management of water restrictions and crop nutritional programs. This year the water allocations have been better," said Neale.

Despite the need for rain in the region, over the next few weeks as the harvest continues across the Sunraysia region, almond growers will be hoping for dry weather.

"Unfortunately we have gotten off to a slow start this harvest season due to the wet weather. When we have dry weather conditions, the nuts normally take five to seven days to dry before we can come through with machinery and collect the crop. If it rains, this process is slowed down," Neale explained.

Almond harvest occurs when the kernel is at an acceptable moisture level, ideally lower than six per cent. The orchard floors are cleared of large weeds and swept of all foreign material. Shakers are used to vibrate the tree trunk, so that the husks, shells and nuts inside fall to the orchard floor. After drying, they are swept into rows and picked up ready for storage.

Almond Board of Australia (ABA) CEO, Julie Haslett says 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