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# Chris cracks inaugural almond award

**A** LIFETIME of involvement with almond growing has been recognised for one South Australian grower. The inaugural Australian Almond Industry Phil Watters Award was presented to Loxton almond grower Craig Spilsbury (pictured) at this year's Australian Almond Conference held in the Barossa Valley, South Australia.

The Phil Watters Award recognises service to the Australian almond industry, in particular a dedication to research, development and the improvement of almond production, adoption of best practice and promotion of horticulture to the community.

Craig said he felt privileged to be the 2009 recipient of this prestigious industry award.

"It is a great honour to receive an award dedicated in the memory of a man who contributed so much to the Australian almond industry," Craig said.

The 41-year-old Craig has long been associated with the Australian almond industry, with his family being one of the earlier almond producers in Willunga, south of Adelaide.

"My family began farming almonds in 1935, so almond farming is well and truly in my blood," he said.

"I've grown up working on the family orchards and always loved what I do.

"The Australian almond industry is such an interesting and dynamic industry to be a part of."

Craig began his career as an almond grower, developing his first orchard in 1991 at Loxton.

Since then, Craig has been a valuable contributor to the Australian almond industry.

Over the past eight years, he has been one of the original growers to adopt and refine some of the research and best practice coming out of the industry's R&D project known as the CT Optimisation Trial.

Using expertise from Israel, the CT Optimisation Trial looked at a new management program for irrigating and fertilising almonds.

Craig was in close contact with the research project, and quickly recognised the benefits and results it was producing.

He has since shared his results and techniques with many other growers.

The Australian Almond Industry Phil Watters Award is dedicated to the memory of Phil Watters (1974-2007), a widely respected individual and dedicated technical officer in the almond industry, who became a role model for young and upcoming horticultural students.

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

