



Know-how for Horticulture™



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



MEDIA RELEASE

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Local experts appointed to help horticulture irrigators with decision making

The Australian Table Grape Association has been contracted on behalf of the Murray Valley Horticultural Alliance to help horticulture irrigators in the Sunraysia region access the financial and agronomic information they need to make business decisions in the face of reduced water availability.

Through the project, growers are able to access one-on-one, free, confidential sessions with local Extension Providers who have a background in horticulture or finance. **It is available to all horticulture irrigators, not just table grape growers.**

Jeff Scott, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Table Grape Association, says the service is designed to help growers manage their businesses today, and plan for tomorrow.

“There are some big decisions to make this year, and with vineyards and orchards particularly, any actions taken can have a long-term impact.

“Our Extension Providers can act as a sounding board as you work through the options, whether that’s pulling trees, planting new varieties, buying or selling water, expanding or trying something entirely different,” Mr Scott said.

The Extension Providers for Sunraysia are:

- **Alison MacGregor**, a consultant with Scholefield Robinson Mildura Pty Ltd and former research scientist with the Victorian DPI, who now consults in a wide range of horticultural industries in the region.
- **Craig Swanbury**, who is the general manager of Fruit Doctors and has 15 years’ experience as a specialist consultant in pest and disease management and general horticultural management.
- **Garth Swinburn**, a senior consultant with Scholefield Robinson Mildura Pty Ltd with 26 years of experience in horticultural production, business management and marketing of horticultural crops.
- **Graeme Thornton**, who has seven years’ experience as a rural financial counsellor and was previously an irrigation development coordinator. Graeme also helped to run a family operated vineyard and citrus orchard located at Barmera for almost 15 years.
- **James Altmann**, who has 20 years’ experience as a specialist horticultural consultant, most recently with Fruit Doctors, providing extension advice in all aspects of crop management.
- **Stephen Kelly**, a consultant with more than 15 years’ experience in group facilitation and project evaluation. Stephen has previously worked with Sunraysia horticulturalists through involvement in the Drying for Profit and Grapecheque programs. Stephen also has a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics.

The project is being run by Horticulture Australia Limited in partnership with industry and supported by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Sunraysia irrigator Tony Martin is chair of the project's Implementation Steering Committee. He says water scarcity is a major issue for irrigated horticulture in the Murray-Darling Basin.

"To ensure the profitability and sustainability of the industry, we need to give horticulture irrigators access to good agronomic and financial information," Mr Martin said.

"There's a lot of information out there from a variety of sources, and the Extension Providers have the knowledge and skills to help growers access information that is most relevant to them.

"The project is being run until the end of October across the southern Murray-Darling Basin, in the Goulburn Valley, Swan Hill, the Riverina and South Australia as well as Sunraysia."

For more information, including contact details in other regions, go to the HAL website, www.horticulture.com.au/mdbdroughtinfo

The Australian Table Grape Association is the peak industry body representing commercial table grape growers from across the country.

Call 03 5021 5718, email atga@ncable.com.au or contact individual Extension Providers to set up an appointment.

- Alison MacGregor, 0419 229 713, amacgregor@ncable.com.au
- Craig Swanbury, 08 8584 6977, info@fruitdoctors.com.au
- Garth Swinburn, 0419 117 369, srm@ncable.com.au
- Graeme Thornton, 0427 164 490, gthornton@sunrcs.com.au
- James Altmann, 08 8584 6977, info@fruitdoctors.com.au
- Stephen Kelly, 0418 353 961, Stephen@stephenkelly.com.au

In partnership with industry and supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Horticulture Australia Limited has developed this project "Drought Information Delivery for Horticulture in the Murray Darling Basin" (MDB) as part of the Australian Government's Irrigation Industries Workshop Programme.

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