

# Boost for dried fruit prices

By Peter Lamb

MAJOR Sunraysia dried vine fruit packer Sunbeam Foods has upped its bid to match or improve on offers by competitor Clyne Foods made earlier this month.

Sunbeam said its higher minimum contract prices reflected the increase in international markets and competitive elements within the domestic market.

Compared to last year, Sunbeam's prices will increase by \$470 a tonne for the 5 Crown and 4 Crown light grades of sultana and \$455 a tonne for both 5 Crown light and 4 Crown light sunmuscats.

Sunbeam Foods Supply and Processing general manager Chris Ellis said yesterday Sunbeam had announced price rises for each specific grade, and even for the lowest grade sultanas the price had increased by \$345 a tonne.

"The prices apply to all Sunbeam's contracted growers and include any contract premium," Mr Ellis said.

"Uncontracted growers can take advantage of the new pricing by contacting a Sunbeam field officer and negotiating a supply agreement."

Mr Ellis said this year's outlook could well be about half last season's 18,000 tonnes-plus.

"This rain will certainly give growers heart," he said.

"If we get another fall or two and a bit of cooler weather, it will all help.

"Where we go this year will depend on rain on our vines and what sort of water allocations growers end up with. On the plus side, we have very good fruit set and higher international prices."

He said the Horticulture Australia statistics indicated Sunbeam bought 15,789 tonnes and Clyne bought 2491 tonnes of dried vine fruit last season.

The Sunbeam announcement follows the company's earlier

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commitment to update growers and the Australian Dried Fruits Association, and bring forward the 2008 price announcements to help growers manage their businesses during the drought.

Sunbeam prices now stand at \$1800 a tonne for 4 and 5 Crown light sultanas; \$1600 a tonne for 3 Crown light, 5 and 4 Crown brown sultanas; \$1460 a tonne for 3 Crown brown sultanas; \$1820 a tonne for 4 and 5 Crown light sunmuscat; \$1620 for 3 Crown light and 4 and 5 Crown

brown sunmuscat; and \$1480 for 3 Crown brown sunmuscat.

Choice natural sultanas will attract \$1600 a tonne; standard naturals \$1450 a tonne; 4 Crown currants, \$1450 a tonne; 3 Crown currants \$1350 a tonne; and 4 and 5 Crown raisins \$1850 a tonne.

A fortnight ago, Clyne Foods spokesman Norm Clyne confirmed they'd raised their offer to \$1800 a tonne for Premium Plus fruit (equivalent to 5 Crown); \$1720 a tonne for Premium Sultana (4 Crown light); and \$1700 a tonne for Sunmuscat.

"The other lines are still a work in progress," Mr Clyne said at the time.

Yesterday, Mr Clyne said they hadn't reviewed prices again but had "gone out early to enable growers to do their sums" in regard buying water.

"We've achieved a lot by doing that, and we'll continue to work with growers in regard all grades," Mr Clyne said.

He said the rain in past days would be an enormous help.

Mr Clyne said he was "extremely pleased" with grower support in 2007-08.

"We're extremely confident we'll get 3500 to 4000 tonnes."