

THE AUSTRALIAN DRIED FRUITS ASSOCIATION INC.

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NEWS RELEASE

ADFA Welcomes Federal Funding For Dried Fruits Industry Projects

The Australian Dried Fruits Association (ADFA) has welcomed the announcement by Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry, Warren Truss that he had approved Industry Partnerships Program funding of \$556,500 for five dried fruits industry projects.

ADFA Chairman, Peter Jones said the Minister's decision was significant for the dried grape industry and the ADFA. "The Industry Partnerships Program was recently established to provide strategic investment in industries that are under pressure from new market competition or industry structural issues. Anyone involved in the dried fruits industry appreciates the continuing pressure that exists on growers and industry stakeholders."

"The ADFA prepared a funding proposal for consideration by the Minister following the success earlier this year in obtaining funds for a consultancy to develop a new dried grape grower training program."

"The ADFA Industry Partnerships Project consists of five individual projects:

- * Pilot Grower Training Program to revise the dried grape industry training program - *Dried Grapes- a Growing Business*
- * Dried Grape Industry Benchmarking
- * Dried Grape Crop Plantings & Food Safety Database
- * Dried Vine Fruits Production Manual
- * Dried fruits consumer research study

This industry/Government partnership will enable us to address a range of industry weaknesses and risks in the areas of training, technical information, industry planning and consumer research to identify better marketing and promotion strategies in the domestic market.

"The aim of the ADFA project is to improve the Australian dried grape industry's profitability, sustainability and competitiveness through these five separate but related projects that must be completed by 30 June 2005" said Mr Jones.

"In addition to the significant Government funding being provided, ADFA & other industry stakeholders will be allocating significant resources to help ensure the successful completion of the five projects".

The objectives for these individual projects are:

1. Increase profitability, productivity and sustainability through improved farm business, production and environmental management skills to enable growers to reach relevant industry performance benchmarks. Growers will gain skills and knowledge to analyse and

evaluate their own dried grape business and make informed decisions about new production practices and plan for future redevelopment.

2. Increase dried grape industry profitability and sustainability by growers using an industry specific benchmarking system that encourages growers to lift their performance towards industry best practice. This benchmarking system will be a tool for ongoing industry use and complement the dried grape grower training program.
3. Improve industry production planning and quality assurance management through a more comprehensive, efficient and accessible dried grape industry database system.
4. Increase dried grape industry adoption of the latest technology and cultural practices by better industry access to the updated ADFA Dried Vine Fruits production manual.
5. Increase the Australian consumption of dried fruits by marketing and promotion. A target of dried grape consumption has been set at 2.25 kg/head of population through diversifying usage patterns and product differentiation.

The ADFA Project will enable a joint strategic investment to be made by Government and industry in a range of priority areas including: training and skills development, benchmarking and business management, industry planning, provision of valuable technical information resources and researching domestic market requirements.

The individual project activities will be to:

1. Implement a pilot training program to revise the dried grape industry training program - Dried Grapes a Growing Business (\$104,250). This will involve 20-25 growers with training delivered at 10 workshops over the 12 month production cycle. The resulting revised training program will be available for industry-wide uptake in 2005-06.
2. Design and implement a dried grape industry benchmarking program using records from 50 growers (\$104,800). Software will be modified to provide a range of financial, environmental and social indicators, to meet the needs of the dried grape industry. A software manual will also be produced to allow ongoing use of benchmarking by the dried grape industry. This project will help stimulate grower interest and encourage participation in the grower training program.
3. Upgrade dried grape industry Crop Plantings and Food Safety database by combining existing databases and improving crop planting information (\$70,000). Database capability will be expanded to enable individuals to benchmark their performance against industry best practice in areas such as chemical use. The options for entering data will be assessed to improve industry input to the database.
4. Print updated ADFA Dried Vine Fruits Production Manuals (\$25,000).
5. Undertake An Extensive Consumer Research Study – including a survey of 2000 adults using a range of quantitative and qualitative survey methods to identify consumption patterns for the dried fruit sector and identify opportunities for future growth (\$197,450). The study will provide the industry with the latest consumer trend and attitudinal information on which to base its ongoing marketing and promotion strategies to raise consumption of Australian dried fruits. The study will establish ways to:
 - * expand retail sales in the dried fruits category, particularly dried vine fruits
 - * increase dried vine fruits consumption to 2.25 kg per head of population
 - * diversify usage patterns
 - * provide differentiation and positioning of brands

“This ADFA Project will see significant funds & resources invested in the dried fruits industry through the five individual projects outlined. We expect to see a range of useful outcomes that will put this industry on a sound footing for the future and help engender confidence amongst growers” said Mr Jones.

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