

# The Australian Dried Grape Industry...

FROM BEGINNINGS TO TODAY

The dried grape industry began in Australia in the late 1880s, when George and William Chaffey, two Canadian brothers who had successfully irrigated arid land in California, USA recognised the potential to do the same around the Murray River. They wanted to transform the area into an "oasis in the desert".

The Chaffey brothers worked closely with Federal and State government authorities. By 1893, they had 8,000 acres under irrigation, supplying around 3,500 pioneer fruit growers, growing largely vine and citrus crops. However in those days transporting fruit, firstly by river to Echuca and then by rail to Melbourne took several days and fresh produce would often spoil along the way. When a promised rail link to Mildura did not eventuate, growers began drying their grapes for freighting to Melbourne and other markets.

At the same time, the need for unity among growers became apparent as they faced difficulties in obtaining fair prices for their fruit. As a result growers began to organise themselves and in 1895 the Mildura Raisin Trust and the Renmark Raisin Trust were both formed. Initially the two organisations operated independently of each other, but they shared the same objectives of protecting growers by regulating prices, setting standard terms and conditions of sale and promoting exports.

In 1907, the two organisations joined to become the Australian Dried Fruits Association (ADFA). From its inception, the ADFA was established by dried fruit growers to protect their interests.

In 1923 the Association underwent a crisis when returns to growers crashed to very low levels, largely as a result of

additional production flowing from the World War I soldier settlement schemes. A subsequent re-structure led to increased focus on export and on meeting local grower requirements for profitable returns.

In Australia today grapes are grown for the dried grape industry in the Riverland in South Australia, the Swan Valley Bindoon regions and in Western Australia, as well as in the Sunraysia region which spans northwest Victoria and southwest NSW around the Murray river.

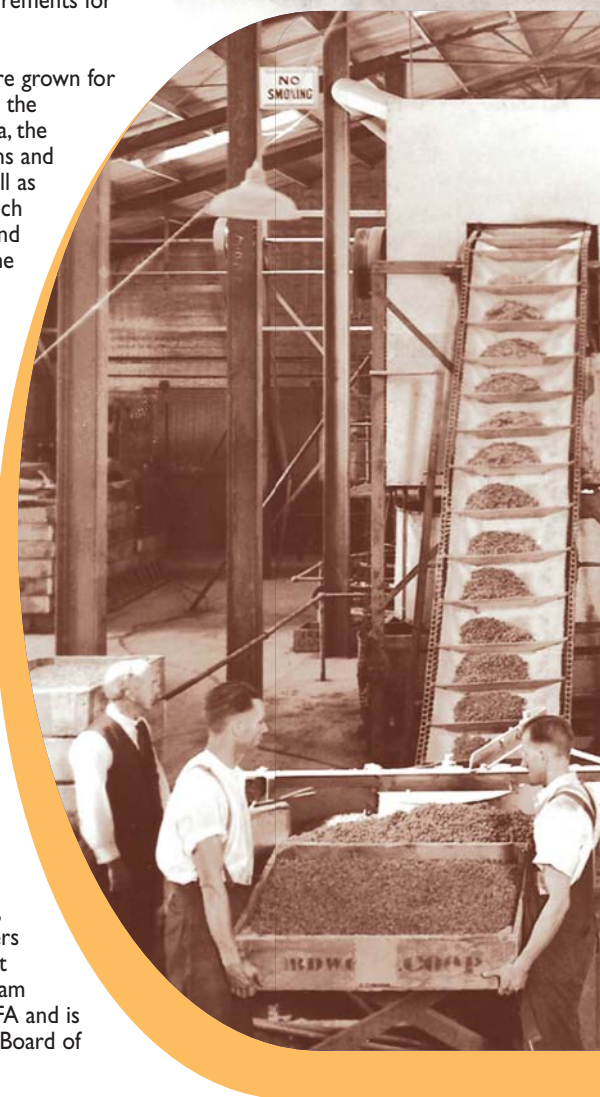
The ADFA is an active and effective grower-based organisation that is committed to seeking profitable returns to growers. It represents growers' interests to all outside parties including government and provides a forum for discussion and decision making on all matters relating to the conduct and management of the Australian dried fruits industry.

ADFA membership includes both growers and processor/marketers. There are currently about 1,000 dried grape growers, many of whom are members of ADFA. Australia's largest processor/marketer, Sunbeam Foods, is a member of ADFA and is represented on the ADFA Board of Management.



The Mildura Co-operative Fruit Company, Mildura, Victoria.

PACKING SHED No. 1.



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Australian Dried Fruits Association

Enjoy the grape taste

A History of Dried Grapes