

Growers invited to have their say on citrus levies

Growers can have input into the future of their levies at Citrus Australia's upcoming regional forums, to be held across the south eastern growing regions.

Growers, along with packers, marketers and supply chain stakeholders, are invited to attend the forums, which will also showcase the latest developments in market access and biosecurity.

Citrus Australia Chief Executive Officer Judith Damiani says currently growers pay \$2/tonne to Horticulture Australia and Plant Health Australia to fund the national citrus research and development (R&D) program and biosecurity.

"This is not enough to fund the five year industry strategy which the industry has agreed upon.

"To build a profitable future for citrus in the Asian century we need greater investment in R&D and biosecurity."

Citrus Australia has begun consulting with growers around a proposed combined levy increase of \$1.50/tonne. This change would increase the R&D levy from \$1.97/tonne to \$3.20/tonne, while also lifting the biosecurity level from \$0.03/tonne to \$0.30/tonne.

Judith says the R&D levy has not increased for almost 20 years. "It is like running today's business with a 20-year-old budget."

She says the raised R&D levy would target export and domestic market opportunities for higher priced products.

"This means better on-farm productivity and better access to new markets."

Past research has led to new markets, including China and the Philippines; and improvements in others such as Japan.

"Our China trade last year was worth \$21 million, up from nothing in 2010. That is really making your levies work for you."

An increase in the biosecurity levy would fund critical programs that safeguard the health of Australia's citrus industry against Huanglongbing and citrus canker, as well as including the National Fruit Fly Strategy.

To read more about the proposed increases to the citrus levies go to citruspoll2014.com

Riverina Regional Forum: 5pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, 7 April at the Southside Griffith Leagues Club. RSVP to Simone Jones on 03 5023 6333 or email admin@citrusaustralia.com.au.

Mid-Murray Regional Forum: 11am to 2:00pm on Tuesday, 8 April at the Barham & District Services Club. RSVP to Simone Jones on 03 5023 6333 or email admin@citrusaustralia.com.au.

Sunraysia Regional Forum: 9:45am to 1.00pm on Thursday, 10 April at the Mildura Golf Club Resort. RSVP to Simone Jones on 03 5023 6333 or email admin@citrusaustralia.com.au.

South Australia Regional Forum: 8:45am to 3:30pm on Monday, 14 April in Waikerie. RSVP to Sam Rogers on 0429 936 812 or email sam.rogers@citrusaustralia.com.au.

Western Australia Regional Forum: 10am to 3pm on Wednesday, 7 May. Bindoon/Moora area. Bus departs Bindoon at 8.30am. RSVP to Bronwyn Walsh on 0400 873 875 or email bronwyn.walsh@agric.wa.gov.au.

ENDS

Media Contact: For more information and interview opportunities, please contact Citrus Australia. Tel: 03-5023 6333.

Citrus Australia Ltd is the national peak body for citrus growers. Citrus Australia represents the industry in policy and advocacy, biosecurity, market access, development and promotion, research, and communications. The citrus industry in Australia is worth \$540 million and represents the interests of around 1800 citrus growers. It is the largest fresh fruit exporter, with annual export earnings of around \$190 million. Go to <http://www.citrusaustralia.com.au/>.