

South Australian citrus growers head to the polls

South Australian citrus growers head to the polls this week to decide on the level of levy investment, as part of the National Citrus Growers' Levy 2014 Ballot.

The Ballot will commence 9am AEDT Wednesday, 29 October 2014 and will remain open for one month.

South Australian grower and Chair of Citrus Australia South Australian Regions (CASAR) Con Poulos said the levy vote is an opportunity for all levy payers to have their say on the future direction of research and development (R&D).

"Australia's citrus industry is small player on the international citrus stage, making up around 1 per cent of the global market," he said. "This means we need to be at the top of our game and investing in our industry is what will keep us ahead of our competitors."

He said the industry currently doesn't have enough funds to fully explore all R&D options.

"Increasing the Horticulture Australia R&D levy will not only allow more R&D projects to be developed for the benefit of the entire industry but it will also expand our R&D to allow specific regional projects to be considered," he said.

Citrus Australia CEO Judith Damiani said the current Horticulture Australia Research and Development (R&D) levy has served the industry for the past 16 years, and the Plant Health Australia biosecurity levy for almost 10 years.

"The current level of investment can no longer fund innovative solutions needed to progress all the industry's R&D priorities such as market access, fruit fly, agrichemicals and biosecurity," she said.

"Many growers are keen to boost funding for R&D and biosecurity measures to better compete in the Asian century and protect their orchards from exotic pests.

"The proposed increase was determined as a result of the cost benefit analysis conducted as part of Horticulture Australia Limited's (HAL) five year citrus R&D plan to demonstrate the level of funding needed to address key industry issues."

The citrus R&D plan was independently facilitated and developed after extensive consultation with growers and industry. It will boost the HAL citrus R&D levy from \$1.97 per tonne to \$3.20 per tonne and the Plant Health Australia biosecurity citrus levy from \$0.03 per tonne to \$0.30 per tonne – a total increase of \$1.50 per tonne.

Voting will commence this Wednesday 29 October. All ballot papers are required to be lodged by 5pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time on Friday 28 November.

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