

Ground-breaking year for citrus industry

Improved trade relations and an increased focus on biosecurity measures are just two of the highlights reported at Citrus Australia's annual general meeting (Thursday, 6 November).

Speaking at the annual general meeting in Brisbane, Citrus Australia Chair Tania Chapman outlined the major successes in improving export returns and achieving the 'ground-breaking' MoU with the China Agriculture Wholesale Market Association.

"During the year, growers set their sights on taking advantage of positive conditions in the Chinese market with a record number registering their blocks," she said. "Premium returns in this market were constant throughout the season and further validated the hard work from growers to improve the quality of their fruit."

She added that work to protect the industry from biosecurity threats ramped up during the year, in partnership with Plant Health Australia, appointing a dedicated citrus biosecurity manager and continuing training and surveillance work.

"These threats can take many forms, including the Queensland fruit fly which is a constant focus for our industry and the biggest cost to getting product to market," she said.

"During the year, we continued to work with industry on reaffirming the correct protocols and ensuring products reach the market in optimal condition, in the most cost effective way."

Citrus Australia CEO Judith Damiani said in the past year the team also had a real focus on consultation, advocacy, market development and quality standards.

"In the past year we boosted our government relations efforts and worked tirelessly to provide a voice for growers and ensure both sides of government were aware of the key issues facing our industry," Ms Damiani said. "Key relationship building was not only the focus in Australia but also a major focus in key Asian export markets.

"We worked closely with the Australian Government ensuring citrus tariffs were eliminated in any free trade deals, including accompanying the Prime Minister on his North Asian trade visit earlier in 2014.

"The gradual elimination of citrus tariffs in Japan and South Korea will have significant benefit to our industry, and we remain confident on a good trade outcome with China."

Judith added the focus wasn't just spent overseas with time spent on the ground upskilling growers to achieve greater success within the export markets and hosting Chinese delegates to showcase the industry as 'sweet, safe and healthy'.

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For further information and high resolution images contact Currie Communications' Sarah Kulman on 0400 006 295 or Citrus Australia on 03 5023 6333.



Citrus Australia and Australian Government representatives meet with the Korean Citrus Growers Association on Jeju Island to discuss opportunities for greater collaboration and trade, Nov 2013.



Citrus farm biosecurity signs were distributed at regional field days/forums.



Members of the China Agriculture Wholesale Market Association inaugural visit to Australia.