

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



Wednesday, 21 October 2020

EPIC JOURNEY OF BEES SECURES VICTORIAN ALMOND SEASON

Victoria's almond harvest has thrived for another year, with a bumper crop expected to be harvested this season despite dry seasonal conditions and difficulties with border movements due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes today visited Cowanna Almonds near Mildura to see the orchards as they develop and contribute to a Victorian crop worth more than an estimated \$500 million and representing around 65 per cent of Australia's total almond export production value.

Without the efforts of the Victorian Government and industry bodies, this season's pollination might not have happened at the required scale.

Each year, about 140,000 beehives are transported in an epic journey between Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria to pollinate the country's 15 million almond trees, 6.6 million of which are in Victoria. In 2020, interstate border controls across Australia threatened to stop the bee movement.

Agriculture Victoria hosted a series of meetings with beekeepers, the almond industry and relevant state governments who worked together to find solutions to safe entry and exit from orchards in a rapidly changing environment.

Almond pollination provides significant economic benefit to the apiary industry as well as the local community who rely on the annual crop.

The cooperation of industry and government has enabled the continued growth and harvest of the high-quality Victorian produce that people enjoy world-wide and brought assurance to the communities that financially rely on this crop.

The work which ensured the 2020 almond pollination season went ahead is particularly pertinent with 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health with the theme "protecting plants, protecting life."

Support is available for Victorian producers to make the operational changes necessary to continue to operate in a COVIDSafe way. For more information visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/agworkforceplan.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"Victoria exports more than \$500 million of almonds each year, making it one of our most valuable horticultural products – that's why it was so vital to ensure border closures didn't stop the bee-dependent pollination process."

"We've worked with agricultural businesses throughout this pandemic to make sure they can keep operating and will keep helping them adapt so Victorians enjoy our high-quality produce."

Quotes attributable to Almond Board of Australia Chief Executive Officer Ross Skinner

"We really appreciated Agriculture Victoria's efforts in keeping all stakeholders up to date with changes and providing safe passage of beehives, their handlers and staff at border check points."

"The movement of hives has enabled the pollination of the 2021 crop that will provide much needed support to the economic wellbeing of our producing regions."

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