

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



Thursday, 22 October 2020

MORE JOBS RIPE FOR PICKING AT PREMIER FRUITS

More than 40 new jobs will be created at Lancaster-based tomato growers Premier Fruits, thanks to support from the Victorian Government for the business to increase production.

Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes today visited the Lancaster facility to announce the investment through the *Regional Jobs Fund*, which will support a new \$10 million five-hectare glasshouse development.

The 41 full-time equivalent roles in cropping, tomato packing and management will increase the company's current Lancaster workforce by 73 per cent, taking it 97, and will provide an important economic boost for the small regional community of around 400 people.

The planned development will increase the facility's total tomato production from 5,250 tonnes to 8,000 and is expected to generate an extra \$5.6 million in turnover. It is also expected to help generate \$3 million in increased local spending each year.

Premier Fruits is an Australian company that specialises in farming, marketing, packing and ripening of tomatoes. It is a subsidiary of LaManna Premier Group – one of Australia's largest fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain companies.

Aside from the ongoing roles to be created when the project is completed, another 25 full-time equivalent workers will be employed during construction. The company is committed to employing local workers during the project's construction.

Premier Fruits Lancaster has also received \$47,500 from the Government's Business Adaptation Grants, part of the *Agriculture Workforce Plan*. The company plans to use this to build portable lunchrooms and toilet blocks to help with working in groups and ensuring physical distancing between workers during their peak season.

The Business Adaptation Grants support food supply chain businesses with the costs of adapting their workplaces to meet health, safety and physical distancing requirements, or adapt to business changes imposed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

"We're helping to provide more jobs and opportunities in the Goulburn Valley to make it an even better place to live work and invest."

"This project will create new employment opportunities for Lancaster and get more fresh produce to market shelves for all Victorians to enjoy."