

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Treasurer

Minister for Industrial Relations

Minister for Regional Development



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WATER UPGRADES MEAN KOALA CHERRIES RIPE FOR EXPANSION

With Victoria's cherry season officially underway, the Allan Labor Government is supporting a leading regional producer to ramp up production, fuelling business growth and local job creation.

Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes today announced the completion of Koala Cherries' \$2.8 million water pipeline at its Yarck site, which was made possible by an investment from the Labor Government.

A staple for many households over the festive season, cherry production across the state is heavily dependent on a consistent and controlled supply of water, with small variations able to have significant impact on the size and quality of output, as well as the health of cherry trees.

The 8.5-kilometre water pipeline will deliver more than 2,000 mega litres of irrigated water to the Yarck site annually – providing a steady and reliable, year-round supply for the orchard's 150,000 trees.

The pipeline has created 11 new full-time jobs and secured the ongoing employment of the business' 85 existing roles. It has also laid the foundation for Koala Cherries to expand through the creation of a new 85-hectare orchard.

Koala Cherries' new orchard is already 70% complete and will enable Koala Cherries to increase production by 1,000 tonnes each year to cater to both domestic and export markets, while helping to sustain a seasonal workforce of more than 1,000 people.

Koala Cherries has invested several million dollars in the orchard expansion and associated infrastructure required to facilitate the boost in production, including additional refrigeration and cooling storage, as well as upgrades to its existing packing line to keep cherries as fresh as possible.

A family owned and run business for more than 80 years, Koala Cherries has been based at its Yarck site since 1988, with the business' name inspired by the surrounding native bushland and its endemic fauna.

This investment is part of our more than \$47 billion investment in rural and regional Victoria in just over a decade, to make them even better places to live, work and invest. For more information, visit rdv.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

"Producers like Koala Cherries help feed the nation, while their expansion into global markets showcases Victoria's world-class agricultural exports to the world – so it's essential they have the infrastructure they need to grow."

"Thriving regional businesses mean more jobs for regional workers, more prosperous local economies and stronger communities."

Quotes attributable to Koala Cherries Managing Director Michael Rouget

"You can't do anything in our game without secure water and this project has given us production certainty and paved the way for future growth."

"The pipeline has removed significant risk and uncertainty for our business and allowed us to expand our orchards and production to supply our growing export markets, underpinning jobs in our region"

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