

MEDIA RELEASE

MURRAY VALLEY CITRUS BOARD

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MURRAY VALLEY CITRUS BOARD CAUTIONS GROWERS IN CHANGING CONDITIONS

The Murray Valley Citrus Board [MVCB] is advising growers [and particularly wine grape growers] who are currently considering moving into growing citrus, to do their research thoroughly before making a firm decision to change.

Board Chairman, Ms Jan Denham, urged caution in this regard saying that there has to be a guaranteed outcome of a viable crop of clean, large fruit to justify any change of direction.

'Growers contemplating such a move to citrus plantings need to research the various citrus varieties, investigate the markets and talk to packers in the context of drawing-up the necessary business and marketing plans. It also takes from five to seven years to bring citrus into production and the associated holding costs of tree investment, water and other inputs have to be met before getting any returns,' Ms Denham said.

Mr Hugh Flett, Chief Executive, MVCB emphasised that Australia already grows more citrus than can be consumed in the domestic market. 'It is becoming more difficult to comply with export market protocols, and there is increasing competition from other countries with low labour costs supplying our traditional markets.'

Ms Mary Cannard, Industry Development Officer, MVCB offered some more specific advice to growers contemplating a change.

'Planting citrus needs a thorough business plan with detailed research on which varieties to select. Investigate the amount of each variety that has already been planted and keenly research the market opportunities for the end product.

The soil types suitable for wine grapes may not be satisfactory for citrus, while water and fertiliser requirements for citrus are usually greater than for wine grapes. In balance, citrus is also a more labour intensive crop with such processes as mechanical harvesting and pruning not being an option,' Ms Cannard stated.

Ends

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