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## **Summerfruit Australia Limited achieves P.R.China, Nectarine Access for 2016/17**

The Australian stone fruit industry welcomes the joint signing of protocols for Australian nectarines to be exported to China and the import of Chinese grown nectarines into Australia. This has taken thirteen years for industry to achieve and appeared to be not achievable for a few more years after a meeting between growers and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, Plant Biosecurity team in April 2015.

This drove the formation of the Summer Fruit Export Alliance (SEDA) which growers funded voluntarily and represents 80% of fresh market stone fruit production and 90% of the exported stone fruit volume. SEDA is a sub-committee of the peak industry body Summerfruit Australia Ltd (SAL).

SEDA chairman Ian McAlister explained SEDA has formed a strong transparent relationship with the department's Plant Biosecurity Division, which has seen nectarine exports to China being many years away, just over twelve months ago, to now a reality. Part of this shorter time frame has been because of the increased resources the coalition government has provided the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to progress market access. Mr McAlister stated "this extra funding along with the commitment of department staff to engage with us in frank discussion about what we had to do on our side to achieve market access is why we have access for nectarine exports to China" Mr McAlister reiterated how appreciative the industry is of the department who have been maligned in the past by many industries including our industry. Our success is evidence that if industries work with the department in an open way, away from media attention, results can be delivered more quickly.

Chairman of SAL Andrew Findlay, a grower in the Stanthorpe region of Queensland said "the protocol for nectarine exports to China is a result of much hard work by a number of people in particular SAL CEO John Moore and SEDA Chairman Ian McAlister. By engaging with the Chinese market and industry investment of considerable grower research and development levies into projects to develop disinfestation treatments that would make sure the protocol would ensure commercial trade."

John Moore CEO of SAL who is funded by grower levies said "the investment in disinfestation treatments has led to our protocol as the first the Chinese have agreed to a 3.0°C treatment for Queensland Fruit Fly and Lesser Queensland Fruit Fly of any Australian horticultural product. This is critical for sea freight shipments as they can be rejected when temperatures can spike above 2.1°C when the sea container defrosts when the ship is near the warmer climate around the equator." Mr Moore explained that the new protocol is the first by China to recognise a Fruit Fly Pest Free Area (FF-PFA) on mainland Australia. The Riverland region of South Australia has been approved as a PFA from all fruit flies, which will allow airfreight without fumigation and temperature controls to China. This region will be able to access many more destinations in China.

"The eastern states including South Australia have been declared to be free of Mediterranean Fruit Fly (MFF)," said Ian McAlister. Mr McAlister explained this was critical to the sea freight protocol enabling commercial trade as the research is not yet proven to kill MFF at 3.0°C. The lower temperature and longer time for disinfestation of MFF makes it far too risky for growers to export to China by sea.

Mr Moore explained that China has also agreed to a new low dose methyl bromide fumigation treatment for Queensland Fruit Fly, which was developed by using grower levies. The new treatment will reduce the risk of fruit being damaged by the fumigation treatment.

Ian McAlister stated “the success of citrus and table grape exports to China has driven vastly improved and now profitable prices to growers compared to a few years ago when growers were losing money. Nectarine growers who have received extremely low prices the last two seasons are likely to see vastly improved prices in the coming season”

“It is very important for growers, packers and exporters to realise a protocol to export fruit to another country is a privilege and not a right. A privilege that can be removed at any time by the importing country” Mr Finlay stressed. He explained that John Moore would be coordinating registration and training of growers, packers and exporters to ensure that compliance is ensured. Mr Moore outlined that orchards, packing sheds and export facilities including cold treatment and fumigation facilities will be audited and approved by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources for nectarines to be exported to China. As part of the compliance growers will have to monitor their orchards for twelve quarantine pests listed in the protocol by a person approved by the department.

Mr Finlay said for the industry to benefit from this new market there is a lot of work for growers, packers and exporters to do before exports start.

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