



MEDIA RELEASE

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New \$12 million Research Program for Apple & Pear Industry

Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) today announced a major \$12 million dollar, five-year apple and pear research program to be administered by the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) at the University of Tasmania.

The co-operative research program, "Productivity, Irrigation, Pests and Soils Program", or the PIPS Orchard Program, will include researchers from TIAR, Victorian Department of Primary Industries (VicDPI), Queensland's Department of Employment, Economic Development & Innovation (DEEDI) and The New Zealand Institute for Plant & Food Research Limited (PFR).

HAL's chief executive officer, John Lloyd, said this was a major program for HAL and the apple & pear industry.

"PIPS is an excellent example of collaboration between agencies and leveraging industry investment, and it is in line with the objectives of the national RD&E framework," he said.

"HAL and the apple & pear industry are investing in world class research that leverages the industry's \$1 million levy investment into a \$12 million program."

PIPS is designed to provide integrated RD&E that supports gains in efficiency within the apple and pear orchard while providing orchardists the tools to assist the long term sustainability of their orchards; or more simply, to increase profitability of orchards, minimise water use and minimise the use of agricultural chemicals.

Project leader, Dr Dugald Close said, "The work will impact at farm level and will produce guidelines that will enable lower costs, more eco-efficient production while minimising environmental footprints and ensuring long-term farm viability.

"It's about creating a more environmentally sound production system that will provide direct farm benefits as well as indirect market benefits."

PIPS involves three major focus areas: integrated pest management, tree structure and, soil, water and nutrients.

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Chairman of Apple and Pear Australia Ltd (APAL), Darral Ashton, said he was pleased the apple and pear industry was associated with such an innovative and comprehensive program.

“This has come about through the co-operation of many people and organisations. I believe we have achieved a critical mass of research effort that should fast-track critical outcomes for our growers and the community at large.

“The apple and pear industry is facing many challenges and the only way we can meet these challenges and remain both environmentally and economically sustainable is to have the best people and structures working for us. I believe this program brings together a dedicated and talented team of people that will have a big impact in the years to come.”

The Australian apple and pear industry is the third largest horticultural industry in Australia and invests approximately \$4.5m annually in a range of research RD&E programs through HAL.

HAL is funding \$7.5 million of the program using the apple and pear levy and a voluntary contribution from PFR with matched funds from the Australian Government. TIAR, VicDPI and DEEDI are co investors in the PIPS program.

HAL is a not-for-profit, industry-owned company. It works in partnership with Australia's horticulture industries to invest almost \$90 million annually in research, development and marketing programs that provide benefit to industry and the wider community.

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