
Thursday, 15 December 2011

FRESH START FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S CITRUS INDUSTRY

Agriculture Minister Gail Gago has announced plans to revitalise South Australia's important citrus industry through the creation of a new united representative organisation.

Ms Gago said a transition working party would be established to map the way forward.

This follows an independent inquiry into the industry and extensive consultation.

"After listening to growers and both the Citrus Industry Development Board (CIDB) and Citrus Growers South Australia (CGSA), I have decided structural reform is needed to meet current and future challenges," Ms Gago said.

"This will ultimately aim to cut costs to local growers, reduce red tape and ensure a broad-based united voice.

"For many years we have had two organisations working on different aspects of the citrus industry, often in cooperation, sometimes in competition, funded by two separate levies.

"Industry representatives have expressed concerns about duplication and inefficiencies in the industry structures, and the relationship between the state bodies and national organisation.

"They have also told me that having two organisations means the industry doesn't speak cohesively to generate the confidence needed for the development of a competitive, sustainable and profitable industry.

"There is also an opportunity to strengthen South Australia's relationship with the peak national body Citrus Australia."

Earlier this year, former Agriculture Minister Michael O'Brien commissioned former District Court Judge, Mr Alan Moss, to conduct a review into the structure and legislative arrangements that govern the citrus industry.

"Judge Moss spent several months interviewing 62 different stakeholders and reviewing 22 written submissions received from industry representatives," Ms Gago said.

"He has confirmed earlier advice that fundamental changes are required if the industry is to survive the challenges of competing within domestic and global market places.

"A fragmented industry will eventually wither and die."

Ms Gago said the transition working party would involve industry and government representatives working with a highly credentialed chair to start from a blank page, scope the new organisation and create a broad-based, united structure to speak with one voice.

“This is all about a fresh start for the citrus industry,” Ms Gago said.

“For too long there has been a lack of cohesion.

“I want the transition working group to develop a contemporary model that forges a new direction for citrus in South Australia.”

South Australia’s citrus industry is worth an estimated \$357 million, comprising around 400 growers and 20 packing sheds. It is the state’s largest horticultural export crop.