

FGV calls for fair Basin funding

Fruit Growers Victoria (FGV) is backing the Victorian Farmers Federation's call for Victoria to receive its fair share of Basin adjustment funding, saying investment must support the long-term viability of horticulture and irrigated agriculture across Northern Victoria.

FGV Chairman Mitchell McNab said Victoria's fruit growers had already made a significant contribution to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and were continuing to adapt to reduced water availability while facing rising production costs and increasing climate pressures.

"Our growers have invested heavily to become more efficient with every megalitre of water, but there is only so much efficiency that can be achieved when less water is available year after year," Mr McNab said.

"Fruit growers are long-term investors. An orchard isn't something you can switch on and off depending on the season. These are permanent plantings that require reliable water to produce the high-quality fruit our domestic and export markets rely on."

Mr McNab said any Basin adjustment funding allocated to Victoria should prioritise projects that improve resilience, productivity and water efficiency across irrigated agriculture.

"Supporting irrigation communities isn't just about replacing what has been lost. It's about investing in practical solutions that help businesses remain productive and competitive into the future."

FGV is calling on governments to establish an ongoing, dollar-for-dollar orchard netting grant program to help growers improve water efficiency while also delivering protection from extreme weather events.

"Permanent netting is one of the best investments governments can make in the future of horticulture. It reduces crop losses from hail, sunburn and birds, while also lowering evapotranspiration, helping growers produce more fruit with less water."

Mr McNab said the benefits of supporting horticulture extended well beyond individual farms.

"Every productive orchard supports local jobs, packing sheds, transport operators, exporters and regional communities. When horticulture thrives, entire regions benefit."

"By investing in productive irrigation systems, modern infrastructure and practical on-farm improvements, we can help ensure Victorian horticulture remains sustainable, resilient and globally competitive despite the challenges of reduced water availability."

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