

MEDIA RELEASE
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Chinese trade officials inspect Mildura farms

In a boost for Mildura's fruit export profile, Chinese quarantine officials are inspecting two local farms to get a close up look at produce quality and processes as the nation's horticulture Research and Development Corporation continues talks about increasing exports to China.

Hosted by Horticulture Innovation Australia, the 11 delegates represent four key Chinese provinces and include the high ranking chair of the China Entry-Exit Inspection Quarantine Association's Plant and Animal Health Committee – a key agency charged with determining import activity into the country.

Hort Innovation Trade specialist Angus Street said the activity is the first to take place following a Memorandum of Understanding the Corporation signed with China in September last year.

"Today's site tours represent a momentous occasion in the history of Australian and China horticultural trade relations," he said.

"This visit marks the first of many activities Australia and China will participate in with the interest of strengthening horticulture trade between both our countries."

Mr Street said "with its abundance of produce, Mildura is the ideal port of call for delegates to inspect Australian fruit, particularly table grapes and citrus.

"Today the delegation will get a close up look into how the stringent packing, pest management and produce quality standards of Australian fruit growers align with China's requirements."

Fruit Tree Trading farm manager Francis Garreffa said it was an honour to walk the delegation through his farm operations, and the tour is great for the region's profile: "the visit has put Mildura on the map for the Chinese delegates".

"It is fantastic that we are able to showcase where more than 2000 tonnes of the table grapes China imports each year come from and how we follow the stringent packing and pest management requirements China has in place."

After Mildura, the delegation will visit summerfruit and apple orchards in Cobram and Shepparton. Yesterday, the group also toured Melbourne retailers to gain a sense of the quality and range of fresh produce available in Australia's domestic retailers.

Mr Street said Victoria's fruit exports to China have close to doubled over the past year: "By the end of last year, exports of Victorian citrus, table grapes, cherries and apples had increased by 8588 tonnes, up 81 per cent up on the previous year."

He said while that is positive, Horticulture Innovation Australia is committed to working with growers, and China, to further boost the nation's trade output.

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