

MEDIA RELEASE
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Putting pollination front and centre

In an effort to ensure Australians can enjoy local fruit, nuts and vegetables for years to come, Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) has launched a significant pollination research investment fund.

This likely multi-million dollar fund will invest in vital research to increase crop quality and yields through more effective pollination and alternate pollinators. Increasing the understanding of the role of various pollinators among growers and safeguarding bee health are also priorities for new research projects.

Supported with Australian Government funding, the fund will comprise multiple projects to be delivered in partnership with co-investors such as research institutions, government agencies or international and commercial enterprises.

Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) Chief Executive John Lloyd said now more than ever, Australia's horticultural future needs to be supported.

"Pollination – particularly declining numbers of European Honey Bees – is fast becoming a global challenge," he said. "Bees pollinate a large percentage of Australian crops so it is vital we dedicate more resources into their health," he said.

Mr Lloyd said many causal factors are likely to be contributors to this phenomenon, and the need for this to be understood from an Australian environment context is critical. One of the most damaging bio-security threats, he said, is the *Varroa Destructor* mite: "The investment in research on pollination will in turn support activities by lead biosecurity agencies in protecting industries that depend on pollination, but bees are only part of the picture.

"For that reason, it is crucial that we explore and strengthen alternative pollinators through this new research fund – such as self-pollinating varieties of plants, alternative insects, or automatic or robotic aids. The aim is to safeguard the future of the nation's horticulture products for years to come."

Hort Innovation will be seeking co-investors in the coming months to partner in research projects. It is also in the process of establishing an Expert Advisory Panel – which will be made up of industry and pollination experts.

Go to the [Hort Innovation website](#) for more information on the Pollination fund.

Aside from its levy-based investments (Pool 1), Hort Innovation is charged with managing the investment of about \$20 million annually in Australian Government seed funds across various research priorities (Pool 2). These funds are matched with funding from co-investors. All Pool 2 funds are used to address cross-industry challenges and opportunities of strategic, long-term importance to Australia's horticulture industries.

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