



TIAR Media Release



TASMANIAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Apple and pear research boost

Increasing apple and pear orchard profitability and sustainability will be the main focus of a new \$12 million research program that has been announced today.

The Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) – a joint venture between the University of Tasmania and the State Government – is managing the national program funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

The research program, “Productivity, Irrigation, Pests and Soils Program”, commonly known as the PIPS Orchard Program, PIPS is designed to increase profitability of orchards, minimise water use and protect the environment and consumers from agricultural chemicals.

Project leader, Dr Dugald Close, said the TIAR program will provide integrated research, development and extension that supports increased efficiency within the apple and pear orchard, while providing orchardists with the tools to assist the long term sustainability of their orchards.

“The work will impact at farm level through developing guidelines that will enable lower cost, more eco-efficient production. This will minimise environmental impacts and ensure long-term farm viability,” he said.

“Creating a more environmentally sound production system will provide direct farm benefits as well as indirect market benefits.”

Welcoming the funding announcement, UTAS Vice-Chancellor, Professor Daryl Le Grew, said the program would be of great benefit to the apple and pear industry in Australia and internationally.

“All of our primary industry enterprises are changing and adapting to work with fewer agricultural chemicals, less water and more environmental efficiency overall,” he said.

“TIAR is well placed as a Tasmanian research institute to advise on best practice for this industry, with the possibility of developing insights for other industry groups.”

The Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, said the apple and pear industry is worth almost \$40 million to Tasmania at the farm gate.

“The number of Tasmanian apple and pear growers has decreased in recent years, so the research looking into increasing orchard profitability and sustainability is most welcome,” Mr Llewellyn said.

“I, like a number of apple growers, do see opportunities for new investment in Tasmania by getting the right combination of the new varieties and improved production levels for sustained profitability that this research and development program offers.

“Apples, in particular, were among the first crops introduced to Tasmania by the early settlers, so it’s especially exciting to see such a significant investment in the future of the industry.”

PIPS is a five-year program involving three major focus areas: integrated pest management, tree structure, and, soil, water and nutrients.

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