

Australia invest \$3M to expand world leading National Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) facility

08 September 2023 | News

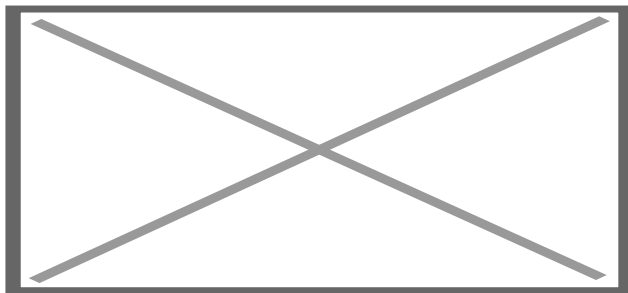
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Australia's fight against fruit fly is set to be boosted with the opening of the \$3 million expansion of the National Sterile Insect Technique facility at Port Augusta. With the upgrade, the current fruit fly centre, which was originally opened in November 2016, will grow, helping to reduce fruit fly numbers in the state.

Funded under the Federal Government's \$30 million Building Resilience to Manage Fruit Fly package, with additional contributions from PIRSA and Citrus SA, the expansion will enable a doubling of the number of sterile Queensland fruit flies (Q-fly) produced at the facility from 20 to 40 million a week. Most of the flies reared at Port Augusta will be sent for release in South Australia's Riverland as part of the response to the current outbreaks in the region.



The program reduces the fruit fly population by mating the sterile flies with wild flies, resulting in no fertile offspring. In addition to its key role in the Riverland outbreak response, the expanded facility could also provide flies to support other key Australian horticulture areas combatting Q-fly.

Fruit flies are the world's worst horticultural pest, destroying fruit and vegetables in commercial crops, home gardens and impacting on trade access. In Australia, Q-fly is one of two major species that impacts fruit and vegetable crops, the other being Mediterranean or Medfly.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Murray Watt said "Strengthening our biosecurity protections is one of the Albanese Government's key priorities for our agriculture sector. That's why we continue to support the ongoing efforts of the Malinauskas Government in its battle to eradicate Q-fly from the Riverland. Current forecasts from ABARES indicate that Australia is set to produce \$18.2 billion of horticulture this year, and roughly half of it is susceptible to fruit fly. That's why projects funded under the Building Resilience to Manage Fruit Fly package, such as this new expanded facility at Port Augusta, are so important in supporting the sector to strengthen their resilience against the pest and assist in getting product to market.