

Australia grants \$15.9 million Horticultural Netting Program fund in Victoria

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Australia's Victoria region's commercial fruit growers and horticulturalists will benefit from grants to help purchase and install new netting – protecting their crops and increasing productivity.

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt, and Victorian Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence announced the expansion of the \$15.9 million Horticultural Netting Program. The program is delivered by Agriculture Victoria on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, providing continued support for Australian growers and their communities to thrive and grow into the future.

Besides protecting produce from environmental damage such as hail and sunburn, horticultural netting helps to keep out some pest animals and can reduce orchard water use by up to 20%. An increase in fruit quality, coupled with reduced adverse weather and animal damage means more dollars in horticulture growers' pockets.

Producers using commercial netting are encouraged to choose products that are safe for birds and other wild-life. The Program provides funding of up to \$150,000 (ex GST) to eligible primary producers of commercial horticulture crops, excluding wine grapes, for the purchase and installation of new netting over established production areas. In response to industry feedback, the Program now includes a self-installation allowance which will help cover the cost of the applicant's labour if they wish to self-install netting.

The 2022-23 Food and Fibre Export Performance Report shows Victoria is Australia's largest food and fibre exporter by value - accounting for 24% of the national total. In another stellar year for Victorian farmers and food manufacturers, the state achieved an increase of 7% in export value, taking the total to a record \$19.6 billion. Applications close on 8 April 2024 and farmers can gain insights on Victoria's horticulture industry visit the [Agriculture Victoria website](#).

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Murray Watt, "The Albanese Government is pleased to partner with the Victorian Government to offer this extended support to the horticulture industry. Our hort producers have been on the frontline of a number of natural disasters in recent years, and so I'm very pleased this program can help to protect crops from more extreme weather in the future, while also lowering watering costs and keeping out pests.

When our growers experience hail damage, or pest exposure, we all feel the pinch at the supermarkets - so we're pleased to be delivering this support to help them better prepare for the future."

Minister for Agriculture, Ros Spence said, "Victorian growers have shown enormous strength in the face of adversity, delivering high quality, fresh, local produce that is enjoyed across the state, the country, and the world. We want Victorian produce on tables across our state and the world, and that's why supporting our growers to capitalise on each and every opportunity is so crucial. Together with the Commonwealth Government, we're ensuring growers remain at the forefront of productivity and sustainability now and into the future."