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M E D I A R E L E A S E

› **Truss launches national Citrus Industry Biosecurity Plan**

Australia's \$400 million citrus industry is now better prepared for pest and disease threats with Agriculture Minister Warren Truss today officially launching the Citrus Industry Biosecurity Plan at the Australian Citrus Growers annual conference in Mildura.

"The plan has been coordinated by Plant Health Australia and developed by experts from industry and government, and will assist growers and other industry members, to identify and better manage the potential impact of serious exotic pests," he said.

"I commend the citrus industry for developing this comprehensive plan - a plan that demonstrates a clear commitment to better plant health management practices, and a willingness to get on the front foot when it comes to dealing with serious exotic pests."

Australia's citrus industry produces around 600,000 tonnes of fruit each year, with a gross value of around \$426 million. The industry is also our largest horticultural exporter, both in terms of tonnage and value.

"Exports have increased rapidly over the past ten years to be worth over \$200 million in 2002-2003," Mr Truss said. "Better biosecurity arrangements will help protect growers, their communities, and the industry in general, from the potentially devastating economic and social costs of pest incursions.

"They will also will help us to build on Australia's reputation as a supplier of healthy and high quality produce, enhancing our standing in markets across the globe.

"In developing the plan, the citrus industry first identified the main exotic pests, such as citrus canker, *Huanglongbing* (citrus greening), mal secco, mandarin stem-pitting, citrus stubborn disease and sweet orange scab, examined their likely impact, and then looked at ways of reducing and managing the associated risks.

"And to ensure the citrus industry stays ahead of the game, the plan will be reviewed annually. This will help ensure we are aware of the latest risks and priority pests, and that our contingency plans and risk strategies are up to the task."

Mr Truss said the Citrus Industry Biosecurity Plan follows the launch in February of a similar plan for the banana industry - a clear sign that our plant industries are serious about biosecurity and well aware of the dangers posed by exotic pests and diseases.

"With funding from the Australian Government, Plant Health Australia is working with its 28 industry and government members to implement national biosecurity plans for all its members," he said.

Copies of the Citrus Industry Biosecurity Plan are available on Plant Health Australia's web site at <http://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au>

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<http://www.affa.gov.au/ministers/truss/releases/04/04098WT.html>

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