



## Shield against sharpshooters



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An insect known as the Glassy-winged sharpshooter is encroaching ever closer on Australia's borders. With the potential to devastate many of Australia's agricultural industries, this sharpshooter and the diseases that come with it are of great concern for growers of grapes, nuts, citrus and more.

Today the Almond Board of Australia, in partnership with Plant Health Australia, is providing almond growers around the country with the tools to help protect its growing industry from this exotic pest threat. The *Orchard Biosecurity Manual for the Almond Industry* is being launched at the 2009 Annual Almond Industry Conference in the Barossa Valley, SA.

"Our industry is growing rapidly and is focussed on both overseas and local markets. Good biosecurity is essential to ensuring market access, and the orchard biosecurity measures outlined in this manual will help growers play a key role in protecting their own orchards and the Australian almond industry from the impacts of exotic pests. It is one way to keep our industry growing from strength to strength," said Ms Julie Haslett, CEO of the Almond Board of Australia.

The Glassy-winged sharpshooter is now in French Polynesia and the Cook Islands. While the sharpshooter's potential to damage crops is enough to put it on the high priority pest list, it is doubly concerning as it is a carrier of a number of high impact exotic diseases such as Almond leaf scorch.

"While there are stringent quarantine measures in place to try and keep these pests out of the country, we have a role to play as well. Everyone in the almond industry needs to be alert and actively involved in surveillance so if something does slip through, we have the best chance for early detection, containment and/or eradication," Ms Halsett said.

Other exotic threats to Australia's almond growers include Phomopsis canker, Almond seed wasp, Navel orangeworm, Ten-lined June beetle and even the honey bee pest Varroa mite, due to its impact on the essential pollination services required for almond production.

"As well as including a wealth of information on the high priority pests of the almond industry, this manual is designed to assist growers protect their orchards from invasive pests using simple, yet effective preventative strategies. Regularly checking planting material, making workers aware of biosecurity measures, and cleaning vehicles and equipment, are just some techniques that can easily be incorporated into day-to-day orchard operations," according to Rod Turner, Plant Health Australia's GM – Programs.

"It is much easier and cheaper to reduce the risks now, than to try and live with these pests if they were to get in," Mr Turner said.

A copy of the *Orchard Biosecurity Manual for the Almond Industry* is available from the Plant Health Australia website at [www.phau.com.au/biosecurity](http://www.phau.com.au/biosecurity)

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## BACKGROUND

### **The Almond Board of Australia**

As the Australian almond industry's peak industry body, the ABA facilitates further growth of the industry, seeks to maximise its profitability and ensure its sustainability, by providing a platform for industry members to collectively respond to industry wide issues, invest in research and marketing, share knowledge, and interact with government and other stakeholders.

Almond production in Australia is concentrated in Victoria and South Australia. Total almond production in 2008/09 was 36,000 tonnes with an estimated GVP of \$250m. Annual Australian almond exports are valued at \$120m (2008/09, up from \$57m in 2006/07). Nearly half of Australia's almond exports are to India.

### **Plant Health Australia (PHA)**

PHA is the lead national coordinating body for plant biosecurity in Australia. Working in partnership with industry, governments, researchers and others, PHA facilitates and manages improvements in biosecurity policy and practice across Australia's plant industries and builds capacity to respond to plant pest emergencies.

PHA is also helping growers secure their farms and their futures against potentially devastating plant pests and diseases. Partnering with Animal Health Australia, PHA has developed a website with biosecurity planning information for both plant and livestock producers at [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au).