

APAL confirms future funding for Future Orchards®

APAL today committed to funding the Australian apple and pear industry's flagship extension program, Future Orchards®, and to reduce the program's reliance on grower levies.

APAL CEO Phil Turnbull said APAL's investment will commence from 1 July 2021 and continues APAL's commitment to investing the profits from its international Pink Lady operations to strengthen the Australian apple and pear industry.

"We are really excited to have reached a financial position that allows us to take some pressure off levies but at the same time provide funding certainty for a program that is so valuable to the ongoing success of our industry. Now is the right time to take this next step," said Mr Turnbull.

With ongoing funding locked in, APAL is looking forward to enhancing the very successful program and including further ideas and feedback from Australian growers.

"The most obvious change we are proposing is to increase the time we – and our speakers and experts - spend with growers in the regions. We are also looking forward to ramping up our support for all aspects of a successful business – from business management, compliance and supporting all varieties, including branded varieties, to consumer trends and export development beyond the farm gate," said Mr Turnbull.

"In partnership with AgFirst, we are continuing to work through the details of the new program with current partners and look forward to sharing further details as we approach the 1 July 2021 start date," said Mr Turnbull.

Since 2005, APAL in partnership with NZ ag consultancy AgFirst has developed the Future Orchards® program to deliver a suite of very successful extension and development activities.

AgFirst's Ross Wilson said the funding commitment was an exciting new opportunity to build on the strengths of the existing program.

"Over the past 15 years we have built an incredibly successful and highly regarded program by prioritising the needs of growers. We are excited to see the program continue to evolve and to build the knowledge and networks within and across the Australian apple and pear industry," said Mr Wilson.

Mr Turnbull said APAL looks forward to supporting Hort Innovation's work.

"Hort Innovation oversees the investment of grower levies into a wide range of world-leading and exciting research initiatives. APAL's intention is that Future Orchards® will continue to provide a valuable avenue for translating these R&D outcomes into practical resources and opportunities for Australian apple and pear growers".

"APAL's ability to fund such an important program from non-levy resources is a privilege that few industries enjoy. It marks an exciting new opportunity for partnerships and collaboration with industry in Australia and overseas, and with all tiers of government. We genuinely believe everyone associated with Future Orchards® can look forward to further building the value of the program for our industry," said Mr Turnbull.