



International Prune Association

Thirteenth World Congress

Davis, California
United States of America

23 May 2012

Australia



Presented By:

Jeff Granger

Delegate Representing

The Australian Prune Industry Association Inc.

2012 - AUSTRALIAN PRUNE INDUSTRY SITUATION

Mr. Chairman, Delegates and Guests

On behalf of the Australian Prune Industry Association this report outlines the current situation within the Australian Prune Industry.

I've mentioned on many previous occasions the long-term damage caused to Australian agriculture by drought which lasted from about the year 2000 until 2009.

The effect has been a large reduction in the number of prune growers to less than half the number of pre drought growers. The traditional dryland production areas have been decimated and the majority of production now occurs in the irrigation areas.

The total potential prune production from Australia has not been reduced and has in fact increased due to significant new plantings in the irrigation areas.

The 2011 and 2012 season prune harvests have seen a return to rainfall that has been higher than the long-term average and has resulted in flood damage and wet harvest conditions for prune growers.

2012 SEASON HARVEST

An excellent crop was grown across all production regions of Australia in 2012. Unfortunately the harvesting of the crop was only partly completed when heavy rains commenced once more. This caused significant fruit drop in most areas however most growers were still able to complete most of their harvest before the ongoing rainfalls became a serious problem.

The rain certainly became a very serious problem in the major irrigation centre based around the city of Griffith and in particular the small town of Yenda to the north of Griffith where severe flooding has occurred. Some prune growers have had their orchards flooded for several weeks, some had floodwaters running through their drying sheds and homes. The flooding also affected other crops including wine grapes, rice and cotton. The total extent of damage cannot be accurately calculated as the flooding is still moving down the river system.

The dryland production area centered on the town of Young also received torrential rain causing fruit to drop and fungal disease problems. Flooding was not a serious problem although erosion is an issue with many roads and bridges badly damaged.

The Government of the New South Wales has declared a Natural Disaster status for both regions.

PRODUCTION STATISTICS

Accurate production figures have yet to be officially announced. It is thought that the total production for Australia in 2012 will be about 3,000 tons.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING GROWERS

The most important issue still facing Australian growers is the cost of production of dried prunes

Poor returns from packers and competition from imported product have impacted heavily on grower profitability and confidence.

The problem is not just with prunes however, most fruit varieties are reporting similar problems.

PACKERS

There has been no change in the number of Australian packers since 2010, with two large packers, one medium sized and two smaller packers.

One of the larger packers has been recently taken over by overseas interests.

THE MARKET FOR PRUNES IN AUSTRALIA

The market for prunes in Australia remains very positive. Per capita consumption seems to be remaining static, having risen a little in recent years.

Sales are primarily by supermarkets however Food Service sales are increasing. Both supermarkets and Food Service customers are sourcing prunes from Australian suppliers and from suppliers of imported prunes, based solely on price.

Australia exports a very small amount of its annual prune production, mainly because our total production barely covers our domestic market requirement and therefore does not leave much to spare for the export market.

PRUNE PRICES

Like prune producers the world over, Australian growers would like to see returns improve. There has been no significant increase in grower returns for many years.

The price issue can be echoed at the packer level with Australian packers taking no significant price increases for many years.

MARKETERS

There are three major marketers of Australian produced prunes and a number of small marketers. The market demand for prunes is steady.

ADVERTISING/PROMOTION

The Australian Prune Industry Association has undertaken a promotion campaign over the past few years. The campaign has been aimed at raising consumer awareness of Australian prunes.

There has been no discernible increase in sales as a result of the campaign partly because of poor production levels of prunes.

Individual packers are conducting their own promotion campaigns with varying degrees of success. Some new packaging is appearing.

A promotion exercise using the Social Media was conducted in 2011 with Facebook, Twitter and YouTube being used. The results of this exercise fell short of the expectations of the industry.

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

Australian growers are pessimistic about the future of the industry particularly amongst the newer producers who have entered the industry in the past twenty years or so. The more established producers believing the apparent slump to be part of the normal cycle as far as prunes are concerned and are hoping for a return to regular, good, average crops with adequate financial returns.

I think this attitude is being echoed in other producing countries.

Thank you for your attention.



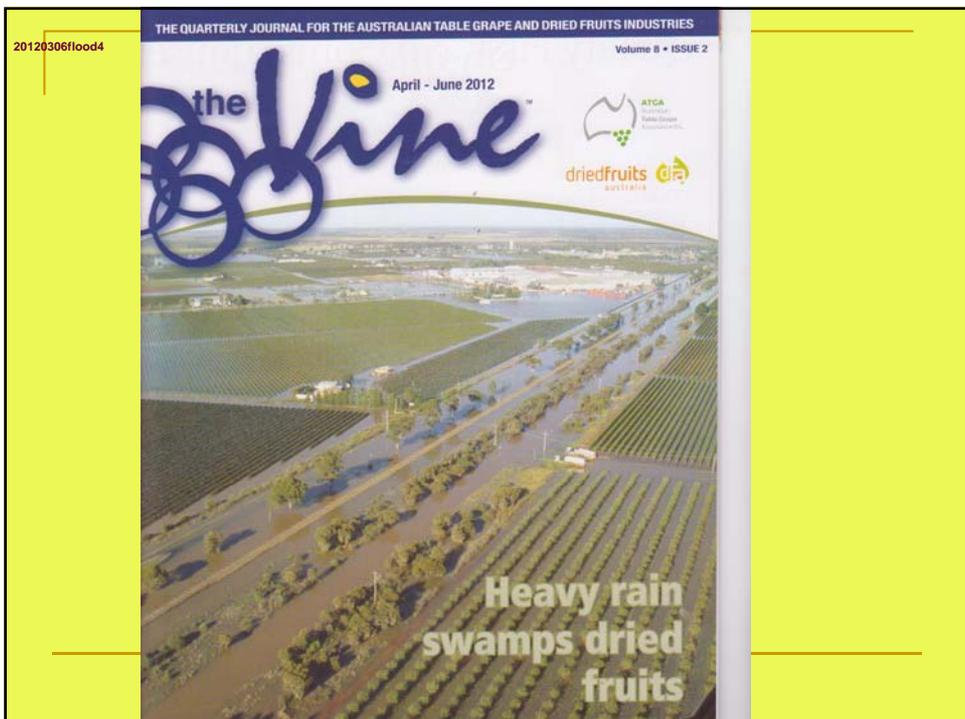
2012 International Prune Association Congress

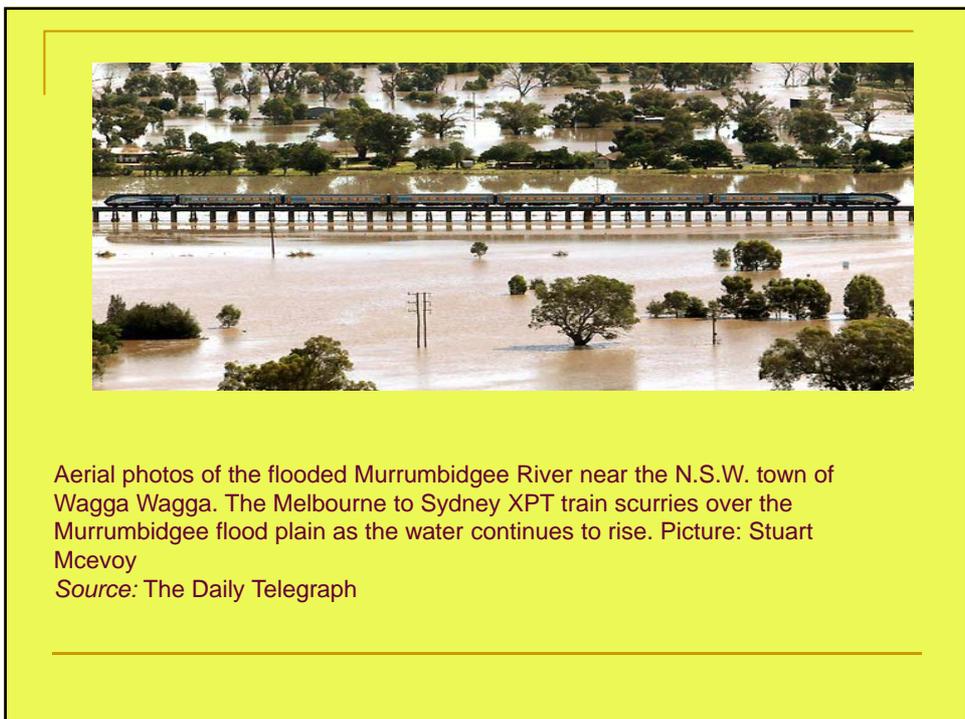
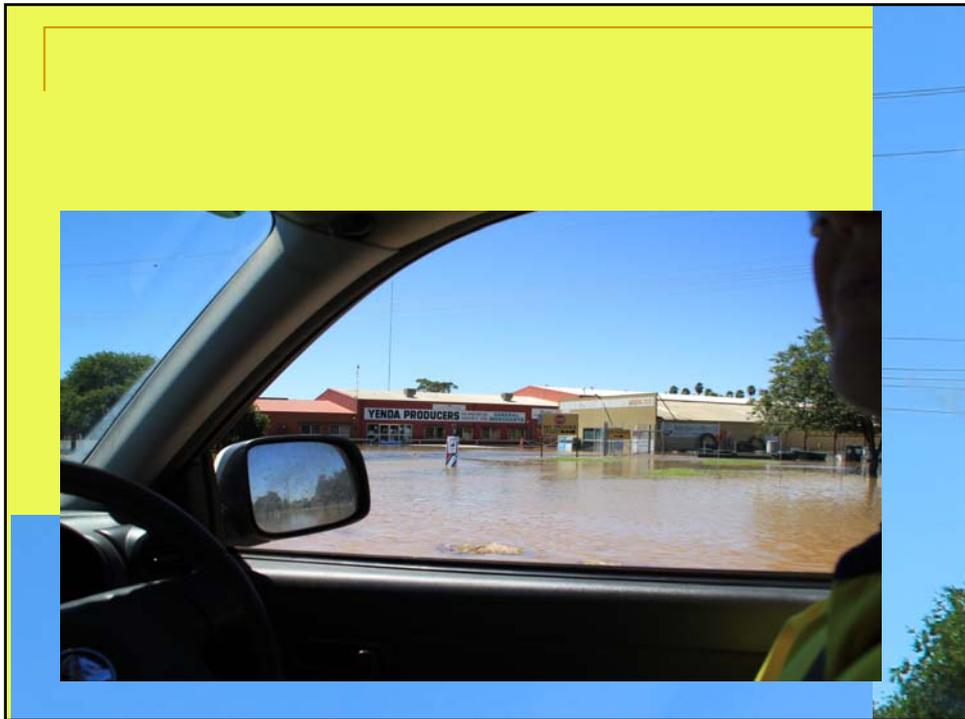
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Australian Prune Industry Situation

Jeff Granger





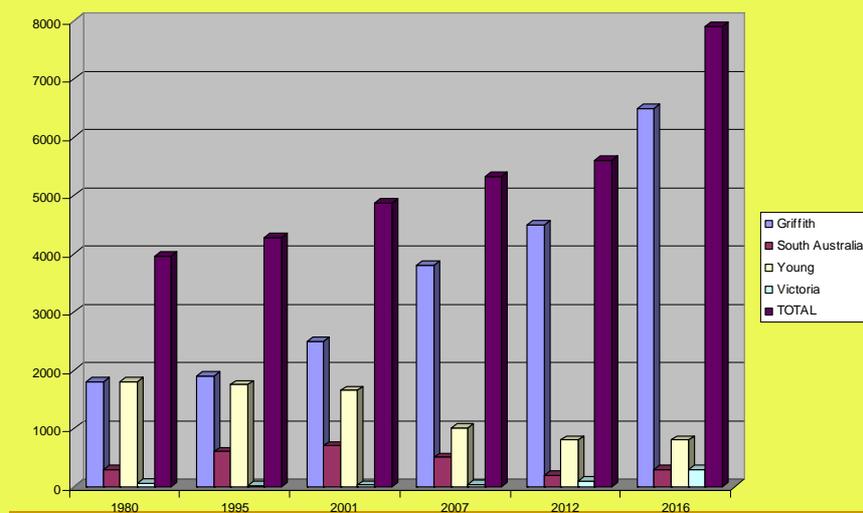


Aerial photos of the flooded Murrumbidgee River near the N.S.W. town of Wagga Wagga. The Melbourne to Sydney XPT train scurries over the Murrumbidgee flood plain as the water continues to rise. Picture: Stuart Mcevoy
Source: The Daily Telegraph

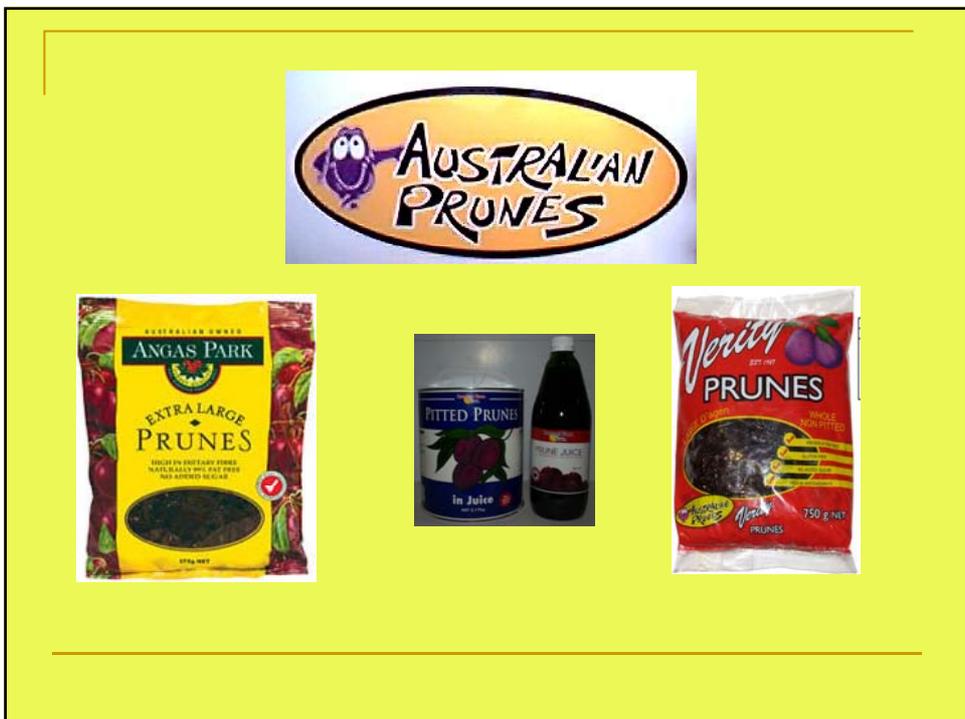


Spiders move to higher ground at Lake Brewster. Lake Brewster on the Lachlan River. The spiders appeared over the weekend after water levels rose at the lake.
 Picture: Corporation State Water
 Source: The Daily Telegraph

Potential Australian Prune Production









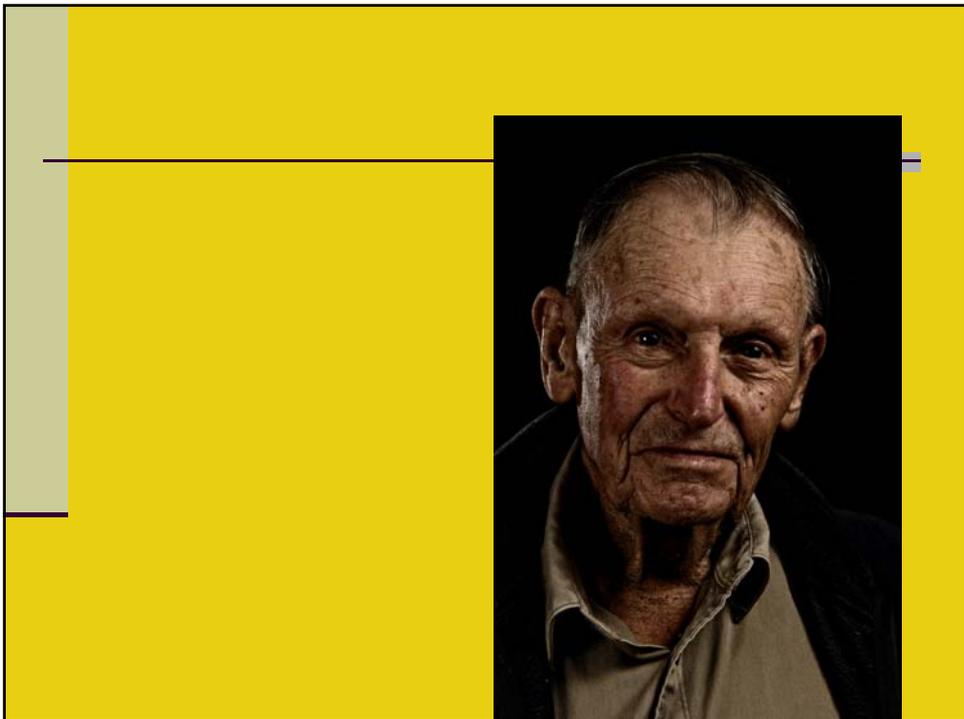
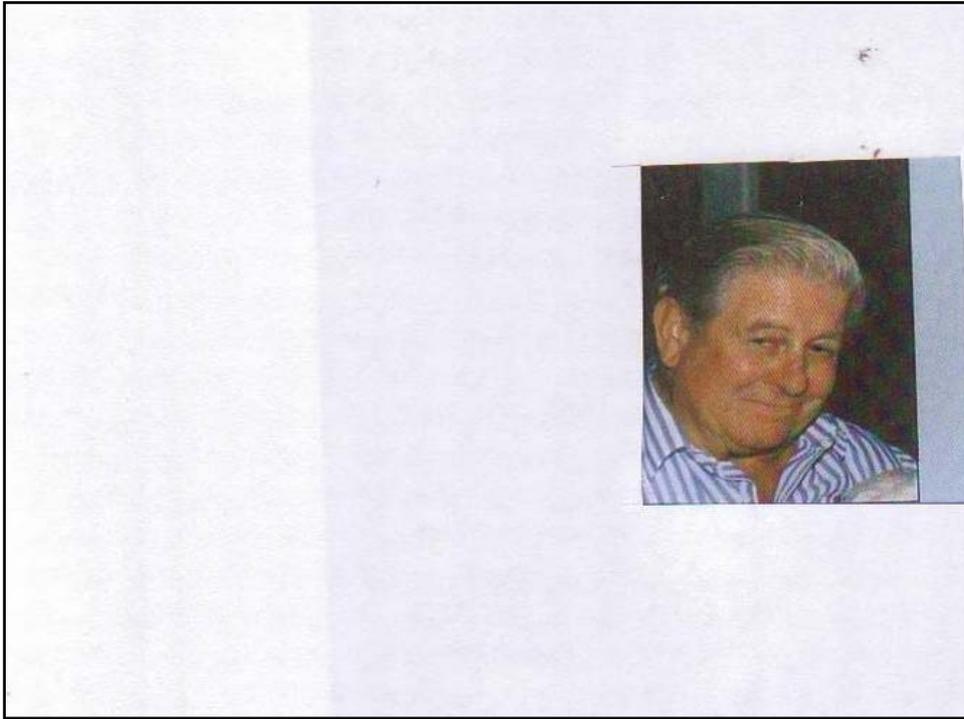
2009 International Prune Association Congress

Australian Prune Industry Situation?
“Still struggling... but alive and well!”

Obituary

■ Lawrence Cormack 1926 – 2011

■ D’Arcy Granger 1923 - 2011



Low Cost Prune Catcher

