

Final Report

Prune International Industry Study Tour

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Australian Prune Industry Association Inc

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Prune International Industry Study Tour - DP23001

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Contents

Public summary	4
Keywords	5
Introduction	6
Methodology	7
Results and discussion	8
Outputs	9
Outcomes	10
Monitoring and evaluation	11
Recommendations	12
Intellectual property	13
Appendices	14

Public summary

This California Study Tour project was initiated with the prime objective of providing Australian prune industry participants, including young, emerging leaders, with the opportunity to see leading practices and innovation in California. As a result of using international linkages with key research and prune industry bodies, APIA strongly believes that future Australian prune R&D investments and local prune industry capability will be enhanced as a result of learnings from this project.

The study tour itinerary was extensive and ran over 9 days and involved a range of visits and meetings that provided group members with access to information that will help lift productivity and profitability. This information included the latest research results, new technologies, changes to farm practices and better market intelligence.

The study tour group comprised 8 prune growers and 1 agronomist who works for a service provider. Importantly, amongst the grower members were 3 young prune growers who had been awarded scholarships by APIA to facilitate their participation. The decision to provide funding for 3 scholarships reflects the seriousness that APIA has towards investing in the future of the industry. The 5 levy payers paid about 50% of their costs (air fares, travel insurance, meals) while the 3 scholarship holders and agronomist paid for most costs including airfares, accommodation, travel ins. The project met costs of travel in California, hosted dinners & project management fee.

APIA has undertaken a range of communications activities, both before and after the study tour, to ensure that prune growers & industry stakeholders are fully informed. Study tour participants have provided summary reports on their study tour experience and observations. Highlights from these reports are being made available through ABC radio interviews, articles in the quarterly Vine magazine and electronic news editions. In addition, a full report will be presented at the APIA Annual Conference in late November 2024. A summary of study tour participant reports, focused on key observations and proposed action has been provided with this report.

In relation to monitoring and evaluation, both pre-tour and post-tour surveys to assess changes in study tour members "Knowledge & Attitude to Change" were undertaken. Summary results & graphs have been included in this report.

This project will ensure that the prune industry continues to address the following outcomes detailed in the Prune SIP:

- Outcome 2: Improved capability and an innovative culture in the Australian prune industry maximises investments in productivity and demand
- Outcome 3: The Australian prune industry is more profitable through informed decision-making using consumer knowledge and tracking
- Outcome 4: The Australian prune industry has increased profitability, efficiency and sustainability through innovative research and development (R&D), sustainable best management practices and better pollination management.

Keywords

Planting densities & design, pruning techniques, prune varieties & rootstocks; California Prune Board; pitted & non-pitted prunes; dehydration; Sunsweet Growers; prune plantings; irrigation management; fertilizer management; pests & disease control; machinery manufacturers; *Phellinus pomaceus*; promotion; thinning; orchard management.

Introduction

The California Study Tour project was undertaken because of the similarities in Australian and Californian production systems, which enabled study tour participants to obtain valuable information about new varieties and rootstocks, production practices, machinery, irrigation systems and the latest R&D findings.

Networking with prune industries in other countries such as the US is seen as an important part of a strategy to develop direct access to the latest market and technical information.

The 2024 Study Tour follows on from a previous study tour to California in 2014, which involved visits and meetings with major players in the California dried prune industry, including growers, prune processors and marketers, researchers and the California Prune Board. The 2014 study tour recommended international travel every 3-5 years to help keep existing and new growers up to date with developments in overseas prune industries. This study will make the same recommendation about future study tours.

Methodology

FINAL ITINERARY for California Study Tour, 25th May 2024 to 4th June 2024

Day	Date	Time	Study Tour Activity – travel/visits/meetings	Location
Day 0	Sat 25 May 2024		Fly from Griffith, NSW to Sydney. Overnight near Sydney airport	
Day 1	Sun 26 May 2024		Fly from Sydney, NSW to San Francisco. Overnight stay.	
Day 2	Mon 27 May 2024	AM PM	Free morning in San Francisco Afternoon travel to Yuba City. Overnight stay. Note – today is a State Holiday for Memorial Day	
Day 3	Tues 28 May 2024	AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.30am. Flory (Coe) Industries facility tour at Live Oak (3453 Riviera Road, Live Oak, CA 95953) 	Live Oak
		AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11.00am. Orchard Machinery Corporation (OMC) facility tour (2700 Colusa Hwy, Yuba City, CA 95993) 	Yuba City
		PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2pm. Taylor Brothers Farms - orchard & processing plant tour (182 Wilkie, Yuba City CA 95991) Overnight Yuba City	Yuba City
Day 4	Weds 29 May 2024	AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sacramento Valley Prune Research Tour (day 1). Full day 	Yuba City & surrounds
		PM	Overnight Red Bluff	
Day 5	Thurs 30 May 2024	AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sacramento Valley Prune Research Tour (day 2). Half day Tour ends with lunch at Chico 	Red Bluff & surrounds
		PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3pm, Sunsweet Growers plant visit/meeting. Overnight Yuba City	Yuba City
Day 6	Fri 31 May 2024	8AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Franz Niederholzer about Heat at bloom, crop set, Fertilizers and General discussion on prune growing Visit an Almond orchard planted after previous orchard recycled back into the ground Overnight Yuba City	Orland
		AM PM PM		Yuba City
Day 7	Sat 1 June 2024	8 AM to 1PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm visit. Erick Nielson Enterprises – grower & harvest contractor. Talk on Green Atlas Trial, pruning trials, thinning trials & growing high Quality prunes Overnight Sacramento free afternoon	Sacramento
Day 8	Sun 2 June 2024	AM PM	FREE DAY Overnight Sacramento	Sacramento
Day 9	Mon 3 June 2024	AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am. Farm visit to Joe Turkovich’s ranch. near Davis 11am. Sarah Castro. UC Davis. New varieties & rootstocks. 3pm. Meeting with Donn Zea & staff, CPB. Prune Board programs & operations, share strategic ideas. Dinner, local restaurant Overnight Sacramento	Winters, near Davis
		AM		Roseville
		PM		Sacramento
Day 10	Tues 4 June 2024	AM PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting, Greg Thompson Prune Growers Marketing Association Farm visit, Ranvir Singh, President - California Prune Growers Marketing Association Kalkat fruit and nuts processing plant Jelly Belly factory tour A jelly beans processor 	Olivehurst

Results and discussion

This project resulted in a highly successful study tour of the California prune industry being undertaken in late May – early June 2024. The study tour was the main project output to be delivered. The other significant output was the communication program which involved a range of activities, both before and after the tour.

The study tour group comprised 9 members, 8 prune growers and 1 agronomist. Amongst these participants were 3 young prune growers who had been awarded \$5,000 scholarships by APIA to help fund their involvement. APIA considered these scholarships to be a vital investment in the future of the Australian industry.

The study tour itinerary (refer Methodology section) was extensive with activities running over 8 days and including visits/meetings with a wide range of California industry stakeholders including: machinery manufacturers, research providers, local growers, major processor Sunsweet Growers, California Prune Board, Prune Bargaining Association (refer Appendix 3 for a list of California industry contacts).

Importantly, the timing of the study tour was determined in close consultation with the Californian industry & enabled the study tour group to participate in the 2024 Sacramento Valley Prune Field Tour (held on Weds 29th & Thurs 30th May) which included several property visits to look at spacing (including high density), irrigation, potassium management, pruning perspectives and disease (Phellinus and Prune brownline).

Study tour members have prepared reports which detail their observations and any recommendations or proposed actions being considered. These reports detail the participants learnings and confirm the benefits gained from participating in the study tour (Refer Appendix 1 Summary of some key observations & proposed actions/recommendations. Extracts from study tour participant reports).

Topics covered in study tour member reports were wide ranging and included: pruning techniques, irrigation management, fertilizer management, dehydration costs, planting densities & design, machinery design & new technologies, tree shakers, pest control, prune quality, promotion focus, research into bloom timing & spread of harvest time, new prune varieties, rootstocks etc.

In addition, pre-tour & post-tour Knowledge & Attitude to Change surveys of study tour members were conducted & confirm the benefits gained in terms of improved knowledge and approach to change & adoption of new practices or technologies (refer Appendix 2 Knowledge & Attitude to Change survey results).

Outputs

Table 1. Output summary

Output	Description	Detail
Study Tour group members & itinerary approved by the Project Reference Group	Finalising the study tour participants & itinerary was the initial objective.	<p>Early focus was on communicating with levy payers & stakeholders about the Study Tour & inviting EOIs. Convened Project Reference Group (PRG) meeting.</p> <p>Extensive activity related to preparation of a draft Study Tour itinerary, in close consultation with Californian industry.</p> <p>Strong focus on managing Study Tour logistics.</p> <p>APIA awarded 3 young grower scholarships to facilitate participation in the study tour.</p>
California Study Tour undertaken in May/June 2024	California Study Tour undertaken in May/June 2024	Activities included preparation of a communications strategy with M&E plan, stakeholder engagement plan & risk register.
Communications delivered including, e-news, Vine article & study tour participants' reports	<p>A range of communications were undertaken before & after the Study Tour.</p> <p>Ongoing communication activities include another article in the August edition of the Vine (still to be published), as well as more e-news editions using extracts from participant reports.</p>	<p>Prepared appropriate communications & reporting activities during & after the Study Tour.</p> <p>Vine article(s) Aug 2024 edition (2 pages) https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/non4yis8wx1mzu0zxzdyp/</p> <p>E-news editions ausprunes_enevs vol 12 issue 19 California Study Tour https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/tg8on3kynezy prnu3pyw/ ausprunes_enevs vol 13 issue 5 California Study Tour EOI https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/oq4yzzqvp1e6p7yrvl5gq/ ausprunes_enevs vol 13 issue 6 Grower scholarships https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/hpgbeh3zdnvuh89jsma5/ ausprunes_enevs vol 13 issue 8 Three Scholarships awarded https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/f2e9693fcwpoakqwg4rzx/</p> <p>Two Study tour participants have done ABC Radio interviews. Reports have been prepared by Study Tour participants. A summary of extracts from study tour participant reports, focused on key observations and proposed actions has been provided with this report.</p>

Outcomes

Table 2. Outcome summary

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
<p>Intermediate outcomes</p> <p>Increased engagement and awareness of growers and industry stakeholders of best practice, latest global R&D investments & project outputs by communicating valuable information.</p>	<p>Prune SIP</p> <p>Outcome 2: Improved capability and an innovative culture in the Australian prune industry maximises investments in productivity and demand</p>	<p>All Study Tour participants appreciated the opportunity to visit California & see it at work & learn about local practices, R&D etc.</p>	<p>Summary of extracts from study tour participant reports in relation to key observations & proposed actions/recommendations (refer appendix 1).</p> <p>Pre & post tour Knowledge & Attitude to Change Survey (refer appendix 2).</p>
<p>Intermediate outcomes</p> <p>Enhanced communication and networking have led to greater sharing of knowledge and information on technical developments across the prune industry.</p>	<p>Prune SIP</p> <p>Outcome 2: Improved capability and an innovative culture in the Australian prune industry maximises investments in productivity and demand</p>	<p>All Study Tour participants appreciated the opportunity to visit California & it see at work & learn about their practices, R&D etc.</p>	<p>Summary of extracts from study tour participant reports in relation to key observations & proposed actions/recommendations (refer appendix 1).</p> <p>Pre & post tour Knowledge & Attitude to Change Survey (refer appendix 2).</p>
<p>End-of-project outcomes</p> <p>Increased engagement and awareness, knowledge and skills supporting the adoption of best practice & innovation in the growing, processing and marketing of Australian prunes with the aim of maximising the profitability of the Australian industry.</p>	<p>Prune SIP</p> <p>Outcome 4: The Australian prune industry has increased profitability, efficiency and sustainability through innovative research and development (R&D), sustainable best management practices and better pollination management.</p>	<p>All Study Tour participants appreciated the opportunity to visit California & it see at work & learn about their practices, R&D etc. Further, participant reports suggest that their learnings will lead to changes being made in their operations.</p>	<p>Summary of extracts from study tour participant reports in relation to key observations & proposed actions/recommendations (refer appendix 1).</p> <p>Pre & post tour Knowledge & Attitude to Change Survey (refer appendix 2).</p>

Monitoring and evaluation

Table 3. Key Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
<p>Effectiveness To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?</p>	<p>The project has successfully increased grower awareness & understanding of the Californian industry's best management practices, latest R&D results & promotion focus.</p>	<p>Regular communication with target groups is vital, both before & after the study tour. Regular study tours to other major prune producing countries offers real benefits.</p>
<p>Relevance How relevant was the project to the needs of intended beneficiaries</p>	<p>The California Study Tour was undertaken with strong member & stakeholder participation (although numbers were impacted by the very low prune crop in 2024) & the continuing active communication about study tour observations is meeting the needs of prune levy payers.</p>	<p>Regular communication with target groups is vital, both before & after the study tour. Regular study tours to other major prune producing countries offers real benefits.</p>
<p>Process Appropriateness How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project?</p>	<p>Prune growers & industry stakeholders were closely engaged with this project. About 20 initial expressions of interest received, however the final number was reduced to 9, as a result of the poor prune crop.</p>	<p>Strong, early communication is essential to create interest in any proposed study tour.</p>
<p>Efficiency What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency</p>	<p>Throughout the project, every effort was made to maximise the participant number. The itinerary had some built-in flexibility to enable opportunities for visits/meetings to be taken as they arose. APIA also invested in 3 young grower scholarships to facilitate the involvement of more young growers.</p>	<p>Retaining some flexibility with the study tour itinerary is essential to ensure that opportunities that may arise can be taken.</p>

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (Future study tours)

That a study tour to a major prune producing country should be considered every 5-7 years to help maintain international contacts and ensure that Australian prune growers & industry stakeholders are fully informed about best practice management and latest research results

Recommendation 2 (Pruning techniques)

That APIA should consider inviting California prune grower, Joe Turkovich to visit Australia to inform the Australian industry and demonstrate pruning techniques being practiced in California.

Recommendation 3 (Closer tree spacings)

That APIA should encourage new and existing growers to maximise returns by adopting closer plantings similar to those found in California (18 feet between rows & 13-16 feet between trees).

Intellectual property

No project IP or commercialisation to report

Appendices

Appendix 1 Summary of some key observations of study tour participants

Appendix 2 Summary results Knowledge & Attitude to Change Surveys

Appendix 3 List of California industry contacts

Appendix 4 List of California Study Tour participants

Appendix 5 Communication Activities

Appendix 1

Summary of some key observations & proposed actions/recommendations (Extracts from study tour participant reports)

Ann Furner

Everything we saw was extremely interesting and the whole group learnt a lot. I know I'm going to use a new pruning technique Joe Turkovich showed us. I will also plant my trees closer and in a diamond pattern to help capture more light. Overall, I learnt heaps and it was a brilliant trip.

Ann's recommendations:

- The tree spacing industry standard should be 16ft x 18ft.
- Don't grow small fruit
- Adopt Joe Turkovich's low pruning technique in new orchards.
- Ask Joe Turkovich to visit Australia again to demonstrate this on a new block. It would be very valuable for all growers and new growers to see this technique.
- DON'T GO NUTS FOR PRUNES – Keep the industry level stable.
- Invest in more drying space. Find ways to make this not a burden on the individual grower.
- Light interception is extremely important in an orchard to grow big, sweet fruit. Ausprunes may be able to create an enews with information from Bruce Lampinen, UC Almond researcher.
- A common theme from the Australian growers, when we were having a discussion on the bus, was that America's know their stuff. The America growers, researchers etc could just about answer every question we ask them regarding plant functionality, the use of fertilisers and how fertilisers interact with soil and the plants. My recommendation would be to hold a short course for prune farmers on the basics in plant physiology and basic soil chemistry.
- Do not allow hard, bitter, sour, burnt prunes to be put into a packet.
- Do not allow the off runs from fresh fruit to be dried. This fruit is not suitable for the use in an Angas Park or Verity bag
- Sunsweet and CA Prunes both said if a consumer eats a bad prune, you will never get them back.
- Focus on improving our sustainability and better understand the industries impact on the environment.
- Investigate Yolo Gold but I wouldn't suggest planting large blocks of this variety.
- Promotional activity should be planned. A 3-5yr plan should be established and should include:
 - Target audience – what is the audience Ausprunes is targeting. Stick to this for 3-5yrs
 - Recipe development – healthy, easy to use with vibrant, colourful images
 - Push gut health and stick to the same message for 3-5yrs.
 - If the industry understands how sustainable prune growing is, and if it is positive news, push that we are a sustainable industry.
 - Hire a photographer to build a good photo database of all the growers in the industry.
 - Work with processors to fill the gaps with promotional activities or push the same message.
 - Ausprunes could lobby Osteoporosis Australia, Bone Health Australia and The Gut Foundation to see if there could be a partnership or the potential for them to push prunes or for us to use their logos.

James Cremasco

Key takeaways

- They all use potassium in the fertigation and focus on it more than nitrogen
- Most mechanical pruning is done in spring/late spring to prevent water shoots & promotes fruit size growth
- They have a lot higher disease pressure
- We have a lot less vermin pressure
- Australia is in front with irrigation tech
- Australia is in front with thinning tech
- California prunes are telling their own growers and other countries don't go nuts for prunes

- Use of micro sprinklers to try and keep a larger root base
- Preference on rootstock Krimps 86 to prevent trees from falling over for field/time management
- Major packers want larger fruit as it brings a premium price
- Labour costs are getting too high for them as well as us
- California prunes as an industry are funding drying technologies to try and make more efficient dryers
- Growers are funding new varieties to try to get the fruit to semi set on the tree as well as flower earlier to prevent heat at flowering time
- A new variety has been released yolo gold that is sweeter than cfi but their markets don't want it because it doesn't dry as dark as a conventional prune
- 47% of grower in California are 10-40 acre farmers
- Only 8% of growers are over 100 acres
- With other commodity's not doing so well over there they feel prunes are in a good place
- Chile floods their markets every year with small and sour fruit which makes it hard to promote prunes
- Marketing teams all say that we need to keep prunes in front of people's minds with advertisement because prunes are not the most memorable.

What we will be implementing

- This year I am doing a trial of the long pruning, we seen Joe Turkovic's farm and Eric Neilson's
- I will be changing my mechanical pruning timing to spring late spring to try and mitigate water shoots
- I will be setting my harvester up with shaking timers to better thin the crop load on my trees
- I will start to change my fertilizer program to use more potassium and less nitrogen where possible
- I would like to try set up a block to sprinklers in the future

Michael Zalunardo

Pruning

- Eric Nielson and Joe Turkovich still mainly hand prune and are aiming for a lot higher tree
- Hedging and pruning - all growers are doing it straight after harvest before the rain starts or in spring because of Cytospora
- Joe Turkovich has developed his own variation on long pruning which looks very encouraging. Some California growers have been using it with great success. Involves no heading cuts just thinning cuts ,2 to 3 main limbs with flat branches coming of them sounds and looks great.

Planting Spacings

- All growers are 17 to 18 feet between rows & 12 to 14 feet between trees
- Some growers are planting to a Diamond pattern getting better light interception, better spray coverage and trees have more soil to grow in. **California Prune Board**
- Funds both Promotion & Research
- Market research has confirmed that prune promotion should be aimed at 40-60-year-old women as the major market for prunes with a focus on bone health and gut health etc. It is the easiest age group to convince them to buy and eat more prunes
- Major concerns include:
 - cost of drying prunes, so CPB are funding research to try to decrease the cost of drying
 - growers not over planting prunes - growers being urged not to plant unless they have a processor to take all of the crop
 - worries about walnut and almond growers planting prunes as they are losing money and may look at changing crops
 - encouraging growers to grow a high-quality prune so they can market at a premium price compared to Chile

Matthew Zalunardo

Different pruning technics e.g., Mechanical, or manual pruning.

- Manual technique of pruning that Joe Turkovich has developed is long pruning only having 2 to 3 primary branches with flat branches coming off them, and letting the tree grow up with no heading cuts only thinning cuts.

New technology in harvest equipment

- Erick Nielsons is trialing Green Atlas and has modified his shaker and put 3 shaking timers to shake different times.
- Erick has also Modified the receiver and put a scale under the bin to weigh the fruit they have shaken off instead of manually counting the fruit.

Things we will be changing

- This year will be the 4th year planting at high density plantings at 18x14 spacing.
- We will be changing the way we prune our trees and go to the long pruning technique for the younger trees. The older trees will still manually prune the tree to open up the centres and mechanical prune the centre of the rows every second year.
- We will continue to thin the trees to 3500 to 4500 pieces of fruit on a tree.
- Last year I wired up a traffic light system on our shaker for thinning, which consists of 3 timers with 3 different colour lights. The reason why I installed this system it to get a more even shake and take the guess work out of it while using green atlas.
- After gaining information for the recommended height of which to shake the tree I will further investigate if we have been shaking the tree at the correct height if not will change the height we shake at.
- We are in the process of trying to get 6 YOLO gold trees for a trial planting.
- We are going to plant in a diamond pattern to get better light interaction and spray coverage, also will help during harvest with removing leaves out of the bins.

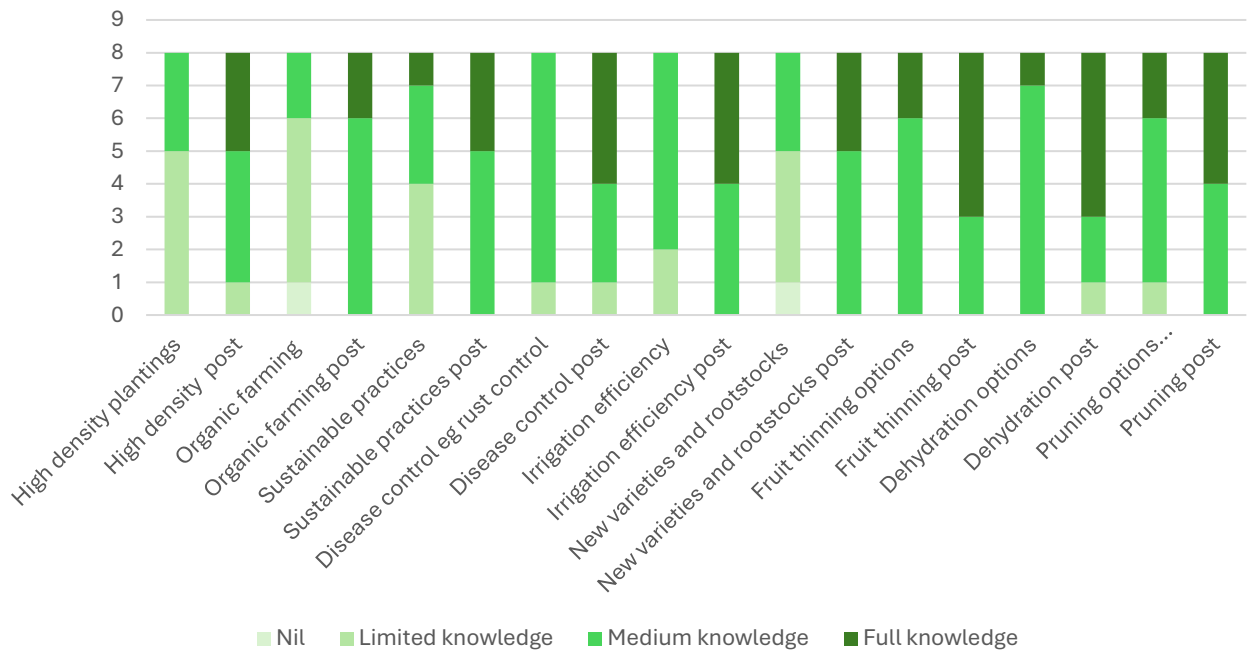
Samuel Raciti

- Thank you to the Australian Prune Industry for selecting me as a young grower to travel across to California as part of a study tour to look at how the Californian Prune industry handles their industry, as well as learning and adapting new technologies and methods onto my own farm from the ideas based on the Californian Prune growers. Thank you to Hort Innovation for funding Aus Prunes.
- What I found most interesting regarding the study tour and how the Californians farm is that they don't put out a lot if any post-harvest fertilizer applications. They also don't spray any dormant oil sprays unlike us here in Australia. As most of the farmers in California have large acres of land, they farm with long rows their input of hands-on experience within the orchard is very minimal. They like to be in the office budgeting and running numbers on the upcoming year. They also have a lot of workers to manage a lot of their on-farm practices such as spraying pruning etc. They are also wanting to get out of having to prune by hand as the quality of pruners aren't the best anymore, so they are turning to a more mechanical way of pruning with saws. Overall, how can they reduce costs on-farm while still producing a quality product.

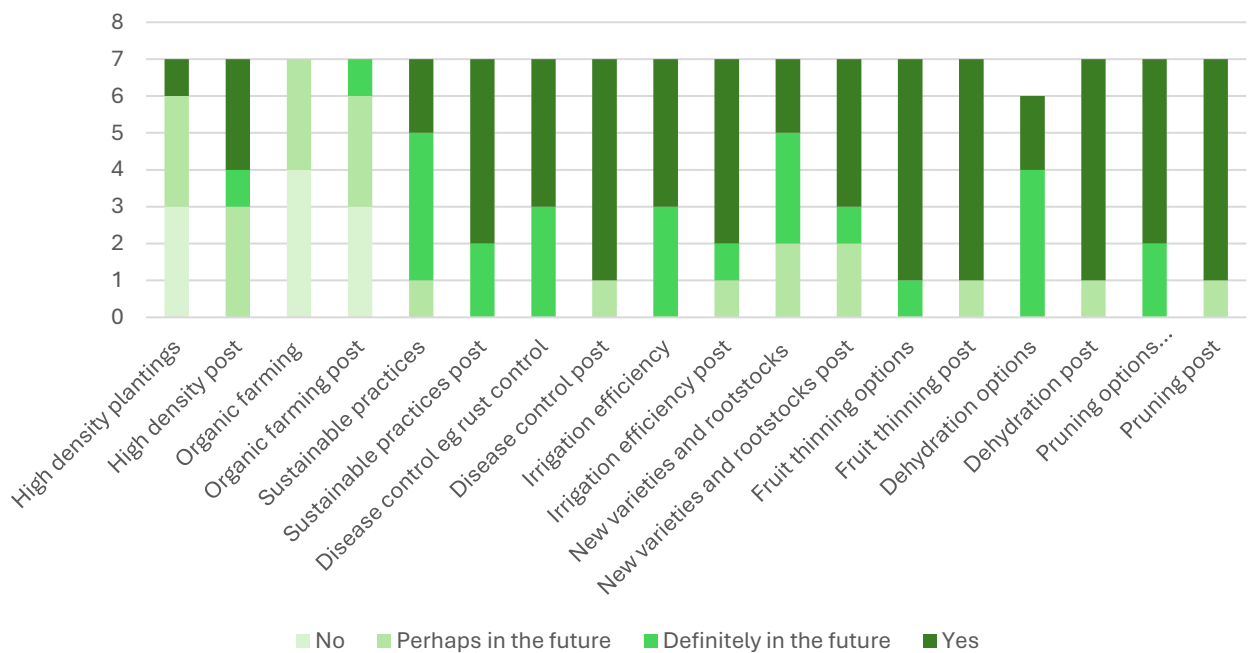
Appendix 2 Knowledge & Attitude to Change Survey Results

	Pre-tour Summary totals				Post-tour Summary totals			
How do you rate your knowledge of the following topics?								
	Nil	Limited knowledge	Medium knowledge	Full knowledge	Nil	Limited knowledge	Medium knowledge	Full knowledge
High density plantings	0	5	3	0	0	1	4	3
Organic farming	1	5	2	0	0	0	6	2
Sustainable practices	0	4	3	1	0	0	5	3
Disease control eg rust control	0	1	7	0	0	1	3	4
Irrigation efficiency	0	2	6	0	0	0	4	4
New varieties and rootstocks	1	4	3	0	0	0	5	3
Fruit thinning options	0	0	6	2	0	0	3	5
Dehydration options	0	0	7	1	0	1	2	5
Pruning options (Mechanical/Hand pruning)	0	1	5	2	0	0	4	4
Have you adopted these practices on your farm?								
	No	Perhaps in the future	Definitely in the future	Yes	No	Perhaps in the future	Definitely in the future	Yes
High density plantings	3	3	0	1	0	3	1	3
Organic farming	4	3	0	0	3	3	1	0
Sustainable practices	0	1	4	2	0	0	2	5
Disease control eg rust control	0	0	3	4	0	1	0	6
Irrigation efficiency	0	0	3	4	0	1	1	5
New varieties and rootstocks	0	2	3	2	0	2	1	4
Fruit thinning options	0	0	1	6	0	1	0	6
Dehydration options	0	0	4	2	0	1	0	6
Pruning options (Mech/Hand pruning)	0	0	2	5	0	1	0	6
Do you have any international industry contacts?								
	Yes	No			Yes	No		
	2	6			7	1		
If yes, how many?								
	1 to 5	5 to 10	More than 10		1 to 5	5 to 10	More than 10	
	0	2	0		2	4	1	

Knowledge, pre and post tour



Adoption, pre and post tour



Appendix 3

CONTACTS LIST – CALIFORNIA STUDY TOUR 2024

Organisations & Main Contacts (in same order as Study Tour itinerary) Flory

Industries

Seth Richmond, P.E. | Director of Product | 209-648-4798 3453
Riviera Road, Live Oak, CA 95953

Orchard Machinery Corporation (OMC)

Brian Andersen, President, Orchard Machinery Corporation, 2700 Colusa Hwy, Yuba City, CA 95993 p: (530) 673-2822 m: (530) 300-6158 w: shakermaker.com e: ba@shakermaker.com

Taylor Brothers Farm

John Taylor. (182 Wilkie Ave, Yuba City CA 95991)
530-671-1505. Cel. 530-870-1592. jtaylor@tbfrunes.com

Sunsweet Growers

Dane Lance, CEO. 901 N. Walton Avenue, Yuba City, CA 95993

Californian Prune Board

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Greg Thompson

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Appendix 4

California Study Tour participants

Zalunardo	Michael	Mr.	Levy payer	PO Box 688, Griffith, NSW, 2680
Furner	Ann	Ms.	Levy payer	PO Box 264, Yenda, NSW, 2681
Raccanello	Peter	Mr	Levy payer	PO Box 293, Yenda, NSW 2681
Raccanello	Sue	Mrs	partner	PO Box 293, Yenda, NSW 2681
Smith	Kate	Ms.	Agronomist, Yenda Prods	PO Box 19 Yenda NSW 2681
Cremasco	James	Mr	Levy payer	PO Box 167 Yenda NSW 2681
Zalunardo	Matthew	Mr	Young grower scholarship	PO Box 688, Griffith, NSW, 2680
Raciti	Samuel	Mr	young grower scholarship	PO Box 125 Yenda NSW 2681
Raccanello	Anthony	Mr	Young grower scholarship	PO Box 293 Yenda NSW 2681

Appendix 5 Communication Activities

These activities included:

- Article in the Vine magazine edition May 2024
- Aus Prune e-news editions: 1 October 2023, 28 February 2024, 8 & 20 March 2024

See attached documents.



Aussie growers head to USA

A group of 11 Australian prune growers will embark on a study tour of the Californian prune industry in late May.

APIA chairman Michael Zalunardo is keen to consolidate the friendships and industry networks formed with Californian growers and processors when APIA last visited in 2014.

"We are extremely fortunate to have such positive relationships where there is a willingness to share knowledge and research findings," Michael said.

"This year I am excited that we will have three young growers – Samuel Raciti, Anthony Raccanello and Matthew Zalunardo – joining us on the study tour.

"The APIA executive recognises that we are part of an ageing industry and that we must invest in our youth to develop their skills and networks to take us into the future.

"Many of the executives have been on study tours in the past and we have all come home with new ideas to try and improve our own farms."

Michael said it was important the next generation had that same eye-opening experience and to begin their own international networks.

"To achieve this, APIA offered a \$5000 scholarship to young prune growers to help meet the costs of participating in the study tour and we are delighted that we had three well-respected candidates apply and be granted the scholarship opportunity," he said.

Michael has had a leading role in planning the study tour, which will include visits to the California Prune Board, machinery manufacturers, researchers, farms and processors.

He said a highlight of the tour will be the Sacramento Valley

Research Tour conducted by the University of California Cooperative Extension team on 29-30 May.

This two-day event occurs annually and takes place on various farms in the Sacramento Valley region.

California Prune Board managing advisor, production research and partnerships Zach Bagley said the field tour was designed to be engaging with ongoing applied research and grower standard/trial practices observed and discussed in the field.

"This is not a sit down powerpoint meeting, but a true field tour where we go farm to farm and talk about different practices, outcomes and how ongoing research might change things for the better," he said.

This year's field tour will look at four to five high yielding (>4 tons per acre) orchards with round table discussions around what made these orchards more productive while maintaining size and quality.

The discussions will include the topics of nutrients, water, and pruning management practices.

The tour will also stop at John Taylor's orchard to see a high-density planting

Discussions will include the trade-offs in production costs and benefits this provides, as well as the potential "orchard of the future" opportunities that high density plantings present.

It will also be a good opportunity to talk about the role of rootstocks.

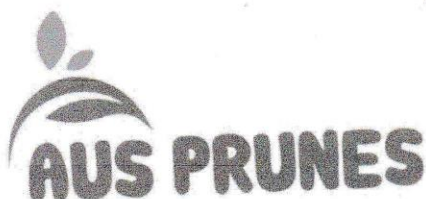
Another stop will be a collaborating orchard to see the ongoing research into understanding the biology and epidemiology of *Phellinus*, a wood decay fungus affecting prune trees, and subsequent prevention and control strategies.

APIA's California study tour is a Hort Innovation project, which will be jointly funded via the statutory Prune Levy and individual participants. The tour will take place from Sunday 26 May to Tuesday 3 June, 2024.

All participants will contribute to discussions and preparation of a final report for Hort Innovation. ❖

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Australian Prune Industry Association Inc.

e-news

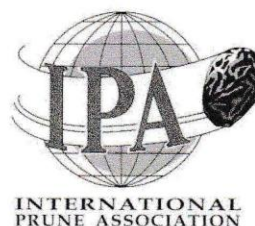
Volume: 12

Date: 1 October 2023

Issue: 19

EOI invited for Californian study tour 2024

The Australian Prune Industry Association (APIA) invites expressions of interest for a study tour to California to coincide with the 21st International Prune Association (IPA) Congress to be held in May/early June 2024.



This will be the first opportunity for the global prune industry to come together face to face in five years, with the 2021 and 2022 congresses both virtual.

Growers, processors and marketers from the major prune-producing countries are expected to attend and discuss the latest growing and dehydrating innovations, nutritional research and market updates for prunes.

The APIA National Executive believes Australian industry members would benefit from participation in the study tour that will include sessions at the IPA Congress as well as other activities such as visits to Californian producers, research organisations and processing facilities. Details of prune industry activities to be included in the study tour will be finalised once the IPA Congress date is set.

APIA will soon prepare a project proposal for Hort Innovation for funding to assist with study tour related costs for one person per enterprise.

It would be beneficial if APIA had an indication of the number of participants interested in participating in the study tour. To assist APIA, interested growers and stakeholders should register their Expressions of Interest by Wednesday 11th October with APIA Secretary Phil Chidzey (E: pwchidzey@bigpond.com).

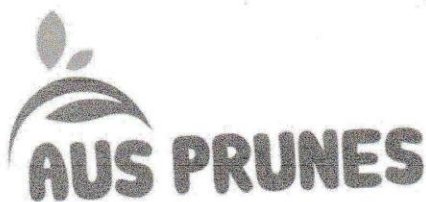
Please note that study tour participants will have some obligations including a willingness to contribute to discussions and preparing reports at the completion of the study tour.

Australian Prune Industry Association Inc.

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This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the Dried Prune industry research levy and funds from the Australian Government



Australian Prune Industry Association Inc.

e-news

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Issue: 5

Final chance to join Californian study tour 2024

The Australian Prune Industry Association (APIA) plans to visit the California prune industry in May this year and invites growers and industry stakeholders to join them.

APIA has signed a project funding agreement with Hort Innovation Australia for the California study tour and is in the process of finalising the itinerary in consultation with Californian prune industry representatives.

At this stage the study tour is likely to be a 7-day program commencing Monday 27 May, 2024. Of particular interest will be the Sacramento Valley Prune Field Tour that will be held over two days, 28-29 May, 2024. In addition, there will be a range of meetings and visits to Californian producers, research organisations and processing facilities.

The APIA Executive believes Australian industry members will benefit from participation in the study tour to gain valuable insights into how other countries grow, process and market prunes, as well as forming industry networks and consolidating friendships with international peers.

The project funding agreement provides for funding assistance to be made available to grower levy-payers, with support limited to one person per eligible entity.

The funding support for growers will be at a level that meets about 50% of total estimated costs. Participating growers will pay for their own airfares, meals and travel insurance, while project funding will cover accommodation, transport (bus and driver hire) and other project costs.

In return for the funding support, study tour participants must show a willingness to contribute to discussions and preparing a report at the completion of the study tour.

This is the final opportunity for interested growers and industry stakeholders to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) if they haven't already done so.

Expressions of Interest should be registered with APIA Secretary Phil Chidgzey
E: pwchidgzey@bigpond.com by cob Monday 4th March, 2024.

Those who have already submitted an EOI don't need to submit another. APIA will soon be in direct contact via email to confirm whether there is continuing interest in participating in the study tour.

The final study tour itinerary and final list of participants will be discussed and agreed by a Project Reference Group, that includes a Hort Innovation member.

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Australian Prune Industry Association Inc.

e-news

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Scholarship opportunity for young prune growers

Australian Prune Industry Association (APIA) Chairman Michael Zalunardo is excited about the impending California study tour and the prospect of developing international networks with researchers and fellow growers.

“As an executive we recognise that we are part of an aging industry and that we must invest in our youth to develop their skills and networks to take us into the future,” he said.

“We would like to encourage young prune growers to be involved in the California study tour as it would provide valuable experience and access to international contacts to boost their industry networks.

“APIA is offering a \$5,000 scholarship to a young prune grower to help meet costs of study tour participation.”

Young growers interested in applying for the scholarship should write an Expression of Interest and address the following matters:

- Explain current involvement in the prune industry
- What would the applicant hope to achieve from being involved?
- Willingness to participate actively in all activities and prepare a summary report for industry information

Expression of Interest should be sent to APIA Secretary Phil Chidgzey E: pwchidgzey@bigpond.com by Friday 15th March, 2024.

The APIA Executive will be responsible for final decisions on the suitability of one or more applicants.

Upcoming events

California Study tour 2024

Date: 27 May – 2 May 2024 TBC

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Three young growers to join US study tour

Three young prune growers will jet off to California as part of the Australian Prune Industry Association (APIA) 2024 California study tour.

APIA Chair Michael Zalunardo said the executive had agreed to award three scholarships, each worth \$5,000, to enable young prune growers to join the study tour.

"The scholarships are seen as a valuable investment in the future of the Australian prune industry," Michael said.

"We want to help nurture the enthusiasm of the younger generation and their passion for knowledge that will help them improve their farming practices and ultimately their profit margins.

"We also want to foster a positive relationship with APIA and promote continuing involvement in industry events. To this end, each of the scholarship recipients will prepare summary reports to be used in communicating with APIA members about the study tour findings and may also be invited to meet with the executive to discuss their experiences."

Michael said three young growers had applied for the scholarship and all three had been active in the industry and attending industry events.

The executive decided all three were worthy recipients and he congratulated Samuel Raciti, Anthony Raccanello and Matthew Zalunardo on their successful applications.

Sam, a third-generation prune grower and agronomist with Yenda producers is keen to learn more about how the Californians deal with labour supply and demand.

"I will also be taking note of tree plantings and spaces and expected yields to see how they compare to our plantings at home," he said.

Anthony, a full-time prune farmer since 2020 is also hoping to pick up some tips to improve his farming practices and management.

"It's a great opportunity to make contacts in a leading prune producing country and get a better understanding of the international industry and its markets," he said.

Matthew, a fourth-generation prune farmer and diesel mechanic is looking forward to seeing the different types of machinery used in California and new product innovations and how he can make improvements to his own machinery on the farm.

"I also want to build an international professional network with other growers and leading researchers to get a better knowledge of growing and drying prunes," Matthew said.

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