

National rural award to Loxton company

SA fruit and veg company P Costi & Sons, Loxton, won the Rural Enterprise Award in the 2009 national NAB Agribusiness Awards for Excellence.

The awards recognise Australia's top companies and individuals in the agriculture, food, fibre and beverage sectors across 10 categories.

Established in 1979, P Costi & Sons operate a citrus packing shed at Loxton in the Riverland.

Their core business is the contract packing and marketing of citrus for growers based in the Riverland and Sunraysia regions.

In 2009, it is estimated between 16,000 and 20,000 tonnes of citrus will be processed through the plant.

Employing 65 staff during peak season and processing fruit for 65 growers, P Costi & Sons is a significant contributor to regional development in the area.

The company is well recognised for its commitment, reliability and quality standards through its relationship with growers and right along the supply chain. This has enabled the company to establish successful markets both domestically and internationally.

Of the citrus they handle, 40 per cent is marketed domestically under the Venus Citrus brand, with the remainder exported to 29 countries including Japan, USA and Malaysia under the Sunrise, Sunflower and Riversun labels.

Quality and food safety is an essential part of company strategy starting from the grower and progressing right through the food chain, with the operations meeting numerous Food Safety and Quality Systems. This has built customer confidence, improved product quality and safety and reduced out turn risks, achieving the best possible return for products.

The viability of the business depends on the volume of citrus sourced, and as a result P Costi & Sons maintain a strong relationship with its grower base, reflected in their loyalty and long-term tenure of supply.

P Costi & Sons managing director Helen Aggeletos said the company and its producers have survived three tough years.

"The face of the Riverland is changing; we have seen many permanent plantings die over the past few years and many families have had to walk off their farms," she said.

"Last season we subsidised farmers to purchase water to save their plantations, and also persuaded some of our exporters to do the same. We also lobbied the State Government for funds for growers to lessen the burden of temporary water purchases.

"We are absolutely thrilled to win this Award. It is great to be recognised for our contribution to the region, and also to increase awareness of what our growers have been going through."

Taken from <http://sj.farmonline.com.au/news/state/events/general/national-rural-award-to-loxton-company/1665615.aspx>

