

## **AU: Stonefruit growers come together over exports**

Stonefruit growers have come together to form one voice, and are on the same page as the government when it comes to promoting better access to Asian markets, according to Gaethan Cutri, of Cutri Fruits.

“The government and growers are now all pulling in the same direction,” he told Fresh Plaza. “We’re all talking about the same story, and trying to make it easier for the government to make the case for better access for Australian stonefruit into Asia.” Mr Cutri’s comments come after media reports on Friday stated that the \$40 million export industry, which is big in Hong Kong, had not had access to any new markets for 20 years, and was heading for a crisis. “It’s been too hard when there had been lots of individual voices in the past.”

The negotiations between growers, the Australian government and overseas trading partners are ongoing, so the industry is still awaiting the outcome, according to John Moore, CEO of Summerfruits Australia.

Mr Moore had previously told media that there is the potential to double, or even triple the 5,500 tonnes of peaches, nectarines and cherries that currently sell to Hong Kong each year if other Asian markets opened up. China has ‘clamped down’ on trade through Hong Kong because it may be missing out on duties to be collected, according to David Minnis, Chairman of the Australian Horticultural Exporters Association.

Exporters should also be proactive and seek to do business with other trading partners to maintain healthy revenue, according the Nicole Cutri, who manages exports for Cutri Fruit. “If you’re a proactive business you’re also working in, or at least looking into, other markets,” she said. “A lot of markets are being, or have been, closed, so that’s important. I used to send a bit of fruit to Vietnam, for example, and we used to send fruit to Russia. It’s a matter of thinking smarter.”

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