

Minister Geoff Brock

Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Local Government

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New almond technology to boost quality and exports

An innovative new radio frequency pasteuriser for almonds is set to improve quality and boost export markets for South Australia's Riverland.

Loxton company, Riverland Almonds, has installed the pasteuriser and a new retail packing line, partly funded by a \$608,000 grant from the State Government's *Riverland Sustainable Futures Fund*.

Regional Development Minister, Geoff Brock said the new technology would increase the volume of almonds processed, as well as provide value-adding opportunities for the company.

"The radio frequency pasteuriser enhances food safety, while the packing line will allow packaging activity to remain local rather than being outsourced interstate," Mr Brock said.

"This project reflects the importance of the almond industry and its value throughout the region.

"Riverland Almonds is one of Australia's leading almond processing and marketing companies, fully owned and operated by Riverland-based growers.

"The company is one of Australia's horticultural success stories, having grown five-fold in the past ten years and anticipating doubling its size again over the next three years.

"The State Government is committed to creating a sustainable future for regional businesses and produce and this project aligns closely with the strategic priority of Premium Food and Wine from our Clean Environment.

"The project has also created regional job opportunities, both directly and indirectly, with local contractors employed during installation and providing ongoing service," Mr Brock said.

Grant Birrell from Riverland Almonds said the project provided the company with new commercial opportunities in addition to its core business.

"The pasteuriser uses radio frequency wave technology to produce heat within the product, to reduce micro-organism levels without affecting the characteristics of the almond," Mr Birrell said.

"This simple process allows the almonds to be pasteurised without the use of steam, drying and refrigerated cooling systems. We hope to be able to offer this service to other products as a value-add to the region.

"We have also been able to expand into direct retail, with Riverland Almonds now supplying pasteurised almonds to the wholesale markets as well as being contracted by a major supermarket chain to provide pasteurised almonds packed through our packing facility," Mr Birrell said.

The \$20 million Riverland Sustainable Futures Fund was established to assist with industry restructuring and promote sustainable economic and social development in the Riverland.