



Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck
Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
Senator for Tasmania

MEDIA RELEASE

Improving productivity through protected cropping

The Australian Government has convened a roundtable today bringing together key horticulture stakeholders and industry members to discuss increasing productivity and job creation through protected cropping and horticulture.

Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Senator Richard Colbeck, said protected cropping has long been seen as a potential game changer for Australia through its efficiency and ability to effectively manage risks that the Australian environment is known for.

“Australia’s \$1.8 billion protected cropping industry offers optimal growing conditions for premium produce and delivers higher yields with less water usage, making it an essential tool during times of drought,” Minister Colbeck said.

“In partnership with Hort Innovation and Western Sydney University, we contributed \$4.3 million to The National Vegetable Protected Cropping Centre, a state-of-the-art glasshouse facility to house research, education and training opportunities.

“This centre features cutting-edge design and technology specifically developed for Australia’s harsh climatic conditions, enabling precise control of temperature, humidity, CO₂ and light.

“The average return on investment from protected cropping is between 5 per cent and 10 per cent—this can increase to up to 25 per cent for high technology greenhouse vegetable enterprises.

“According to the *Going Dutch* report released by KPMG, Australia needs to move its focus to technology innovation. Major investment into cutting edge technology development is what sets the Netherlands apart.

“There are 355 greenhouse vegetable producers in the Netherlands in comparison to our 105 greenhouse producers.

“Dutch farmers have reduced dependence on water for key crops by as much as 90 per cent, demonstrating the effectiveness of protected cropping and horticulture advances.

“Horticulture is the third largest agricultural industry behind meat and grains, employing more than 60,000 people around the country. It’s imperative we continue

to promote technological advancement in the sector to support jobs and further growth.

“The Government will continue to invest in ongoing research and innovation in horticulture through the Rural Research and Development Corporations. In 2018–19 it is expected that matching government contributions to Hort Innovation will be over \$55 million.

“There is an opportunity to harness the growth and productivity of the sector to make a substantial contribution to the vision of \$100 billion in agricultural production by 2030.” Minister Colbeck said.

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