

Monday 1 March 2010

PR/033/10

Apple crops crumble

Apple crops are bearing the brunt of a growing flying fox population and the NSW Farmers' Association is calling for action.

NSW Farmers' Association Horticulture Committee Chair Peter Darley says fruit growers have reported astronomical crop losses in recent days, predominantly in the Sydney Basin.

"We have long been seeking a commitment from the NSW Government to address the perennial issue of flying-fox culling and crop losses in NSW," Mr Darley said.

"Even green immature apple varieties such as Granny Smith and Pink Lady are suffering tremendous losses.

"Growers, alongside animal welfare, scientific and environment groups, would prefer not to use culling as their management tool but Government hasn't agreed to support alternatives, such as a netting scheme."

Mr Darley says the provision of a grant to orchardists to implement orchard exclusion netting would prevent crop losses. In return, the industry would avoid culling as a management tool.

Under the grant proposed by the Association, the NSW Government would offset about half of the cost of constructing netting meanwhile ongoing liabilities for maintenance and depreciation would be the concern of growers.

"Some growers are reporting well over 50% crop losses in their orchard this season and the need for Government action is critical," Mr Darley concluded.

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