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Greenlife Industry Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian horticulture industry mobilises \$5M eradication plan for tomato brown rugose fruit virus

The detection of tomato brown rugose fruit virus (ToBRFV) in South Australia's Northern Adelaide Plains has triggered a coordinated \$5 million eradication response, aiming to eliminate the virus and ensure confidence in Australia's horticulture industry remains robust.

John McDonald, Director of Research, Development and Extension (RDE) and Biosecurity at Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) highlighted the significance of the response effort.

"The five-million-dollar eradication plan is a critical step in securing Australia's horticulture sector against the spread of ToBRFV. The virus' containment to three properties is a positive development, but vigilance remains crucial," Mr McDonald said.

"By acting decisively and adopting precautionary measures, we can safeguard the horticulture industry and ensure its continued contribution to Australia's economy and food security."

Mr McDonald warned of the potential consequences if ToBRFV is not eradicated.

"A widespread outbreak could result in significant trade disruptions, including export restrictions and regulatory challenges, as well as damage to Australia's reputation as a trusted supplier of high-quality greenlife products," Mr McDonald said.

First detected in August 2024, ToBRFV is highly transmissible and affects tomatoes, capsicums and chillies, posing a significant biosecurity threat to the \$2.78 billion production nursery sector. The virus has been contained to three linked properties, with no further detections reported.

The National Management Group (NMG), which includes all Australian governments and affected industries under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD), has approved the ToBRFV Eradication Response Plan. This plan encompasses surveillance, testing and containment measures to eradicate the virus and support the production and trade of tomatoes.

The eradication effort, led by the South Australia Department of Primary Industries and Regions, is being nationally cost-shared by governments and industries, including GIA.

Mr McDonald emphasised the importance of proactive biosecurity measures across the nursery and horticulture sectors.

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“This eradication plan demonstrates the strength of collaboration between government and industry. Robust biosecurity protocols, such as enhanced hygiene and surveillance, are essential for protecting nurseries and ensuring long-term resilience against emerging threats like ToBRFV,” Mr McDonald said.

“ToBRFV spreads easily via infected seeds, plant material, human contact and tools. Production nurseries must prioritise strict hygiene and monitoring measures to prevent further outbreaks and safeguard the supply chain,” said Mr McDonald.

GIA recommends that production nurseries adopt robust biosecurity measures, including:

- **enhanced hygiene protocols** – cleaning tools, machinery and surfaces regularly; considering footbaths and restricted access areas
- **frequent monitoring** – inspecting plants for symptoms such as yellowing, leaf deformities or wrinkled fruit
- **safe sourcing** – sourcing seeds and plant material only from certified, disease-free suppliers
- **cross-contamination prevention** – creating designated zones for different plant species, and sanitising equipment and personnel before they move between zones.

For more information on ToBRFV and the eradication response, visit www.pir.sa.gov.au/tobrfv

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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