

Lee calls for response on frost damage

The frost which has devastated the fruit crops in the Goulburn Valley is a Natural Disaster exactly the same as Flood or Fire. While it will take several days to fully assess the damage, even at this early stage it is clear that the loss is massive.

Growers are already battling drought and the threat of water shortages. This, along with several years of depressed prices and escalating costs, has put the sustainability of many growers in doubt.

The losses from this frost may well be the last nail in the coffin for many. The Goulburn Valley region cannot afford to lose these growers or their contribution to the regional economy.

Several large producers in the Valley have estimated the loss to the region will exceed half a billion dollars. The Goulburn Valley yields twenty five percent of Victoria's food production. Victoria cannot afford to have this put at risk.

The State Government must not be allowed to dismiss this as anything other than a Natural Disaster. Both the Federal and State Governments can offer immediate assistance if it is given that status.

Exceptional Circumstances is more a long term measure for dry land agriculture, which is choked in a myriad of rules and regulations, and not suitable for this disaster.

Country Alliance Candidate Danny Lee, himself a fruit grower who has suffered the affects of crop loss from severe frost, says he fully understands the plight of the fruit industry and calls upon the minister for Regional Development and Treasurer Mr Brumby, to ensure the survival of the Goulburn Valley.

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