



By Gabrielle Easter

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Sunraysia TAFE offering citrus diploma



A new diploma to support the next generation of Australian orchard managers has been developed by Citrus Australia, the NSW Department of Primary Industry and TAFE institutes

A two-year nationally accredited citrus Diploma of Production Horticulture has been announced by Australia's Sunraysia Institute of TAFE (SuniTAFE), with the pilot programme to be rolled out in Mildura in February 2016.

SuniTAFE has worked alongside TAFE NEW – Riverina Institute, the NSW Department of Primary Industry and industry body Citrus Australia to develop the diploma, which aims to support Australia's next generation of citrus orchard managers.

The part-time course will include hands-on, practical sessions as well as seminars and has been designed

to work around employer's requirements, according to Citrus Australia market development manager Andrew Harty.

"There is an urgent need to develop a career pathway in the Australian citrus industry, and develop a skills training framework to support this," Harty said in a statement released 25 November. "The Australian citrus industry is entering an exciting growth phase, with massive new marketing opportunities to supply Asian export markets.

"Free trade agreements, favourable currency exchange and huge demand for 'clean and green' Australian fruit are all helping to drive citrus expansion,"

Hardy continued. "But at the same time, we need to lift our game to ensure we are supplying only the best quality product as efficiently as possible, and to achieve that, our supply chain will need managers with greater knowledge, skills and technical expertise than ever before."

The course will focus on production, including crop rotation, pruning, yield forecasting and irrigation, as well as managerial skills such as farm management, quality assurance and budgeting, and will look industry issues from market requirements and protocols to value chain understanding.