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PRESS RELEASE

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Surround proven winner for orchard returns

A recent grower-conducted trial has demonstrated again that choosing the best sunburn protection product and applying it correctly can dramatically improve grower returns.

John Corboy of Corboy's Orchard near Merrigum in Victoria's Goulburn Valley operates a 350 hectare orchard, producing premium quality pears, apples and stone fruit in one of the hottest pome fruit growing areas in Australia. He has seen the devastating effect of sunburn, particularly on Granny Smith apples, with losses in the region sometimes exceeding 30%.

Mr. Corboy's business is strongly focused on growing fruit for fresh market, and over the years he has seen a significant rise in quality standards of customers, in particular supermarkets; fruit that was readily sold with sunburn blush ten years ago is no longer acceptable. A combination of this and other management changes, such as high density open tatura trellising, has increased the incidence of sunburn, and consequently placed significant pressure on his bottom line.

Mr Corboy instigated his own trial last summer on over 30,000 trees to compare the performance of Surround and a liquid, calcium based sunscreen, two products which claim sunburn protection. He said that, "Every company comes to you with promises that their product will deliver improved yields and quality. Our management team wanted to test them out on our own orchards and quantify the return on investment when applied side by side in an independently controlled trial."

"The differences were quite significant", Mr Corboy added, "Surround was the clear winner, coming out with a net return over \$3880 per hectare in front of the liquid, calcium based sunscreen product. There are not many inputs that a grower can utilize that will generate that sort of return. "

Application of sunburn protectants has changed on Corboy's orchard in recent years with the modification to existing air blast sprayers. Mr Corboy said, "Commonsense tells you that sunburn occurs on the fruit that is exposed to the sun. Conventional airblasts are not designed to spray the tops of fruit, particularly the fruit inside the vee of the trellis. Our workshop staff made up an extension to our air blast sprayer so that the nozzles and air stream sprayed from above tree height. This coats the top of the fruit protecting it from sunburn." Mr Corboy added "We use water sensitive paper to check the accuracy of all our sprayers but with Surround it is very visual, you can see where your sprayer is putting it."

Mr Corboy concluded, "Surround is good insurance for your orchard. It is a useful tool to help ensure that our fruit is grown to suit the increasingly high standards required by our customers. Any initiative that improves quality of fruit and therefore pack-out percentage can add a lot to your bottom line. With grower margins being squeezed, value adding products such as Surround have the potential to mean the difference between the grower making a profit rather than a loss. But I would say to other growers, Do what I did, trial it alongside the alternative products on your own orchard and prove it to yourself."