



Rabobank

*Media release
May 20, 2014*

Potatoes South Australia names young industry leader

Riverland potato grower Justin Della Zoppa has been named the 2014 Rabobank Potatoes South Australia Industry Award winner.

As part of his prize, Mr Della Zoppa, 28, has been awarded a scholarship to attend the 2014 Rabobank Farm Managers Program, a course which offers young farmers from across a range of agricultural sectors in Australia and New Zealand the opportunity to develop and enhance their business management skills. Participants take away new skills and techniques with a commercially-driven perspective on farm management to put systems and structures in place to manage growth.

Mr Della Zoppa said he was excited to be able to take his business management skills to the next level via the Rabobank Farm Managers Program.

“My vision is to remain in our family business over the long-term, as a third generation potato producer, and on the Rabobank program, I hope to pick up some important skills to help me manage our farm business,” he said.

“We are currently in expansion mode on the property having bought the neighbouring farm. We’re investing in irrigating that land so we can increase our production into the future. It’s an exciting time for our business.”

Chosen from a select group of nominees, Mr Della Zoppa will be presented his prize at the Potato Industry Conference in Mount Gambier from 10-12 August later this year.

“I think the program will be critical in expanding my knowledge, communication, ability to influence, and my networking with other growers in the industry,” he said.

“This ought to help me gain insight into successful farming operations in different parts of Australia. I am keen to learn about how to set up effective business structures to help grow the business and manage our financial goals.”

Along with his family, Mr Della Zoppa runs their business, Hilltop Produce, located approximately five kilometres outside of Waikerie. The enterprise is focused mostly on potato and onion growing, as well as a citrus orchard and some rotational wheat and barley crops.

After completing schooling in Adelaide, Mr Della Zoppa returned home to be a part of the family enterprise to further his interests in horticultural farming.

“There are lots of things I like about the potato industry but mainly, I enjoy the challenge of farming and it’s an industry I have grown up around so I have known it all my life,” he said.

“Also, there aren’t too many others around this area doing it – only one other person my age in fact – so I believe there is a real opportunity, so long as you have the right



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infrastructure, land and water to grow quality produce. You're always challenged and you're always learning something new."

Hilltop Produce turns off between 100-200 acres of potatoes annually, with plans to expand production in coming years.

"We're starting to develop some of our land out the back with a focus on irrigation so we have better crop production and rotation," Mr Della Zoppa said.

"This plan will substantially grow our potato and onion production in the next three years. Then, we have a further growth expected to come in the fifth year of our irrigation development which is based on a five-year rotation of the crop."

Hilltop Produce has grown Nardine and Désirée potatoes for the 2014 season, however Mr Della Zoppa said they are undertaking some trials on other varieties as they look to planting for the coming year.

"Next year Nardine potatoes will be sold in an open market so anyone can grow them which could impact prices somewhat," he said.

"We tend to mix things up and we are currently exploring new varieties of reds and whites, however, we'll just wait and see how they go throughout the trials. If they go well, we'll plant some more."

Rabobank state manager for South Australia James Robinson said Mr Della Zoppa would make an ideal candidate for the Farm Managers Program due to his highly-developed agronomic skills and technical ability in the industry.

"Rabobank and Potatoes SA have jointly sponsored this industry award as both organisations see it as an integral way of acknowledging and supporting the future leaders of the industry," Mr Robinson said.

"We want to invest in the future leaders of agriculture, and by supporting Justin to further his leadership and management skills, we can be confident that the industry will be in a sound place for sustainable growth and productivity."

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Rabobank Australia & New Zealand is a part of the international Rabobank Group, the world's leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. Rabobank has more than 110 years' experience providing customised banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. Rabobank is structured as a cooperative and operates in 42 countries, servicing the needs of approximately 10 million clients worldwide through a network of more than 1600 offices and branches. Rabobank Australia & New Zealand is one of Australasia's leading rural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to the region's food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 93 branches throughout Australia and New Zealand.



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