

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 102
Asked on Thursday, 14 February 2008

MR HAYWARD asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the winner of the 2008 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's Rural Women's Award which was announced yesterday—

How does this award contribute to developing innovative skills in women engaged in primary production?

ANSWER:

The prestigious Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's Rural Women's Award is one of the few programs nationally that offers rural women the opportunity and the resources to develop new skills and knowledge in order to effect significant change within their industries.

The winner of the 2008 Award - Sunshine Coast avocado producer, Rosslyn Smerdon will use her \$10,000 bursary to undertake a study tour to South Africa to research and benchmark the Westfalia avocado operations and value-adding processing plant against the Australian industry. She believes this research will contribute to the long-term economic sustainability of the avocado industry.

Ms Smerdon will share her new knowledge and skills with fellow growers. As chairman of Natures Fruit Company, a grower owned co-operative, she is passionate about the need for growers to work cooperatively so that they can be in a better position to deal with the increasing challenges facing primary producers today.

Ms Smerdon joins an illustrious group of Queensland producers who have won this award. The 2007 award winner Sonya Maley from Mossman in north Queensland used her bursary to research and commercialise new sugar products using cane separation technology. These products include sugar cane juices that retain the health enhancing anti-oxidants and fibre components that are lost in the manufacture of processed sugar. By targeting the growing health market, these products will have an economic value many times that of sugar cane resulting in increased returns to Queensland farmers and food manufacturing businesses.

Martha Shepherd won both the Queensland and Australian Award in 2006. Martha's business, Galeru is a value-added rural enterprise that produces a range of gourmet food products from rainforest fruits grown on 11 acres at Cooroy. Martha used her bursary to develop a value chain with a group of fellow producers and regional food processors. The Galeru value chain has created the largest entity growing native Australian rainforest fruit species in Australia. It has transformed a small gourmet food business selling products at farmers markets into a more commercial venture and the native fruits the group grows into an economic and environmentally sustainable crop. It has also provided a viable business model for small acreage producers across rural industries nationally.