

She's apples for cherry harvest



Forest Range cherry grower Alan Mayne believes the coming cherry season will offer mixed yields for growers, with some varieties performing better than others.

By Lisa Symonds

The cherry season has begun with growers already picking in the Hills and hoping for at least average yields.

The local industry marked the start of the season with an inaugural event in Uraidla, where it was officially launched by SA Agriculture Minister Rory McEwen.

Growers have reported good quality fruit, but varying yields with several varieties performing better than others.

Cherry Growers Association of SA president and Uraidla grower Grant Wotton said the season looked promising for Hills growers.

"Growers at Montacute and Norton Summit are already picking," he said.

"Most of us throughout the Hills will be underway in the first week of December."

Fruit quality and size were good, Mr Wotton said.

"The cherries have not over-cropped,

so the size is going to be good," he said.

Some varieties would produce above-average crops, while others were producing reduced yields, Mr Wotton said.

The popular Stella variety has experienced a region-wide cut to yields, which some growers have blamed on heat stress affecting the trees during SA's record heatwave in March.

Forest Range cherry grower Alan Mayne said his property, Stella Creek, would produce a similar amount of fruit to last season.

Whole crop

While some of the more than 20 varieties on the Plummers Road property will have reduced yields – including the property's namesake Stella – others have produced good crops.

"Our whole crop will be about the same as last year and that's mainly because we have got some new trees which are really coming into production this year," Mr Mayne said.

"Plus the fact that a variety, Summit,

has produced well for us this year.

"For the last three years we got hardly anything off Summit and people had been becoming quite annoyed with it.

"But this year it has got a wonderful crop."

Other varieties and some of the property's older trees had produced lighter crops, he said.

Stella Creek and Mr Wotton's orchards are among more than 25 SA properties to join the Cherries SA cherry trail, an increase on previous years.

Participating growers will have fruit available for shed door sales or allow visitors to pick their own.

Fruit will also be sent from the Hills to overseas markets, as well as interstate and throughout SA.

Some growers will be affected by a fruit fly quarantine zone that remains in place until mid-December following a fruit fly outbreak in Daw Park in February.

That could restrict where they send their fruit until the zone is lifted.

For a map of the cherry trail visit www.cherriessa.com.au.