



For immediate release

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Demand puts nut industry in good health**

Increasing awareness of their health benefits has seen sales value of Australian tree nuts increase by 50% in the past four years.

Figures released by the Australian Nut Industry Council (ANIC), show that domestic consumption of nuts\* has grown from \$254 million in 2002 to \$382 million in the year ending June 2006. Most of this growth was achieved in the last two years.

Mr Phil Montgomery, President of ANIC, says he believes that the largest factor driving growth has been the nut industry's health promotion program, "Nuts for Life", to increase awareness of the positive health and dietary benefits of nuts.

"Traditionally, nuts have been viewed as fatty and therefore to be avoided.

"However, research over the last decade has shown that the nuts actually contain 'good fats' that are associated with significantly lower risk of heart disease and reducing blood cholesterol.

"As a result we've seen huge growth in demand, which can only be because of a change in the perception of nuts as a healthy food choice."

The Australian Nut Industry Council represents the seven Australian nut growing industries – almonds, chestnuts, hazel nuts, macadamias, pecans, pistachios and walnuts.

The majority of businesses in the Australian nut industry, including growers, importers, packers and processors of nuts, voluntarily support the health education program, Nuts for Life, aimed at increasing the awareness of the health benefits of eating nuts, as well as dispelling myths.

Australia grows about 50% of its nut consumption. It is the largest producer and exporter of the native Australian macadamia nut as well as exporting almonds and pecans. Around a third of all exports go to markets in Japan, Europe, India and the USA.

In 2006, over 40,000 hectares in Australia produced around 61,800 tonnes of nuts.

Cultivation of pistachio, walnut and hazelnuts are all increasing, but still cannot meet domestic demand. Australia is self-sufficient in chestnuts but cashews, Brazil nuts and pine nuts are all imported.

Mr Montgomery, who grows macadamia nuts near Gympie, says that growth in the industry is expected to continue, with Australia well-suited to the production of nut crops.

“Tree nut crops require a significant investment of capital and management, but are not labour-intensive, as most of the harvesting and processing is now mechanized.

“This reduces production costs compared to other crops.

“It’s also a relatively water-efficient product, especially compared to others such as rice and many fruits,” Mr Montgomery said.

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To arrange interviews with Mr Phil Montgomery please contact Claudia Pritchitt Business Publicity on 0438 221 550 or Lisa Yates, Program Manager and Dietitian Nuts for Life on 02 9460 0111 or email [admin@nutsforlife.com.au](mailto:admin@nutsforlife.com.au)

*\* Tree nuts are almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, chestnuts, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts. For more information on the health benefits of tree nuts, please visit [www.nutsforlife.com.au](http://www.nutsforlife.com.au)*