

Hort support for 'new' SAFF

By PAULA THOMPSON

AS South Australia's peak farming organisation prepares to morph into a new entity, horticulturists are being urged to have their say and become involved with the new organisation.

Former premier Rob Kerin held a meeting in June to outline his vision for SAFF's replacement, and received unanimous support from the 100-plus industry representatives present, including those from horticultural and viticultural.

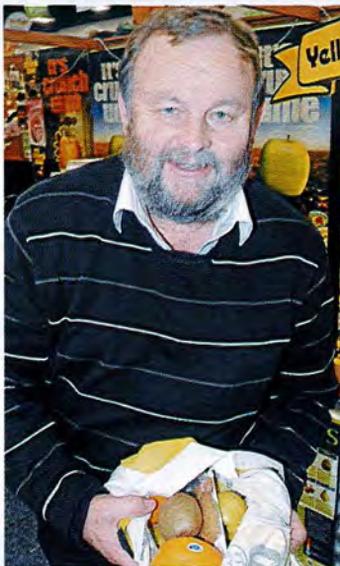
Mr Kerin was brought in to lead the organisation after relations between SAFF's board and its grains committee became strained, and the latter was dismissed.

Rather than continue with SAFF's regional structure, Mr Kerin wanted to make the organisation commodity based.

He proposed five autonomous commodity groups – horticulture, winegrapes, dairy, livestock and grain – to tackle issues specific to their industries.

They would feed into a central Primary Producers Council of South Australia to deal with overarching, cross-commodity issues such as water policy, taxation and natural resource management.

Mr Kerin met with representatives of the commodity groups on July 26. From the horticultural sector, Mr Kerin had already met



Independent horticultural consultant Trevor Ranford is one of the industry representatives liaising with former premier Rob Kerin on the proposed restructure of SAFF.

with independent horticultural consultant Trevor Ranford, Grow SA's Mike Redmond and the Adelaide Produce Market's Angelo Demasi.

"We need to create a stronger voice for all kinds of producers," he said. "Government benefits from that as well. It's easier if they have one group to talk to on cross-commodity issues."

Mr Ranford said it was a challenge to bring all the horticultural groups to the table.

"From a horticultural point of view, we've been continuing the discussion, but there are still a lot of unknowns, particularly with what the structure of the new organisation might be, such as whether it be an incorporated association," he said.

"How this might all gel for the horticultural sector is still a burning question. It's easier for some of the other sectors in a sense. They might have only five or six sub-sets, and in the case of dairy, they're

only dealing with one organisation. In horticulture, you've got about 15 organisations that need to be considered."

Mr Ranford said it was important the proposed council focused on big-picture issues.

"There's a need for a single voice on some of the major issues," he said.

"It's important that whatever the structure, its role is focused on dealing with major issues impacting all farm businesses, such as workplace health and safety, infrastructure and water.

"It's important to have a single structure dealing with those issues and also working with the government of the day, particularly on the development of legislation.

"Whatever the structure is, it needs to ensure primary production is put back on the agenda in government's thinking, and also helping ensure that businesses are profitable.

"At the moment, from many sectors – certainly in horticulture – the returns are just not there."

Mr Redmond said he was supportive of Mr Kerin's concept.

"There's still a long way to go, but it seems a fairly good basis to work from," he said.

"The difficult thing is getting the right structure with the right objectives. If we can get that in place, it will certainly help in providing a single reference point that we can influence politicians from.

"We really need to get the whole food sector at the table with government and climbing up the importance scale. All we ever seem to hear about is mining."

Mr Redmond said some of the cross-commodity issues that needed a strong voice were water, biosecurity, increased compliance and rising input costs.

SAFF's annual general meeting will be held on Friday, August 31, at the Adelaide Pavillion, on the corner of South Terrace and Peacock Road. The AGM starts at 9am.

● www.saff.com.au

