



Loxton almond grower's major honour...

Inaugural award win

The inaugural Australian Almond Industry Phil Watters Award has been awarded to Loxton almond grower Craig Spilsbury.

The award – named in honour of the late Phil Watters, who lived and worked in the Riverland – was presented at this year's Australian Almond Conference held recently in the Barossa Valley.

The award recognises service to the Australian almond industry, in particular a dedication to research, development and the improvement of almond production, adoption of best practice and promotion of horticulture to the community.

Mr Spilsbury said he felt privileged to be the 2009 recipient.

"It is a great honour to receive an award dedicated in the memory of a man who contributed so much to the Australian almond industry," he said.

Mr Spilsbury, 41, has a

long association with the Australian almond industry, with his family being one of the earlier almond producers in Willunga, south of Adelaide.

"My family began farming almonds in 1935, so almond farming is well and truly in my blood," he said.

"I've grown up working on the family orchards and always loved what I do. The Australian almond industry is such an interesting and dynamic industry to be a part of."

Mr Spilsbury began his career as an almond grower developing his first orchard in 1991 at Loxton.

Since then, Craig has been a valuable contributor to the Australian almond industry.

Over the past eight years he has been one of the original growers to adopt and refine some of the research and best practice coming out of the industry's R&D project, known as the CT Optimisation Trial.

Using expertise from

Israel, the CT Optimisation Trial looked at a new management program for irrigating and fertilising almonds.

Mr Spilsbury was in close contact with the research project and quickly recognised the benefits and results it was producing. He has since shared his results and techniques with many other growers.

The award is dedicated to the memory of Phil Watters (1974-2007), a widely respected individual and dedicated technical officer in the almond industry who became a role model for young and upcoming horticultural students.

It is organised by the Almond Board of Australia (ABA), a non-profit, membership-based organisation representing the interests of Australian almond growers, processors and marketers.

It was presented to Mr Spilsbury by Mr Watters' Loxton-based wife, Sheridan Purvis, on the night.