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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

13 April 2021

### **SunRice celebrates Australian growers as much larger harvest gets underway**

As the largest rice harvest in three years kicks off across the Riverina, SunRice has launched a new video series profiling four NSW rice farming families.

SunRice Chairman and rice grower Laurie Arthur said following two years of extremely low production, the company is expecting approximately 450,000 tonnes of paddy to be harvested in the coming weeks, more than 10 times the size of the 2020 crop.

“It’s fantastic to be in a position to bring Australian rice back to the world this year,” Mr Arthur said.

“Against that backdrop we’re incredibly proud to showcase four of the farming families behind SunRice brands: the Hardy’s from **Coleambally**; the Hehir’s from **Finley**; the Glenn’s from **Moulamein**, and the Sergi’s from **Griffith**.

“These videos capture what all of our growers bring to SunRice and the Australian rice industry every day – teamwork, resilience, versatility, passion and good humour.

“The fact growers have returned to rice production shows that it is a perfect fit for the farming systems in the Riverina – and that when our growers have improved water availability they can and will increase production.

“We’re proud to have 475 growers in the Riverina this year harvesting some 44,000 hectares of rice – which will be transformed into high-value branded products in SunRice’s facilities in the Riverina and sold to customers and consumers in Australia and around the world.”

Ricegrowers’ Association of Australia President and Finley rice grower Rob Massina said Australians can be proud of the success of the Aussie-owned, sustainable, paddock-to-plate story that underpins the rice industry in the Riverina.

“It is clear from these videos that Australian rice growers are proud and passionate about what they do and their sentiments are also reflective of the wider grower membership,” Mr Massina said.

Highlights from the video series include:

**The Hardy family** – Perry and Catherine Hardy and sons, Stephen and Thomas, operate a number of mixed cropping farms under their ‘Hardy Irrigation’ business at Coleambally.

Catherine – who Perry explains is “the backbone of the business” – says: “Perry would have to be one of the most creative farmers. He will see a broken-down farm on a map [and] he will spend weeks and weeks transforming it into a modern, efficient farm – I love working with that energy.”

Perry says: “To be able to order water from the supply system to allow us to grow rice is just exciting – that’s what we’re here for – we’re Coleambally, we’re rice farmers, and we love it.”

Ahead of this season, Catherine says: “I think it’s going to be exciting, especially for the two boys. They’ve come back to the farm – and it’s been pretty tough.”

Perry adds: “The industry is sustainable, our farming’s sustainable, and the boys know that. They’re here, they enjoy it, they want to progress, they want to succeed, so we can’t think of a better place to be.”

The family also has a sense of humour – an essential for famers. “There’s always awards for stuff ups – and everyone knows about it,” says Thomas about a headline-making bogged header. Catherine adds: “Sometimes you have to laugh at yourself – or your husband.”

*Meet the Hardy family:* <https://vimeo.com/533773082>

**The Hehir family** – Emily and Nathan Hehir run a mixed farming enterprise based at ‘Myola’, Finley, where Nathan’s father first farmed rice in the early 1980s. Nathan grew up around rice and says: “It’s in my blood”.

The couple, who have two young daughters, met while both studying at Orange. Sydney-bred Emily says: “I’d like to say we’re a typical farming partnership – although there’s nothing typical about us. I consider myself a farmer’s wife, which means I get to wear lots and lots of hats.”

The Hehir family are proud rice growers. “It’s definitely a good feeling knowing that you’re growing a food that’s a staple right around the world,” says Nathan.

Emily adds: “We’re growing something for everyone else in the world – that’s really heartening – and that’s become obvious again this year with COVID – that we are really doing the right thing – growing products and food for people.”

*Meet the Hehir family:* <https://vimeo.com/533773930>

**The Glenn family** – Robert and Alison Glenn and daughters, Sam and Charleton run mixed farming business ‘Edward Park’, Moulamein.

Charleton explains how rice benefits the mix that includes sheep and cropping: “Rice has a really symbiotic relationship with the environment: it’s not just for the consumer; it’s also for the environment and the farming side of it.”

The sisters are third-generation rice farmers. Sam says: “There’s a huge sense of ownership for Aussie rice farmers in the rice industry, which is why they’re so passionate about what they do.”

Charleton adds: “Consumers don’t really see that when they buy the SunRice product in the supermarket, there is literally a family farm in the Riverina jumping up and down ‘cause they’re happy someone bought their product.”

*Meet the Glenn family:* <https://vimeo.com/533774103>

**The Sergi family** – Husband-and-wife team Patrick and Hayley Sergi run mixed cropping farms based at ‘Felsina’, Widgelli and Murrarni near Griffith.

After a tough couple of years, Patrick says: “The whole town is vibrant because there’s water and there’s rice – it’s really a fantastic feeling.”

“It’s going to benefit the whole community, right through the system – whether it be the farmers who are obviously going to be busier, employing more people, and spending more money in town.”

Hayley, a third-generation rice grower says: “I’m extremely proud to be a rice grower ... often when I’m with my [Sydney] friends, they’re always interested to hear what’s going on. I’m very proud to be able to show them that I grow this rice and they’re eating Australian products from my farm.”

*Meet the Sergi family:* <https://vimeo.com/533773543>

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