

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION

TOPIC: Merbein Facility

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 15 February 2012, page 8)

QUESTION No.: AI-4

Senator McKENZIE: The viticulture has shifted to Adelaide. Given the importance of irrigated agriculture to the Sunraysia district and the way that they grow their particular things in their particular space, I am just wondering if that research capacity is somewhere within the CSIRO, given the closure of Merbein?

Dr Clark: Yes. We are continuing that work in Adelaide, and we are also doing it in conjunction with our partners in South Australia—that is, the University of Adelaide and other partners that sit on the same location as us at the Waite Campus. We cover a number of areas all the way from the actual flavours and compounds that are in the wine through to the grape varieties themselves, new grape varieties and new and faster ways of growing, back to the soils research, the health of the soils and microbial aspects of the soils. So we cover that in depth, but we also have very strong partnerships in South Australia. It is our intention to maintain that work at the Waite Campus and to strengthen our partnerships with the other organisations co-located at the Waite Campus.

Senator McKENZIE: So that is specifically wine grapes?

Dr Clark: I would have to take on notice the work on table grapes, because we were doing table grapes at Merbein.

Senator McKENZIE: Yes.

Dr Clark: I will take on notice whether we are continuing to do the table grape work at Adelaide. The work that I was referring to was definitely related to the wine grape industry.

ANSWER

In 2008, CSIRO made a science research investment decision to focus its plant research on Australia's core food and non-food crops, scaling back on horticultural crops but continuing to support its leading wine research program. CSIRO's research on table and dried grapes has been wound up in a staged manner to ensure that germplasm in the breeding and selection process was advanced to the point where it can be handed on to industry. CSIRO is continuing to provide a small amount of guidance to the industry in that process.