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Record truffle haul is black gold for Manjimup

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Farmers rejoice at precious haul with the potential to rejuvenate a town.

WA truffle growers are jumping with joy after harvesting a record crop of the rare fungus this season — and they're predicting even bigger things next year.

A Manjimup grower has claimed the biggest crop of “black gold” in the southern hemisphere, beating truffle producers in Tasmania and New Zealand.



A warm, dry August cut short the truffle season in the timber town but not before the Wine and Truffle Company dug up more than 600kg of truffles, a big increase on last year's crop of about 320kg.

At a retail price of \$3000 a kilogram, it is a \$1.8 million harvest on 30ha and comes a decade after former CSIRO scientist Nicholas Malajczuk and former Australian Test cricketer Wally Edwards came up with the idea for WA's first truffle farm.

Dr Malajczuk said the Hazel Hill property, just south of Manjimup, was now a “truffle pumping” operation, having practically doubled its crop in the past year. “We're chuffed about it, we're grinning from ear to ear,” he said.

A handful of small operators in the region had each produced up to 50kg this year he estimated, while producers in Tasmania and New Zealand remained tight-lipped on their yields.

“We reckon they’re keeping quiet because they’re not achieving these figures,” he said.

The French black truffles are grown on the roots of 13,000 oak and hazelnut trees at Hazel Hill and found by trained sniffer dogs, before being sold to restaurants worldwide.

Wine and Truffle Company operations manager Damon Boorman attributed the bumper crop to the trees’ maturity, but said that it was cut short by a dry August.

“Spring sprung too early and the season came to a crashing halt, but saying that we still had a really good season,” he said.

“More and more trees are coming on line. Next year we might get 1000kg.”

Australians now expected gourmet delights when eating out at restaurants, Mr Boorman said.


“This year, we’ve actually increased our sales into Australia tenfold, because 10 years ago the average Australian didn’t know what a truffle was other than a piece of chocolate,” he said.

International buyers include Japan, the US, Hong Kong Singapore, Italy, France and Indonesia.

Tourism WA chairwoman Kate Lamont said the truffle industry set the timber town up for tourism.

“People will travel for truffles, it broadens the appeal of the region,” she said. “By adding truffles to the fledgling wine tourism industry in Manjimup it’s potentially going to become a mecca for wine and food lovers all over the world.”

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