

ROBERN MENZ SET FOR ARRIVAL OF OZ FAVOURITE

GIUSEPPE TAURIELLO



SWEET SUCCESS: Robern Menz chief executive Phil Sims with its famous honeycomb chocolates. Picture: ROY VANDERVEGT

FOURTH-generation family business Robern Menz is on track to kick-start production of Violet Crumble next month, as it eyes global growth opportunities in Asia and US.

It follows the completion of a \$4 million upgrade of its Glynde factory.

The fourth-generation family business – which makes FruChocs, Choc Honeycomb and Crown Mints – acquired the chocolate brand from Nestlé in January, promising to create 30 jobs at an expanded facility at Glynde.

Chief executive Phil Sims said half of those jobs had already been filled ahead of the start of production next month.

“We’re right in the middle of reinstallation of equipment for production and we’re on track to be producing in early October,” he said.

"If you lined Violet Crumble end to end, it would stretch from Adelaide to Sydney – that's the current production per annum.

"And the growth opportunities are enormous – there's been a huge amount of work and activity since January and this will be a major step change for the business." Robern Menz secured \$750,000 from the former state government's \$200 million Future Jobs Fund and a \$900,000 loan from the Investment Attraction Agency for its purchase of Violet Crumble earlier this year.

With roots dating back to 1850, the company now employs close to 100 staff at its factory and three retail outlets at Glynde, McLaren Vale and Hahndorf.

Last month, it made its first shipment of Choc Honeycomb to South Korea, with Mr Sims bullish about opportunities to grow the company's brands across Asia and in the US market.

"Asia is a story for us and North America is a story for us – we're focusing on those two regions," he said.

"In the US, you have 320 million people who love their candy, so if you get that right it's massive."

Mr Sims said the reputation of South Australia's food industry continued to improve internationally but costs remained a challenge for many local producers.

"When we talk about the vibrancy of the food industry, it's huge, employing one in five South Australians and that's growing," he said.

"The challenge is certainly around electricity and gas prices."