

# Agribusiness is sowing seeds of export success

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Seed Terminator chief executive Mark Ashenden. Picture: Mike Burton

PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION

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TWO years after launching its weed-management system in the domestic market, South Australian agribusiness Seed Terminator secured its first international contract.



Three years later, it now exports to Canada, the US and Europe and has boosted its staff from two to more than 30.

It's a long way to have come in just five years, but Seed Terminator director Mark Ashenden has only just begun.

"When we started out, we quickly realised there are about 8000 harvesters in Australia we could fit to

which grows by about 700 a year, so there's good business to be done here," he said. "But Australia constitutes about 5

cent of the broad acre grain production in the world, which means there's 95 per cent of growth potential out there."

The company's advanced manufacturing technology creates a simple attachment for combine harvesters that terminates weed seeds before they become weeds. The process involves less chemical use and returns the nutrients back to the soil, creating a mulch that protects subsoil moisture and lowers the weed seed bank every year.

An expanding international market provides the opportunity to continue with research and development.

"We've recently committed to shipping another half a dozen Seed Terminators to the northern hemisphere before their harvest in July, which starts earlier than ours," Mr Ashenden said. "From a growth perspective, it gives us an opportunity to level out our sales season. It's also a great learning opportunity: we can test certain

things to match the conditions in other countries, which then brings a few R&D lessons > our back harvests to us before ." F a c i l i t a t i n g international export from an Australian base by partnering with a European distributor has also proven valuable.

"In 2018, we did a pilot with a German distributor which proved successful, so in 2019 we were their guests at Agritechnica, the world's leading trade fair for agricultural machinery, with 450,000 people attending," Mr Ashenden said.

"That gave us marketing exposure and put our name and our product out there. The location of the right partner is probably our biggest lesson and we continue to build on those relationships."

Closer to home, solid relationships have also been facilitated through support from the state government and the Department for Trade and Investment.

"From a state level, the network of business advisers has been important because I'm a great fan of ringing people up and speaking to them directly," Mr Ashenden said.

"We've been provided with advice and connections from DTI's export advisers, who referred us to successfully obtain a federal government export grant."

Despite its rapid success, Mr Ashenden and his team are reluctant to just sit back and soak up the accolades.

"At the end of every year, we look back at what we've achieved so far, give ourselves a pat on the back where it's deserved and then work out how we do better again," he said.

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