

A Victoria-based company whose cherry and grape tomato sorting systems are used around the world has won the prestigious Australian Exporter of the Year award. 

On accepting the award, GP Graders director Stuart Payne said the award was a great honor and testimony to his team's hard work put into product innovation and customer service.

"We have been at the forefront of grading machinery technology for a long time and we make continuous improvements to technology by listening to our clients' needs," Payne said.

"This has built up goodwill with our many clients across the globe and we hope to continue our push for excellence in this field whilst contributing to the improvement of efficiencies in the agriculture industry."

The company is Australia's leading supplier of fresh produce grading machinery, with exports to countries including Turkey, Greece, the U.S., Canada and Chile.

"The businesses recognised by these awards make a huge contribution to our economy, and I congratulate the winners - indeed all the finalists - for their commitment, creativity and drive," said Trade and Investment Minister Andrew Robb.

"Exporter of the year, GP Graders - from my home-state of Victoria - should be especially proud of the innovation and imagination they've demonstrated, in order to capture international attention for their machinery products."

Around 85% of the company's sales come from its AirJet cherry grader, which it claims is used by every major cherry packer in all leading markets. The machinery's camera technology categorizes cherries according to size, color, shape and defects, reducing human sorting by 60% and increasing accuracy to 97.5%.

The company installed the world's largest cherry grading machine and packing in California last year, which can process 24 metric tons (MT) of the fruit per hour, representing a 200% increase on previous machines. GP Graders also has an office in Chile and an assembly plant in Seattle.

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