

94 Volume
JULY / AUGUST 2023



Fruit & Vegetable NEWS

Changes to flying fox management in Queensland
Minimum wage increase – is your business prepared?
Celebrating our first horticulturalists



QUEENSLAND FRUIT
& VEGETABLE GROWERS



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welcome

Chief Executive Officer
Rachel Chambers



Wow. If I had to sum up the last few months in horticulture in just one word, I'm not sure what one would appropriately convey the complexity the industry is currently operating in. What I do know is the immense impact these complexities are having on our growers with growers sharing their feelings of bewilderment, confusion, fear, and frustration with us at every opportunity.

In late May we attended the Rotary FNQ Field Days in Mareeba. If the traffic jam into Mareeba and the rodeo grounds was anything to go by, this year's Field Days was bigger and better than ever. The event was buzzing as producers and growers alike checked out the machinery demos, did deals, and caught up with their agronomists and industry reps. We wish all those who don't yet understand how big and impactful the horticultural industry is on our economy could have seen the massive supply chain on show.

As we made our way around the crowd, the closure of the Coen Roadblock and biosecurity threats were a constant worry for many as they are the first line of defense at the state border. Of course, it was soon after

this event where we learnt of the Federal government's biosecurity levy, a levy we weren't consulted on, and given we already pay our fair share of biosecurity incursions (eg. industry has funded varroa mite to the tune of \$26 million), a levy arrangement we will not support moving forward.

Likewise in our recent visit to the Lockyer Valley we also heard growers match the concerns up north about the desire for fair margins and the inability to 'pass through' costs such as compliance and labour. Interestingly, this viewpoint wasn't mirrored in a recent ABARES reports on labour usage and economic outlooks which instead provided an alternative view to Fair Work with reasoning that horticulture did in fact, have the ability to pass on input costs (news to us!)

"horticulture businesses do have at least some capacity to pass on increased input costs in their pricing, the use of labour across the industry has been reduced and made more efficient, and the industry is generally in a healthy state, with increasing production value and greater productivity."

We are unsure how ABARES has reached this conclusion given the figures we are hearing across the state is a collective loss of 33% productivity with input increases between 35 and 60%. How a sector is supposed to continue to operate in the face of these factors is anyone's guess.

With cost of living being front and centre of all Australians, the significant changes in horticultural policy are mesmerising to say the least. PALM, migrant and seasonal worker policy have enough potential ill-fated consequences in them to break an industry nationally and break consumers along the way.

Apple grower Hervey Giblette said it better than we could... "as a society we seem to have the opinion that fruit and veg should be cheap. Well, that's fine but we can't grow them cheap, and if you are, you are not going to be growing them long."

Until we get this balance between costs and profitability right, I would consider growers are now Australia's most endangered species.

inside

6.

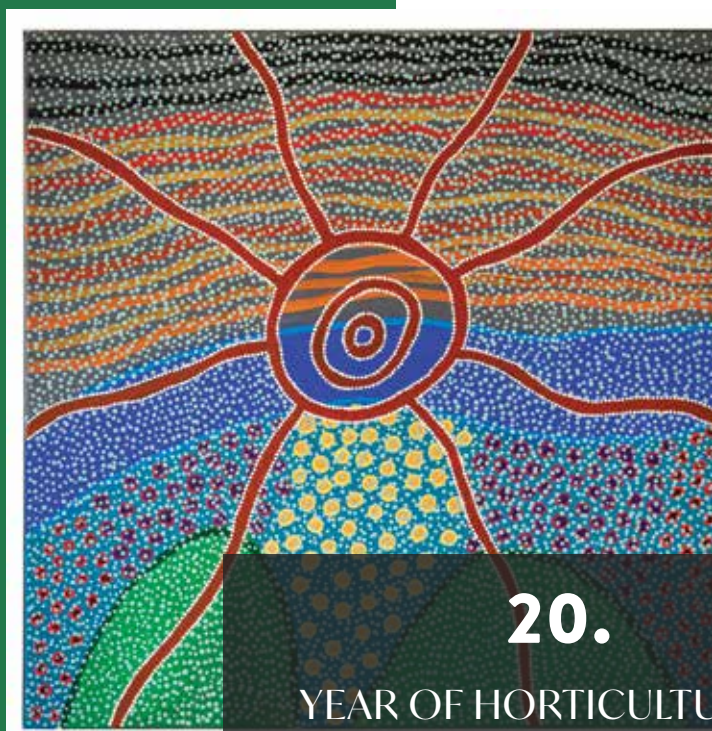
CHANGES TO FLYING FOX MANAGEMENT IN QUEENSLAND

The Queensland Government has completed their review of flying-fox management regulations. For the grower this means they have decided to move away from permitting the shooting of flying-foxes due to ongoing animal welfare concerns.

22.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE – IS YOUR BUSINESS PREPARED?

Employers should review their rates of pay to ensure compliance. To assist we have provided members with the updated wage table for the Horticulture Award.



Balance & Harmony – Jacobo Sarra

20.

YEAR OF HORTICULTURE DURING NAIDOC WEEK

QFVG continued our Year of Horticulture during NAIDOC week where we celebrated, educated, and advocated for our first growers in Queensland.

Rachel Chambers, QFVG CEO



Dear Unions, you forgot growers are working Australians too

In June over 3,000 people in the national horticultural supply chain came together in Adelaide to celebrate, educate, collaborate, innovate, and advocate for an industry which supports umpteen hundreds of thousands of jobs across the nation. I say umpteen as unfortunately no one really knows how many jobs indirectly rely on horticulture, a noticeable lack of data which really inhibits our advocacy efforts.

The Conference itself was fabulous! Those who work in the industry know how interesting, vital, forward thinking, innovative and hard working the industry is, and all these elements were reflected in the many conversations, forums, panels, and sessions.

But the week was almost overshadowed by the government's announcement that a guaranteed 30-hour week (without any averaging) proposal for PALM workers was yet another great idea and made it happen! This is despite every single peak industry body across Australia rejecting the proposal.

Growers are workers too and deserve a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. They also deserve secure jobs with secure pay, psychological and physical safety at work. Needs that don't matter to unions and government who keep adding responsibility and additional burdens whilst simultaneously reducing profitability and production.

The rights of the employer (who is also a worker) seem completely lost in all conversations and debates. Why is it that there is only concern about one type of human? Are grower's not human too?

Given government and unions, hereby now known as 'govunions' seem to have all the answers and no longer needs any industry collaboration nor indeed input, we now invite them to support our growers, who are also working Australians.

Our (starting) list of demands to 'govunions' are as follows:

Growers (herein known as '*workers*') demand to be able to

operate within a 38-hour Monday to Friday work week. We also want public holidays and four weeks leave per year. Don't forget we want overtime. You will have to work out supply and demand across the globe and also consumer needs to achieve this given we are price takers, but it should be easy enough for the brains trust.

'*Workers*' (aka growers) demand to be paid for the work we do – you know, same job, same pay. Many growers are expected to perform the roles of IR expert, HR manager, finance manager, scientist, environmentalist, and business development manager at the same time – we can't wait to see what kind of packaged salary deal you can get for us!

'*Workers*' (you've guessed it... growers) demand that fresh produce not ripen on weekends (or any public holidays) unless you can demand retailers pay additional charges for the privilege of that supply. They should be fine with it; consumers should be good with the passed-on costs too.

'*Workers*' demand that retailers are no longer able to request that we supply them seven days a week. This may result in you also needing to work with consumers worldwide so that they no longer demand this supply chain work seven days a week, 365 days a year. Easy peasy.

'*Workers*' demand you attract Australian workers to do the vital work of our industry. You've been asking us to do this for years and we've tried hard – it's now up to you. We can't wait to get a permanent supply of Australians wanting to do farm work, it would make life so much easier. Just a heads up, maybe you'll need to improve our reputation as an industry before you do this. Nothing you shouldn't be able to handle though given your new reforms.

Finally, can you do something about the weather? Its variability really gets in the way.

Yours,

Queensland's fruit, vegetable and nut '*workers*'.



Rudderless

PALM on the road to ruin

CLOSING THE LOOP

We listen.

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The NFF Horticulture Council has expressed their alarm that the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is now heading toward calamity following a series of dramatic changes to the rules and requirements placed on employers that will see many of them walk away from the scheme. And the national peak horticulture body is attributing its troubling trajectory to a lack of ownership and direction from the highest levels of government.

Horticulture Council spokesperson Rachel Chambers said it was increasingly clear relevant Ministers aren't working together to ensure the scheme meets the long-term interests of the Pacific and Australian industries it's meant to serve.

"Farmers are increasingly frustrated that no Senior Minister is effectively accountable and taking responsibility for fixing the PALM scheme," Ms Chamber said.

"Instead, we have buck passing and finger pointing across portfolios. Farmers and Pacific nations are both becoming increasingly dissatisfied with how the scheme is run."

"We've warned for years against putting all our eggs in the PALM basket, given how challenging it is for small businesses to engage with."

"Now, instead of making it easier for small business, we have a suite of changes that would effectively lock them out."

"Most alarmingly, some of these changes appear to be a proxy for wider ideological industrial relations reforms and fulfilling a shopping list of demands from the union movement."

"From the outside, it appears that the ACTU is running the show, making decisions which will send the PALM scheme into meltdown and damage our ties in the Pacific."

"Australia's Pacific diplomacy is being outsourced to the ACTU and they're botching it big time."

Members of the Council are reporting that employers within the scheme, both long-term participants and those who've joined recently due to COVID workforce shortages, have taken one look at the changes to the scheme Deed and Guidelines and are readying to walk away.

We encourage all impacted parties, growers and workers alike, to write formally to government to put on the record their dismay at these proposed changes.

The PALM scheme has an essential part to play in our labour supply mix and is now too important to fail. Someone has to step up and chart a reasonable path forward, that strikes a better balance between the competing interests in the PALM scheme, otherwise it will continue on a road to ruin.

SNAPSHOT: MAY / JUNE 2023

Meetings with Government	Meetings with industry organisations	Submissions
14	55	1
Media articles published	Media mentions	Our Reach
10	60+	1,434,000+



Changes to flying fox management in Queensland

The Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Science (DES) has completed their review of flying-fox management regulations for crop protection and have decided to stick to their election commitment to repeal flying-fox management regulations and return to a modern framework of protection. For the grower this means they have decided to move away from permitting the shooting of flying-foxes due to ongoing animal welfare concerns.

In a letter to Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG), former Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef Meaghan Scanlon said moving away from lethal take was in line with agricultural outcomes and best practice. The Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework contains principles to protect and enhance biodiverse ecological communities, demonstrate transparency and accountability, and provide safe working environments. The upcoming changes align with these principles.

The announcement comes after a review by DES to understand the challenges of dealing with flying-foxes and the impacts on fruit crops with many members, including QFVG making submissions on this issue.

Lethal means will be phased out over the next three years, during which time we will work with the department on identifying and managing risks encountered by growers during this transition period.

The Horticultural Netting Program was suggested by the department to be a potential effective crop protection measure. Information can be obtained at the QRIDA website.

A grower tax in disguise... again

We were repeatedly told not to expect anything for horticulture in the latest Federal Budget handed down in May, so we readied ourselves for no good news. What we didn't brace for was the sneaky way the government would go about funding biosecurity.

Horticulture has long lobbied for an increase in biosecurity resources given the many risks looming which could shut down the industry overnight. But after years of lobbying on the basis that the originators of this risk fund it, the government has decided on a grower pays model.

Whoopie! Another grower pays model! What an amazing idea to ensure the future of food security – let's ask the people who grow the food and receive the least amount of the profit margin (think a potato vs a serve of hot chips) to pay for the increased risk that the importers of multiple products and others forge on the industry.

The budget announcement is just another foot in the grave for many growers who have been consistently dealing with increasing production costs.

The levy, collected from July 2024, is set at a rate equivalent to 10 percent of the 2020-21 industry-led agricultural levies – money already collected from growers to fund research and development. How this money is collected and who makes the decisions as to its use is not yet understood.

The government spin on this was that the levy recognises the benefits that primary producers derive from Australia's biosecurity system, including detection, identification and response associated with invasive pests and diseases, maximising trade opportunities, and enhancing access to premium overseas markets.

While it may seem logical to some to push the burden of biosecurity costs onto the growers of food, it's important to consider the potential impacts that this could have on industry and consumers. Just how many more increases in production costs can growers absorb without passing huge increases onto consumers?

We have never implied a sustainable solution to biosecurity would be easily found, however we have been very forthcoming with government to try to work together towards potential solutions.

The lack of understanding of our precarious food security situation is terrifying! If you keep kicking the industry who provide the foundation of all our meals, if you continue to make it harder for them to provide the nation the nutrients they need, how long do you think it will be before you see great exits from those who just can't do it anymore?

Forget the great resignation, the great starvation seems more and more a potential reality.

Come on Murray, you can do better than this.

State Budget: What's in it for horticulture?

The latest State Budget, while heavily focused on measures to alleviate cost of living pressures, also delivered investment in biosecurity, drought preparedness, water and energy infrastructure and planning.

Key budget announcements include funding to further uplift our biosecurity preparedness and capability including \$21.7 million over five years, and \$2.8 million each year thereafter. This is welcome news for action against current and emerging plant pests and diseases as much of our competitive advantage and market access in horticulture is a direct result of our biosecurity systems. At recent biosecurity training we heard loud and clear that the pressure on emerging plant specific pests and diseases entering the state is far greater than the animal industries.

Also announced was the creation of 15 new permanent jobs within Biosecurity Queensland to identify and manage biosecurity threats; \$60.9 million over four years to continue delivery of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program; and up to \$35.7 million over 5 years and \$7 million per annum ongoing to meet Queensland's obligations under the National Biosecurity System to help mitigate the risks and impacts of significant animal and plant pests and diseases.

We were disappointed in the announcement that the Cape York Biosecurity Centre at Coen will be closed. QFVG will continue to hold the government to account to protect the State from

emerging horticulture-specific biosecurity risks. We also expect Biosecurity Queensland to work closely with us and with key stakeholders in the north Queensland region.

Further funding under the Drought Assistance and Reform Package will assist primary producers prepare for drought with up to \$48.5 million over 3 years to be invested in programs and grants, and \$100 million over 2 years allocated for loans.

Energy is a crucial input cost for agriculture, and it is vital that farming agribusinesses are supported to make energy investment decisions and achieve sustainable, long term energy efficiency.

After recent successes in this space, QFVG supports the inclusion of a \$35 million investment for the Queensland Business Energy Saving and Transformation Program, which includes targeted support for agriculture to enable advice and contribution to energy efficiency measures and infrastructure.

In addition, \$1.7 billion has also been earmarked for water infrastructure and planning commitments, including safety improvement works and raising of the Burdekin Falls Dam, Paradise Dam works and the completion of Rookwood Weir.

We were also pleased that the budget confirmed \$22.8 million over two years to continue the government's commitment to discount irrigation prices by 15% percent – a win for horticulture.



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Electricity tariffs on the rise: IT'S TIME TO CHECK YOUR TARIFFS

The Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) has published the final determination on 2023-24 regulated retail electricity prices. Changes came into effect on 1 July 2023.

Below is a quick overview of the major updates included in the determination:

Prices increasing

Prices have increased across all tariff classes, including (but not limited to):

- Tariff 20, a small business tariff which will see an increase of 26.8% for the average customer.
- Tariff 44, a large business demand tariff which will see an increase of around 15.6% for the average customer.

Feed in tariff increasing

The regional solar feed-in tariff will also increase by 44.5% to 13.441c/kWh for power exported to the grid from eligible solar systems.

Time of use tariffs in the spotlight

The time of use business tariffs for small customers, tariffs 22B and 22C, incentivise the use of power during solar generation times between 9am and 4pm (day), and penalise businesses that use power between 4pm and 9pm (peak). For example, the new Tariff 22C has a 'day' rate of 10.875 c/kWh and a 'peak' rate of 63.837 c/kWh.

What can your business do to ensure an easy transition?

Here's a few suggested next steps to understand the impact on your business:

1. Check whether your existing tariff rates have changed. To read more about the tariffs, visit the Ergon Business tariff webpage: www.ergon.com.au/retail/business/tariffs-and-prices/compare-business-tariffs
2. Check whether a load-control or interruptible supply tariff will work for you. If you are a small customer using less than 100,000kWh per year, you could choose T34 as a primary tariff, or choose from T31 or T33 as secondary tariffs. As a large customer, you could choose T60A as a primary tariff or T60B as a secondary tariff.

a. Note that load control is not available in all areas.

b. Supply under these tariffs can be interrupted during peak demand times so you should assess whether that interruption will be acceptable to your operations.

c. Read our article about load control tariffs here: www.qff.org.au/blog/new-load-control-tariffs/

3. Check whether a time of use business tariff, Tariff 22B and 22C, will work for you. Under these tariffs, you will be charged a lower rate when using power during the day (9am to 4pm) but rates will increase significantly if you use power in the peak time (4pm to 9pm), where they increase to over 63c/kWh on Tariff 22C.

4. Find out more about potential relief opportunities:

a. **Drought Relief from Electricity Charges Scheme (DRECS):** Some parts of Queensland are still eligible for drought relief with their obsolete tariff under the Drought Relief from Electricity Charges Scheme (DRECS). Your Daily Service Charge will continue to be waived under your replacement tariff/s, if you continue to meet the DRECS eligibility requirements.

b. **Energy bill relief for small businesses:** Small businesses will receive a \$650 energy bill rebate in 2023-24. To find out more about the scheme, visit the Queensland Government website here: www.treasury.qld.gov.au/programs-and-policies/energy-bill-relief/

5. If you are in regional Queensland, consider signing up to Ergon's **Energy Analysis via My Account**.

6. Review your operations to see if there is additional energy consumption you can shift to a time that coincides with when your solar system is generating the most output. Remember, it is more cost effective to utilise any solar generated on site rather than exporting to the grid.

There is no cost to change tariffs. However, your meter may need to be updated to access the tariff. If the meter box needs upgrading or a meter needs to be changed due to tariffs expiring, a licenced electrical contractor will be required, and fees will need to be discussed with the contractor.

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Hort Connections 2023 Knowledge for Growth

Over 3,000 delegates came together in Adelaide last month for what was the largest Hort Connections Conference in the event's seven-year history.

Exploring the theme of 'Knowledge for Growth' delegates shared ideas and discussed a range of topics from nurturing grower-retailer relationships to scaling sustainability, rethinking labelling, enhancing farming profitability and strategising for export development.

Dates have been announced for the 2024 Hort Connections Conference, so save the date and we will see you in Melbourne from 3-5 June.



Global food futurist Tony Hunter said when we look at and talk about food from farm to fork, we can no longer avoid talking about technology. Food is technology.

From rapid conventional breeding techniques to genetic modification of crops and alternative proteins – there's a whole raft of things out there that are going to revolutionise the horticulture industry. The days of just saying 'I grow a piece of fruit' are rapidly disappearing. Consumers are going to want to know what these foods do for them – and that's where these technologies come in.

The challenge for our industry is how can horticulture be at the forefront and use these technologies to our advantage.

Dr. Max Teplitski, Chief Science Officer at the International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) told the Conference that a lack of labor is leading to elevated opportunities for robotics, both in picking and processing, but also in plant breeding. He said that consumers are paying a lot more attention to sustainability, and visibility in the supply chain will be important.

Coles Supermarkets was cooking up a storm in the Trade Hall using local produce to create delicious and healthy dishes.

Result Group officially launched its natural branding technology EcoMark at this year's Hort Connections Conference. The technology uses a laser to naturally brand the outer layer of skin on a piece of fruit or vegetable, removing the need for labels. The technology also eliminates the need for any material in the marking process meaning no label, ink, silicone, or additives. Result Group says the laser does not damage the produce, nor affect shelf life.





One important part of the rollout is ensuring the EcoMark is compatible with barcode scanners. GSI's support as a strategic alliance partner is important to the rollout, getting to the point where it will go 'beep' at the point of sale. It is anticipated that consumers will start to see the new EcoMark on fresh produce in supermarkets across the country before the end of this calendar year.

Clever consumption or crime against frozen dessert? Hort Innovation served up two bespoke gelato flavours - cauliflower-vanilla bean and pumpkin-ginger bread. With one serve of veggies in every two scoops, the gelatos are not only delicious but highly nutritious.

The offering was developed by Hort Innovation in partnership with a grower-owned vegetable waste company Nutri-V. The pumpkin and cauliflower that would be otherwise lost to the supply chain are transformed into a nutritious powder that can be added to a range of meals and drinks, and even ice cream!

The team from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) attended the Hort Connections Conference. Speaking at the conference was the Gatton Smart Farm team who presented alongside a Queensland grower and US AgTech company about weeding technology in vegetable systems. The market access team also shed light on the market access research process and how research supports negotiations that lead to export protocols and trade.

Fresh Markets Australia (FMA) once again put on a beautiful display of the nation's fresh produce in the trade hall. FMA is the national organisation representing each of the five Market Chambers, which themselves are organisations which represent the fruit and vegetable wholesalers located in each of Australia's six central Markets - Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Newcastle.

On display in the trade show was a range of innovative packaging solutions. One such solution is from Detpak, a specialist across the food service, FMCG and grocery industries, who work with some of the largest and most iconic brands.

Detpak is committed to reducing and removing, where possible, plastic packaging for fresh produce. Recently Detpak developed a range of ten paper and board packaging items, suitable for use with over 30 different fruits and vegetables to replace the traditional plastic packaging often used for fresh produce. These products also come in multiple variations, such as different sizes and window shapes, and can be customised.

There was a variety of machinery and implements on display throughout the trade show.



QUEENSLAND TAKES OUT TOP GONG AT NATIONAL AWARDS

North Queensland vegetable growers Pirrone Brothers were recognised for their achievements in the Australian horticulture industry taking out the Syngenta Grower of the Year Award at the Hort Connections Gala Dinner in Adelaide.

The national award recognises outstanding achievement across all aspects of horticultural production, including growing, environmental management, staff management and quality of produce, and acknowledges grower commitment to innovation and advancing the Australian horticulture industry.

The three siblings – Ross-Shane, Josh, and Chris – run Pirrone Brothers in North Queensland, and over the past decade have evolved the family business from sugar cane production to one of the state’s most innovative vegetable producers.

AUSVEG CEO Michael Coote said, “Over the past 10 years, Ross-Shane, Josh, and Chris have built an impressive vegetable production business through ongoing experimentation and rapid adoption of new research and technology, such as protected cropping, soilless production and automation. As active participants in research trials, the brothers have also generously shared their learnings with other industry members.”

Other Award winners announced on the night included:

- Corteva Agriscience Young Grower of the Year - Robert Arvier, West Pine Ag, Tas
- Boomaroo Nurseries Women in Horticulture Award - Angela Ruffo, Tripod Farmers Group, Vic
- Hort Innovation Exporter of the Year - Frank Frappa, Premier Fresh Australia, Vic
- Bayer Researcher of the Year - Michael Rettke, SARDI, SA
- Visy Industry Impact Award - Bruce Scott, Campbells Fertiliser, Vic
- E.E. Muir & Sons Community Stewardship Award - Allan McGann, drumMASTER (Agsafe), NSW
- Butler Market Gardens Environment and Sustainability Award - Fresh Select, Vic
- UPL Tech Innovation Award - Kylie Hall, Hectre, NZ



L-R the Hon Clare Scriven MLC, the Pirrone Brothers and Syngenta Australia New Zealand Managing Director Paul Luxton. IMAGE: Andrew Beveridge.

Hort 2023 Connections Awards Night

OUTSTANDING INDUSTRY LEADERS RECOGNISED

Fresh Markets Australia (FMA), a leading organisation in the fresh produce industry, honoured two outstanding individuals at the Hort Connections Gala Dinner. Gail Woods was presented with the highly esteemed FMA Meritorious Service Award, while Mark Russo received the prestigious FMA Col Johnson Young Achievers Award.

Gail Woods, a highly respected figure in the fresh produce industry, has been actively involved for many years. Her significant contributions to Brismark and FMA have had a lasting impact on the industry. As the former General Manager of Brismark from 2012 to 2020 and the current General Manager of FMA, Gail’s visionary leadership has played a pivotal role in shaping the organisations.

Mark Russo, a passionate grower from Adelaide Hydro Fresh, was presented with the Col Johnson Young Achievers Award. Mark’s entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to his craft have been evident in the expansion of his business and the recent opening of a wholesaler store in the South Australian Produce Market. He actively participates in local and national conferences, demonstrating his commitment to personal and professional development.



L-R: Gail Woods, FMA Chair Shane Schnitzler, and Mark Russo. IMAGE: Andrew Beveridge.

Irrigator discount

The Queensland Government has extended the 15 percent irrigator discount until 2024/25.

EXTENDED

The discount is automatically applied to irrigators in Sunwater and Seqwater schemes.

Horticultural irrigators can also access a further 35 percent rebate on charges associated with horticultural crops through the Horticulture Irrigation Pricing Rebate Scheme administered by QRIDA.

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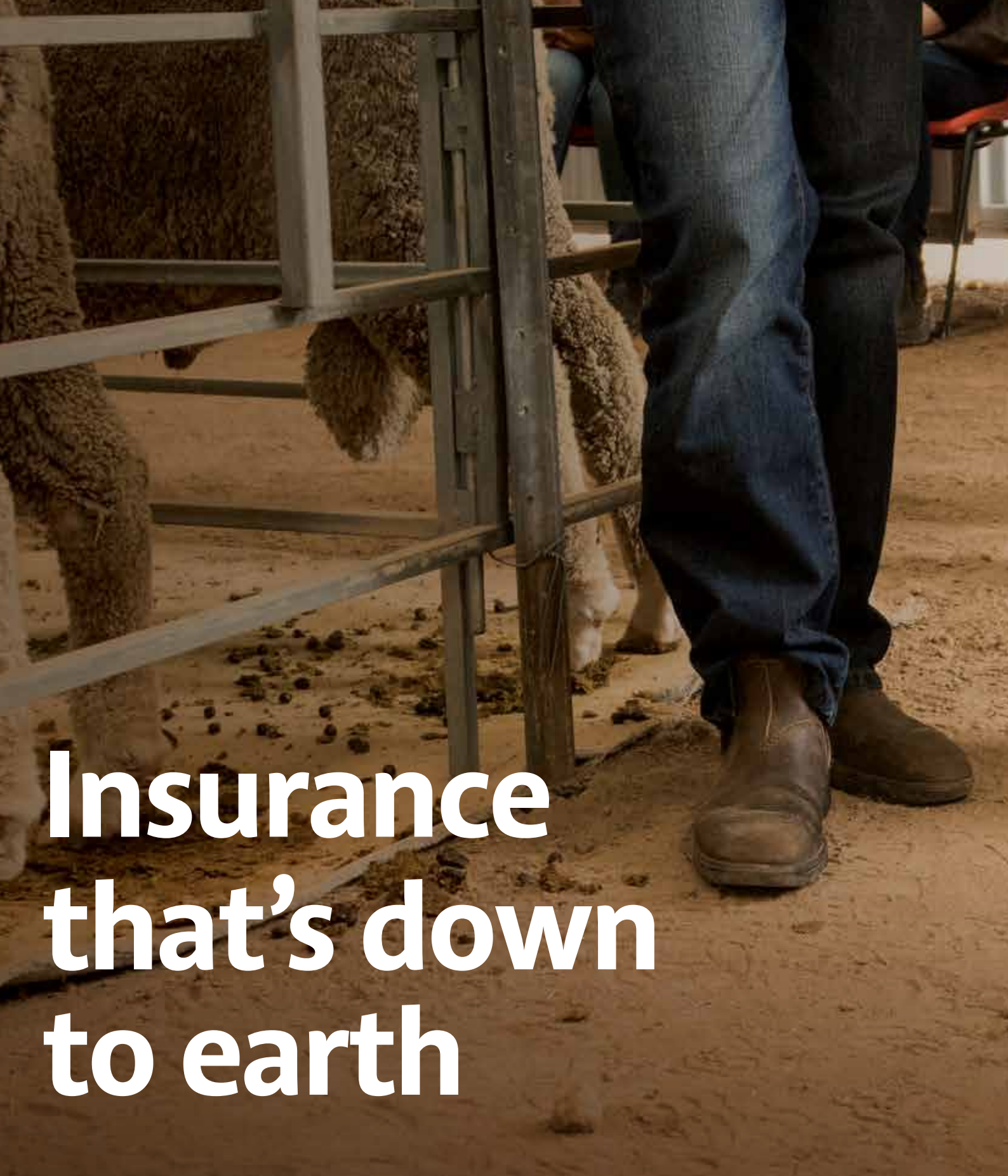
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Good people to know.



NEW PACKING MACHINE SEES CITRUS GROWERS' EXPANSION COME TO FRUITION

The new packing machine Oscar and Dwaine Bugno have been able to install with their Sustainability Loan from QRIDA.



Citrus growers Oscar and Dwaine Bugno.

Farming is in the blood for Oscar Bugno and his family who have been farming for more than 50 years on their land 10 km west of Dimbulah in the 'food bowl' region of Far North Queensland.

Together with wife Giannina and son Dwaine, Oscar runs a thriving citrus operation with over 6,000 lemon, 2,500 grapefruit and 850 lime trees under two brand names – Bug's Citrus and JDL.

"When Dwaine returned to the farm after completing an electrical apprenticeship, we started producing more fruit and it became clear that we needed to expand the business," Oscar said.

Oscar and Dwaine began looking into ways they could expand and, having accessed a loan from the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) previously, Oscar contacted his local QRIDA Regional Area Manager

Sam Spina to see if they could assist them.

"One of our shortfalls was our 20 year old packing machine. So, we met with Sam about using a Sustainability Loan to put in a new machine," Oscar said.

Sam met with the Bugnos on farm to talk through the application process and explain the business plan and other documents they needed to submit as part of their loan application.

Installation of the new packing machine has greatly improved the business' efficiencies, with Dwaine saying the machine has a computerised grading system which removes the need for the grading process to be manually completed.

"With electronic weights and an extra eight bins for the fruit, we've made the process more efficient and allowed more fruit to be processed, graded, and packed

quicker than before – saving both time and money," Dwaine said.

"The machine has really helped because we've been able to move more produce through to meet our market demands," he said.

"The loan has been very beneficial for us. It's helped us do a lot of things that we wouldn't have been able to do prior," Oscar said.

QRIDA offers Sustainability Loans up to \$1.3 million for primary producers looking to invest in the latest infrastructure or technology to create a viable future for their farming business.

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Advertisement

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-  Construct on-farm rural worker accommodation
-  Buy your first farm
-  Put succession plans in place

- ✓ Flexible repayment terms
- ✓ No set up or exit fees
- ✓ Up to \$1.3 million for Sustainability Loans and \$2 million for First Start Loans

Talk to your local Regional Area Manager on 1800 623 946 or scan to find out how QRIDA could help grow your farming business*.



*Eligibility criteria applies. The information contained herein is for general information purposes only. You should not rely upon this information as a basis for making any business, legal or any other decisions.

qrida.qld.gov.au 1800 623 946 contact_us@qrida.qld.gov.au    



Authorised by the Queensland Government, Turbot St, Brisbane

Launching the Mental Health on the Land resource were Whitsunday Regional Council, Thankful4Farmers, Bowen Gumlu Growers Association and Royal Flying Doctors.



MENTAL HEALTH ON THE LAND PROGRAM launched

In May, the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association (BGGGA) hosted the launch of the 'Mental Health on the Land' resources created by the Royal Flying Doctors Service and funded by Thankful4Farmers.

President of BGGGA, Carl Walker said, "Often, as farmers, we don't realise the impact that these challenges are having on our mental health. We just get on with the job, but it can take a toll. This book brings awareness, makes us feel like we're not alone, and provides us with the tools we need to help manage our mental health and wellbeing."

"I've seen first-hand the impact that mental health challenges have had on friends and many farmers who are struggling with the stress of farming today. Just when we think we are in for a bumper season we are hit with bad weather and the whole season is a write-off. We invest time and money into the crop and just like that it's gone and there is nothing we can do about it. It takes its toll on our health and we are told as farmers we are resilient and tough. But the industry needs to change the narrative and recognise that it is ok not to be ok so people can ask for help when they need it. This new book will help make us more aware and recognise when and how we can seek help."

The book includes information about wellness, healthy relationships, reducing loneliness, stress management, strategies to cope in difficult times, seeking help for mental health conditions, suicide prevention and details for further mental health resources which are growing areas of challenge for rural people.

"Mental Health is one of Bowen Gumlu Growers' key priorities in 2023,"

BGGGA CEO Ry Collins said.

"Workforce shortages, weather events, financial challenges, social isolation, long work hours and stress are all issues facing our growers that can have a negative impact on mental health. In rural and regional communities where mental health supports can be lacking and expertise is low, a free mental health resource is expected to be of great benefit much like a first aid manual."

MENTAL HEALTH ON THE LAND RESOURCE ONLINE HERE

SCAN HERE





BRISBANE MONTHLY SUMMARY

June

Compiled by Market Information Services. Ph (07) 3379 4576. Fax (07) 3379 4103.
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Fruits

Brisbane Monthly Special 6 - 10 Crop Summary

Page No 1

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
APPLES,Fuji	1492.34	10KgCtn	40.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	Clementine		13KgCtn	20.00	36.00	36.00	28.00
Missile		3KgCtn	24.00	28.00	28.00	27.00	Daisy		13KgCtn	28.00	45.00	45.00	35.18
Pink Lady		4KgTray	20.00	24.00	24.00	24.00	Imperial		13KgCtn	15.00	36.00	36.00	26.98
Sweet Tango		9KgCtn	40.00	48.00	48.00	47.00	RH Murcott		13KgCtn	30.00	45.00	45.00	37.50
Granny Smith		AACTn	15.00	50.00	50.00	28.43	Premier		16KgCtn	30.00	40.00	40.00	36.33
Pink Lady		AACTn	40.00	54.00	54.00	48.00	Empress		CP	50.00	75.00	75.00	66.88
Red Delicious		AACTn	20.00	40.00	40.00	32.64	RH Murcott		CP	30.00	54.00	54.00	35.48
Royal Gala		AACTn	40.00	54.00	54.00	50.00	Taylor Lee		CP	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
Ambrosia		DLCTn	38.00	50.00	50.00	43.00	ORANGES,Valencia	3001.91	1/2Bin	400.00	420.00	420.00	410.00
Bravo		DLCTn	40.00	60.00	60.00	55.00	Navel,Washington		1/2Bin	280.00	330.00	330.00	305.00
Envy		DLCTn	44.00	50.00	50.00	47.00	Navel,Unspecified		13KgCtn	20.00	25.00	25.00	22.50
Fuji		DLCTn	24.00	50.00	50.00	42.00	Seedless Valencia		15KgTra	30.00	35.00	35.00	32.50
Granny Smith		DLCTn	12.00	45.00	45.00	30.25	Navel,Naveleana		3KgBag	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.50
Jazz		DLCTn	40.00	64.00	70.00	54.00	Valencia		BulkCP	20.00	40.00	40.00	30.00
Kanzi		DLCTn	32.00	48.00	48.00	43.00	Navel,M7		BulkCP	20.00	30.00	30.00	25.00
Pink Lady		DLCTn	12.00	48.00	56.00	30.43	Navel,Naveleana		BulkCP	20.00	55.00	55.00	33.52
Red Delicious		DLCTn	30.00	36.00	40.00	35.00	Valencia		CP	15.00	36.00	36.00	22.75
Royal Gala		DLCTn	30.00	55.00	55.00	46.91	Navel,Cara Cara		CP	12.00	45.00	50.00	31.93
Sundowner		DLCTn	30.00	36.00	36.00	36.00	Navel,M7		CP	20.00	70.00	70.00	41.95
Pink Lady		SLTray	10.00	32.00	32.00	27.00	RAMBUTANS	2.86	Kg	10.00	26.00	28.00	16.45
Red Delicious		SLTray	8.00	10.00	12.00	9.00	STATE: A=ACT, N=NSW, Q=QLD, S=SA, T=TAS, V=VIC, W=WA, Y=NT, I=IMPORTED						
Yello		SLTray	48.00	48.00	48.00	48.00	IMPORTANT NOTICE: Reproducing, publishing, emailing or re-Faxing this report is prohibited as is the creation of a derivative work eg. Database.						
Royal Gala		TLCtn	20.00	34.00	34.00	31.00	Privileged/confidential information may be contained in this document/message. If you are not the addressee indicated in the message (or responsible for delivery of the message to such person), you may not copy or deliver this document/message to anyone. In such case, please destroy this message, and notify us immediately. Opinions, conclusions and other information expressed in this message/document are not given or endorsed by the firm or employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised representative independent of this message. We use virus scanning software but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
AVOCADOS,Fuerte	3204.20	18LCtn	10.00	15.00	15.00	12.50							
Hass		18LCtn	6.00	28.00	35.00	13.74							
Sharwill		18LCtn	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00							
Fuerte		SLTray	8.00	15.00	15.00	13.00							
Hass		SLTray	8.00	26.00	30.00	18.52							
Sharwill		SLTray	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00							
BERRIES,Blackberries	185.33	125g	2.00	5.00	5.00	4.59							
Blueberries		125g	2.50	8.00	9.00	5.50							
Raspberries		125g	1.50	4.50	5.00	2.72							
Gooseberries		Kg	20.00	25.00	25.00	24.67							
FEIJOAS	4.15	2KgTray	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00							
		9LCtn	15.00	80.00	80.00	35.80							
		SLTray	25.00	50.00	50.00	37.50							
FIGS,Dark Skin	20.13	300gLP	3.50	6.00	6.00	4.75							
Dark Skin		4.5Kg	50.00	70.00	70.00	61.67							
Dark Skin		500g	3.50	5.00	5.00	4.25							
Dark Skin		9LCtn	24.00	30.00	30.00	27.00							
Dark Skin		Kg	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00							
Dark Skin,Black Genoa		SLTray	50.00	80.00	80.00	60.45							
HONEYDEW MELONS,Dark Skin													
Piel De Sapo	390.72	30LTray	20.00	26.00	26.00	22.76							
Gold		30LTray	14.00	24.00	24.00	18.95							
Gold,Orange Candy		30LTray	18.00	24.00	24.00	20.75							
White		30LTray	16.00	24.00	30.00	21.09							
LONGANS	35.35	8KgCtn	60.00	96.00	96.00	88.08							
MANDARINS,Afourer	3226.32	1/2CP	6.00	28.00	32.00	14.77							
Daisy		1/2CP	10.00	20.00	24.00	15.31							
Freemont		1/2CP	12.00	30.00	30.00	20.85							
Imperial		1/2CP	5.00	26.00	30.00	12.54							
Nova		1/2CP	12.00	20.00	20.00	16.73							
Orri		1/2CP	12.00	12.00	12.00	12.00							
RH Murcott		1/2CP	10.00	36.00	36.00	20.60							
Satsuma		1/2CP	10.00	20.00	20.00	15.50							
Taylor Lee		1/2CP	24.00	24.00	24.00	24.00							
Freemont		1/4Bin	300.00	360.00	360.00	330.00							
Afourer		13KgCtn	20.00	26.00	26.00	23.00							

Vegetables

Brisbane Monthly Special 6 - 10 Crop Summary

Page No 1

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
BEANS,Bora	286.69	Kg	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	SPRING ONIONS,White	30.35	Bunch	1.20	3.00	3.00	2.60
Borlotti		Kg	4.00	8.00	8.00	7.00	ZUCCHINIS,Green	1172.98	10KgCtn	4.00	34.00	34.00	13.59
Broad		Kg	4.00	8.00	8.00	6.50	Lebanese		10KgCtn	10.00	48.00	48.00	24.80
Butter		Kg	3.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	STATE: A=ACT, N=NSW, Q=QLD, S=SA, T=TAS, V=VIC, W=WA, Y=NT, I=IMPORTED						
Flat,Continental		Kg	7.00	10.00	10.00	8.27	IMPORTANT NOTICE: Reproducing, publishing, emailing or re-Faxing this report is prohibited as is the creation of a derivative work eg. Database.						
Round S'less		Kg	0.50	8.00	8.00	3.31	Privileged/confidential information may be contained in this document/message. If you are not the addressee indicated in the message (or responsible for delivery of the message to such person), you may not copy or deliver this document/message to anyone. In such case, please destroy this message, and notify us immediately. Opinions, conclusions and other information expressed in this message/document are not given or endorsed by the firm or employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised representative independent of this message. We use virus scanning software but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
Snake		Kg	4.00	8.00	10.00	6.50							
Winged		Kg	8.00	14.00	14.00	11.00							
BROCCOLI,Baby	312.89	2.4Kg	20.00	26.00	26.00	22.09							
		8KglPk	6.00	30.00	30.00	15.31							
CAPSICUMS,Gold	581.70	10KgCtn	25.00	40.00	40.00	34.50							
Green		10KgCtn	15.00	45.00	45.00	30.40							
Mixed Colour		10KgCtn	16.00	26.00	30.00	20.32							
Red		10KgCtn	20.00	60.00	60.00	38.95							
Gold		27LCtn	12.00	32.00	32.00	20.41							
Green		27LCtn	6.00	24.00	24.00	13.77							
Mixed Colour		27LCtn	12.00	16.00	16.00	14.00							
Red		27LCtn	4.00	35.00	35.00	21.52							
Gold		5KgCtn	20.00	35.00	35.00	29.77							
CELERY	308.10	15KgCtn	6.00	18.00	18.00	10.70							
CHILLIES,Hot Red,Reaper	95.84	400g	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50							
Hot Green,Long		6KgCtn	24.00	42.00	42.00	32.86							
Hot Red		6KgCtn	24.00	60.00	60.00	44.64							
Sweet Green		6KgCtn	20.00	30.00	35.00	25.00							
Sweet Mixed Col.		6KgCtn	16.00	20.00	20.00	19.00							
Sweet Red		6KgCtn	10.00	30.00	35.00	18.75							
Sweet Yellow		6KgCtn	16.00	24.00	24.00	20.00							
Birdseye Red		Kg	12.00	16.00	16.00	14.00							
Hot Green		Kg	5.00	16.00	16.00	9.83							
Hot Green,Jalapeno		Kg	6.00	12.00	12.00	11.00							
Hot Green,Thai		Kg	16.00	20.00	20.00	18.00							
Hot Orange,Habanero		Kg	8.00	16.00	16.00	12.00							
Hot Red		Kg	6.00	12.00	12.00	8.80							
Hot Red,Habanero		Kg	12.00	16.00	16.00	14.00							
Hot Red,Thai		Kg	12.00	20.00	20.00	17.09							
CHOKOS	42.30	15KgCtn	15.00	25.00	25.00	20.00							
		18KgCtn	25.00	40.00	40.00	32.55							
		18LCtn	10.00	20.00	20.00	15.00							
CUCUMBERS,Apple	956.45	10KgCtn	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
Green		10KgCtn	10.00	40.00	40.00	23.55							
Green,Dragon		10KgCtn	30.00	40.00	40.00	35.00							
Lebanese		10KgCtn	10.00	30.00	30.00	18.49							
Lebanese,Mini		10KgCtn	20.00	28.00	28.00	25.00							
White		10KgCtn	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
Baby,Qukes		250gLP	1.50	2.70	2.70	2.25							
Continental		7KgBag	8.00	20.00	20.00	15.55							
Continental		8KgBag	16.00	24.00	24.00	18.86							
Continental		9KgBag	10.00	20.00	20.00	16.86							
LETTUCE,Baby Cos,Midi	709.82	Carton	16.00	24.00	24.00	20.00							
Baby Cos,Sweet Gems		Carton	14.00	22.00	24.00	19.00							
Baby Cos Hearts		Carton	12.00	16.00	20.00	13.64							
Cos		Carton	10.00	26.00	26.00	18.61							
Headed		Carton	6.00	30.00	36.00	18.13							
Hearts		Carton	12.00	20.00	20.00	16.00							
Open Varieties		Carton	6.00	12.00	12.00	9.00							
Open Varieties,Green Oak		Carton	8.00	16.00	16.00	11.00							
Open Varieties,Red Oak		Carton	8.00	16.00	16.00	11.00							
Radicchio Hearts,Treviso		Carton	24.00	30.00	30.00	27.00							
Radicchio		Tray	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50							



FRUIT AND VEGETABLE WHOLESALE MARKET PRICE REPORTING

Ausmarket Consultants is an independently owned and operated business located in the Brisbane Produce Markets, Queensland. Ausmarket has been servicing the Horticulture Industry since 1996.

Ausmarket has been supplying price data to all sectors of the Horticulture Industry for 20+ Years. Clients include State and Federal Government, Grower Organisations, Financial Institutions, Business Consultants, Educational Facilities, Industry Organisations, Restaurants/Hotels, Independent and Major Retailers, Primary and Secondary Wholesalers, Transport Companies, and Individual Growers.

Our primary business activity is the supply of Australian Fruit and Vegetable Market Price Data.

- Daily, Weekly, Monthly and Annual Historic Fruit and Vegetable Price Data for 20+ Years
- Industry and Grower Organisation Projects, Programs and Market Activity Reporting
- Grower Subsidised Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market Price Reports
- Price Data from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide Markets

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CELEBRATING

our first horticulturalists



Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers continued our Year of Horticulture during NAIDOC week where we celebrated, educated, and advocated for our First Australian growers from Queensland.

We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations Peoples. We recognise their connection to land and environment, and celebrate their care for country for over 60,000 years. We value their skills and knowledge as our first horticulturalists and look forward to learning with a persistent curiosity.

#YOH2023 #NAIDOC2023 #ForOurElders



Lyndon Davis, a Gubbi Gubbi man from the Maroochy River using traditional Aboriginal stones to crack macadamia nuts. The nut is held in a depression in the anvil rock, a flat stone spreads the force when hit with a hammer stone.

Connection to Country - a seed project in the making

An idea, sparked from bedtime reading of the Bruce Pascoe book 'Dark Emu' and recognition of First Nations people as accomplished horticulturalists, is soon to come to fruition at Cooroy on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

Connection to Country aims to bring together an Indigenous owned and run farming business with Indigenous young people wanting to see if farming could be part of the future they are seeking.

This project is a small start, but one that hopes to build an authentic working example which may be replicated, bringing a connection to the land back to its first farmers. It also seeks to support a revival of Indigenous agricultural practices, connecting bush foods with modern agricultural practices and inspiring the farm owners and emerging elders of tomorrow.



[READ MORE](#)



COVER IMAGE

Gidarjil Bundaberg Land and Sea Rangers manage, monitor, and conserve many threatened species, including dugong and marine turtles. The rangers work with the Queensland Government to monitor populations of nesting turtles, including at Mon Repos, and undertake turtle research activities to collect valuable data. Rangers also undertake monitoring of different marine and coastal ecological communities, completing Mangrove Watch surveys, as well as surveys of in-shore coral reefs.



Celebrating our first scientists & botanists

There are some wonderful, highly successful 100% owned and operated Indigenous business, doing incredibly innovative things in the native botanicals industry.

With leadership from an Indigenous Enterprise Group and Indigenous Advisory Board, the ARC Industrial Transformational Training Centre for Uniquely Australian Foods has been working with Indigenous groups to profile the nutritional, functional and sensory characteristics of native foods, to help them create products and build sustainable, long-term businesses in ways which adhere to Nagoya Protocol, and protect their Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Property.

Native Oz Bushfoods are one such organisation partnering with UQ. They are 100% indigenous owned and operated, working across all facets of the native foods value chain - from nursesey, growing, product development and manufacture, to native bushfood tours and teas.

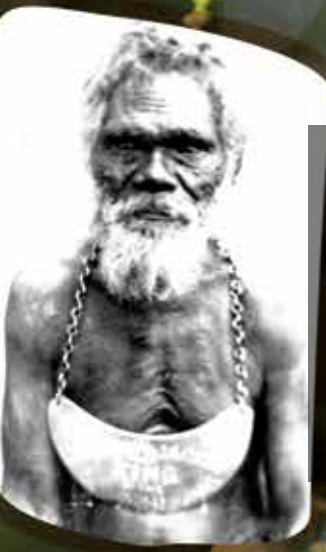
Brighter future for Australia's rarest macadamia

The future is looking bright for Australia's rarest macadamia species. The tree commonly known as the Bulburin Nut is only found in a single location north of Gin Gin. Following a successful propagation and planting project, *Macadamia janseni* will also be planted at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra, the Brisbane Botanic Gardens at Mt Coot-tha, and the Maroochy Research Facility.

The project is supported by the Macadamia Conservation Trust, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. Funds were provided by Hinkler Park Macadamia Plantation and the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens, which have played a critical role in the success of the project.



Russell Bennet - Macadamia Conservation Trust



Macadamias – Treasured and traded

Meet the world's first macadamia marketer. His name is Bilin Bilin and this is a little of his story.

“Bilin Bilin was an exceptional leader, intelligent, trusted, an entrepreneur, accepted by the Europeans and was able to bridge two very different worlds. The full extent of his role with macadamias is uncertain but I believe he deserves to be acknowledged as a macadamia enthusiast, pioneer and the first commercial macadamia marketer.”

READ MORE



Bilin Bilin's story is one of many in the soon to be released 'The Macadamia Story' written by Ian McConachie, macadamia enthusiast and historian.



Celebrating our first festivals

You've heard of the Chinchilla Melon Festival and the Goomeri Pumpkin Festival, but have you heard of the Bunya Dreaming Festival?

This ancient Aboriginal tradition celebrating the harvest and trading of the spiky, football-sized bunya cone has been revived in Queensland more than 120 years after the last traditional gathering. For thousands of years, Aboriginal people on the east coast of Australia journeyed and gathered to celebrate the harvest of cones from the bunya tree. These contain dozens of nutritious kernels, or nuts, that are high in protein and can taste similar to chestnuts or potatoes.



workplace relations

Focus HR Founding Director
Naomi Wilson

Minimum wage increase – is your business prepared?

In early June the Fair Work Commission (FWC) announced the 2023 minimum wage review outcome as:

- The National Minimum Wage will be increased to \$882.80 per week or \$23.23 per hour
- A 5.75% increase to minimum award wages

The increase applied from the first full pay period starting on or after 1 July 2023.

		Permanent	Casual
The impact of this increase on the Modern Awards has now been released with the following rates being published:	LEVEL 1	\$22.61	\$28.26
	LEVEL 2	\$23.23	\$29.04
	LEVEL 3	\$23.87	\$29.84
	LEVEL 4	\$24.73	\$30.91
	LEVEL 5	\$26.18	\$32.73

If you have other Modern Awards covering your employees, you can view updated rates in the Awards here: www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/awards/list-of-awards

Employers should review their rates of pay to ensure compliance with the new minimum rates - even if you already pay above Award rates, have employees on all up hourly rates or salaries, or employees under Agreements, you still have an obligation to ensure compliance with the new minimum rates.

A reminder also that the Superannuation Guarantee increased to 11 percent from 1 July 2023 (for all employees, regardless of Award coverage).

Require assistance with your wage compliance checking?

Please contact the QFVG WR Team on 07 3620 3844 or wrtteam@qfvg.com.au

FAIR WORK MODERN AWARDS

SCAN HERE



Engaged People is a 12-month program designed to build winning teams through strategy, leadership and people practices.

Nominate yourself (or someone else) for the opportunity to participate in this program in 2024 absolutely **FREE** with the Engaged People Bursary (valued at over \$30,000).



You deserve the opportunity to build a winning team. Applying is easy! Scan the code to get started or find out more at focushr.com.au





program update

Fair Farms National Program Manager
Sachin Ayachit



FAIR FARMS, FAIR DINKUM!

With the increasing adoption of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices and its reporting in businesses, stakeholder expectations from suppliers are on the rise. This growing demand places a greater emphasis on social compliance certification, particularly in the horticulture sector.

ESG and social compliance are interconnected concepts that prioritise sustainable and responsible business practices. In the context of farming, especially in horticulture, the Fair Farms program provides growers with a valuable opportunity to navigate and comply with intricate workplace relations and workplace health and safety (WHS) regulations. By participating in this program, growers can effectively address the “S” in ESG and demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility.

ESG analysis and reporting often include assessing social risks within a company’s operations and supply chain. Social compliance programs like Fair Farms provide a mechanism to identify, mitigate and remediate social risks, such as labor rights violations, worker safety hazards, or unethical practices. By implementing social compliance measures, companies can proactively address these risks and improve their ESG performance. The Modern Slavery Act requirements are another reason why businesses should consider a social compliance certification. Entities covered by the Act are required to publish a Modern Slavery Statement on their website, and lodge on the Modern Slavery Register outlining the actions they have taken to address modern slavery risks within their supply chain. Social compliance programs like Fair Farms play a crucial role in identifying and addressing modern slavery risks like labor exploitation and human rights violations within supply chains.

Farms, particularly in the horticulture sector, remain in the Fair Work Ombudsman’s spotlight. Fair Work is urging agriculture sector employers to prioritise compliance as total fines for just pay slip and record-keeping breaches exceed \$170,000 nationally. Embracing a

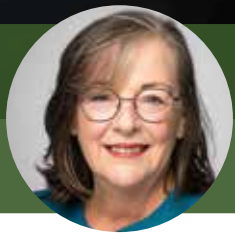
social compliance certification like Fair Farms helps the horticulture industry in rebuilding its reputation.

While external factors such as ESG, Modern Slavery, and FWO compliance play a significant role in enforcing compliance, social compliance certification remains the essential accreditation that every business should prioritise for ongoing risk mitigation. The imperative for change should stem from the genuine intention to safeguard the most vital asset in any business: its people. By prioritising social compliance, businesses can demonstrate their commitment to the well-being and fair treatment of their employees, establishing a strong foundation for sustainable and responsible operations.

Introduced in 2017, Fair Farms is a unique program specifically designed and developed for the horticulture industry. In light of the emerging challenges posed by ESG and the Modern Slavery Act, this program serves as a valuable tool that can be leveraged to transform these challenges into opportunities for businesses. By embracing Fair Farms, companies can proactively address these issues and utilise them as catalysts for positive change and growth within their operations.

I highly recommend reaching out to Fair Farms certified growers in your region and engaging in conversations to understand firsthand how the program has benefited them. Their insights and experiences can provide valuable perspectives on the advantages and positive impacts of participating in the certification. Should you have any further inquiries or wish to discuss your social compliance requirements, we are just a phone call away and eager to assist you.





engagement

Fair Farms Grower Engagement Officer
Donna Mogg

CONSULTING WITH YOUR WORKERS

Having recently delivered the webinar on the Horticulture Award hours of work provisions, I realise that I speak a lot about consulting with workers when seeking to introduce change or get input around WHS, so I thought it might be timely to go into the weeds a little and talk about how, and how much consultation would be considered sufficient (for example by the Fair Work Ombudsman/Commission or WHS Authority) in a variety of situations.

What is 'Consultation'?

Consultation is a two-way process between you and your workers, where you talk to each other about health and safety matters, listen to their concerns and raise your concerns, seek, and share views and information, and consider what your workers say before you make decisions.

Consultation does not mean reaching agreement or the ability to veto a proposal. Agreement may be an outcome of consultation but is not presumed.

There are similar, but slightly differing expectations and regulations around consultation, depending on the matter under consideration. For example, consultation is a legal requirement under Work Health and Safety legislation, and an essential part of managing health and safety risks and employees have a right to stop work if directed to undertake unsafe work practices.

Requirements to consult with employees about significant changes in the workplace are centred around business proposals to make a particular change. The rules for consultation here are set out in the legislation, Awards, or enterprise agreements.

Consultation under the Fair Work Act/Awards

These provisions require employers to consult with employees and their representatives if:

- They intend to change an employee's regular roster or ordinary hours of work, or
- They intend to make significant changes at the workplace.

"Significant change" means any change to the business that will impact employees in a significant way, for example different working hours, duties, work locations, or decisions leading to redundancies.

Employers who take a consultative approach still have the right to make final decisions on how to manage their business – but employees who are a part of the process are more likely to accept change and less likely to feel anxious or stressed about the change.

Consultation under the WHS Act

The Federal Work Health and Safety Act 2011 explains the nature of consultation at Section 48:

S48 Nature of consultation

(1) Consultation under this Division requires:

- (a) that relevant information about the matter is shared with workers; and
- (b) that workers be given a reasonable opportunity:
 - (i) to express their views and to raise work health or safety issues in relation to the matter; and
 - (ii) to contribute to the decision making process relating to the matter; and
- (c) that the views of workers are taken into account by the person conducting the business or undertaking; and
- (d) that the workers consulted are advised of the outcome of the consultation in a timely manner.

(2) If the workers are represented by a health and safety representative, the consultation must involve that representative."

Workers are often in the best situation to identify hazards and suggest solutions to common problems. A safe workplace is more easily achieved when everyone involved in the various tasks communicate to identify workplace hazards and their associated risks, when they discuss health and safety concerns, and when they work together to find practical solutions.

Consultation under the WHS Act is specifically required in relation to the following health and safety matters:



S49 When consultation is required

Consultation under this Division is required in relation to the following health and safety matters:

- (a) when identifying hazards and assessing risks to health and safety arising from the work carried out or to be carried out by the business or undertaking;
- (b) when making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those risks;
- (c) when making decisions about the adequacy of facilities for the welfare of workers;
- (d) when proposing changes that may affect the health or safety of workers;
- (e) when making decisions about the procedures for:
 - I. consulting with workers; or
 - II. resolving work health or safety issues at the workplace; or
 - III. monitoring the health of workers; or
 - IV. monitoring the conditions at any workplace under the management or control of the person conducting the business or undertaking; or
 - V. providing information and training for workers;
- (f) when carrying out any other activity prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this section.

Consultation Framework

It is useful to have a consultation framework in place. A set of guiding principles and procedures ensures that consultation occurs in a

consistent way and can be described and justified if and when that's needed.

Don't over-complicate the process. By framework, we mean a set of guiding principles for how you consult with employees around new proposals, in what circumstances, and to what extent. Consider whether it's all employees, or a specific section or group of workers, and what impact the proposal will have on those employees.

Develop an internal communication strategy which outlines how your business will deliver key messages to your staff. The degree of complexity depends on the size of the workforce and the type of changes proposed. For smaller businesses, this can be a simple document setting out the ground rules for when and how staff communications will be handled, and who will handle them, how and when.

Essentially:

- Provide information to the employees about the change.
- Invite the employees to give their views about the impact of the change (including any impact in relation to their family or caring responsibilities).
- Consider any views given by the employees about the impact of the change.

The climate of consultation is vitally important for the smooth transition of change. And setting the tone is as important as the questions to be asked and answered. Invite input, manage expectations, be open and honest and listen to your employees. Again, you get the make the decisions, but manner in which those are implemented that counts. Also... keep records!

Fair Farms is designed help you navigate and work through that complex landscape of workplace relations, workplace health & safety, and social/ethical compliance. We can guide and assist you through the Fair Farms process, so you get the most out of it. So, how can I help you? Give me a call on 0472 922 811 or send me an email dmogg@growcom.com.au



CERTIFICATION JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE LESSONS AND TRAINING PROVIDED

Perched in the lush Adelaide Hills is a family farm that have been making use of the rich soils and gentle rains for almost 60 years, becoming one of the nations major Brussel Sprout Producers.

This is AE Cranwell & Sons.

The Fair Farms team were recently given a tour of their site by the uncle and niece combination of John and Erin, the second and third generations of a thriving Cranwell family business, themselves Fair Farms members since 2019.

“We are based across two farms to the south of Adelaide,” said Erin, who oversees operations in the farms packing facilities.

“Here on our property in the Hay Valley is our packing shed, and more recently we’ve started to grow in the Fleurieu Peninsula.

“There are times when it’s just too wet to get anything into the ground here in the Adelaide Hills, so we started operations from our second property about 30 years ago, just to extend our season a little further, and it’s become extremely important to us.

“Across the two we are typically rotating Carrots and Barley through as cover crops, but there’s no doubt that above all else, we are Brussel Sprout specialists.”

AE Cranwell & Sons produce huge numbers of Brussel Sprouts for a variety of markets both domestic and abroad.

With a national supply to major supermarket chains, markets in every state and a portion heading to the export market too, labour is an important cog in their operation.

“We have around nine full-time workers across the course of the year, but into the peak season you can see the workforce swell to up to 35 workers between farm scheme programs and casual hires,” Erin said.

“We came into the Fair Farms because we wanted to be able to show we were ethically compliant, and to be a part of a National Standard, where everyone is operating fairly, and on the same page.

“It’s also given us the opportunity to have a way to have our voice heard, to have our say in decisions that may come towards us.”

John says the certification outcomes given by Fair Farms are just as important as the lessons and training provided.

“There’s no question we are ethical in how we operate, but we need to be able to prove to people, to our buyers, to our customers,” John said.

“Anyone who knows us personally, or who works with us knows how we operate.

“They know we are ethical, but having a means to prove that, to have it certified on our product to show our customers and to our buyers what we are, it’s important for us.”



Uncle and niece combination, Erin and John.



MEET JO WILLIAMS

from QCWA Boonah Branch in West Moreton Division

Involved in the QCWA Country Kitchens program for just under six months, Jo is a new facilitator of Country Kitchens, actively embracing the Country Kitchens program.

The QCWA's Country Kitchens program is a health promotion program supporting communities across Queensland to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviours. It is a partnership between the QCWA and Health and Wellbeing Queensland and the flagship program of the Association.

The Country Kitchens program supports QCWA volunteer Supporter and Branch members, like Jo, who already have a wealth of cooking knowledge and skills, with training and support to help improve the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders, particularly those living in rural, regional, and remote locations.

"Since becoming a facilitator I have been making and sharing Country Kitchens recipes at our Branch meetings, and at Coffee Chat Craft mornings which are open to all

community members."

Country Kitchens facilitators, like Jo, engage communities to participate in a variety of localised, fun-filled activities, learning nutrition basics and cooking delicious, healthy meals.

The Country Kitchens program promotes five key messages which are supported by scientific evidence and provide simple, accessible, and effective ways to improve your health and wellbeing.

"In January my Country Kitchens buddy and I prepared and hosted a Country Kitchens lunch for all of our members following our branch meeting," said Jo.

Jo has also held Showcases at QCWA street stalls and at Scenic Rim Council sponsored community events. Sharing taste testers and recipes at these events, and Country Kitchens cakes, slices, scones, and hummus which Jo says sold well at the branch street stalls.

Events like these are how the Country Kitchens program is improving food and nutrition literacy, and importantly, influencing behaviour change at a local community level.

"I would encourage other branch members to become Country Kitchens facilitators. You could become involved simply to improve your own nutrition, to make and share recipes with your branch and community as I am doing, or to partner with other organisations and teach hands-on workshops, as many of our members have done."

If you or someone you know is interested in improving the health of their family and community, get in touch with the Country Kitchens team at countrykitchens@qcwa.org.au or call 0417 539 663.

"You can do whatever you have the time and capacity for. That is the beauty of the program," said Jo.

Vegetable Barley Soup

Recipe courtesy of the Country Kitchens team

This hearty soup is the perfect winter pick me up! Loaded with veggies, one portion of this soup provides you with half of your daily recommended vegetable serves! Be sure to dice all your vegetables the same size.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbs olive oil
1 medium onion, finely diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 medium carrots, diced
3 celery sticks, diced
2 cups butternut pumpkin, diced
¼ cup tomato paste
2L chicken stock, reduced salt
1 cup pearl barley
400g can cannellini or butter beans
1 tsp dried thyme
1 tsp dried basil
½ tsp onion powder
1 bay leaf
Cracked black pepper
3 cups baby spinach

To serve

Basil pesto
Parmesan, shaved

METHOD

HEAT oil in a large pot on medium heat. Add the onion and fry for 5 minutes then add garlic and fry for a further minute.

ADD the carrot, celery and butternut pumpkin and sauté for 5 minutes.

STIR in the tomato paste, chicken stock, barley, beans and seasonings.

BRING to a boil then reduce heat and cover, cooking for 50-60 minutes or until the barley is tender and fluffy.

REMOVE soup from heat and tear in the spinach leaves, stirring through until wilted.

Optional: Serve with a tsp of fresh basil pesto and shaved parmesan.

 15 min  60 min  8

OLD COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
COUNTRY Kitchens
Recipe for good health


Queensland
Country Women's Association

health+
wellbeing
Queensland


Queensland
Government

Empowering women through education and health is a priority for the Queensland Country Women's Association (QCWA). The QCWA Country Kitchens program, funded by the Queensland Government through Health and Wellbeing Queensland, supports Queenslanders to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Farm Business Resilience Program

Following a few good years of rain in the Lockyer Valley, Greg Lester and his brother Wayne from Morton Vale Farms knew from experience that a dry spell could be just around the corner. With the assistance on offer through Growcom's Farm Business Resilience Program (FBRP) now was the right time to strengthen their farms' drought resilience to secure their future in farming.

The Lesters grow a mixed range of crops, from seasonal pumpkins, melons, vegetables, and corn as well as lucerne hay production under irrigation. Like many farm businesses, their farming area is spread across a number of blocks up to 2 km apart and until recently the Lester's farm only had a single hard hose boom irrigator. In drier times, the existing boom irrigator must be moved from paddock to paddock creating significant delays in water application damaging the soil health and increasing crop stress.

Unsure of how to get started, Greg connected with Southern Queensland Resilience Officer, Brock McDonald from Growcom. Through a series of mini-workshops, Brock helped Greg to navigate the FBRP process, using questions to help Greg think through his business and look at some of the potential risks from new angles.

"I'm not doing a lot of paperwork myself day-to-day, so I wouldn't have got the plan completed without Brock's assistance," Greg said.

Working through the Hort360 Farm Business Planning module guides your thinking around the key elements that make up your business including your infrastructure, operations, care for the environment and your people.

For Greg it focussed his mind on risk. "There's a lot more risk than you think about in the day-to-day. You know they're there, but once you've done the plan it really highlights those risks."

Regular water is one of the main ingredients needed to grow crops and the business needed to duplicate its existing irrigation infrastructure if it was to remain viable for the uncertain future under climate change. Without consistent irrigation more water is required to continually rebuild the soil moisture profile costing time and money, and impacting on crop yields.

With the risks identified, Greg was able to apply for a Drought Preparedness Grant from QRIDA to help the business purchase a new hard hose boom irrigator. Once installed this will increase irrigation

Growcom's Farm Business Resilience Program (FBRP) is assisting horticultural growers to identify gaps in their current farm management systems and develop plans that support growth and aid in mitigating the impacts of future droughts.

Using Growcom's best management practice platform, Hort360 growers can easily undertake a gap-analysis and develop their Resilient Plan using the inbuilt template. Financial assistance is also available and can be accessed through QRIDA.



Morton Vale Farm's Greg Lester - strengthening their farms' drought resilience.

efficiency and conserve water overall increasing the farms drought resilience and reducing costs.

"There's an optimum time in the crops' life where it needs extra water even with good rains; if you can give it the moisture at the right time, you're going to get the best yield you can," explains Greg.

An additional benefit of the FBRP process is that it got Greg thinking about succession planning for the business which is something he had not really considered until this point. He feels that the planning structure gets you thinking from a broader angle about your business rather than the narrow scope where you exist in the day-to-day.

With Brock's assistance, the entire process from starting the FBRP to receiving approval for the Drought Preparedness Grant only took about three months. Although he was slightly apprehensive at the beginning, Greg would definitely recommend that other farm businesses take the time to follow the FBRP process with assistance from one of the Resilience Officers spread throughout Queensland.



Farm Business Resilience Program

NEW INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT NORTH QUEENSLAND GROWERS

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) has announced two new initiatives to help growers tackle future risks and plan for growth.

The first initiative is a collaboration between QFVG and the FNQ Food Incubator that will see a team of business advisors provide individual, tailored support to develop and update existing farm business plans, building the capacity of horticultural businesses to plan for and manage risks, including drought.

QFVG CEO Rachel Chambers said horticultural growers were encouraged to take advantage of this collaboration to achieve their business and financial goals.

“The FNQ Food Incubator assists growers to develop their business and value add to what they’re already doing,” Chambers said.

“This is a significant opportunity for industry to plan, prepare and take action to ensure their business is resilient and better able to combat future impacts, including drought.”

FNQ Food Incubator CEO Lara Wilde applauded the initiative.

“This is an insightful collaboration from the team at Growcom. At the FNQ Food Incubator, we work hands on with many farmers throughout Queensland to assist them to be more sustainable and create new income streams through value adding,” Wilde said.

“A collaboration to deliver farm business resilience plans is a logical move to enhance our ability to support farmers.”

The second initiative is a new partnership between QFVG and the Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland (RFCSNQ) that will see North Queensland horticultural growers are set to be better supported to achieve their business and financial goals.

Ms Chambers said under the new partnership horticultural growers in North Queensland will be able to access the Rural Financial Counselling Service to explore risks to their business and develop their farm business resilience plan.

“This is a fantastic outcome for our North Queensland growers as traditionally these services have only been available to livestock producers,” Chambers said.

“With the Bureau of Meteorology forecasting drier conditions ahead, it is important that horticultural growers prepare now so they can mitigate the impacts of future droughts.”

RFCSNQ CEO David Arnold said he and the team were looking forward to working with Growcom to support the implementation of farm business resilience plans in the horticultural sector.

“We’ve been engaged by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) now for approximately 18 months delivering the FBRP across the grazing sector in North and Central Western Queensland and we are seeing an excellent take-up of the programme,” Arnold said.

“Our specialist rural financial counsellors (RFC) have the skills and industry experience to support growers. Just as we have RFCs knowledgeable in the grazing sector, we have RFCs equally knowledgeable in the horticultural industry.”

Both initiatives form part of the Farm Business Resilience Program (FBRP) being delivered via the organisation’s project delivery arm, Growcom.



Back L-R: Brock and John (Growcom), Andrew (RFCS NQ).
Front L-R: Karen (Growcom), Wendy and Lara (FNQ Food Incubator).



Our Facilitators are available to work with you and your group across the state to help you be more resilient, plan and access funding.

Get in contact to start your resilience journey.



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A SMALL CHANGE DELIVERS DOUBLE

Growcom's SEQ Water Quality project supported by the Department of Environment and Science (DES) continues to deliver positive outcomes from the first round of 'seed funding' invested into South East Queensland pineapple farms.

Wamuran farmers Polsoni Pines have recently accessed the seed funding program to implement a new boomspraying practice on their farm that was developed through an industry research program and rubber stamped by the pineapple environmental team (PET).

Tony and Irina have been growing pineapples at their 260-acre property for over 37 years and have now been joined by youngest son Joe following a brief stint at university. The family currently produce three different varieties - Festival, Carnival and 7350 - providing them with harvest nearly all year round.

Tony and Joe first heard about the seed funding opportunity back in 2022 during an industry field day tour of the Pumicestone passage waterways with Tim Wolens, SEQ Water Quality Project Manager and representatives from DES. Surface water from their farm location flows via Six Mile Creek into the Pumicestone system and on into Moreton Bay so the family have always been aware of the need to minimise the run-off possibility.

The concept of precision boomspraying in agriculture is not a new one, but the application of the principles to pineapple production is not yet widespread. Tim Wolens explains that a very simple and inexpensive retrofit of droppers to the existing boomsprayer can result in a decrease in input costs of 20-30% across the first stage of pineapple growth up until canopy closure.

The idea is intriguingly simple; only spraying the ground area where the young plants are located from planting up until canopy closure when the ground area is fully covered by plant foliage. In practice, this requires a series of droppers to be fitted to the existing boomsprayer at intervals that exactly match the planting configuration of the crowns.

Each crop is still receiving the same amount of nutrition or treatment as when the broadcast spray method is used, the difference is no wasted spray and no spray falling on the interrow area whose purpose is to funnel water away from the plants and out of the paddock. Better yet, this new approach has been shown to have no negative impact on yield.

Tim explains that at about \$1,000 in parts and labour to achieve the precision spray capability and with the cost of inputs skyrocketing over recent times this small adjustment makes strong economic sense. Growers can achieve a full return on the small investment after just a few boomspray applications and ongoing savings in fertiliser and chemical into the future.

It has the doubly positive benefit of dramatically reducing the amount of nutrient or chemical that can be washed off the paddock and into neighbouring waterways. It's a great example of where there is not a clash between cost saving and sustainability - the two outcomes go hand in hand.

Tony said for their business to be sustainable they've got to make money. This innovation saves money first and foremost, but it also reduces the amount of spray being wasted and running off into waterways and that's a very good outcome.

DES and Growcom will continue to roll out the seed funding program in the region for growers looking to adopt more sustainable production practices in their business.



Irina and Tony Polsoni with son Joe.

Tim Wolens
SEQ Water Quality Project Manager
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Lene Knudsen
SEQ Water Quality Facilitator
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The SEQ Water Quality Project is funded by the Queensland Department of Environment & Science.





Aussie melons

CHASE BIGGER SLICE OF ASIAN MARKET

Melons Australia, the peak industry body for the Australian melon industry, will target opening access to emerging markets in south-east Asia as part of its strategy to grow its export share from 8 to 20 percent over the next five years.

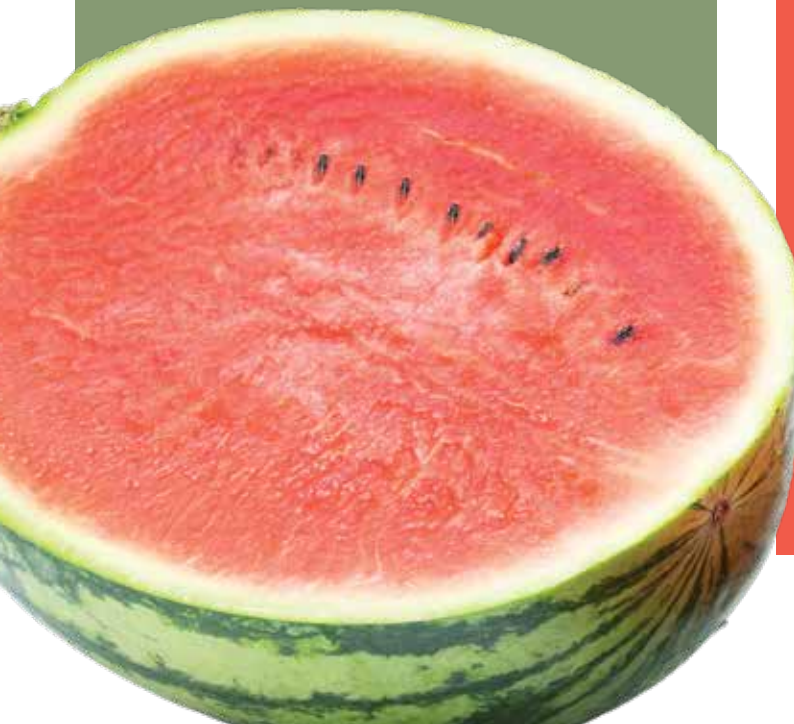
Executive Officer Johnathon Davey said the industry which reportedly produced some 165,000 tonnes last year - a decrease from approximately 200,000 tonnes pre-COVID - was in a post-pandemic recovery phase and poised to seize new opportunities in emerging markets in South Korea, Vietnam, and India.

“Our top three export markets are Japan, Singapore and New Zealand. We’ve worked collaboratively with Japanese buyers, who demand consistency and quality of product, to grow that market from some 498 tonnes in 2017-18 to 4,690 tonnes in 2021 and there is potential to grow it further,” he said.

“South Korea presents a strong opportunity for development as South Koreans are large consumers of melons. Vietnam is a melon producer in its own right but also a significant importer with a growing melon-consumer base. In India, we’re seeing the rise of the middle class and growth of the upper class driving a focus on beneficial diets and increasing life expectancy through eating fresh produce.

“In India, promotional channels and access to fresh produce such as Amazon offering speedy direct-to-consumer fresh produce deliveries is providing creative opportunities for exporters.”

He said key export advantages for the melon industry included proximity to Asian markets, a competitive Australian dollar and the ability to leverage off Australia’s reputation for quality fresh produce.



ROADMAP FOR MELON PROFITABILITY

The industry’s Strategic Investment Plan 2022-2026, developed in conjunction with Hort Innovation, provided a roadmap to support the profitability and sustainability of the melon industry, he said.

“Additionally, under Melons Australia’s Strategic Plan, we are committed to growing our membership, returning and exceeding productivity to pre-COVID levels, developing our export markets and building consumer confidence,” he said.

“Our work is now about giving growers the confidence to plant full crops. The workforce is returning but the confidence to plant full crops and look towards growth is not back yet.”

The Australian melon industry is valued at approximately \$172 million annually with some 140 growers producing watermelons, rockmelon, honeydew and other specialty varieties over some 8,500 hectares, 12 months of the year.

Mr Davey said the number of growers had decreased from about 250 in 2018/19 due to significant rationalisation and some growers servicing niche markets such as cruise ships, the airline industry and food service - all sectors which faced turbulence during the pandemic.

While the 2022 East Coast floods had impacted supply from New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, a return this year to an El Niño weather pattern - better suited to melon production - buoyed optimism for industry recovery, he said.

“We are looking at a solid autumn-spring-winter in the north, shifting to a great summer in the south. We’re confident we can exceed 200,000 tonnes in the next five years,” he said.

DIGGING DEEPER FOR SOIL HEALTH

Although primarily known for beef production, the Fitzroy region in Central Queensland boasts a growing and diverse horticulture industry. The gross value of the horticulture industry in the Fitzroy region is \$150M, a quarter of which is attributed to vegetable production, namely sweet potatoes, pumpkins, tomatoes, and capsicums.

Given its proximity to the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), the horticulture industry has an important role to play in adopting land management practices which are not detrimental to Reef water quality. Minimising loss of topsoil to reduce the amount of fine sediment ending up in waterways in particular is a priority in the Fitzroy region.

In early June growers in the Fitzroy region participated in two paddock walks on soil health practices to minimise losses of sediment and nutrients. The events were hosted by herb growers Paul and Kim Stringer at Biloela, and Reef Certified lychee growers Paul and Krystal Caton at South Yaamba. Discussion canvassed regenerative farming practices, the benefits of precision sampling practices, tools for measuring losses of nutrient, and using soil organic carbon to its highest advantage.

The events were funded by natural resource management body Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) to assist horticulture growers based in the region to become involved in their programs, and to improve management practices. Other events that the FBA has funded for growers include a field day on soil conservation, and pest awareness and preparedness.

Basic soil conservation principles and practice to minimise erosion, loss of topsoil and potential impacts of fine sediment on water quality, without compromising yield include:

- Well maintained headlands, contours, and sediment traps to prevent infield sediment loss, gullying and erosion.
- Correctly designed and built access roads and tracks.
- Undersow inter-rows or use mulch (annuals).
- Vegetated drains, buffers, and diversion banks, and at least 80% ground cover to slow run-off/increase infiltration (grassy inter-rows and mulch in tree lines).
- Regenerative agriculture approach for improved soil health.



CHEMICAL ACCREDITATION

One day new and refresher course

Mareeba - 3/5 Tully/Innisfail - 4/5 Ayr - 5/5 Bowen - 8/5

Mackay - 9/5 Rockhampton - 10/5 Bundaberg - 05/06

Gympie - 06/06 Beerburum - 07/06 Boonah - 08/06

Dalby - 13/06 Gatton 14/06

If dates/location do not suit please advise of your requirements to enable future planning. Courses can be arranged elsewhere if required.

Accreditation valid for five years • One day new and update courses

CLIENT FEEDBACK:

ROB'S COURSE WAS WELL CONSTRUCTED AND CATERES FOR PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT SKILL LEVELS AND USES RELEVANT REAL CASE STORIES TO ACCENTUATE RELATIVE POINTS. ADRIAN S

RELEVANT TO OUR INDUSTRY, PRACTICAL INFORMATION THAT WE WILL USE WITHIN OUR BUSINESS. GREAT INFO. JESS M

GREAT INFORMATION AND EASY TO LISTEN TO INSTRUCTOR WHO WAS ABLE TO IMPART HIS KNOWLEDGE TO ME EASILY. VERY GOOD COURSE. I LEARNT A LOT. RODNEY W



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NQ WORKSHOPS FOCUS ON IPM TECHNOLOGIES

The horticulture industry continues to face greater restrictions and scrutiny around access to and use of pesticides, especially near sensitive waterways and ecosystems.

Through grower participation in Growcom's Hort360 Great Barrier Reef program we are able to monitor and report on industry-wide trends that demonstrate improvements in on-farm practices.

Of the four critical crop and land management practices that the program focuses on, data shows a greater focus is needed on pesticide application and usage if we are to collectively improve the industry's best practice standards.

To help address this, Growcom hosted two Integrated Pest Management (IPM) workshops in north and far north Queensland during May.

Dr Paul Horne from IPM Technologies in Victoria presented on the benefits of implementing IPM strategies and real-life outcomes from the programs his company has implemented both in Australia and overseas.

Dr Horne took local farming representatives from Mulgowie Farms, VJK Produce, Euri Gold Farms and Sunshine Mango's, along with regional rural agronomists and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) entomologists through an example of how to develop an IPM strategy for a major regional crop.

Nathaniel Clark from RapidAIM Technologies also presented the latest Queensland Fruit Fly, Macadamia Nut Borer, Coddling Moth and soon to be released Fall Army Worm real time pest monitoring and reporting technology developed by the CSIRO.

This tech enables growers to receive instant notification of pest presence and pressure allowing far greater control over intervention options.

Dale Williams, owner of Euri Gold Farms in Bowen presented on his farms use of the RapidAIM traps to monitor Queensland Fruit Fly and how this technology completely changed his management strategies for managing this pest.

Euri Gold Farms traditionally used 50,000 liters of pesticide specific to Queensland Fruit Fly control per spray cycle but now that they can target specific pest incursions and control them quickly that spray volume is now down to 10,000 liters or only 20 percent of previous use per spray cycle.

This represents a significant reduction in potential environmental off farm impacts including those to water quality entering the coastal streams and Great Barrier Reef environments and significant cost savings for the producer.

These workshops were supported by the Queensland Governments Reef Water Quality Program.



Hort360 GBR is funded through the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program.



REGULAR INSECT MONITORING REDUCING CHEMICAL APPLICATION IN AVOCADOS

Childers Avocado grower, Kevin Philip uses Transform WG, and other soft insecticides, early in the season to help leave beneficial insects in the orchard.

The regular monitoring of insect pests and the number of beneficial insects is helping to reduce the amount of insecticide applications needed in Avocado orchards, in the Bundaberg region of Queensland.

Agronomist Jonathan McDonald, from Agronica, in Bundaberg, said they utilised drop sheets in Avocado orchards to identify insect populations.

“This gives us a real time view of what’s in the orchard to make sure we are using the right products, with a close eye on the pest to beneficial ratio.”

He said they were trying to preserve any insects in the orchard that were not having a detrimental effect on the crop.

“We’re doing this because there should be an associated value on those beneficials. There should be a dollar value which is helping growers spray less.”

The period post flowering is key to examining the pest dynamic in the orchard with fruit spotting bug a major concern.

“They cause a lot of marketability issues in avocados with blemishes on the outside of fruit and internally as well,” Mr McDonald said.

“When it comes to beneficials, we’ve got a raft that do come in. Green lacewing, cryptolaemus, a lot of micro hymenoptera come into the orchards and manage some of our pests.

Other insects, such as cockroaches, can act as a food source for some of our large predator insects. Assassin bugs are another key one. We certainly feel that some of the Jumping Spider species will also control fruit spotting bug.”

To keep the beneficial insects in the orchard, Mr McDonald is recommending softer chemistry options such as Transform® WG from Corteva Agriscience.

“We categorise our insects that we collect into a beneficial predator, other and a pest and we keep an eye on those ratios. We’ve used Transform through that process, and then compared it to synthetic pyrethroids,” he said.

“There are low effects on some of our beneficial species from using Transform compared to a pyrethroid.”

He said by using Transform early in the season they were able to preserve beneficial insects in the crop so they can continue to work through the year.

Transform is registered to control fruit-spotting bug and banana-spotting bug in avocados but its ability to leave key beneficial insects in the crop after application means these can go to work and control a wide range of other pests.

Regular monitoring means decisions on insecticide are made as the need arises instead of at certain times of the crop development.

“If we don’t need to spray, we will recommend not to spray which really helps the grower’s pocket,” Mr McDonald said.

Childers Avocado grower, Kevin Philip, utilises the Agronica services and has used IPM techniques since originally growing tomatoes before swapping into Avocados.

“We’ve been IPM since before IPM was a thing,” Mr Philip said. “Our method is just softly, softly as light as we can possibly go. We use Transform early in the piece and then look at the broad-spectrum stuff later.”

While Transform produces good results on the labelled pests, its ability to preserve beneficial insects in the orchard made it a key option.

Tomato red spider mites can cause significant damage to leaves, fruit size and quality and tend to flare if hard chemistry knocks out beneficial insects.

“Ninety per cent of the reason for the soft approach is mite control,” Mr Philip said. “We also haven’t had to spray for loopers.”

He said last season they used softer chemistry options through until December and January and had some excellent results.

HIGH-DENSITY ORCHARDS: EVALUATING RESILIENCE AND PROFITABILITY

Diversification of crop production in Northern Australia is crucial in developing an economically sustainable and resilient agricultural sector. Whilst there are numerous tropical tree crops which can be cultivated in the region, plantings are limited due to the susceptibility of orchards to tropical cyclones.

Through the Demonstrating Next-Generation Resilient Orchard Production Systems for Tropical Crops project being led by the Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries (QDAF) and supported by the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA), a range of high-density production systems and trellis planting systems are being assessed for not only their cyclone resilience but also their production capacity and profitability.

Jackfruit is being used as a model tree crop with high-density orchards developed at multiple trial sites across Northern Australia. Each trial site uses a site-specific planting density and a mixture of seedlings, grafted trees, cuttings and marcotts planted under both free standing and supported (trellis) arrangements.

The production strategies being investigated could not only provide growers with a production methodology which mitigates the risks associate with tropical cyclones, but also enable expansion of the horticulture sector through new plantings across Northern Australia.

Whilst specific to jackfruit, the production system can be applied to a broad range of tree crops, most of which are unique to north Australia. Under the project the production systems are also being monitored on a rambutan orchard and existing trellised cocoa plantation.

This three-year project is funded through the CRCNA as part of the Australian Government's CRC Program, and is being undertaken in collaboration with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Northern Territory Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT DITT), Western Australia Department of Primary Industries and regional development (DPIRD), Manbulloo Limited, Zappala Tropicals, Northern Territory Farmers Association (NT Farmers) and Growcom.



Misconceptions of food packaging aggravates food waste problem

New RMIT-led research reveals most Australians think food packaging waste is a bigger environmental issue than food waste – but the opposite is true.

With Australians wasting four times more food than food packaging, experts are calling for a more nuanced approach to help consumers and industry understand packaging's role in reducing food waste, rather than a simple war on plastic.

The research, supported by the Fight Food Waste Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), surveyed 965 Australian consumers on their perceptions of the role of packaging in reducing food waste.

RMIT project lead Professor Linda Brennan said consumers' negative perceptions of packaging were due to it being seen as a single-use waste product that needed to be disposed of once the food had been consumed.

"A lot of people don't realise packaging can play an important role in preventing food waste," said Brennan, from RMIT's School of Media and Communications.

"Packaging designed with food waste reduction in mind can keep food fresher for longer and provide protection from damage."

A final report consolidating the team's five-year research included alternative packaging designs to save food.

Suggestions included better date labelling, divided portions for bulk foods, resealable packaging, and clearer communications on how to best avoid bacterial contamination.

Co-author and RMIT Associate Professor Lukas Parker said there was also a misconception that composted food did not count as food waste.

"While composting food is better than throwing it in landfill, it may unintentionally lead to the misperception that it's OK to waste food if it's being reused for gardening purposes," said Parker.

"But a lot of energy and resources are needed to grow, process, transport and package the food. So, when food goes uneaten and is rotting in compost, that energy is wasted."

Better packaging and clearer instructions are key

While over 60 percent of global food waste came from households, the researchers said consumers should not

shoulder all the blame for the issue.

Their research identified most Australian household food waste was the result of unsuitable packaging sizes, poor purchasing habits, date label confusion, poor food storage knowledge and behaviours.

Brennan said many of these factors could be improved if packaging was designed better with clearer instructions on how best to portion out food or store food for longevity.

Food waste needs policy to create change

While the team's recommendations for alternative food packaging would help reduce food waste, Brennan acknowledged it was expensive for industry to adopt as new machinery, processes and materials would be needed to implement.

She said the government needed to create public policy to help industry waste less and design packaging to save food, rather than rely on consumer-education campaigns.

"Policy interventions are necessary where there is a clash between consumer desires, industry profit-seeking and societal and environmental wellbeing," she said.

"Even policy guidelines around suitable portion sizes for households, or banning non-resealable packaging on perishable foods, could begin to help make change."

Next steps

The team will start a new project funded by the Fight Food Waste CRC to review and overhaul date labelling and storage instructions on food packaging.

Parker said current 'best before' dates on packaging were a measure of quality, not a measure of safety, which can lead to consumers disposing of foods that were still safe to eat despite the date having passed.

The team hope to advise on a national approach to improve date labelling conventions to help consumers avoid confusion.

Funding partners for the new project include Sustainability Victoria, NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Green Industry SA and the Department of Environment and Science in Queensland.

Biodegradable bags to revolutionise mushroom farming

University of Queensland researchers are working with industry to develop biodegradable 'plastic' bags for use in mushroom farming, which could open lucrative opportunities in packaging and manufacturing.

Dr Nasim Amiralian from UQ's Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology is collaborating with Queensland producer Scenic Rim Mushrooms to reduce the company's reliance on plastic 'grow bags'.

"Grow bags are widely used across the fungiculture industry, but most are made from non-biodegradable materials which can only be burned or sent to landfill," Dr Amiralian said.

"This adds to the 80,000-plus tonnes of plastic waste generated by Australian agriculture each year.

"This 12-month project is about designing a grow bag that provides optimum growing conditions, while also breaking down in soil."

Dr Amiralian said existing biodegradable plastics made from corn starch, potato starch, or even mycelium – the vegetative part of mushrooms – are often brittle and lack long-term integrity.

"But using fibres from agricultural waste like sugarcane is an affordable, high quality and sustainable way to ensure plastic grow bags can withstand high temperatures and humidity," she said.

Scenic Rim Mushrooms founder Matthew Davis said the company's farming methods were all sustainable, except for the use of plastics.

"The fungiculture industry has traditionally had to use plastics for mass commercial production, but this project gives us hope," Mr Davis said.

"It's a problem that needs to be fixed for us to become completely cyclic mushroom growers, and proceed to large volume commercial cultivation."

Dr Amiralian said the grow bag project could lay the groundwork for the technology to be applied across agriculture, manufacturing, pulping and packaging.

"Ultimately we'd like to see the product we develop translated to the global fungiculture and packaging markets," she said.

The project has been funded with the help of a \$30,000 Industry Kickstarter grant from the UQ Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, supported by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment under the Strategic University Reform (SURF).

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AUSTRALIAN FRUIT HOLDS THE KEY TO CITRUS DISEASE RESISTANCE

A comprehensive map of the genome of a native lime species that is resistant to a devastating citrus disease could be the key to preventing that disease entering Australia.

Researchers from The University of Queensland (UQ) have sequenced the genome of the Australian round lime, also known as the Gympie lime, and are now looking at five other native citrus species including the finger lime.

PhD candidate Upuli Nakandala said the work aimed to identify a gene which provides resistance to Huanglongbing (HLB), also known as 'citrus greening', that could be incorporated into commercial citrus varieties.

"The species citrus australis is recognised as HLB-resistant so we put it first on our list," Ms Nakandala said.

"HLB is a huge problem for citrus growers across a number of growing areas including California and Florida in the United States and in Africa.

"HLB is not currently present in Australia.

"People have been trying to control this disease using chemicals and other methods but there's been no permanent solution.

"One option available is to develop resistant cultivars, and the first step towards that is identifying these important resistant genes in Australian citrus."

UQ's Professor Robert Henry said mapping the genome of Australian round limes achieved that aim.

"Sequencing the genomes of plants, particularly these tree crops will give us a new platform for genetic improvements and better management of their production into the future," Professor Henry said.

"Our research team has the right technology at the right time.

"We have placed ourselves at the cutting edge of that technology and we have the climate and the crops here that put us in a great position to make an important contribution to international efforts to solve this devastating disease problem."

Professor Henry said the team was also working on genomes for other tree crop species.

"We're looking at a number of horticultural crops including macadamia, almond and mango – a wide range of species that are important in Australia and will provide the science background that we need to advance these crops," he said.



Upuli Nakandala and Prof Robert Henry with a native Mount White lime. IMAGE Megan Pope.



Citrus garrawayi, one of a number of native Australian citrus species. IMAGE Megan Pope.



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