

Fruit & Vegetable

news



A TWO-PRONGED APPROACH TO
sustainability with a biofilter

NATURAL FLOWERING NOT SO NATURAL FOR GROWERS | HIGH FIVES FOR HORTICULTURE IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF | PREPARATION AND PLANNING ARE EVERYTHING | LATEST TECH SHOWCASED AT NORTH QUEENSLAND FIELD DAY



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9. Natural flowering not so natural for growers

Pineapple growers are facing a significant challenge. Akin to a natural disaster, the impact isn't being felt by all, and isn't evenly spread. However, when 40 percent of the entire pineapple supply are predicting a 60-90 percent loss of crop you start to understand why growers are coming together to support and strategise.

26. High fives for horticulture in the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is one of the richest and most complex natural ecosystems on earth, and the world's most extensive coral reef ecosystem. It is recognised for its vital ecosystem functions and supporting extensive aquatic wildlife. No other World Heritage property contains such biodiversity. Given the proximity of many vibrant growing regions to the GBR, the work being achieved by the horticulture industry for Reef water quality improvement is exceedingly important.

33. Preparation and planning are everything

It was at the 2022 Hort Connections Conference in Brisbane that South Burnett avocado, garlic and rhubarb growers Michael and Beth Crane learnt about Growcom's Farm Business Resilience Program for horticulture. The Program helps primary producers build a sustainable business by planning today for tomorrow's drought and other climate risks.

37. Latest tech showcased at north Queensland field day

Bowen Gumlu Growers Association's (BGGGA) Innovation Field Day held at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) research station in Bowen in early November, was a huge success attracting over 150 producers, industry stakeholders, students, and ag businesses from across north Queensland.



welcome

Chief Executive Officer
Rachel Chambers

It's our birthday, so we're going to celebrate you!

2023 marks Growcom's 100 years in operation and what a journey it's been! Multiple structural changes, name changes, address changes, thousands of staffing changes and strategic direction changes not to mention 100 years of dealing with various political, social and environmental issues. One thing that hasn't changed has been our commitment to the industry we are passionate about.

I'm proud of the dedication, pragmatism and sheer grit growers and Growcom staff have demonstrated to get us to this point. Each year, each grower, each staff member has added to the foundation of horticulture in Queensland, leaving a legacy for generations to come.

While our official 100th birthday is in November, we think we are old enough to have earned the right to celebrate all year long. The thing is though, we aren't celebrating Growcom, QFVG, COD or whatever you may think of us as, we are celebrating all of Queensland Horticulture, all year long, with 2023 being self-proclaimed as the "Year of Horticulture".

It's time to **celebrate** all things horticulture, **educate** consumers, retailers and the next generation grower, and **advocate** strongly and loudly.

We have three main focus areas for 2023: **profit, people** and **planet**, and they have been mindfully placed in that order. We have steely resolve in our pursuit of profit in the horticultural sector. There is always much talk about labour and environmental issues however we must get the profitability of agribusiness front and centre before we can even start addressing the other two points.

We will be taking this unique opportunity to strengthen our existing relationships with regional horticulture and commodity groups, our partners and government. And using it to forge new relationships with the same.

There's going to be a lot of important work done but we are also going to have some fun. From guerrilla style, overnight pop-up events, to a collector's edition Queensland Horticulture scratch and sniff seasonal calendar the ideas we have come up with to celebrate, educate and advocate, range from conservative to crazy.

2023, is your year! Let's have some fun!



Where it all began! Angela Seng-Williams (Head of Engagement & Advocacy), and Rachel Chambers (Growcom CEO) met with Brandan Egan (QRIDA Chief Engagement Officer) and Cameron MacMillan (QRIDA CEO) at Heritage Lanes in Brisbane's CBD. Heritage Lanes is built on the site of the Brisbane Fruit and Produce Exchange, which opened in 1906.

10 A TWO-PRONGED APPROACH TO *sustainability with a biofilter*



MEDIA RELEASES
PUBLISHED

2



QLD COUNTRY LIFE
ARTICLES PUBLISHED

9



MEETINGS HELD

71



SUBMISSIONS

3

GROWCOM ADVOCACY REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: November/December 2022

Welcome to our new advocacy report card where our intention is to give you a snapshot of the issues we are working on and what we have done in the previous months.

THE ISSUE: Federal Government reform agenda “Building a stronger Pacific and Timor-Leste family”

OUR ADVOCACY POSITION: Our response included (but was not limited to) drawing their attention to:

- Seasonality
- Competition between sectors
- Multiple government department involvement
- Preclusion of small to medium growers
- Travel costs
- Family accompaniment
- Post code expansion
- Accommodation
- Only part of the puzzle
- Portability and mobility

THE OUTCOME: You can read the Consultation Summary published online here: www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/palm-reform-consultation-summary-report-2022.pdf

THE ISSUE: On-farm accommodation – working with the State Government on a potential on-farm accommodation policy.

OUR ADVOCACY POSITION: Growers have been buying up every piece of suitable infrastructure available including caravan parks, hotels, and houses. All this stock is now removed accommodation for locals and visitors alike. If more flexibility in accommodation solutions is not fast-tracked growers will have two choices:

1. Stop farming as they will not be able to staff the production.
2. Continue to invest in any available infrastructure from the market.

This is not ideal for growers as they then have issues such as: inflated market values, increased transport to and from farm, in town behaviour issues and it is not ideal for community as local and visitor accommodation stock is removed.

We need an on-farm accommodation model which would be able to have immediate impact across Queensland.

THE OUTCOME: Currently with Government

THE ISSUE: Food Security – highlighting horticulture’s crucial role in feeding the nation and voicing all our key concerns impacting future food security.

OUR ADVOCACY POSITION:

- Extreme weather events
- Input costs and availability
- Accommodation
- Labour attraction, retention, seasonal availability
- Threat of disease
- Market price transparency
- Inappropriate appointment of risk.
- Worker’s accommodation, wages and job security.
- Consumers valuing of fresh produce, household income and understanding of nutrition
- Export markets market access (ESG)
- Import markets.
- Global supply chains including freight, ag vet chemicals

THE OUTCOME: Our submission can be found on the Parliament of Australia website: www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Agriculture/FoodsecurityinAustralia/Submissions

Horticulture calls for meaningful discussion following passing of Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill

Growcom has called on the federal government to engage in genuine and meaningful discussion following the passing of the new *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022* so industry can understand how it will be implemented.

Growcom Chief Executive Officer Rachel Chambers said when discussing a Bill called 'secure jobs, better pay' you need to have the business owners, the people who create the jobs for employees, around the table. Without employers there is no employment.

"The horticulture sector wasn't consulted anywhere near enough in the development of this Bill which in itself is concerning given the unique and seasonal nature of our industry," Ms Chambers said.

Ms Chambers added that Growcom was prepared to welcome any rational and well-considered changes to industrial relations and labour policy which promote employment. However, warned that unintended consequences were usually the result of rushing through changes.

"The irony for me is we're dealing with this on one hand and on the other we're being asked to work through issues around food security," Ms Chambers said.

"This Bill potentially allows disruptive industrial action in our food and fibre supply chain. Something we all are trying to avoid."

Growcom was among the employer and advocacy groups who sought to split the Bill so that the more complex issues such as the controversial multi-employer bargaining elements could be delayed until 2023 allowing more time for business to understand the consequences and argue for changes.

"I would like to have a mature conversation going forward around the process we are going to use to improve pay and conditions in the horticulture sector. The government needs to understand the world in which horticulture lives and our unique labour needs," Ms Chambers said.

"A minority of growers have scarred our sector however, the 'minimum wage guarantee' for pieceworkers has certainly made any legacy arguments about pay conditions in the industry null and void.

"None of us are against better pay and conditions, the issue lies in businesses needing to turn a profit in order to do so. Unfortunately, as a price-taking sector, there is little capacity for growers to pass on any additional costs.

"We are concerned that this bill may be counter intuitive to the government's intent and instead result in employment of less staff or a scaling down of business."



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We want to hear from you!

Growcom would like to hear from our members regarding their concerns around the Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill. You can contact Angela Seng-Williams, Head of Engagement & Advocacy any time with your thoughts on 0427 217 077 or aseng-williams@growcom.com.au



New Chair to Lead Queensland horticulture

Growcom's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on 24 November 2022 in Brisbane.

In her address to the meeting, former Growcom Chair Belinda Frentz noted that the 2021/22 period was challenging for many with ongoing labour shortages, rising input costs, and multiple flooding events truly testing growers' passion for the industry. However, despite the adversity the industry continues to be strong, resilient, and passionate as ever.

At the end of the meeting Ms Frentz formally announced she was stepping down as Chair of the Growcom Board. Also stepping down, having both served their maximum terms, were Director Sharron Windolf and Independent Director Michael Kent.

Taking over the role of Chair is north Queensland grower, Joe Moro.

In a statement Mr Moro said on behalf of the Growcom Board,

I would like to extend my thanks and best wishes to Belinda, Sharron, and Michael for their dedication to the company and wider industry.

"In particular I would like to extend my thanks to Belinda who has been a steadfast and loyal advocate for Queensland's horticultural industry, particularly during the turbulent times of COVID, multiple natural disasters, and labour shortages – all of which have put great strain on our industry," he said.

In other Board appointments, St George grower Andrew Moon has been elected Deputy Chair while Gayndah citrus grower Judy Shepherd has been elected Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. And we welcome to the Board North Queensland grower and former Australian Pineapples Chair Stephen Pace and Bowen mango grower Ben Martin.



Have you completed the 2022 Growcom Member Survey?

If 2022 had to be remembered by using just one word, 'lettuce' would have to be a front runner. On the back of ongoing labour shortages and rising input costs, multiple flooding events truly tested growers' passion for the industry. Throughout it all, Growcom has been there supporting the Queensland horticulture industry and our grower members.

2023 is set to be an especially exciting one as we celebrate 100 years of Growcom and its predecessor organisation. To ensure we continue to be an effective peak industry body for Queensland's horticulture industry, Growcom is asking all members to complete our annual Member Survey.

The survey will remain open until 31 January 2023.



Have your say at:
<https://bit.ly/2022GrowcomSurvey>

Meet your Growcom Board of Directors

The Growcom Board of Directors is made up of commercial production horticultural growers who are financial grower members of the organisation. They come from a diverse background and are located in major horticultural growing regions around Queensland.



Joe Moro – Chair

*Non-Executive Director since 23 November 2016
Chair since 25 November 2022*

Joe Moro is a dedicated and experienced farmer and proprietor of the family farming business, A Moro & Sons. He has grown a wide variety of crops over the years at his North Queensland property including pumpkins, zucchini, cucumbers, capsicums, tomatoes, papaws, watermelons, citrus, tobacco, and mangoes.

As Chairman of the FNQ Growers Association Joe has many years of experience in business and the horticultural industry, as well as wider community involvement across North Queensland.

In 1997 he was appointed by the Queensland Government to the Queensland Horticultural Institute Board in the Department of Primary Industries. He was a Mareeba Shire Councillor from 2000 until 2008 and is a Director of the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF). Joe also helped in the formation of the Australian Mango Industry Association and went on to serve as Chairman.



Andrew Moon – Deputy Chair

Non-Executive Director since 25 November 2021

Andrew Moon from Moonrocks, farms alongside his brother David in the South-West Queensland town of St George. In the early 90s the brothers started growing rockmelons. Today they specialise in onions, garlic, and pumpkins.

Andrew's key role in the business is post-farm production, marketing, and logistics. Their key customer base is broad, specialising in fresh and process product for both domestic and international markets.

Being involved with industry groups has always been important to Andrew. He served as Chair of Onions Australia from 2013 – 2016. Prior to that he was on the Onions Industry Advisory Committee for five years. He is now in an advisory role on the Hort Innovation Post-Farmgate Vegetable SIAP. Most recently, Andrew has been appointed as a Grower Director on the AUSVEG Board.



Judy Shepherd

Non-Executive Director since 23 November 2016

Judy Shepherd is a citrus orchardist in Gayndah. She operates three mandarin orchards with her husband and son for the Australian domestic and export markets.

Judy's focus is on the strategic operational direction of the enterprise with an emphasis on emerging Asian markets and establishing strong relationships with export customers. Through her role as Secretary of the Gayndah Fruitgrowers Association, she has worked locally in the industry for many years to ensure growers have access to best practice models and support in WHS, HR and IR processes and compliance.

Judy is a member of the Queensland Horticulture Council. She is

also the Manager of a successful Regional Disability Employment site and works in this role as an advocate for people with a disability in their employment and training goals throughout the North



Ben Martin

Non-Executive Director since 24 November 2022

Ben Martin operates Marto's Mangoes in Bowen growing R2E2 mangoes for both the domestic and international markets. Ben is an innovator within the industry developing and adopting AgTech whenever the opportunity arises.

His business Marto's Mangoes is a true family operated business. His parents started the original farm in 1990 and Ben purchased his first farm in 2007. Ben and his wife have since expanded their operation a number of times and are continuing to grow their business alongside his parents.

Ben is the Chairman of The Australian Mango Industry Association which is the PIB for mangoes in Australia, Vice President of Bowen Gumlu Growers Association and sits on a number of other advisory committees and boards within the horticultural industry.



Stephen Pace

Non-Executive Director since 24 November 2022

Stephen Pace is a third-generation farmer based at Rollingstone, North Queensland. Stephen works alongside his brother, two uncles and two cousins in the family business – Pace Farming Pty Ltd – producing pineapples, sugarcane, watermelons, pumpkins, and beef cattle. Stephen oversees the businesses pineapple, watermelon and pumpkin crops which are supplied domestically to fresh markets throughout Australia. His role within the business is managing day-to-day operations, harvest, distribution, and marketing.

Stephen is a key member of the Australian pineapple industry representing the North Queensland region on the industry committee, Australian Pineapples from 2011 – 2021.



Stacey Watson

Independent Director since 5 December 2022

Growing up on a cane farm at Wallaville and now based in Bundaberg, Stacey understands the challenges of farming and is passionate about the continuing success of agriculture and horticulture. For the past six years Stacey held the role of Independent Director of Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers (BFVG).

Stacey has more than 33 years experience in the superannuation industry. As a relationship manager she currently she fulfils the role of Energy Partnership Manager for Industry Super Fund, Brighter Super. Stacey is a Fellow of the Association of Super Funds of Australia (ASFA) and she holds a Diploma of Financial Services (Financial Planning) and is RG146 qualified.

CELEBRATING FARMING FAMILIES CENTRAL TO NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY

National days of this and that are popping up on our calendars more and more each year. Why? Because they work. Having a day dedicated to a particular product, service, social issue or in this case sector, forces people to stop and think about how their lives relate.

In late November, Growcom paused alongside the rest of the nation to celebrate the 3,500 agribusinesses and farming families along with the 25,000 workers directly engaged in the Queensland fresh produce sector as part of National Agriculture Day.

As part of the celebrations, Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) hosted a breakfast where keynote speaker Terry McCosker (RCS) and panelists openly challenged industry and the government to continue to advocate and support agriculture at every opportunity. Terry gathered a few extra fans calling for the comeback of Farmbiz- like programs to help build agribusiness skills, knowledge, and confidence as, in his experience, with this confidence comes the ability to embrace change and growth.

As part of the panel, Growcom's CEO Rachel Chambers highlighted the value of horticulture across 104 fruit, vegetable, and nut

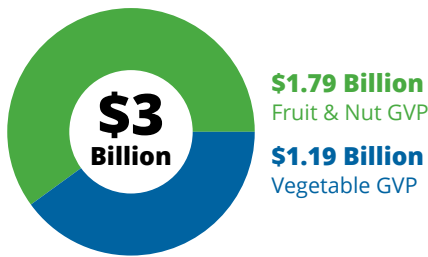
commodities. But most importantly celebrating our growers who are entrepreneurs, scientists, mechanics, managers, and financial controllers who have been trading and exporting since before 'it was a thing' and the lifeblood of regional communities.

Michael Murray and Dan Gallagher from Cotton and Cane respectively were equally reflective in celebrating where we have come from through the generations and our continued push for profitable and sustainable agribusinesses and what it will take to support growers as industry advocates.

Agility and adapting to forced change were shared themes across all three CEOs as they shared experiences around increasing consumer and supply chain demand for sustainable products produced ethically and a growing preparedness to pay a premium for industry best management practices.

It was lovely to stop and share amazing stories of horticulture for one day with our growers and colleagues in agriculture. One day is a great start, however Growcom has a further 364 days to continue to strongly advocate, celebrate and demonstrate the immense value in our people and produce across horticulture.

SNAPSHOT: THE QUEENSLAND HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY



Gross Value of Production (GVP) for Queensland horticulture at farmgate



Approximately 3,500 businesses engaged in the Queensland fresh produce sector.

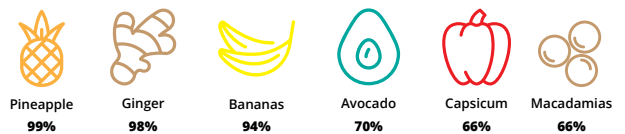


Up to 25,000 workers directly engaged in some capacity within the sector annually.



Queensland growers produce more than 100 types of fruit, vegetables, and nuts, from Stanthorpe in the south to Cooktown in the far north. Queensland supplies one-third of Australia's fruit, and one-fifth of our vegetables.

PROPORTION OF THE NATIONAL CROP GROWN IN QUEENSLAND





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NATURAL FLOWERING NOT SO NATURAL FOR GROWERS

Pineapple growers are facing a significant challenge. Akin to a natural disaster, the impact isn't being felt by all, and isn't evenly spread. However, when 40 percent of the entire pineapple supply are predicting a 60-90 percent loss of crop you start to understand why growers are coming together to support and strategise.

Pineapple growing regions in Queensland include North, Central, Wide Bay and Southeast. If you eat fresh pineapple in Australia, it has come from the Sunshine State. Well, it's usually sunshine but cast your mind back to May 2022 and it was anything but.

Pineapples are well suited to dry conditions and have evolved to flower annually, often in response to a stressor such as low temperatures or drought however this year it seems the unseasonal warm weather (about 4 degrees warmer than usual) combined with double the average monthly rainfall has triggered a mass natural flowering event, predominantly, but not exclusively, in the South East Queensland area.

Natural flowering is, as its name indicates, a 'usual' annual natural flowering. On any one year it accounts for approximately 10 percent of a crop. This year growers are reporting between 60 percent and 80 percent of their crop has flowered.

Why is this a problem? Profit for growers lies in being able to force a crop to flower simultaneously to avoid repeated labour harvests. Profit also is driven by market supply and demand and growers can initialise a flowering (which becomes the fruit), using ethylene to take full advantage of gaps in supply.

When a natural flowering occurs, as it has in this case, plants are 5-6 months immature which results in small sized, unsaleable fruit, meaning many growers are now deciding whether the crop is worth taking to market. It also impacts the crop for the next year given the suckers which are usually planted as next year's crop are also too small to be used. Additionally, labour costs are blown due to the various natural flowering stages throughout a crop.

For all of us relying on growers for our next Pina Colada, ham and pineapple pizza, delicious snack or table centrepiece, we all have

a role to play. The best thing we can do to support pineapples to continue to be grown locally is to buy as many of them as possible this year. Although the numbers will be down on their usual crop by about half, this will be the only crop growers will have for a year meaning whatever cashflow they can muster will be what they need to rely on to keep them in business.

This event brings with it major challenges ahead for growers and industry but also a significant opportunity for Australian consumers to back our local growers.

Advertisement

Reef protection regulations

IMPORTANT INFORMATION for graziers, sugarcane producers and banana growers

Reef protection regulations apply across the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions.

All beef cattle graziers, sugarcane producers and banana growers in these regions need to follow minimum practice agricultural standards.

Agricultural advisers must keep records of the tailored advice they provide to producers about the minimum standards.

Find out more

For further information or to order an information pack:

Visit: www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations

Call: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Email: ESReef@des.qld.gov.au



Authorised by the Queensland Government, William Street, Brisbane.



A TWO-PRONGED APPROACH

to sustainability with a biofilter

Row upon row of pineapples line up, pointing high toward the clouds on what is a cold, drab day at Pine-Co on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. In the distance, the Glass House Mountains shoot skyward.

For second generation pineapple growers Faruk and Catherine Buzaki, they get to take in this view everyday while working the farm.

The social, cultural, and economic significance of the Glass House Mountains and Sunshine Coast is not lost on them, nor is their goal to create a sustainable business model that their family can continue to farm for generations to come.

First purchased by Catherine's father John Winterhoff in 1962, Pine-Co has ridden a sustainable trajectory ever since.

"John had great foresight in ensuring the farm is well drained down to this natural biofilter," Faruk said, as we stand among virgin bushland, green and reaching for the sky, fertilised from runoff water from crops further up the hill.

John devised a system to move surface and sub-surface runoff water to drain down into the virgin bushland, which acts as a natural biofilter.

John installed four kilometres of French drainage, otherwise known as ag drain.

The ag drain is 1,000 mm deep x 200 mm wide and contains a 60 mm slotted pipe in a depth of 400 mm of gravel.

Here at the base of the crops, at the start of the bushland and biofilter, one watches water drip into a stream that slowly moves through the bush.

"We are working hard to get our soil nutrient ratios correct to ensure a well-balanced soil this reduces leeching of nutrients into our biofilter," Catherine said.

"Then using this bushland as a biofilter means water leaving the property is clean.

"The bushland takes up the nutrients, and some chemicals will

break down in the bushland too.

"As you can see, the bushland is healthy, this is our litmus test to make sure the nutrients and chemicals are not doing anything bad."

If the water level rises because of a storm – commonplace because of the current La Nina – it will slowly make its way down through the marshy bushland into Coochin Creek - clean and free of nutrient runoff or chemicals.

Proactive, through the Hort360 SEQ water quality project

With the drainage system John set up also keeping the army of pineapples disease-free and healthy, the Pine-Co team wanted to measure the gains they've made.

Enter Growcom's Hort360 South East Queensland (Hort360 SEQ) Water Quality project.

With the guidance of project manager Tim Wolens and project facilitator Lene Knudsen, Pine-Co was able to measure their success in environmental sustainability.

"We completed a Hort360 health check with Growcom which was a great way to gauge how our sustainable strategy was travelling," Catherine explained.

"We test the soil in each paddock before planting to ensure that we add the correct amount of nutrients and micro-nutrients to create a nutritionally balanced soil with a good Ph.

"We utilise the great people at Growcom to monitor nutrient levels entering and leaving the biofilter and with great results so far."

Additionally, the Hort360 SEQ water quality project team launched a drone over the farm.

"Flying the drone over the Pine-Co crops gave Catherine and Faruk the opportunity to identify wet spots and drainage lines in the field to help reduce costs and increase yields," Tim said.

"The drone images help to layout drainage and farm better so that they can manage surface flow that leads into the biofilter."

Soil management

Managing soil to grow sustainable, top-quality pineapples is a priority for Pine-Co.

To meet their objective of producing top-quality pineapples, in collaboration with Growcom, Pine-Co is boosting soil health with compost trials.

Pine-Co's goal with the compost trials is to outlay the process across the crops, to boost nutrient retention, increase soil carbon and cation exchange capacity.

"Fertilisers are so ridiculously expensive nowadays due to world events with price increases of up to 100 percent and constant shortages of supply," Catherine said.

"It is becoming so much more challenging to afford and buy nutrients that we have to search out and use other nutrient sources like compost so we can continue supplying fresh, healthy food."

Innovation on-farm at Pine-Co

Faruk relies on his past engineering skills to improve crop production. From his trailblazing top harvester that harvests planting material from pineapple plants, to a crop divider that cuts a track wide enough for pickers to pick pineapples without the challenges of interwoven leaves.

Faruk also has two more machines under development, an automatic plant top sizer. This machine will size planting material to ensure a more uniform crop. The second is a new style pineapple planter that will plant tops at four times the current speed. It does this by using a completely different method by which planting material is preloaded in magazines in a shed.

In the end, Pine-Co's goals don't stop with the present day.

"If we manage the farm as an intergenerational investment, not just a one off short-term monetary gain, we can invest in its health and it will be good for generations of our family, not just us," Catherine said.

Catherine is planning that the farm is passed down to her children Megan and Jessie and then then to their children.

Pineapple farmers to benefit from new Hort360 incentive

The Hort360 SEQ water quality project team is calling out to all pineapple farmers in the Pumicestone Passage region to apply for grants, through the Hort360 SEQ Incentive Scheme.

The Scheme supports on-farm projects to boost water quality in the Pumicestone Passage and its catchments.

"The initial funding is for pineapple growers in the Pumicestone and will hopefully lead to wider funding across the south-east Queensland catchment area and other commodities," Hort360 SEQ water quality project manager Tim Wolens said.

Through the Incentive Scheme, a pineapple grower could use funding to build a biofilter, bioreactor or other projects that boost water quality in the Pumicestone Passage and its catchments.

For more details on how pineapple growers can apply, contact Tim Wolens (0409 848 076 or twolens@growcom.com.au) or Lene Knudsen (0429 000 179 or lknudsen@growcom.com.au).



SUPPORTING LANDHOLDER CAPACITY FOR QUALITY DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS ACROSS NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Tahna Jackson, Environmental Project Officer, NT Farmers

Agricultural development relates to a variety of agricultural and aquacultural processes and practices that either expand new production or increase the value of current production. Such developments might involve public or private sector investment, and traverse a range of planning, assessment, and approval processes.

Through this three-year CRCNA funded research project, an online survey was developed to identify the capacity building needs of valued stakeholders in the agricultural industry across Northern Australia. This was completed by 56 respondents. Thirty-seven respondents were employed within the industry, as landholders or consultants, and 19 were employed by government.

Some key points from the survey found that:

Sixty-nine percent of development applications (water licence, clearing etc.) were made by engaging the services of a consultant or external service providers. Of the 31 percent of submissions who did not engage a consultant, the majority did not feel that they had the information, time, and ability to prepare the best application by themselves. Of the 16 respondents, 10 reported preferences for professional assistance or additional information to assist with the approval process. The additional assistance which the respondents determined to be useful included:

- Consultants who understood conditions of Northern Australia
- Access to government staff for assistance, clarification and to answer questions
- Access to government data on land systems and land resource information
- Access to accurate and consistent data
- Improved land resource mapping available to the public including better resolution
- Access to professional consultants
- Access to templates to assist with applications

Over the past two years, respondents estimated the cost of engaging consultants and meeting government compliance across all levels of government was between less than \$1,000 to greater than \$1 million. Overall, 89 percent of respondents identified an increase in the cost of compliance with government regulation over the past two years. Fifty-eight percent of respondents were willing to consider paying a nominal fee to assist with meeting compliance obligations.

CAPACITY BUILDING

In considering if a set of learning materials or capacity building program was to be made available, 13 respondents were interested and a further five considering their interest. In determining if they would be interested or willing to participate in such a program, the factors which would influence that decision are time, location and cost with time being the overwhelming factor. Content and context of the assistance which was to be the most helpful was a combination of:

- Access to easy to use, easy to understand assistive materials (such as guides, templates, or examples)
- The ability to retain knowledgeable advisers to assist with approvals applications
- Direct assistance from government agencies or peak representative bodies
- Network building and group learning sessions, seminars, or micro-credential programs.

Eighteen respondents were willing to either attend an external training session or utilize materials or at least consider the use and attendance.

When considering who would deliver such training, 79 percent of respondents nominated peak organisations as being best placed to deliver such training with only three respondents choosing government and one respondent preferring an education provider.

APPLICATIONS MADE TO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Government employees who receive applications, were asked to rate the average quality of the applications which their department received. Of the 12 responses, just 42 percent were rated as "Fair" and 58 percent were rated as "Needs Improvement".

The project is now entering Phase Two, Capacity Building Options.

If you would like to find out more about this project, you can contact Tahna on 0409 357 211 or email epo@ntfarmers.org.au



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Apple grower Chris McColl (above) is a Churchill Fellow

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Lessons and opportunities for on farm microgrids

Energy Innovation Officer, Queensland Farmers' Federation
Madison Sturgess

Developing nations, the US military, and universities around the world have begun relying on microgrids as their primary energy system for the last decade. Australia's early electricity networks were a series of microgrids that were eventually interconnected as a national network. Microgrids, in the technical sense, are not new.



A MICROGRID IS A PHYSICAL ENERGY SYSTEM THAT GENERATES + DISTRIBUTES ELECTRICITY WITHIN ITS OWN GEOGRAPHIC FOOTPRINT.

What is new is the affordability of generation and storage (solar PV and batteries), the real time or 'smart' capabilities of system controls, and the appetite for microgrids in Australian agriculture.

Productivity impacts of high energy costs, seasonal ag energy use at odds with available tariffs, energy resilience during extreme weather events, and the desire to optimise excess solar on farm are driving farmers to consider energy sharing via microgrids. Market conditions mean consumer owned energy systems present real competition to the electricity grid.

Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF), Cotton Australia, Constructive Energy, and ReAqua conducted a two-year study to determine the feasibility of microgrids on farm. Testing four archetypes across four farms in Queensland and New South Wales, the study identified three viable scenarios.

Analysis assumed that a financially viable microgrid remained grid connected and sold excess energy at a pre-determined pricing threshold. For the most part, this is currently legally possible. However existing regulatory and market rules make it difficult to satisfy conditions for approval. Regulatory barriers remain the primary challenge to microgrid adoption in Australia.

Despite these top-down challenges the study identified bottom-up key findings that identify opportunities for reform and practical lessons for producers and developers considering an on farm microgrid.

1. Microgrid design

Feasibility is improved by remaining grid-connected, system sizing to accommodate ~80% of energy needs, preferences serving behind-the-meter loads then export value, and incorporates virtual management solutions for brownfield sites rather than replicating existing poles and wires. Solution providers with experience in low connectivity locations is highly recommended.

2. Collective consumption

Developers should consider microgrids oriented to a group of co-located consumers. Specifically, co-located single commodity producers (for example a cane group) and co-located consumers across a supply chain (for example a group of fruit producers and a nearby packing shed).

3. Defining viable

The conditions for viability aren't always strictly financial. For example, the value a farmer places on uninterrupted electricity supply during production periods or the ability to demonstrate decarbonisation to buyers can drastically alter a microgrid's value proposition. 'Value stacking' allows for the full value of the investment to be considered despite market immaturity.

4. Local network benefits

Microgrids, if permitted, can also offer value to the local distribution network by providing emergency supply, optimised substation utilisation, voltage/frequency support, and upgrade deferral of network assets. Currently, permissions are rare and often don't appropriately reward services provided.

On farm microgrids open the door for regional communities to consider community energy innovation like local energy trading and improved local network resilience and performance. Regional councils and communities are already actively pursuing microgrids, VPPs, and community batteries.

Regulators, utilities, and industry are eagerly working to reduce barriers and ensure regulation and market mechanisms keep up with the energy technologies increasingly available to consumers. A core challenge lies in the ability to integrate consumer energy systems while balancing consumer and network service provider benefits.

Following on from a successful feasibility study, QFF is now conducting market research across regional Queensland to identify and articulate the emerging appetite for microgrids, VPPs, and community batteries among farmers, regional businesses and councils. Visit QFF's website to participate in this important research: www.qff.org.au/projects/11709-2/

For more detailed insights and other microgrid project information please see the QFF Project Resource Library: www.qff.org.au/projects/microgrids/

A photograph showing the lower half of a person wearing blue denim jeans and brown leather boots. They are standing in a metal pen or stall. Several sheep are visible behind the metal bars. The floor is dirt and covered with sheep droppings. The lighting is warm and natural.

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workplace relations

Focus HR Founding Director
Naomi Wilson

Secure jobs, better pay bill passes federal parliament

The Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022 passed Federal Parliament on Friday 2 December 2022 and is now only one small step away from becoming law.

When the bill receives Royal Assent, we will see some of the biggest changes to Australian workplace law since the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) was introduced.

A broad overview of the key changes have been provided below. Please note that this is a summary only and more details will be coming as the Bill progresses through Royal Assent. As these details are made available Growcom will communicate them with our members.

Zombie Agreements: Agreements that commenced before the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) and during the 1 July to 31 December 2009 bridging period will automatically terminate 12 months after the Bill commences or at another date by approval of an extension from the Fair Work Commission (FWC). Employers will be required to give six months' notice of the expiry to each employee covered by a zombie agreement. Once terminated, employees' pay and conditions will be set by the relevant modern award or a new enterprise agreement that has been approved by the FWC.

Approving new agreements: The Better Off Overall Test (BOOT) has been simplified to make bargaining and the approval process easier. The FWC will consider any common views held by bargaining participants and must undertake a 'global assessment' under the BOOT as opposed to a line-by-line comparison, taking into account reasonably foreseeable patterns of work.

Bargaining disputes: The FWC will have greater power to deal with bargaining disputes including issuing bargaining declarations where the 'minimum bargaining period' exceeds nine months.

Amending agreements: Agreements will be easier to amend by application to the FWC to rectify drafting errors.

Equal remuneration: The FWC's powers will be increased to better enforce/improve gender pay equality by issuing Equal Remuneration Orders where it has determined that work has been undervalued on the basis of gender.

Fixed term contracts: there will be a two-year limitation on fixed term contracts and prohibits against extensions greater than two years, or for more than one extension (meaning employers will be prohibited from offering a third consecutive fixed-term contract for substantially the same role).

Pay secrecy: Prohibitions against pay secrecy clauses and clauses which stop employees from discussing their pay. Employees will have a protected right to disclose (or not disclose) information about their remuneration to any other person. It is important to note that any existing pay secrecy clauses will be invalid.

Sexual harassment: Increased protections against sexual harassment in the workplace by holding employers accountable to a positive duty to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers will be held vicariously liable for sexual harassment in their workplace, unless they can prove they took all reasonable

steps to prevent the conduct from occurring.

Anti-discrimination: Adding to the anti-discrimination provisions by including protection against discrimination on the basis of breastfeeding, gender identity and intersex status as protected attributes.

Flexible work arrangements: Employers will need to respond to requests for flexible work arrangements within 21 days, and must set out the 'reasonable business grounds' for refusal. Disputes regarding refusals to grant flexible work arrangements can be taken to the FWC who will be able to order that they be implemented if it believes there were not 'reasonable business grounds' that support the rejection of the request.

Multi-employer bargaining: Multi-employer bargaining has been a significant focus during the progression of the Bill and includes new 'streams' through which agreements can be made. The Workplace Minister can declare that an industry or occupation is eligible for supported multi-employer bargaining and the FWC will have the power to make a supported bargaining authorisation that requires employers to bargain together. The FWC will be able to determine "whether there is a common interest" and "public interest" in multi-employer bargaining when considering various factors, such as the presence of low pay-rates, and use of the common interest test. These provisions will not, however, apply to businesses that employ fewer than 50 employees.

Timing

The changes relating to zombie agreements, equal remuneration and anti-discrimination (amongst other changes) are likely to commence the day after the Bill receives Royal Assent.

The changes to the BOOT, industrial action, bargaining disputes and alike will likely commence no later than six months after, with the changes to sexual harassment commencing with three months. The changes to fixed term contracts will likely have a 12-month delay of commencement.

What businesses should do

Businesses should be aware of these changes and consider how they may impact including:

- Is there a need to review/update policies? In particular, think about how robust your sexual harassment policies and training are and whether you have policies relating to employees not discussing pay rates.
- Do your Contracts of Employment need updating?
- Review your rolling, fixed term contract employees to prepare for which may need to be converted to permanent employees.
- Examine your pay rates to self-assess whether there are any pay equity issues based on gender.
- If you have a collective agreement in place, check whether it is now classified as a 'Zombie Agreement' and start to think about whether reverting to the Award or renegotiating a new Enterprise Agreement is the best course of action.

NEW PAID FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE

In late October 2022, the Government's *Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Act 2022* passed through Parliament.

Key points to note for employers:

- Full-time, part-time, and casual employees will be able to access 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave in a 12-month period. It won't be pro-rated for part-time or casual employees.
- The full 10-day leave entitlement will be available upfront. It won't accumulate from year to year if it's not used.
- The new leave entitlement will be available from:
 - 1 February 2023, for employees of non-small business employers (employers with 15 or more employees on 1 February 2023)
 - 1 August 2023, for employees of small business employers (employers with less than 15 employees on 1 February 2023).
- The new leave provisions will be independently reviewed after 12 months to consider the impacts on small businesses, sole traders and people experiencing family and domestic violence.
- Employees will continue to be entitled to 5 days of unpaid family and domestic violence leave until they can access the new paid entitlement.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has now published more information around the new leave entitlement on their website. You can read this online here: www.fairwork.gov.au/newsroom/news/new-paid-family-and-domestic-violence-leave

Members have begun raising questions around the new paid Family and Domestic Violence leave. Below are some of the more commonly asked questions and answers provided.

Q: What proof can an employer legally request to ensure the application for family and domestic violence leave is valid?

A: Employers may request evidence that would satisfy a reasonable person that the employee took the leave to deal with the impact of family and domestic violence. Examples of actions, by an employee who is experiencing family and domestic violence, include (but are not limited to) arranging for the safety of the employee or a close relative (including relocation), attending court hearings, accessing police services, attending counselling and attending appointments with medical, financial or legal professionals. An employee should be able to provide some form of evidence to prove that they undertook any of the above (ie a court notice, QPS appointment confirmation or letter, appointment confirmation act, statutory declaration).

Employers need to be mindful of what evidence they are prepared to be responsible for as there are strict requirements imposed on employers once they hold information regarding an employee's FDV leave - and therefore employers should exercise caution when requiring employees to provide large amounts of evidence or particularly sensitive evidence.

Q: How are the impacts of weather or the conclusion of harvest managed? Eg. if an employee has family and domestic violence leave for 2 weeks, the harvest period (and hence

casual work) could cease during this period. Is the employer still required to pay family and domestic violence leave if no work is available?

A: If an employee was rostered to work, they can access the FDV leave at their full rate of pay for those rostered hours.

If an employer is required to vary an employee's roster for a genuine and legitimate reason and they comply with their industrial obligations for varying a roster (ie. must provide the required amount of notice before varying a roster), there may be room to argue that the employer is potentially not required to pay FDV leave for hours the employee would not have worked as the hours no longer exist due to a change in operational needs/requirements. This is, however, highly uncertain and untested, would also be open to an employee to challenge the decision to vary their roster if they were concerned that the employer only varied their roster to avoid paying a NES entitlement. Employers should ensure they have sufficient evidence to prove that the roster change was lawful and complied with any applicable industrial obligations/laws.

Q: What happens if an employee has multiple, unrelated employers?

A: If an employee has multiple employers, they will have multiple entitlements to leave and this is the same for every other type of leave under the NES. Meaning if a single employee has two jobs, they will have an entitlement to have 10 days FDV leave with employer A and 10 days FDV leave with employer B.



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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 LEARNED A LOT. RODNEY W



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Respect@Work Bill

The Respect@Work Bill passed Parliament late last year which means the new positive duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation is just around the corner.

Once the final step of being given royal assent occurs, new legislation will:

- explicitly prohibit conduct that subjects another person to sexual harassment, or a workplace environment that is hostile on the ground of sex.
- require employers and persons conducting a business or undertaking to take 'reasonable and proportionate measures' to eliminate, as far as possible, unlawful sex discrimination (including sexual harassment) and victimisation.
- give the Australian Human Rights Commission greater powers to enforce the new laws and inquire into systemic, unlawful discrimination including suspected systemic unlawful discrimination, namely unlawful discrimination that affects a group of people and is continuous, repetitive or forms a pattern.
- ensures there is a pathway for Australian Human Rights Commission matters to proceed to the courts.

It also includes greater clarity regarding costs for Australian Human Rights Commission matters and amends the objects of the Sex Discrimination Act to include the objective to achieve substantive equality between men and women.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has officially launched a new website Respect@Work (www.respectatwork.gov.au) which contains information and resources for individuals and organisations.

Employers should proactively review their policies and procedures to ensure that they are prepared and have 'reasonable and proportionate measures' to eliminate, as far as possible, unlawful sex discrimination (including sexual harassment) and victimisation.

Other legislation updates

A few other legislation updates for our members to be aware of:

1. *QLD Industrial Relations Act 2016 Amendments (the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022).*

If you've been hearing about this and wondering if it applies to you, rest easy - this legislation only applies to employees of Queensland local governments.

2. *Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work Code of Practice 2022.*

This one does apply to all Queensland employers and provides a practical guide on how to prevent harm from psychosocial (including psychological and physical) hazards at work.

Psychosocial hazards can arise from things like high and/or low job demands; low job control; poor support; low role clarity; poor organisational change management; low recognition and reward; poor organisational justice; poor environmental conditions; traumatic events; violence and aggression; bullying; harassment and fatigue.

Coming into play from 1 April 2023, this Code places a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that psychosocial hazards at work are effectively managed.

Further information can be found here: www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice/managing-the-risk-of-psychosocial-hazards-at-work-code-of-practice-2022

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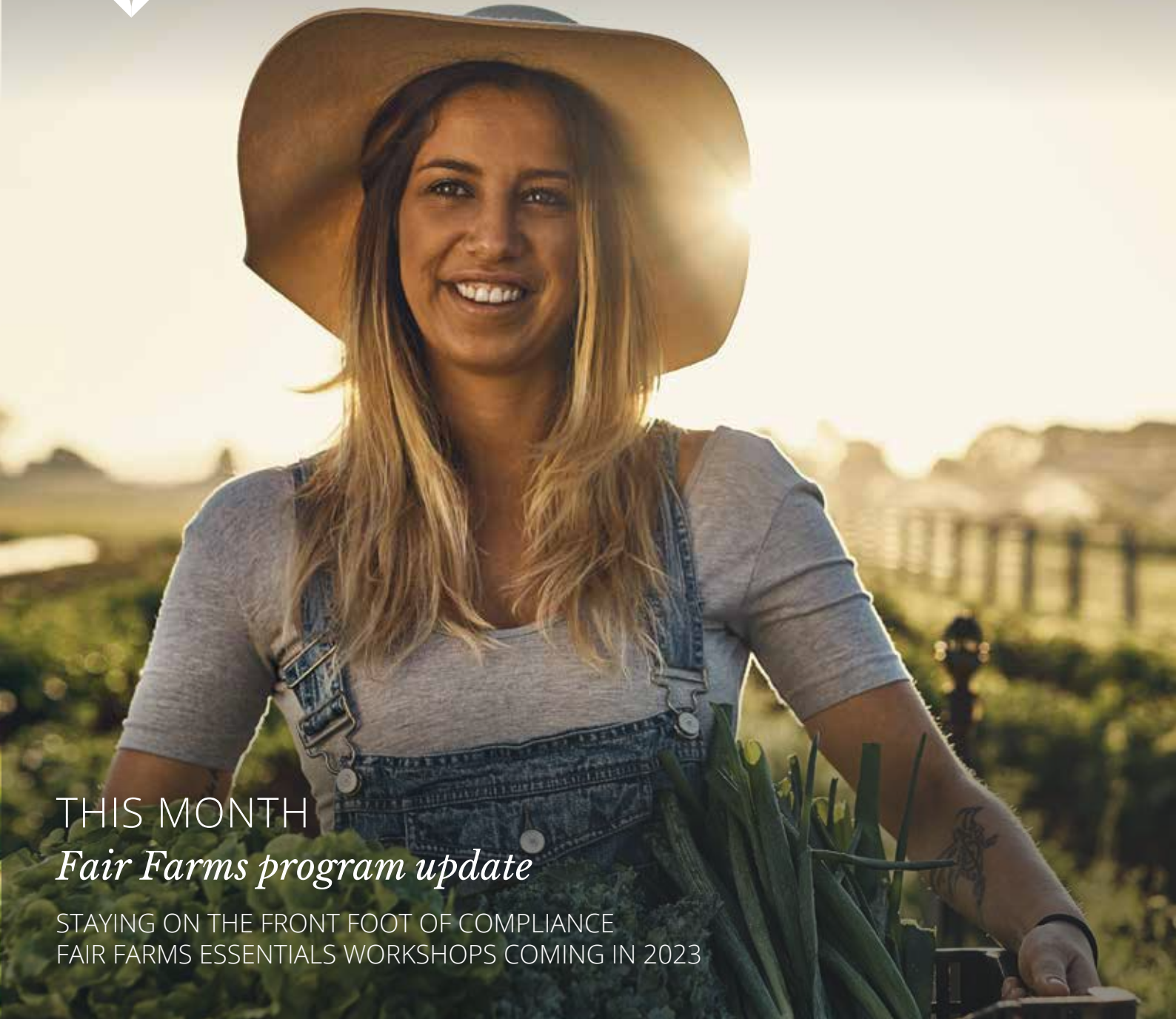
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FAIR FARMS NEWS

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2023



THIS MONTH *Fair Farms program update*

STAYING ON THE FRONT FOOT OF COMPLIANCE
FAIR FARMS ESSENTIALS WORKSHOPS COMING IN 2023



Fair Farms is an industry-led, national training and certification initiative that is cultivating fair and responsible employment practices in Australian horticulture. The program provides support and training to farm employers and a pathway to independent third-party audit and certification.

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program update

Fair Farms National Program Manager
Sachin Ayachit

Welcome to 2023. On behalf of the Fair Farms team, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to everyone associated with the Program. What a wonderful year 2022 was. We thank you for your contribution, feedback, and association with the Program that is designed to make a difference in the horticulture industry. Before we jump head-first into a new year, let us take stock of the year that was.

With COVID-19 still lingering, we started 2022 with hope, many plans, and a bit of uncertainty. As a Program, Fair Farms faced many implementation challenges in our first couple of years. Growers have been going through extremely tough times and multiple challenges - floods, drought, workforce shortages, biosecurity incursions, increased compliance and regulations to name a few.

2022 offered us a real opportunity to reach out to growers and implement the Program. We achieved many milestones including the completion of the first program review, engagement of diverse stakeholders, launch of the online portal and training platform, establishment a robust governance process, and the delivery of our inaugural conference in October. These milestones helped us strengthen the foundation of the Program. This was not possible without your support.

The Fair Farms Program that is built on the solid foundation of systems, governance, collaboration, and integrity, is 380 members strong. We had 60 percent growth in the number of certified growers in the program and we proudly touch the lives of more than 13,000 workers through the registered farms. Many registered growers benefited from the Fair Farms e-learning platform too. It is a reflection of that fact that we are not just another compliance program. We are here to assist, train, and

empower growers to improve the workplace practices for their farms and for their workers.

2023 offers many opportunities and challenges for the Program. The scope of the Program is no longer limited to the Fair Work and Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) regulations. We need to review the Program in the light of evolving Modern Slavery Act, International Labour Organisation conventions, and Ethical Trading Initiative base code. These acts, conventions, and codes have direct impact on what workplace processes we need to have at the farm level. The Fair Farms program offers training and support to growers to understand the changes happening in the broader modern slavery space and its impact at a grassroots level for growers.

We will also keep working on other challenges like the availability of auditors, duplication of compliance, workforce attraction and retention, and changing regulations.

On the other hand, we are also looking forward to launching our Fair Farms manual to assist growers with guidance and templates. Watch this space!

This year, I encourage you to avail the benefits of multiple resources and technical expertise the Program can offer. There are lot of training modules, workshops, webinars, and newsletters coming your way. The Fair Farms team has Amanda Higgins (Workplace Relations Specialist), and Donna Mogg (Grower Engagement Officer) - two experienced and passionate team members, who are only a phone call away if you need any technical expertise.

Let celebrate our successes, milestones, and resilience. Let's embrace the challenges and join hands to create fair, safe, profitable and ethical workplaces.



HR / IR Compliance

Fair Farms Workplace Relations Specialist
Amanda Higgins

Staying on the front foot of compliance

Travelling in my car with a local Sunshine Coast radio station on, I was not-so gently reminded of the Fair Work Ombudsman's (FWO) media campaign around compliance in the Horticulture space.

Since the Fair Work Commission modified the Horticulture Award back in April 2022 imposing a minimum wage guarantee for piece rate workers, there has been an increase in radio advertising campaigns as a reminder to employers of their obligations under the new provisions within the Award.

This radio advert was a very simple campaign designed to educate workers on how to report employers who are underpaying. It also promoted the Horticulture Showcase on the FWO website, which is designed to assist growers and employees to be able to navigate their minimum employment rates and legal obligations.

As we are all well aware, the FWO is aiming to boost compliance within the horticulture sector, and one of the ways is through

on-site visits which remain a priority for the agency.

As a Workplace Relations Specialist within Fair Farms, we are here to assist our Fair Farms members to reach compliance and one of the most basic ways in which we can assist is to make sure that the payrates for employees are correct, that employees are paid the relevant classification level and that payslips contain all the required information.

If you would like to check that your rates are compliant BEFORE you end up with a visit or call from the FWO, or to ensure that your classification level for your employees are correct, please reach out to the Fair Farms team or head to the Fair Work Ombudsman's website: horticulture.fairwork.gov.au

We are just a phone call away and here to assist our Fair Farms members to ensure that they are current and compliant with the legislative changes! Give us a call on 07 3620 3844.

ARE YOU PAYING THE CORRECT MINIMUM WAGE?

Full-time or part-time minimum base hourly rate (adult, Classification Level 1): **\$21.38**

Casual minimum base hourly rate (adult, Classification Level 1): **\$26.73** (\$21.38 + 25% casual loading)

IS YOUR PAYSLIP COMPLIANT?

Payslips should be provided to employees within one working day of being paid and should include:

- Employees name
- Employer's business name and ABN / ACN (if applicable)
- Date of payment
- Pay period that the pay is covering
- Gross pay (includes tax)
- Nett pay (excludes tax)
- \$\$ detail of superannuation contribution by employer (SGC is currently 10.5%)
- Name of super fund and member number

If an employee is on an hourly rate:

- Number of hours worked at base hourly rate
- Base hourly rate \$\$
- Casual loading amount of 25% as a separate line item

- Number hours overtime if applicable and overtime rate \$\$
- Any allowances additional allowances such as First-Aider / wet weather etc other entitlements that are separated from ordinary hourly rate

If an employee is on an annual salary

- The annual rate that the employee is paid
- Number hours overtime if applicable and overtime rate \$\$

Where relevant, details of deductions and amounts deducted – this may include:

- Additional salary sacrifice superannuation contributions
- Child support
- Accommodation charges
- Health insurance

For each deduction it is important that you have a written agreement with your employee where they authorise you to deduct those monies. Any deductions made must be legal and must be principally for the employees benefit.



engagement

Fair Farms Grower Engagement Officer
Donna Mogg

Coming soon... Fair Farms Essentials workshops

You asked, we deliver. With suggestions that employer ethical and legal compliance around employment practices is to move further down the supply chain, it is timely that we provide guidance to our growers around what's required, and how to meet those standards.

So, we are happy to announce that we will be delivering Fair Farms Essentials workshops in 2023, full of important and useful information, guidance, and resources to help you manage your workforce.

While still under development, Fair Farms Essentials will be heading to key growing regions in every State to talk about the issues that matter most to our industry and to get your views. Topics will cover responsible employment practices, working with Labour Hire, employing and managing OS workers, as well as a

range of other hot button issues on the horizon. The workshop will also outline the key principles and processes of the Fair Farms program, which can help greatly to address those issues.

We may have specialist speakers to speak to different issues, and there will be plenty of opportunity to have your say about it all. Horticulture employment remains a key challenge in our industry, but it's one we must get right across the supply chain if we are to continue to grow.

Watch this space, keep an eye on your email, or ask your local grower or commodity group for details.

Over the past couple of month's I've been busy, out and about meeting with growers. Here are a couple happy snaps from my travels.



In November Fair Farms facilitated a workshop in the Northern Territory. Donna is pictured here engaging with growers from the NT



In early November, Fair Farms attended the AusMac 2022 Conference on the Gold Coast.

PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A STRONG AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE



With Queensland agriculture producing one third of Australia's food and contributing approximately \$23.54 billion to the nation's gross value of production (GVP), the sector is calling on young Australians to join its workforce.

Launched in late last year, the *Careers in Agriculture Magazine*

– an initiative of the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) and the Queensland Government in conjunction with the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance (RJSA) – is a resource that raises awareness of agriculture and aquaculture careers, education, training, and job opportunities for young people.

With the termination of agriculture's itinerant worker program of international labour triggered by the pandemic, and the shrinking availability of domestic qualified labour, the QFF workforce planning and development team set out to identify and address current and emerging workforce issues in the agriculture sector

through several consultations held around the state. The findings of this consultation process informed a strategic five-year strategy: *The Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-2027*.

The plan, developed by QFF in partnership with Jobs Queensland and in collaboration with RJSA, identified actions to assist the agriculture sector to be productive, innovative, and profitable by investing in workforce development.

QFF CEO Jo Sheppard acknowledged that agricultural workforce demand continues to both grow and change, moving towards a more skilled and capable workforce aware of emerging market and technology developments revolutionising agricultural industries.

"We require new approaches to attract and retain skilled individuals across the sector to ensure its future survival and success", explained Ms Sheppard.

"The *Careers in Agriculture Magazine* is a resource that aims to address two of the goals set out in the plan - to attract a diverse and capable workforce, and to retain those individuals for the duration of their working lives."

The *Careers in Agriculture Magazine* is available from: www.careerharvest.com.au/qff-careersinag



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Brisbane monthly summary for November 2022

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Growcom and Ausmarket Consultants have entered into a partnership providing Growcom members with access to monthly fruit and vegetable market price information and data. Through this partnership, members also have the opportunity to access daily market reports at a discounted rate.

Visit Growcom's website to download your monthly market data report: growcom.com.au/news-information/ausmarket

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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
AVOCADOS,Hass	1501.50	18LCtn	15.00	35.00	45.00	27.09	IMPORTANT NOTICE: Reproducing, publishing, emailing or re-Faxing this report is prohibited as is the creation of a derivative work eg. Database.						
Hass		7KgTray	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.40							
Hass		SLTray	10.00	36.00	38.00	24.50	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 canning software but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
Lamb Hass		SLTray	20.00	26.00	26.00	22.68							
Reed		SLTray	16.00	24.00	24.00	19.45							
BERRIES,Blueberries	222.21	125g	1.00	3.00	3.50	2.04							
Raspberries		125g	1.50	4.50	4.50	3.25							
Blackberries		250g	2.50	4.50	4.50	4.07							
GRAPEFRUIT,Marsh	99.00	CP	24.00	28.00	28.00	26.00							
Red Ruby		CP	24.00	45.00	45.00	30.18							
GRAPES,White Seedless,Arra Sweetee	577.32	18LCtn	60.00	80.00	80.00	70.00							
White Seedless,Sweet Globe		18LCtn	100.00	130.00	130.00	115.77							
Dark Seedless,Adora		9KgCtn	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00							
Dark Seedless,Crimson		9KgCtn	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00							
Dark Seedless,Flame		9KgCtn	80.00	125.00	130.00	96.00							
Dark Seedless,Midnight Beauty		9KgCtn	50.00	90.00	90.00	73.13							
Dark Seedless,Sapphire		9KgCtn	65.00	70.00	70.00	67.50							
Dark Seedless,Scarlett Royal		9KgCtn	50.00	90.00	90.00	73.13							
Dark Seedless,Unspecified		9KgCtn	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00							
White Seedless,Autumn Crisp		9KgCtn	140.00	140.00	140.00	140.00							
White Seedless,Mindee		9KgCtn	80.00	125.00	130.00	96.00							
White Seedless,Timpson Green		9KgCtn	75.00	90.00	90.00	82.50							
White Seedless,Unspecified		9KgCtn	75.00	110.00	110.00	87.50							
HONEYDEW MELONS,Dark Skin													
Piel De Sapo	651.89	30LTray	12.00	26.00	26.00	20.25							
Gold		30LTray	20.00	26.00	26.00	22.23							
Gold,Orange Candy		30LTray	8.00	24.00	24.00	16.02							
White		30LTray	10.00	30.00	30.00	18.88							
Gold		32LCtn	16.00	20.00	20.00	18.00							
White		32LCtn	12.00	24.00	24.00	18.45							
ORANGES,Valencia	1605.26	1/2Bin	240.00	340.00	340.00	290.00							
Blood		1/2CP	16.00	36.00	36.00	23.00							
Blood		6KgCtn	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00							
Navel,Cara Cara		BulkCP	20.00	30.00	30.00	25.00							
Navel,Late Lane		BulkCP	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00							
Navel,Unspecified		BulkCP	20.00	30.00	30.00	25.00							
Navel,Washington		BulkCP	18.00	35.00	35.00	26.50							
Seedless Valencia,Midnight		BulkCP	12.00	20.00	20.00	16.00							
Valencia		CP	30.00	40.00	40.00	35.00							
Navel,Cara Cara		CP	10.00	25.00	25.00	16.75							
Navel,Late Lane		CP	16.00	24.00	24.00	20.00							
Navel,Unspecified		CP	5.00	30.00	30.00	18.56							
Seedless Valencia,Midnight		CP	20.00	28.00	28.00	23.38							
PITAYA,Yellow Flesh	16.45	3KgTray	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00							
Red Flesh		5KgCtn	50.00	60.00	60.00	55.23							
White Flesh		5KgCtn	50.00	60.00	60.00	57.32							
Yellow Flesh		5KgCtn	70.00	90.00	90.00	83.33							
White Flesh		5KgTray	30.00	45.00	45.00	39.32							
ROCKMELONS	641.73	30LTray	15.00	30.00	30.00	20.34							
		32LCtn	2.00	12.00	12.00	7.00							
		Kg	1.00	1.20	1.20	1.10							
SAPOTES,Black	1.98	SLTray	30.00	36.00	36.00	36.00							
WATERMELONS,Champagne S'less	1541.50	Kg	1.20	1.40	1.40	1.27							
Long Varieties		Kg	0.50	1.00	1.00	0.65							
Minimelons		Kg	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00							
Seedless		Kg	0.40	2.00	2.00	1.01							

STATE: A=ACT, N=NSW, Q=QLD, S=SA, T=NT, V=VIC, W=WA, Y=NT, I=IMPORTED

Vegetables

Brisbane Monthly Special 6 - 10 Crop Summary

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Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
BEANS,Borlotti	227.47	Kg	4.00	8.00	8.00	6.00							
Broad		Kg	4.00	7.00	8.00	5.50							
Butter		Kg	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.00							
Flat,Continental		Kg	5.00	8.00	8.00	6.70							
Round S'less		Kg	1.00	10.00	10.00	3.70							
Snake		Kg	10.00	12.00	14.00	11.00							
BROCCOLI,Baby	309.73	2.4Kg	16.00	24.00	24.00	20.45							
		8KgIPk	8.00	60.00	60.00	25.84							
BROCCOLINI	65.67	2.4Kg	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
CAPSICUMS,Gold	616.68	10KgCtn	30.00	36.00	40.00	33.00							
Green		10KgCtn	22.00	50.00	50.00	33.29							
Mixed Colour		10KgCtn	20.00	26.00	30.00	25.00							
Red		10KgCtn	24.00	90.00	95.00	51.48							
Gold		27LCtn	18.00	26.00	36.00	25.00							
Green		27LCtn	8.00	32.00	36.00	20.43							
Mixed Colour		27LCtn	16.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
Red		27LCtn	10.00	55.00	55.00	24.34							
Gold		5KgCtn	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00							
Red		5KgCtn	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00							
CELERY	297.14	15KgCtn	10.00	40.00	45.00	24.25							
FENNEL	57.16	Carton	20.00	32.00	34.00	27.14							
GINGER	119.00	Kg	3.50	5.00	5.00	5.00							
KALE,Green	21.81	250g	0.50	3.00	3.00	1.57							
Green		Carton	20.00	35.00	35.00	26.27							
ONIONS,Brown	746.74	10KgBag	12.00	22.00	22.00	13.50							
Salad Red		10KgBag	18.00	38.00	38.00	26.83							
Salad Red		10KgCtn	32.00	38.00	38.00	34.95							
White		10KgCtn	34.00	40.00	40.00	37.00							
Brown		15KgCtn	24.00	36.00	40.00	32.00							
Brown		1KgBag	1.80	2.20	2.20	2.10							
Salad Red		1KgBag	2.50	3.50	3.50	3.00							
Brown		20KgBag	18.00	46.00	46.00	33.10							
RHUBARB	5.77	Bunch	3.80	4.00	4.00	3.90							
		Carton	30.00	55.00	55.00	42.50							

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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

AUSMARKET CONSULTANTS CAN BE CONTACTED BY:

E: admin@ausmarket.com.au
E: ausinspect@outlook.com

W: www.ausmarket.com.au
P: (07) 3379 4576
M: 0400 719 941

HIGH FIVES FOR HORTICULTURE IN THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is one of the richest and most complex natural ecosystems on earth, and the world's most extensive coral reef ecosystem. It is recognised for its vital ecosystem functions and supporting extensive aquatic wildlife. No other World Heritage property contains such biodiversity.

The catchments of the GBR support three significant horticulture food bowls growing an abundance of vegetables, summer fruits, nuts, and herbs. Bowen, in the North Queensland Dry Tropics region alone, produces 90 percent of Australia's winter vegetables in rotation with melon production. The delightfully diverse array of vegetables grown in the Bowen region is an estimated farm gate value of \$650M.

Moving northwards, horticulture is THE major agriculture sector of the Atherton Tablelands, contributing \$530M to the Tablelands economy. Expansion of the industry into tree crops such as avocados and citrus, as well as blueberries, has been a driving factor in the two-fold increase in value of these commodities since 2015.

Whilst the Wide Bay-Burnett at the bottom of the GBR, is the largest production areas of avocado, macadamia and sweet potato in Australia, and the largest production area in Queensland of mandarins. The combined value of fruit, vegetable and nuts grown in the Wide Bay-Burnett is \$986M (GVP).

Given the proximity of these vibrant growing regions to the GBR, the work being achieved by the horticulture industry for Reef water quality improvement is exceedingly important.

With funding from the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program, Growcom has worked alongside commercial horticultural growers in the GBR catchment, to benchmark specific land management practices. Using Growcom's best management practice program Hort360, 227 properties have been assessed and scored against a set of agreed government standards. Of these, 128 properties have progressed to become Reef Certified; a third-party audit process designed specifically for the industry to demonstrate voluntary stewardship toward the GBR.

What this means is that their management practices for fertiliser, pesticide and irrigation application and record keeping is at or above 'best practice'. It additionally means that their management practices of ground cover, headlands, contours and on-farm water catchments ensures no losses of top soil. Fine sediment is one of the most damaging pollutants to coral reefs, so when it comes to Reef water quality, limiting loss of top soil is particularly important.

The combined area of Reef Certified farms is approximately 19,500 hectares and represents a third of land known to be under horticulture production in the GBR catchment (area under horticultural production in 2018 cited at 58,000 hectares).

Motivation for being Reef Certified or simply becoming involved in the Hort360 GBR program to participate in a workshop or use Hort360 to assess their practices is many and varied. Some growers have cited the initiative as an opportunity to be ahead

of proposed regulations for the horticulture industry. Others see it as an opportunity to develop marketing and promotion that demonstrates a duty of care and commitment to sustainability.

Australia's largest chilli grower, and award-winning food manufacturer, Mr David De Paoli of Austchilli, is based in Bundaberg and was one of the first agribusinesses to become involved in the program. Dedicated to improving soil health to prevent loss of sediment and using irrigation as efficiently as possible, he reflects on their reason for participating in being involved in this initiative.

"Fifty kilometres in a straight line from here, is the Sandy Strait Biosphere. That is a UNESCO listed site and we're right on the edge of it. Why would I want to do anything to jeopardise that valuable position we have here. We need to think of our clean land, our clean waterways our riparian zones our rivers, the mouths of our rivers, and then the Reef," Mr De Paoli said.

At the top of the leader board in terms of commodities represented via Reef Certification is the macadamia industry with 72 properties certified. They're followed by the avocado industry with 16 orchards, and right up there with avocados, is the vegetable industry; 14 vegetable farms certified (zucchinis, capsicum, pumpkin, tomato, beans, sweet corn, broccoli, squash). Other commodities that are represented through Reef Certification, and equally deserving of recognition are:

- mangos, lychees, custard apples, soursop, jujube
- pineapples, melons
- citrus (lemon, lime, mandarin)
- sweet potatoes, potatoes
- herbs/baby leaf, and
- blueberries.

A key outcome of the Hort360 GBR project is the overwhelming results of horticulture growers in the management of their practices to prevent losses of topsoil, irrigation run-off, pesticide, and nutrient. The total average score of the Reef Certification module is 84 percent which is higher than Hort360 benchmark expectations of 75 percent. What this means is that we can be confident that almost a third of the horticulture production area is above standard industry practice.

Growcom acknowledges and appreciates the efforts being made by horticulture growers to reduce their impacts to significant assets such as the Great Barrier Reef. It is your participation in the Hort360 GBR program which has enabled industry to demonstrate good practice and be acknowledged by Queensland Government and hence have minimum standards for horticulture deferred through to December 2024.

At the time of print, Growcom has secured a commitment from the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Meaghan Scanlon of further investment in the Hort360 Great Barrier Reef program until June 2026.



Hort360 GBR Facilitator Luke Hargreaves at the Soils Symposium, Mackay with Gillian Barbat, Mackay Whitsunday Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator.



Brodie and Rodney Wolfenden, Wolfies Farm, Rossmoya.



Dr Rohan Orford (top left), Macadamias Australia congratulates Daryl and Nicole Wake (top right), and Perfection Fresh on becoming Reef Certified.



Johan Oosthuizen, Alloway Macadamias, Bundaberg.



Eliza and Ken Brown, Keppel Orchards, Yeppoon.



Ben Clifton and John Cranny, Valley Syndicate, Bungundarra.



L-R: Shaun Corbett (Farm Manager – Bonna Road), Hort360 GBR Facilitator Michelle Haase and Jamie Thomas (Production Supervisor), Perfection Fresh, Bundaberg.



Gloria and Jeff Pershouse, Sunnyvale Mangoes, Benaraby.



Tomato growers, the Jones family, Bowen.

Michelle Haase
Southern Reef Catchments
0428 586 890
mhaase@growcom.com.au

Luke Hargreaves
Central Reef Catchments
0422 567 371
lhargreaves@growcom.com.au

Phil Laycock
Northern Reef Catchments
0439 252 828
phillaycock@growcom.com.au



Hort360 GBR is funded through the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by Growcom.

PRACTICE IMPROVEMENTS BENEFIT REEF WATER QUALITY

Growers engaged in Growcom's Hort360 Great Barrier Reef (GBR) project were supported to make on farm practice improvements for efficiencies and Reef water quality outcomes. Workshops, demonstration sites, benchmarking, shed meetings and connecting growers to tools and expertise to assist in practice improvements was a key goal for the project. Below, we take a look at some of the many practice improvement being implemented as a result of participation in Growcom's Hort360 GBR project.

Zappala Tropicals and Hort360 – a BMP that stacks up

In 2017 Josh Maunder from Zappala Tropicals in Far North Queensland worked closely with Growcom to become the first grower to fully complete Hort360. Through the process, Josh gained a robust understanding of best management practices, which became a valuable tool for their business. Critically, benchmarking through the Hort360 program assisted Zappala in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their on-farm practices.

A key outcome of using Hort360 was the need to improve irrigation practices. High energy costs, non-uniform delivery rates and record keeping were identified as key areas of concern in the irrigation module. This has led Zappala Tropicals to invest in new irrigation equipment that allows more efficient water delivery.

Soil moisture sensors have been added and there are also plans to add additional sensors across the farm. This focus on high resolution data is designed to push the boundaries of farm efficiency. Not only has this reduced the risk of nutrient leaching into the local waterways and ultimately the Great Barrier Reef, but it has meant cost savings for the business as well. More broadly, Hort360 has provided an excellent framework for decision-making in all domains of Zappala Tropicals farm management.

Greenside Produce reap the benefits of healthy soils

The benefits of healthy soils and the microbes in them is well documented and can significantly increase farm productivity and resilience. North Queensland watermelon and pumpkin growers Chris and Sue Coyne have been leading the way with a suite of management strategies designed to build and maintain soil health and biology.

The Coynes practice the application of microbes and microbe-building materials to their soils. One of their strategies is microbial inoculation with *Trichodesma* and *Bacillus*. They apply inoculants through the fertigation system in combination with molasses, a sugar food source, and milk powder, a protein source. So far results indicate the program is working well with microbe populations increasing significantly.

This strategy is complemented by a suite of organic amendments such as humic and fulvic acids, brown coal, rock dust and dunder all of which are effective soil builders and good fertilisers. Finally, to ensure the continued viability of their soil biology, Greenside Produce does all it can to minimise soil disturbance.

A key part of this is minimal herbicide application. They also abide by minimal tillage which minimises damage to microbe populations, particularly mycorrhizae. This means all the time and money that goes into building microbe populations isn't wasted. By focusing on soil health, Greenside Produce is leading the way in efficient and environmentally friendly food production while also making their business more profitable.

Ten-fold yield in production through adoption of real time sensor technology

Ken Brown from Keppel Orchards attended a Pest Aware; Pest Prepared workshop in Yeppoon in 2021. Growing custard apples and mangoes, Qld Fruit Fly (Q-Fly) were giving them a real run for their money. Despite a concerted spray program, orchard hygiene and biosecurity practices in place, significant losses of custard apples continued to occur at Keppel Orchards from Q-Fly. The situation was completely dire. Ken found hope, however, during one of the presentations that looked at use of sensor technology providing real-time notification to his mobile phone on the presence of Q-Fly. It was a game changer. The results and consequential overhaul of their approach to dealing with Q-fly resulted in a ten-fold increase in custard apple yield, as well as other benefits.

Michelle Haase
Southern Reef Catchments
0428 586 890
mhaase@growcom.com.au

Luke Hargreaves
Central Reef Catchments
0422 567 371
lhargreaves@growcom.com.au

Phil Laycock
Northern Reef Catchments
0439 252 828
phillaycock@growcom.com.au



Hort360 GBR is funded through the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by Growcom.



25% DISCOUNT ON Q-FLY SENSOR DEVICES; HELPS BOOST EFFICIENCY AND YIELDS

As endorsement of Growcom's voluntary Reef Certification initiative, innovative agtech start-up, RapidAIM is offering a discount promotion to all Reef Certified growers.

RapidAIM technology provides real-time Queensland Fruit Fly (Q-fly) pressure data to a mobile device, enabling growers to make informed, timely decisions and adopt precision spray practices in their orchards and fields.

To support Reef Certified growers in maintaining best management practices for monitoring and pesticide use for Q-Fly control, RapidAIM's real-time sensor technology is available with a 25 percent discount for a 12-month subscription.

RapidAIM has recently advanced their sensor technology to detect Macadamia Nut Borer and is offering the same discount for Reef Certified macadamia growers. The normal price is \$450 however they're launching this new product at the same price of \$360 and 10 units for the price of nine.

RapidAIM has been an active stakeholder in Growcom's Hort360 Great Barrier Reef (GBR) program since 2018, due to the benefits they can see in operating at 'best practice' and demonstrating environmental stewardship through Reef Certification.

Reef Certified custard apple grower, Ken Brown and his family, learned about RapidAIM technology at a Pest Aware; Pest Prepared workshop coordinated by Growcom in 2021. As a direct result of what they learnt at the workshop, the Browns invested in

RapidAIM sensors and subscription system.

Since using RapidAIM, they've had a ten-fold increase in yield of custard apples.

"I knew as soon as Nancy [RapidAIM CEO] started talking that this was something we needed to get on-board with," Mr Brown said.

"We just couldn't get the jump on them [Q-Fly] and the presentation helped me to understand why."

The results and consequential overhaul of their approach to dealing with Q-fly resulted in significant other benefits in addition to yield; more time, forecasting and planning, changes to chemicals used, and use of more beneficial insects.

Improved monitoring practices that incorporate agtech such as sensors and real-time alerts assist growers in changing their pesticide management practices, resulting in a win-win situation for the grower and environment.

Reef Certified growers keen to find out more or participate in trials for sensor technology for other pests, can contact Ron Yariv at RapidAIM on 0451 602 542. Further information and grower testimonials available via RapidAIM's website - rapidaim.io

Reef Certification is an initiative of Growcom's Hort360 GBR project which is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by Growcom. Growers in the GBR interested in participating are encouraged to contact their closest Hort360 Facilitator.

RAPIDAIM OFFERS THE FOLLOWING PROMOTION FOR GROWCOM'S REEF CERTIFIED GROWERS:

- 25% discount for a 12-month subscription. This would be \$360 per unit with a special offer of 10 sensors for the price of 9.
- Unlimited access to the RapidAIM mobile app which provides the following:
 - real-time detections and alerts
 - trends over time and historical data
 - 5-additional accounts for farm managers and agronomists.
- 60-day money back guarantee.



AgroFresh

We Grow Confidence™

DELIVERING LONG-TERM, SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO PRESERVE FRESHNESS IN BROCCOLI

From 2014-2017, a project was undertaken that investigated the cooling and packaging processes of broccoli. One of the activities looked at the effects of the freshness protection treatment 'SmartFresh' on broccoli storage and shelf-life. Western Australia broccoli grower Brad Ipsen was at the forefront of the SmartFresh trials and recently spoke to Vegetables Australia magazine produced by AUSVEG about his involvement and the positive outcomes so far.

Process improvements for preserving peak freshness in broccoli (VG14062) was a strategic levy investment under the Hort Innovation Vegetable Fund. Led by Dr Jenny Ekman from Applied Horticultural Research, the project examined some of the factors that could increase or decrease the retail freshness of broccoli including harvest time, delay before cooling, cooling method and packaging materials.

One of the major outcomes of the project – which concluded in 2017 – is the introduction of the SmartFresh In-Box system. This is a formulation of 1-methylcyclopropene that blocks the receptors in the broccoli, preventing its ability to produce or respond to ethylene and slowing respiration – which, in turn, reduces post-harvest quality loss.

AgroFresh gathered the data required to register the new InBox formulation of 1-MCP for commercial use on broccoli in Australia, which was approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) earlier this year. It is now registered, and commercial uptake has commenced.

Brad Ipsen is the first vegetable grower in Australia to use the SmartFresh In-Box system. Brad and his family run Twin Lakes – a mixed farming operation located in Manjimup, about 300 kilometres south of Perth. The main horticultural crop is broccoli, which is grown on 85 hectares between November and June. Twin Lakes also produces citrus, sheep and cattle.

Addressing issues

Traditionally, broccoli has been packed in Styrofoam boxes with ice. This keeps broccoli cool and hydrated through the transport chain and looks good when the box is opened.

However, Brad explains that this system has disadvantages including cost.

"Making ice is an expensive operation. I've got a six-tonne ice machine and I'm shipping water around Australia and overseas," he says.

Another challenge is maintaining freshness of the broccoli.

"The whole issue with ice is that people think that the broccoli sitting in that ice is fresh, because the ice hasn't melted," Brad says.

"Domestically in Western Australia, it's never a problem because it sits in Perth in a cool room refrigerator but when you're sending to the east coast for instance, you open the box, and the ice is

all melted – so it's not fresh. It doesn't change the status of the product though."

When broccoli sits in water, it can attract bugs that then deteriorate the shelf life of the broccoli, which Brad says is a big problem.

Finding a solution

During the project, Brad and the research team conducted SmartFresh trials that involved packing sachets of the 1-MCP into liners, placing them in either polystyrene or cardboard boxes and shipping them around WA and across the Nullarbor.

This produced encouraging results and earlier this year – once the product was registered and available to use – Twin Lakes received a commercial quantity and rolled out 2000 cartons that included the sachets.

Customers were shocked to find the broccoli wasn't being transported on ice.

"We told our customers that there would be no ice but then they're on selling someone else who was wondering where the ice was," Brad says.

Another benefit to using SmartFresh is environmental, with Twin Lakes moving away from polystyrene as it becomes less acceptable. Replacing ice with sachets means no soggy or collapsing of cardboard boxes and Brad says he is confident that this new method will overcome these challenges, as well as deliver a fresher product.

"These things are going to need a fair bit of education to our customers that this is how it's going to be. Because next year, polystyrene will probably be phased out in WA. I'm preparing for that," Brad added.

Another challenge is controlling temperature.

"When you're shipping the product, you need to have a good temperature-controlled environment. And if you can bring those two things together, it's very exciting. But as I said, education is needed and we've done quite a bit of that to show when these potential advantages are," Brad says.

"We've already seen that the product is fresher and crispier, and our customers within Australia and overseas have said that too."

Find out more

The final report for this project is available on InfoVeg. Readers can search 'VG14062' on the InfoVeg database: www.ausveg.com.au/infoveg/infoveg-database

For more information about the research, please contact Dr Jenny Ekman on 0407 384 285 or email jenny.ekman@ahr.com.au.

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the vegetable research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.



an AgroFresh solution

Pack Freshness with Confidence

SmartFresh™ InBox for Broccoli

When broccoli has a challenging journey to reach the consumer, **SmartFresh™ InBox** delivers peace of mind.



Actual size:
40.6mm x 45.7mm



Convenience:

Simply place sachets into liner during packing



Consistent Quality:

Maintain green colour, turgidity and crispness



Real Cost Efficiency



Safe & Sustainable:
No need for polystyrene cartons and ice



CONTROL

Two weeks of storage top iced (600g) with black plastic liner.



SmartFresh™ InBox

Two weeks storage using one 0.625g InBox sachet in sealed black plastic liner.

AgroFresh

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CONTACT :

Nick Sanders
Commercial Director - Asia Pacific Region
+61 (0) 418 998 315, nsanders@agrofresh.com

Greg Montgomery
Harvista Manager -
Victoria / New South Wales / Queensland
+61 (0) 419 698 102
gmontgomery@agrofresh.com

Peter Vedeniapine
Account Manager - W. Australia / S. Australia
+61 (0) 417 779 133
pvedeniapine@agrofresh.com

Amrit Pannu
Technical Development Manager -
Australia / Victoria
+61 (0) 496 927 100, apannu@agrofresh.com

Helping you value-add beyond the paddock: Meet your new QRIDA Regional Area Manager

Think of the Central Coast and Whitsundays region, and vibrant, juicy mangoes, pineapples and lychees probably come to mind.

But it's what growers are using their fresh produce for post-picking, that local Tegan McBride believes is helping secure her region's agricultural future.

"It's impressive to see primary producers who aren't just growing fruit and vegetables, but are also turning them into juices and jams to add value to their business," she said.

Inspired by local growers, Tegan is now helping producers diversify into new markets and achieve their agribusiness goals, as the new Regional Area Manager for Central Coast and Whitsundays at the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA).

"Value-adding is a great way to gain business exposure in new areas and to add more income streams, helping make your enterprise more resilient against changing economies and climates," she said.

"If you have an established enterprise that you're wanting to future-proof, I can help you look into a Sustainability Loan of up to \$1.3 million.

"Or if you're an aspiring farmer, you could get up to \$2 million with a First Start Loan to help you buy into the family business."

With cyclones, flooding, and storms forecast for the region into early next year, Tegan is also encouraging growers to get ready for this disaster season.

"It's critical to complete a disaster preparedness checklist so you're not caught off guard, including ensuring you have adequate insurance cover, packing an emergency kit and reviewing your emergency fund," she said.

"Following a disaster, ensure you safely take photos of any damage, and make sure you check QRIDA's website to see what financial assistance may be available to you.

"You can easily get started by giving me a call and together we



Make an appointment to meet with your new Regional Area Manager for Central Coast and Whitsundays Tegan McBride and catch her at local agricultural and QRIDA events.

can chat about where you want to take your primary production enterprise. We can also arrange to meet on-farm."

Tegan takes the reins from QRIDA's former Regional Area Manager for Central Coast and Whitsundays, Peter Crowley, who has retired after 21 years in the role.

With a Bachelor of Business and experience in regional development and farm practice change, Tegan is well-equipped to help primary producers find the right QRIDA loan for their farming business and guide them through the application process.

Get in touch with Tegan on 1800 623 946 or email her at tegan.mcbride@qrda.qld.gov.au

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- **First Start Loans** of up to \$2 million to help new and next generation primary producers purchase their first property, buy into the family farm business or lease country.



Find out more by scanning this QR Code or speak to your Regional Area Manager by calling 1800 623 946.

**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.*

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 /QRIDAMedia /company/QRIDA



Authorised by the Queensland Government, Turbot St, Brisbane

Farm Business Resilience Program

PREPARATION AND PLANNING ARE EVERYTHING

It was at the 2022 Hort Connections Conference in Brisbane that South Burnett avocado, garlic and rhubarb growers Michael and Beth Crane learnt about Growcom's Farm Business Resilience Program for horticulture.

The Program helps primary producers build a sustainable business by planning today for tomorrow's drought and other climate risks. The objective of the Program is to support growers to develop or update existing Farm Business Resilience Plans. To do this Growcom has incorporated a checklist of questions within our best management practice program, Hort360.

Prior to the completion of their Farm Business Resilience Plan, the Cranes were successful in securing a Sustainability Grant through QRIDA for a dam and irrigation project.

With the funding the Cranes have constructed a five Megaliter dam, with a four Megaliter sump and installed drainage channels to reduce likelihood of erosion by overland flow for the dam.

To maintain progress, Michael and Beth have plans to further increase their production area irrigation and to achieve this, Growcom Central Queensland Resilience Facilitator John Targett has been working with Michael and Beth on a Farm Business Resilience Plan, which is a requirement for accessing the Drought Preparedness Grant from QRIDA.

For Michael, the implementation of a Farm Business Resilience Plan will have benefits across the whole enterprise.

"A well-developed business resilience plan designed with a five-to ten-year implementation timeline allows for projects to be adapted, stepped, funded, and implemented which will increase productivity exponentially," Michael said.

"This also benefits the human side of the business by ensuring employment for staff.

"It also benefits the environment by efficient use of water and increased water quality for irrigation, resulting in a higher quality product going to the marketplace."

The Farm Business Resilience Program is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Queensland Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program and is available to horticultural growers until June 2024.



Michael and Beth Crane

Is your industry taking advantage of the Farm Business Resilience Program?

Farm Business Resilience Planning supports growers to analyse their business management and make plans to be more resilient, better prepared for and mitigate the impacts of drought.

Our team of Resilience Facilitators can offer tailored support, workshops, and individual assistance. Get in contact today to find out more.



Contact Growcom today

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.



Karen George
Manager, Resilience
0408 135 003

kgeorge@growcom.com.au



John Targett
Central Queensland
0418 803 997

jtargett@growcom.com.au



Brock McDonald
Southern Queensland
0418 893 442

wmcdonald@growcom.com.au



Sue and Gary Lee, Dragon Fruit Farmers

– Lee’s Dragonfruit Plantation

As part of the QCWA Country Kitchens ‘Meet the Farmer’ initiative, the Country Kitchens team recently spent some time at Lee’s Dragon Fruit Farm. Sue and Gary Lee are based just outside Rockhampton, Queensland. This interview has come at a perfect time with the QCWA releasing their primary product of the year - dragon fruit. The Country Kitchens team have developed several dragon fruit related resources, community activities and recipes.

Recognised for its unique and bright appearance, dragon fruit acquired its name because the oval shaped fruit and green, pointy external “scales” are thought to represent a dragon or dragon egg.

Dragon fruit is classified as a fruit and therefore is a core food according to the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating. Fruits provide vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and many hundreds of phytonutrients. Dragon fruit is rich in fibre, vitamin C and antioxidants. One serve of dragon fruit is about ½ of a large fruit or 1 cup in total, equivalent to one of the recommended two serves of fruit we should consume every day.

Dragon fruit farming is a relatively new venture for Sue and Gary.

“We went to Vietnam and saw the fruit there and we loved it. We decided to start growing them [dragon fruit] from cuttings just for ourselves as a hobby. We realised that there was a lot of interest, so we started selling them at markets. As community interest and sales increased, we grew more plants.”

Although dragon fruit is their main production, they are also increasing their crops of other tropical fruits including guava, passionfruit, finger lime and jack fruit. Sue and Gary are quite the busy duo. While working the farm, Gary also works in mining and Sue runs a daycare from home.

When it comes to the farm work, Sue says, “I love being able to work outside” and Gary elaborates, “I like working outside with no real distractions. I find it relaxing. Work is only that because you don’t really enjoy it. Our farm work is an interest, and we find it satisfying and very enjoyable for most parts. Sue and I enjoy doing things together in the business, working outside together in particular. I enjoy the reward of seeing really good quality large fruit as it shows the results of our hard work.”

Dragon fruit has increased in popularity since the 1970’s when it was first reportedly grown in Australia. Australia now has around 40,000 dragon fruit plants.

“Dragon fruit farming is very labour intense,” Sue explains that there is always something to do. From planting, trimming, pollinating, and protecting from pests, it keeps the couple very busy. “We also have to put up nets to protect the plants from fruit fly, foxes, and birds.”

Outlining the farming process, Sue shares “Cuttings are dried out for seven days in a cardboard box, so they start to root. We plant



them straight into the ground with a hardwood or concrete post to prop them up.” Sue and Gary wait for around nine months until the cuttings start to produce flowers. Sue explained that once the plants are in flower, the pollination begins. “You need a red and white dragon fruit plant for cross pollination.”

“We have some self-pollinating plants, but we manually pollinate to get them across the line” adding that “bees also help with pollination.”

Gary has been creative with techniques to improve production of fruit. “We use a small Ryobi vacuum with a special home-made nozzle to suction the pollen out. We put it in the freezer to brush on [the dragon fruit flowers] later.”

The dragon fruit flowers open in the evening until early morning. Gary uses this time to brush the pollen into the open flowers. They estimate that it takes around 30-40 days to produce fruit from the flower before they hand pick it.

The work doesn’t stop there. “Each year we trim all the plants because they are very fast growing. We use a chainsaw to go along each row and manually prune all the dragon fruit plants.”

Gary loves to eat the yellow dragon fruit straight from the skin. Sue loves the vibrant American beauty, lemonade, and yellow dragon fruit. We learn that the yellow dragon fruit has the sweetest flavour and were lucky enough to receive a sample to taste.

When asked about her favourite Dragon fruit recipe, Sue had one word “smoothies.” She says, “the standard white and yellow are better for tropical type smoothies.” She uses the purple dragon fruit for milk and yoghurt-based smoothies with other fruit such as mulberries, mango, and frozen berries. She also gets the day care children involved making simple recipes with dragon fruit and serving fruit smoothies.

Touching on food waste, Sue explained “We can’t sell the smaller dragon fruit so that ends up being pig food.” Gary explains “smaller fruit can also be cut, pulp removed and then dried to a soft apricot type consistency” Sue and Gary also freeze some of the extra dragon fruit to use in smoothies.

To learn more about dragon fruit, visit our website and access our Product of the Year 2023 - Dragon Fruit resources, qcwacountrykitchens.com.au/qcwa-member-activities/

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.



Asian Dragon Fruit Salad

SERVES 6 PREP TIME 15 MIN FRUIT & VEGE: 1½ SEVS

Recipe courtesy of the Country Kitchens 2023 Product of the Year Recipe Collection – Dragon Fruit

SALAD	
4 cups	mixed salad leaves
1	avocado, cubed
1	pink dragon fruit, sliced into wedges
½	red onion, finely sliced
1 bunch	coriander, stems and leaves roughly chopped
1	red apple, julienned
1	carrot, peeled into julienne strips
3 tablespoons	granulated peanuts
DRESSING	
3 tablespoons	plum sauce
3 teaspoons	sesame oil
2 teaspoons	salt reduced soy sauce
2 teaspoons	rice wine vinegar
1 ½ teaspoons	fresh ginger, grated
1	lime, juiced

METHOD

ADD all salad ingredients except peanuts to a large bowl.

COMBINE all dressing ingredients in a screw top jar and shake well to combine.

POUR dressing over salad just before serving. Sprinkle with peanuts and toss to combine.



What's Great About It

With fresh Asian flavours, this salad is great for entertaining during the summertime. Fresh white dragon fruit can be used if you are unable to source the pink variety. Try serving this salad with some lean protein such as zesty lemon chicken or as a colourful side to your favourite summer barbeque.

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Northern Australia project evaluates resilience and profitability of high-density orchards

Diversification of crop production across 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 cyclones.

Through the Demonstrating Next-Gen Resilient Orchards project being led by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries with investment from the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA), project partners are investigating the use of both high-density and trellis planting systems to examine their production capacity, profitability, and resilience to cyclones.

With trial sites established across Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, the Demonstrating Next-Gen Resilient Orchards project brings together expertise from multiple government agencies, industry organisations, and private companies.

With a farm gate value in excess of \$341 million, the Northern Territory is a key producer of the nation's mango, melon and vegetable crops. The Top End's unique climate and conditions also enables Territory farmers to successfully grow a range of exotic fruits such as jackfruit, rambutan and durian.

Under the project, jackfruit is being used as a catalyst tree crop. Whilst specific to jackfruit, it is expected that the production systems being investigated could be applied to any orchard crop.

At the Coastal Plains Research Farm in the Northern Territory, Team Leader Plant Industries at the Northern Territory Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT DITT), Chelsea Moore said their field trials were looking at the differences between trellised vs high-density along with the difference between cuttings vs grafted plants.

"The team is also propagating jackfruit cuttings, marcotts and grafted plants along with studying aeroponics," she said.

"We also have a PhD student studying at the Edith Cowan University who is looking at how to measure the maturity of jackfruit without having to tap on every piece of fruit."

Located just outside of Katherine, NT, Ballongilly Farms is one of seven properties owned by Australia's largest grower of Kensington Pride mangoes, Manbulloo Limited.

Owner and manager Marie Piccone explains that the company currently has three trial sites established under the project located in Katherine in the Northern Territory, on the Atherton Tablelands and outside Townsville in the dry tropics in Queensland.

"Each trial site contains 400 jackfruit trees," Marie said.

"We're investigating a number of different treatments - so we've got wide-spaced jackfruit, we've also got trees planted at closer spacings and trees on trellis.

"Our aim is to have an understanding of the optimal way of growing jackfruit in each location."

"We could potentially have higher yields with some of the treatments and also have more robust trees when we experience the strong storms that occur here in the build-up."

The Demonstrating Next-Generation Resilient Orchard Production Systems for Tropical Crops project is funded through the CRCNA as part of the Australian Government's CRC Program, and 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, Aus-Ex Fruit, Northern Territory Farmers Association (NT Farmers) and Growcom.



A range of videos have been developed showcasing the work being conducted across project partners. You can view them via the Next Gen Resilient Orchards YouTube site.



You can also keep up to date with the latest project developments via the Facebook page.

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FUMIGATION PARTNERSHIPS INNOVATION

LATEST TECH SHOWCASED AT NORTH QUEENSLAND FIELD DAY

Bowen Gumlu Growers Association's (BGGGA) Innovation Field Day held at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) research station in Bowen in early November, was a huge success attracting over 150 producers, industry stakeholders, students, and ag businesses from across north Queensland.

BGGGA Chief Executive Officer Ry Collins said the field day was a great opportunity for industry and our community to come together, share information and learn about new technologies and advancements in the horticulture sector.

Mr Collins said it was a key business priority for BGGGA to collaborate with industry and provide growers with information and access to the latest agtech products and services that helped them improve on-farm efficiency, reduce input costs, and remain profitable.

"It is vital that we continue to pursue new ways to meet and adapt to challenges, be more productive and sustainable and ensure our industry is able to continue to be prosperous into the future," he said.

"BGGGA organised a comprehensive program of speakers, displays and demonstrations, including the autonomous Robotti and GUSS units that demonstrated robotic weeding, seeding, spraying and slashing as well as automated packing from LYRO robotics."

Utilising technology and research to combat biosecurity threats was also addressed on the day.

"Local business, NQ Aerovation, demonstrated their drone technology that is currently being used in the region to deploy beneficial bugs and AUSVEG exhibited the iMapPESTS sentinel, which traps pests to help with identification, research and management," he said.

"Entomologists from DAF provided attendees with valuable information about fall armyworm and other local pests and diseases."

Mr Collins said BGGGA was also delivering a project in collaboration with AgriFutures Australia under the National Producer Technology Uptake Program, which would further support grower access to new technology.

"Like the field day, the program aims to increase grower awareness



In-farm demonstration of Robotti autonomous unit.



Students listening to a talk on the GUSS automated sprayer.

of new innovations in machinery, computer and production systems, wireless, digital and other technologies," he said.

Mr Collins said growers involved in the program will participate in a "FarmTech Planning" workshop early this year followed with a group study tour to another producing region in Australia to observe advanced agtech in practice and experience on-farm demonstrations.

"Growers will also have access to an online resource that will allow them to more easily connect with agtech vendors, obtain pricing and identify potential return on investment through adopting new technologies in their business," he said.

Mr Collins also noted a new fixed wireless tower and data centre being installed in Bowen specifically for use by local farm business was a positive step forwards for improving digital connectivity and agtech adoption in the region and industry.

"We hope the increased connectivity will allow producers to implement additional agtech to their farms and provide better access to wireless sensors, internet-enabled devices, automation and other precision technology to improve their production and efficiency," he said.

Celebrating 40 years of the R2E2 mango

The iconic North Queensland bred R2E2 mango has celebrated 40 years of sweetness.

Decades ago, the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries began a breeding program as imported mango varieties did not meet Australian industry and consumers' expectations.

In 1982 researchers struck mouth-watering gold by crossing a Bowen and Kent mango and creating the R2E2.

The name R2E2 relates to the row and block number in the field in which the original tree was grown. The name stuck because of the similarity to another 80s icon, R2D2.

Forty years later the fruit has not only become a summer staple across Australia but is popular with international exports.



L-R: Peter Beal (former DAF Senior Horticulturist who was responsible for setting up the trial that R2E2 was selected from); Ian Bally (Principal Horticulturist from Mareeba, who was working on the project when R2E2 was selected); Asjad Ali (Plant Breeder with the DAF mango breeding program); and Nick MacLeod (retired DAF Director of Tropical Fruit and Market Access).



Fruit & Vegetable news

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Level 2, 231 George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
ACN 090 816 827
Phone: 07 3620 3844
Email: growcom@growcom.com.au
Website: www.growcom.com.au
Postal address: PO Box 12101,
George Street QLD 4003

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PRODUCTION TEAM

Natalie Brady (Managing Editor)
Martin Volz (Journalist)
Lachlan Mitcherson (Graphic Design)

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Justin Bowler
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justin.bowler@mmg.com.au

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KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Sachin Ayachit, Rachel Chambers, Michelle Haase, Amanda Higgins, Tahna Jackson, Donna Mogg, Angela Seng-Williams, Madison Sturgess, Scott Wallace, and Naomi Wilson.

COVER PHOTO

Lachlan Mitcherson

FEATURE STORY

Martin Volz

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New campaign reveals 'The Backstory' behind innovation in agriculture

Australian farmers are known across the globe for growing some of the world's best food and fibre, but what's not so well known is how much science, research, technology, and innovation goes on behind the farmgate.

Research commissioned by the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) has found only 18 percent of Australians agree the sector is focused on innovation and improvement – revealing a shocking lack of understanding of modern farming.

"The Backstory" will take Australians into the paddocks, glasshouses, and shearing sheds on Aussie farms to show them just how innovative our farmers are.

NFF President Fiona Simson believes many people will be surprised at what goes into some of our farm-grown favourites.

"There is a backstory behind every apple we eat, every sandwich we make and every coffee we drink of farmers embracing technology and research to create tastier food, better fibre, more efficient practices, safer workplaces and more sustainable farms," she said.

"Traditionally, when people think about farming, they picture a farmer in a paddock, but The Backstory shows there

is so much more to modern farming than that.

"We have apps, satellites and sensor technology, Bluetooth scanning and robotics. These are just some of the tools helping farmers better manage their landscapes and animals. They also create traceable supply chains, contribute to the climate change solution, and produce high quality food and fibre for us to eat, wear and use."

The Backstory is a series of videos hosted by Rachel McCann who swaps pavement for paddocks to visit three different farms across Australia.

"Farmers are the powerhouse in agriculture, but they are being backed by entrepreneurs, scientists and technicians who are providing endless opportunities and an exciting future in agriculture," Ms Simson said.

"As farmers, we're driven to grow better products in smarter, more sustainable ways. Whether it's using satellites to monitor plant growth, or converting waste to renewable energy to lower emissions – the way that we farm is never standing still."

You can check out The Backstory online: www.farmers.org.au/backstory



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