

Volume 95

#2

MARCH / APRIL
2024



Fruit & Vegetable NEWS

We Give A Fork campaign update
QFVG doubles down on collective voice to stop double dipping levy
Latest disaster assistance for Queensland growers



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welcome

Chief Executive Officer
Rachel Chambers

How do growers feel in 2024? Forked.

Well, this year is already turning out to be quite the ride! With the convergence of Local, State, and Federal Elections within a year, we knew we needed to be on our toes however, none of us anticipated the spotlight food, especially in its grocery store form, would receive.

The last couple of months have been full of learnings as we have tried to wrangle the cost-of-living crisis conversations. Some of these include:

It seems we've been advocating in the wrong manner. This isn't to discredit our past efforts, but it's becoming evident that Australians connect more with food as it appears in supermarkets rather than how growers typically discuss it. We haven't fully tapped into the power of the entire consumer population – food impacts 100% of voters! We're onto it now!

It's imperative for us to be present in Canberra, engaging with politicians more frequently. Ideally, we should bring growers and other crucial parts of the supply chain along. After attending over 20 meetings in Canberra last month, it's clear that many policymakers don't grasp the concept of growers being "price takers". This knowledge gap may explain their casual approach to imposing additional costs through various industrial relations changes.

Australians are very much invested in the current supermarket debate, recognising the essential nature of food. For years, we've warned about the importance of food security, assuming people would only react when food becomes scarce. What we didn't anticipate is the concern that arises when food becomes unaffordable, which is kind of the same thing.

The compliance burdens imposed by retailers are a product of their own success. Consequently, we believe they should shoulder the associated costs.

The coordinated response from the government, focusing on supermarket behavior, is the most significant example of mass deflection I've witnessed. The unified message is concerning, especially in a Federal Election year, as political agendas may soon diverge. We will be watching this space closely.

I've recently been taught that humans think in terms of images. For instance, the activity of retrieving a "white elephant statue from your bedside table" automatically conjures up an image, despite the unlikelihood of such an item being present. Therefore, QFVG is embarking on simplifying complex horticulture narratives into a series of cartoons, embracing an old-school, newspaper-style communication approach. Our first piece, titled "Forked," encapsulates the feelings of a grower in 2024. If you have any cartoon ideas, feel free to share!

Finally, there is overwhelming agreement nationally, that this is the moment. This is a crossroads in horticulture. This is the once in a generation opportunity to make change. And we couldn't agree more.

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AXE THE TAX

QVFG doubles down on collective voice to stop double dipping levy, calling on the Federal Government to axe its looming biosecurity tax if it is fair dinkum about reducing cost pain to growers.

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DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR QUEENSLAND GROWERS

With bushfires, hail, storms, flooding, and cyclones affecting Queensland this summer – be sure to check the list of current disaster activations to see if you're eligible for financial support.



7.

SHAUN JACKSON, DAINTREE FRESH

...shares his story as part of QFVG's 'We Give A Fork' campaign.

CAMPAIGN UPDATE:

WE GIVE A FORK.

SINCE LAUNCHING WE GIVE A FORK IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, WE'VE HAD AN OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM GROWERS AROUND THE NATION IN SUPPORT OF THE CAMPAIGN.

Through the campaign we are tackling three key issues head on.

1. **Margin-squeeze**
2. **Policy pile-on**
3. **Reputation and brand of sector**

One thing we did not anticipate was that our newly 'elected' Queensland Premier would throw whatever weight he yielded at the start of 2024 into the supermarket narrative. Some very clever 'cost of living' politics there!

As our members would expect, we are making hay whilst the sun shines and are ensuring we combine forces to both protect and provide positive outcomes for horticulture.

Here is a quick wrap for the January/February period.

IN THE NEWS

QFVG has been featured across major television, radio and print publications including:

- ABC News
- The Project
- 2GB Afternoons
- The Courier Mail
- Sunrise
- SBS

Fueling these conversations have been several media statements calling out both the Federal Government and major retailers on their actions and behaviours.

View full coverage of media appearances online here:

Read QFVG's media statements online here:

SCAN HERE



SCAN HERE



GROWER MEETINGS

Grower meetings have been held in the Wide Bay and North Queensland where members had the opportunity to talk all things, We Give A Fork.

Further events are planned throughout the state over the year. Keep an eye on our social media for details. We will also SMS members when we're coming to your area.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

FORKED

WANTED: Risk taker. Generous nature required as the entire supply chain will need to be paid prior than yourself. Internal fortitude a non-negotiable as repeated natural disasters and inclement weather events will be inevitable. Project management, finance, IR, HR, marketing, and global political experience required. Strong negotiation skills necessary to have a fighting chance of making a profit, in a price taking industry. Unbreakable spirit given the reputation of the industry is one of exploitation of others. No holidays guaranteed. Salary not guaranteed.



SNAPSHOT: JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

Meetings with Government	39	Meetings with industry organisations	26	Submissions	3
Media articles published	13	Media mentions	110+	Our reach	43,584,000+

Let us know if you like the direction we're headed!

Give us your score!

SCAN HERE



WE'RE SEEING THEIR EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE DEPLETING; YOU WONDER HOW LONG THEY ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE FOR - Dion



WE WANT GROWERS TO BE PAID FAIRLY FOR THEIR WORK AND WHAT THEY PRODUCE. - Alex + Jen

Queensland cafés say 'We Give A Fork'

Queensland's café owners are putting their support behind fresh produce growers saying they don't want to imagine a world where...

...smashed avo for Sunday brunch is the stuff of legend; a burger and fries becomes nothing more than a meat patty, and the glorious Caesar salad is a story to be regaled to our grandchildren.

Restaurant owner Dion Taylor understands and sees first-hand the pressures on food businesses especially when working with growers directly on a regular basis.

"We're seeing their emotional resilience depleting; You wonder how long they are going to be able to continue," Dion said.

"Not only is there real concern for grower welfare, but [as a small business owner] you can't help feeling anxious about where the next load of produce is coming from.

"The grower and the chef have a symbiotic, intertwined relationship. When you go out to the grower and know the dog's name, their children's names, it's a semi social relationship.

"Unlike the bigger players in the corporate world, they don't know the growers as intimately as we do as a small business. So, when they're hurting, we're hurting."

The relationship between chefs and producers is changing. The economy of scale makes it harder for small business to deal directly with local growers.

"It's increasingly difficult to order say one box of broccoli because 10 pallets are going to Brisbane in

an hour - I'm not going to get my one box off those pallets," explains Dion.

For restaurant owners Alex and Jen Cameron, they'd like to see a world where it was somehow 'fairer' in terms of price margins.

"Everyone who touches that box of tomatoes, from the grower to the truckie - everyone takes a bit," Alex said.

"If everyone was to put their appropriate margin on that - you couldn't afford those tomatoes. It's a real issue."

On a personal level, Jen and Alex said it was a real concern for them when it comes to teaching their young children about healthy eating.

"We live in a society where eating fast food is so much cheaper than fresh produce," Alex said.

"So much hard work has gone into educating people on healthy eating - it would be incredibly sad to see that work go to waste as we are now living in a world where fresh produce is spiraling in price and out of the realms of possibility for the average family," Jen said.

"We want to see change for Queensland's growers. We want growers to be paid fairly for their work and what they produce."

"This is an opportunity for people to show they truly care about fresh fruit, vegetables, and nuts being grown in Australia - now and in the future."

WE GIVE A
FORK

The time is now to share your story

“Do not grow more, grow less and charge more; respect the value of your business and your risk.”

This is the advice from Far North Queensland melon producer Shaun Jackson who recently shared his story with QFVG as part of our ‘We Give A Fork’ campaign.

My name is Shaun Jackson, Director of Daintree Fresh in Lakeland, Far North Queensland.

I produce watermelons and honeydew melons for predominantly export but also some domestic markets.

In early 2023 I received calls from three agents, coming indirectly from supermarkets, asking me to grow rockmelons. I said NO for many reasons.

At the time I asked each of them for prices and likely volumes. Of course there was no commitment in any way. Two of the agents even went so far as to offer to finance the crop when I said I couldn't afford it, saying they would take the money out of my returns.

As I suspected, and many melon growers would know, it has been the worst rockmelon pricing year for a while.

If I had taken up the offer, not only would I have had to pay the agents money back, but I would have lost a lot of money to develop the equipment to produce it.

But no matter how much I lost, the agent would make a commission on what he did sell, and chase me up for what I owed him, to “finance the crop”.

Firstly, almost all these requests are verbal. Maybe your particular buyer will come up with a forecast price but if it is floating - beware. All they are trying to do is make sure they have supply to keep their orders filled and their shelves full.

You will not be the only grower they ask. There could be hundreds asked between the agents and supermarkets trying to get their existing preferred suppliers to do the crop or increase production to take up any slack.

If you have been out of the crop for any time you will be blown away when you start spending dollars between the increased cost of labour, transport, boxes, and the creep of lower prices from variable size payments.

Even changing varieties over the season, you will get variable size lower prices for large and small fruit meaning the real average price is a lot lower than originally quoted.

You may be smart enough to even consider why there is an opening in a particular crop according to your buyers. Just maybe the grower who dropped the crop went broke trying to do it for existing prices.

No one takes the risk except the grower. Only grow to order or price; do not speculate. You can make more money from less, particularly as the financial pressures start to bite with the general public.

It is time growers considered much more carefully what and how much they grow; there have been more major players in our industry hurt from low margins, natural disasters, rapid changes in regulatory costs, labour costs (with a drop in productivity), carton costs and of course fuel prices. And don't forget – on average growers are getting returns as low as the late 90's and in some cases less.

Do not grow more, grow less and charge more; respect the value of your business and your risk.

Now is the time to take charge, it is cheaper to slash a block than pick it and sell under cost. All those in the chain make money while you lose it. It also makes people get a false sense of what your product is worth.

I had an agent say to me that the market is getting back to 'normal prices', this is bull@#%.

The public will pay \$100/kg for a cherry ripe, \$6 for a coffee, but believe a bunch of broccolini should be under \$3 and a melon should be less than \$6 retail.

We are the cheapest and healthiest food with the greatest risk.

*Shaun Jackson
Director
Daintree Fresh*

Shaun Jackson

WWW.WEGIVEAFORK.COM.AU



Supermarket inquiries

Grower prices just one piece of the puzzle

In the last month, QFVG wrote two submissions to a long list of inquiries announced into supermarket price gouging, however behind the scenes there's been a lot more action with nine TV interviews; 11 radio interviews; 19 newspaper articles; five media releases; and 29 State and Federal Government meetings along with meetings with both the Coles and Woolworths arbiters, Independent Reviewer of the Code, the ACCC and the ACTU to ensure all and sundry understand the depth of the issues.

It is understandable that many growers may view this current flurry of attention with skepticism, doubtful that the outcome will be any different this time. However, the level of scrutiny appears more pronounced this time around, with the intensity of focus and sheer volume of individual reviews and inquiries rarely seen.

In 2023 QFVG adopted 'profitability of growers' as our number one priority, as it became increasingly evident that the industry was on a knife-edge.

The more we investigated growers of all size across multiple commodities, the more we worked out the sector, regardless of size and scale, has nothing left in the kitty. Maintaining the status quo was no longer an option.

A successful retail sector is an integral part of a successful Queensland horticulture industry, and all businesses along the supply chain need to be profitable to keep operating.

However, prices paid to growers are one part of the puzzle. To truly secure long-term sustainability for our industry, governments must consider and address all current factors contributing to the margin squeeze threatening its viability. In saying this, whilst focus is firmly on retailers we must be a part of the conversation and solutions.

In response to both the Senate Select Committee on Supermarket Prices and Independent Review of the Food & Grocery Code of Conduct 2023–24, QFVG put forward the following recommendations:

The code is made mandatory. However, this action will not be effective on its own and will need to be combined with:

- Significantly strengthened penalties (to the level they would impact shareholders).
- A guarantee that the process of dispute resolution was timely and not financially burdensome for growers (given the greater legal resourcing of retailers along with the perishability of produce).
- Arbiters were fully independent and perceived as so, of those they were reporting on.
- Significant civil pecuniary penalties for individuals employed by the signatories who breach the code.
- Compensation for growers who have been significantly affected by a code breaches.
- Empowerment of ACCC to act, even if they don't ever need to – as it would serve as a deterrent into the future.

QFVG has opposed the idea of 'real-time' price data saying it may provide unintended consequences such as collusion or anti-competitive practices. Instead, we supported the disclosure of periodic information to an impartial entity to act as a 'watch dog'.

Read QFVG's submissions
(go to submission page and search)

Senate Select
Committee on
Supermarket
Prices

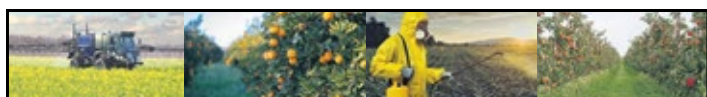


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Food and
Grocery Code of
Conduct Review
2023–24



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AXE THE TAX:

QVFG doubles down on collective voice to stop double dipping levy

QVFG has called on the Federal Government to axe its looming biosecurity tax if it is fair dinkum about reducing cost pain to growers.

Nationally, the sector has rejected the tax since it was first mooted last year, giving substantial feedback around its concerns to the office of Agriculture Minister Murray Watt.

Last month, Mr Watt announced he had listened to industry and the levy would be redesigned to make contributions fairer and more transparent - a response which has failed to put industry at ease.

"This levy will raid \$50 million from those in agriculture which is unfair given they already heavily contribute to biosecurity costs," QVFG CEO Rachel Chambers said.

"To add insult to injury, growers have also been told this money will go to

consolidated revenue which means growers won't have any oversight as to how this money, once collected, will support our biosecurity concerns instead of just funding another function of government."

Ms Chambers said it was simply a tax on growers under the guise of a levy.

"There is a sad irony in the fact that while government is rightly investigating whether supermarkets are treating growers and consumers fairly, their own policies are increasing growers' costs," she said.

"While the Federal Government is pursuing their 'double dipping' tax, we are doubling down on our call for them to commit to an armistice on any changes that will further drive-up costs for growers.

"Doesn't government have a duty of care to the Australian people to ensure their own decisions aren't

contributing to the precarious footing Australian horticulture is currently, and very publicly revealing?"

The levy, set to be introduced on 1 July, comes after a barrage of policies in the past 12 months that have driven up costs for growers.

"Our growers are at tipping point and need the government to axe the biosecurity tax and guarantee they will not impose any further cost burdens in the immediate future," Ms Chambers said.

"As part of our We Give A Fork campaign, we will be writing to every Federal and State parliamentarian to remind them that food security is a national security issue and looking after our growers - who are getting the rough end of the stick - is crucial in this cost-of-living crisis.

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QFVG Reward Your Loyalty

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) has had a proud partnership with WFI for many years. To celebrate our partnership, QFVG is giving its members who also hold an eligible WFI policy a rebate off their next year's QFVG membership renewal fee*.

To find out more, scan here:

Or contact Tim Hayden, QFVG's Head of Partnerships at thayden@qfvg.com.au



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Celebrating our

Partners Who Care

*QFVG members must hold a WFI policy, where QFVG is the referring agent, to be eligible for a rebate on their next year's QFVG membership renewal fee. A rebate will only apply while the policy remains active. In the event of joint policyholders, only one rebate is available per eligible WFI policy. The amount of the rebate is 25% of the commission amount received by QFVG from WFI for the referral of the relevant policy, capped at the value of the next year's QFVG membership renewal fee (whichever is lower). Any rebate is not funded by WFI and does not reduce the premium on any WFI policy. Offer is available from 01/01/2024 and QFVG may withdraw or change this offer at any time.



WE'RE Listening



engagement

Head of Engagement & Advocacy
Angela Seng-Williams

Over the past couple of months, we've been talking with hundreds of growers across the state to continue to shape our national We Give A Fork campaign.

From banana, papaya, mango, and vegetable growers in the State's far north; avocado, macadamia and vegetable growers in Bundaberg; and Burdekin Bowen growers - what did we hear and learn?

In raw Queensland speak, growers told us to 'go hard or go home'. We were also told to make sure we capture grower stories from across the nation, and to fight on their behalf to achieve lasting impact for them and horticulture. You want us to ensure the invisible or hidden issues are made visible.

Growers also applauded the three key issues the campaign is addressing - margin squeeze and the escalating costs of doing business; policy pile on; and our brand or reputation as a

sector. All this through grower stories highlighting the complexity of the horticulture industry.

Amidst the positive support and momentum that is building, this is what you, our members want to see happen now. Growers deserve:

- the ability to pay themselves and be treated fairly and ethically as they pay and treat their workers. One rule for all.
- viable farms and profitable agri-businesses.
- a transparent, fair, and free market where retail margins are shared.
- a price above the cost of production like the rest of the supply chain.
- the ability to pass through escalating costs like other sectors do.

- respect for their efficiency, innovation, and quality produce.
- politicians who genuinely take them seriously and consumers who value and eat their produce.
- practical government policy and a winding back of what is not working.
- accessible mental health supports outside 9 - 5 office hours.
- practical, consistent compliance that makes sense.
- retailers to share the compliance burden - they need it too.
- a peak industry body that has their back.

Most of all, growers want simple actions done well not just words, even if it is again pioneering into the great unknown.

We are hearing you!



PADDOCK TO PLATE

QFVG SPENDS THE DAY WITH KALFRESH

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers alongside our friends at the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) enjoyed an informative paddock to plate tour at Kalfresh Vegetable's facilities in the Scenic Rim at the end of January.

The tour provided a first-hand glance into what it takes to produce some of Queensland's best vegetables with key insights into the logistics, workforce management, and continuous innovation and process optimisation considerations for the business.

The growing, harvest and packing process for onions, carrots, corn, and beans were highlighted with Kalfresh Founding Director Robert Hinrichsen discussing a range of topics related to regenerative agriculture, soil health, cover cropping and sustainability across the supply chain.

The warm hospitality continued with a beautiful lunch at the Scenic Rim Farm Shop where Genevieve Windley explained that almost all produce we were enjoying was grown a stone's throw from where we sat under the magnificent 124-year-old jacaranda that graces the Farm Shop's front lawn.

Thank you Kalfresh for hosting this valuable experience for the teams.



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THE END OF AN ERA



I N F O P E S T

For many years, Infopest has been Australia's number one AgVet chemical database. Originally developed by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (then DPI), QFVG (then Growcom) took over the product in 2012.

Operating as a free service for five years, in 2017 Growcom brought in user charges via an online subscription model. QFVG always saw this service as necessary for our growers and we never wanted to add to the burden of costs so annual subscriptions were set as a very modest \$50+ GST annually.

In 2022, as part of a Board review into all activities of QFVG's project and program delivery arm Growcom,

a strategic review of Infopest was undertaken. The review confirmed our beliefs, that Infopest had been a long-standing platform for the dissemination of critical information to support the identification and use of AgVet chemicals by users throughout Australia. However, despite being recognised as the number one platform for AgVet chemical information in Australia, it failed to generate substantive revenue to ensure its long-term viability. Basically, although valued it had become entrenched as a given in the horticultural landscape.

The review suggested Infopest held significant potential that may be unlocked with the right business model in place. However, this potential needed capital and skilled personnel.

The board set the task to find an entity to adopt and further the program and in the past year every effort has been made to find a way forward, and even though we have been close to finding a great result for industry, we ended the year being unsuccessful.





Late 2023, we received news that another platform may be in operation shortly and as such had to decide whether to continue to provide this service at the cost of our members. A decision was made that Infopest would be shut down at the end of January.

Emails have been issued to impacted licence holders as to their options. On 31 January, the platform was officially closed with all access removed to prevent any liability issues around unmaintained data.







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ON-FARM CONNECTIVITY IN CRISIS

Members have told us that connectivity in the bush is in crisis. In our view, if it wasn't so serious, it'd be a joke.

We asked growers about the challenges they are facing 'getting connected'. What we heard was that growers have bigger fish to fry. Getting connected is not even on your radar when a reliable form of communication, something we often take for granted, eludes you.

Growers' frustration included:

- mobile service drop outs
- patchiness of mobile coverage from one side of the farm to the other; and
- concern for the health and safety of staff being without phone service.

Many are still reliant on old ADSL copper wire reporting that they lose all communication when it rains, but also when it is windy. Others cannot even make use of their landline at particular times of the day because the line is so crackly.

It was most surprising to find the locations experiencing these issues included parts of the Sunshine Coast, Lockyer Valley, and the Wide Bay. Hardly locations you'd consider rural, and certainly not remote. One grower said, "It's not woop woop you know."

The impact of limited mobile service and connectivity is that growers in these situations are unable to embrace AgTech innovation for business and production efficiencies.

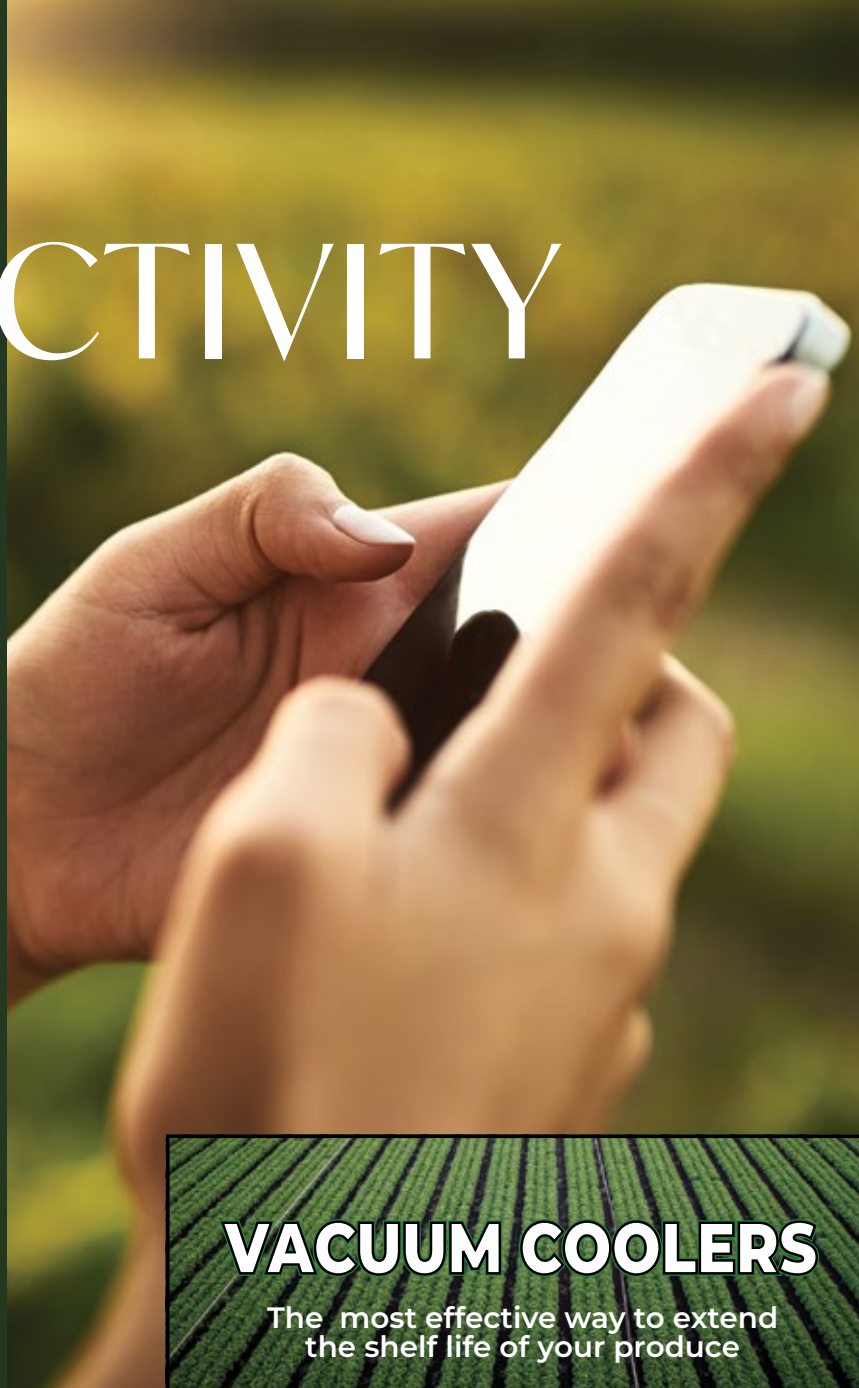
Regional Tech Hub is here to help.

QFVG is a member of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) on your behalf. This membership enables our members to access resources and expertise through the Regional Tech Hub.

The Hub offers independent advice and support around phone and internet options and technical issues. If you're having connectivity issues, give them a call today!

GET IN TOUCH

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MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

For members



QUEENSLAND FRUIT
& VEGETABLE GROWERS

Employer Assistance Program (EAP Assist)

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers has activated mental health support for Grower Members providing confidential phone counselling throughout Queensland.

Do you experience...

Stress, anxiety,
and/or depression?

Workplace conflict?

Family, relationship,
or succession
challenges?

Alcohol and
substance abuse,
gambling, or domestic
violence?

Counselling is a conversation, a time to talk freely to help resolve both workplace and personal issues before they impact on overall mental health, wellbeing, safety, and productivity at work.

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DISASTER ASSISTANCE

It's been quite the ride in Queensland over summer with extreme heat, bushfires, hail, storms, flooding, and cyclones impacting the state - some areas with cumulative impacts. Below is a list of current disaster assistance.

Grants and Loans

Tropical Cyclone Kirrily

- Disaster assistance loans of up to \$250,000
- Disaster assistance (essential working capital) loan of up to \$100,000

Activated LGAs (Council)

- Boulia Shire
- Burdekin Shire
- Burke Shire
- Charters Towers Regional
- City of Moreton Bay
- Cloncurry Shire
- Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire
- Etheridge Shire
- Lockyer Valley Regional
- McKinlay Shire
- Mount Isa City
- Richmond Shire
- Townsville City
- Western Downs Regional
- Winton Shire

South Queensland Severe Storms and Rainfall (December 2023 - January 2024)

- Disaster assistance grants of up to \$75,000
- Disaster assistance loans of up to \$250,000
- Disaster assistance (essential working capital) loan of up to \$100,000

Activated LGAs (Council)

- City of Gold Coast
- Logan City
- Scenic Rim Regional

Tropical Cyclone Jasper, associated rainfall and flooding

- Disaster assistance grants of up to \$75,000
- Disaster assistance loans of up to \$250,000
- Disaster assistance (essential working capital) loan of up to \$100,000

Activated LGAs (Council)

- Cairns Regional
- Cassowary Coast Regional
- Cook Shire
- Douglas Shire
- Hinchinbrook Shire
- Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire
- Mareeba Shire
- Tablelands Regional
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire
- Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire

Northern Queensland Bushfires

- Disaster assistance loans of up to \$250,000
- Disaster assistance (essential working capital) loan of up to \$100,000

Activated LGAs (Council)

- Cook Shire
- Mareeba Shire
- Tablelands Regional

Southern Queensland fires

- Disaster assistance grants of up to \$75,000
- Disaster assistance loans of up to \$250,000
- Disaster assistance (essential working capital) loan of up to \$100,000

Activated LGAs (Council)

- Bundaberg Regional Council
- Central Highlands Regional
- Gladstone Regional
- Maranoa Regional
- North Burnett Regional
- South Burnett Regional
- Southern Downs Regional
- Toowoomba Regional
- Western Downs Regional

Freight subsidies

Subsidies of up to \$5,000 are available to primary producers to assist with the movement of stock, feed, machinery, fuel, water, and building or fencing materials.

Individual disaster stricken property

If a primary producer is not in an area activated for Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements - but has suffered significant damage from a natural disaster - they are able to apply for an Individual Disaster Stricken Property (IDSP) declaration.

MORE INFORMATION DISASTER ASSISTANCE GRANTS, LOANS & SUBSIDIES ONLINE:

Grants and Loans



SCAN HERE

Freight Subsidies



SCAN HERE

Disaster Stricken Property



SCAN HERE

Bauer's Organic Farm

MEET ROB BAUER



As part of the QCWA Country Kitchens Meet a Farmer initiative, the Country Kitchens team recently visited Rob Bauer at Bauer's Organic Farm, located in the Mount Sylvia & Upper Tenthill areas of the Lockyer Valley. Rob is a fourth-generation farmer, with the Bauer family starting to farm the land in 1885.

About half the farm is devoted to organic cropping, with the remainder of the 'hilly' treed country and creek areas providing habitat for wildlife and good organic-farm-critters.

Rob knew that he wanted to be a farmer for as long as he could remember. He loves the variety that you get day to day, as well as the bigger picture of providing delicious produce for customers across the country.

With celebrity chefs labelling Rob's potatoes "the best spuds in the world", Rob puts his produce quality down to their organic practices and the regions unique soil.

"The Lockyer Valley has some of the best soil in the world. The soil is stacked the right way which makes a big difference - you have fertile dark soil at the top and well-draining soil at the bottom. We are especially lucky as we have a mix of volcanic and sandstone rock," Rob said.

Taking advantage of the fertile soil, Bauer's Organic Farm currently grows three varieties of potatoes, three varieties of carrot, two varieties of garlic, wombok, parsnip, watermelon, butternut pumpkin, jap pumpkin (kent) and celery. They try a mix of old and new each year, with parsnips being a newer crop that is going well.

"Nearly everything we pick is already under order. That is why we plant regularly every two weeks. This lets us provide the freshest possible product," he said.

Rob also proudly has almost no waste from his carrot crop, with any broken carrots going towards juicing lines and other buyers.

Throughout his decades in farming, Rob has seen a lot of change in the industry and in the Lockyer Valley itself. He has been a champion for the region, and shares his knowledge and learnings on organic farming with industry and the public.

To learn more about Bauer's Organic Farm, and where you can purchase their produce, SCAN HERE:



Pumpkin & Chickpea Coconut Curry

Recipe courtesy the Country Kitchens Team.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons sunflower oil
- 1 large brown onion, chopped
- 4cm piece fresh ginger, grated
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tablespoons yellow curry paste
- 2 x 400g cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 400mL can coconut milk
- 2 cups cooked pumpkin, mashed
- 1 cup vegetable stock, salt reduced
- 2 limes, juiced
- 3/4 cup fresh coriander leaves, chopped

METHOD

- HEAT** oil in large pan over medium heat.
- ADD** onion, ginger, garlic and curry paste. Stir until aromatic, around 2 minutes.
- STIR** in chickpeas, coconut milk, pumpkin and vegetable stock. Do not allow to boil, just slow simmer until heated through.
- ADD** lime juice to taste and serve with sprinkle of coriander.



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MELBOURNE 2024



BRISBANE MONTHLY SUMMARY

February

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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
BERRIES,Blackberries	141.56	125g	0.50	4.00	4.00	2.42	Queen Rosa		18LCtn	15.00	24.00	24.00	19.43
Blueberries		125g	1.00	8.00	8.00	3.59	Sugar		18LCtn	30.00	45.00	50.00	37.50
Kiwiberries		125g	5.00	6.00	6.00	5.50	Suplum		18LCtn	20.00	20.00	20.00	20.00
Raspberries		125g	1.00	6.00	6.00	3.47	Black Diamond		5KgTray	25.00	35.00	35.00	30.00
CHERRIES,Lapin	44.41	2KgCtn	25.00	36.00	40.00	30.50	Black Splendor		9LCtn	10.00	18.00	18.00	14.00
Unspecified		2KgCtn	25.00	40.00	40.00	32.50	Donsworth		9LCtn	15.00	30.00	30.00	22.50
Lapin		9LCtn	40.00	70.00	70.00	55.00	Prime Time		9LCtn	12.00	25.00	25.00	16.86
Unspecified		9LCtn	40.00	70.00	70.00	55.00	Queen Garnet		9LCtn	20.00	30.00	30.00	26.19
CUSTARD APPLES,Pink's Mammoth	22.87	18LCtn	30.00	90.00	90.00	63.50	Tegan Blue		9LCtn	20.00	25.00	25.00	22.50
Pink's Mammoth		SLTray	50.00	150.00	150.00	86.90	Red Flesh,Unspecified		9LCtn	12.00	30.00	30.00	21.00
GRAPES,Dark Seeded,Black Magic	1443.12	18LCtn	20.00	40.00	40.00	27.50	STRAWBERRIES	226.48	250g	1.00	2.50	2.50	1.83
Dark Seeded,Black Muscat		18LCtn	32.00	50.00	55.00	44.98		250gLP	0.50	3.75	3.80	2.28	
Dark Seedless,Adora		18LCtn	50.00	60.00	60.00	55.00		500gLP	0.50	2.50	3.00	1.61	
Dark Seedless,Crimson		18LCtn	20.00	36.00	36.00	24.38	STATE: A=ACT, N=NSW, Q=QLD, S=SA, T=TAS, V=VIC, W=WA, Y=NT,						
Dark Seedless,Flame		18LCtn	10.00	30.00	30.00	21.73	I=IMPORTED						
Dark Seedless,Midnight Beauty		18LCtn	25.00	50.00	60.00	33.21	IMPORTANT NOTICE: Reproducing, publishing, emailing or re-Faxing this						
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White Seedless,Cotton Candy		18LCtn	30.00	35.00	35.00	32.50	Privileged/confidential information may be contained in this						
White Seedless,Ivory		18LCtn	12.00	30.00	35.00	15.64	document/message. If you are not the addressee indicated in the message (or						
White Seedless,Menindee		18LCtn	10.00	30.00	30.00	17.69	responsible for delivery of the message to such person), you may not copy or						
White Seedless,Sultana		18LCtn	40.00	45.00	45.00	42.50	deliver this document/message to anyone. In such case, please destroy this						
White Seedless,Sweet Globe		18LCtn	75.00	100.00	100.00	85.00	message, and notify us immediately. Opinions, conclusions and other						
White Seedless,Unspecified		18LCtn	36.00	36.00	36.00	36.00	information expressed in this message/document are not given or endorsed						
Dark Seedless,SweetCelebration		4.5KgCtn	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00	by the firm or employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised						
White Seedless,Autumn Crisp		4KgCtn	50.00	55.00	55.00	52.50	representative independent of this message. We use virus scanning software						
Dark Seedless,Sapphire		9KgCtn	40.00	60.00	70.00	46.43	but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
Dark Seedless,SweetCelebration		9KgCtn	30.00	60.00	60.00	41.31							
White Seedless,Autumn Crisp		9KgCtn	36.00	100.00	100.00	50.21							
White Seedless,Sweet Globe		9KgCtn	20.00	30.00	30.00	25.00							
White Seedless,Thompson		9KgCtn	15.00	30.00	32.00	21.55							
White Seedless,Unspecified		9LCtn	30.00	30.00	30.00	30.00							
NECTARINES,White Flesh	320.63	18LCtn	20.00	30.00	36.00	25.00							
Yellow Flesh		18LCtn	20.00	30.00	30.00	22.50							
White Flesh		5KgTray	12.00	26.00	26.00	17.67							
White Flesh,Donut		5KgTray	45.00	50.00	50.00	47.50							
Yellow Flesh		5KgTray	12.00	26.00	26.00	19.00							
NUTS,Peanuts	95.94	20KgBag	110.00	120.00	120.00	115.00							
Peanuts		3KgBag	29.00	29.00	29.00	29.00							
Peanuts		500g	4.65	5.40	5.40	5.03							
Peanuts		5KgBag	25.40	25.40	25.40	25.40							
Macadamia		Kg	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.75							
Pistachio		Kg	16.00	20.00	20.00	16.73							
PASSIONFRUIT,Panama	101.46	18LCtn	5.00	35.00	40.00	19.08							
Purple		18LCtn	5.00	50.00	60.00	22.68							
PEACHES,Cling-stone,Golden Queen	410.00	18LCtn	20.00	30.00	30.00	25.00							
White Flesh		18LCtn	10.00	24.00	30.00	20.00							
Yellow Flesh		18LCtn	10.00	26.00	26.00	17.33							
White Flesh,Donut		5KgCtn	20.00	50.00	50.00	36.79							
White Flesh		5KgTray	12.00	24.00	24.00	18.33							
Yellow Flesh		5KgTray	12.00	24.00	26.00	18.56							
Cling-stone,Golden Queen		DLTray	18.00	32.00	34.00	25.00							
PLUMS,Amber Jewel	489.66	18LCtn	10.00	25.00	25.00	17.50							
Black Beaut		18LCtn	30.00	40.00	40.00	35.00							
Black Splendor		18LCtn	15.00	25.00	25.00	20.00							
Cherry		18LCtn	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50							
Donsworth		18LCtn	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
Doris		18LCtn	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
Prime Time		18LCtn	15.00	26.00	26.00	20.50							

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
BEANS,Borlotti	641.20	Kg	8.00	10.00	10.00	8.69	Open Varieties,Red Oak		Carton	10.00	14.00	16.00	13.00
Broad		Kg	5.00	6.00	7.20	5.50	Radicchio		Tray	28.00	40.00	45.00	29.43
Flat,Continental		Kg	4.00	6.00	6.00	4.55	MUSHROOMS,Asian,Black Fungus	74.93	100g	3.00	3.60	3.60	3.30
Round S'less		Kg	1.50	8.00	8.00	5.24	Asian,Enoki		100g	2.20	2.70	2.70	2.45
Snake		Kg	7.00	11.00	12.00	9.50	Asian,Shitake		100g	3.30	4.00	4.00	3.80
CABBAGES,Red	574.00	Carton	20.00	65.00	70.00	36.57	Asian,Oyster		150g	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.60
Sugarloaf		Carton	24.00	55.00	60.00	39.40	Asian,Shimeji		150g	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.80
Ballhead		Each	3.00	8.00	8.00	5.19	Swiss Brown		200g	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.90
Red		Each	0.10	10.00	12.00	2.98	Asian,Oyster		200g	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Savoy		Each	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.50	Asian,Enoki		300g	2.20	3.20	3.20	2.70
CHINESE CABBAGES,Wombok	93.86	16KgCtn	16.00	50.00	60.00	26.67	Asian,King Oyster		300g	3.80	4.20	4.20	4.00
CUCUMBERS,Gherkin	1286.44	10KgBag	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00	Asian,King Oyster		400g	3.60	4.00	4.00	3.80
Apple		10KgCtn	26.00	30.00	36.00	28.00	Swiss Brown		Kg	10.00	14.00	14.00	12.00
Baby,Qukes		10KgCtn	20.00	26.00	26.00	23.00	Vic Pine		Kg	25.00	25.00	25.00	25.00
Continental		10KgCtn	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	Asian,King Brown		Kg	10.50	14.00	14.00	12.25
Green		10KgCtn	10.00	40.00	40.00	24.33	Asian,Shitake		Kg	16.00	22.00	22.00	21.50
Lebanese		10KgCtn	4.00	30.00	32.00	16.31	Buttons		Kg	7.00	9.00	10.00	8.50
Lebanese,Mini		10KgCtn	20.00	28.00	28.00	25.00	Cups		Kg	6.00	9.00	9.00	7.43
Non-acid,Asian		10KgCtn	35.00	50.00	50.00	43.33	Flats		Kg	7.00	9.00	10.00	8.50
White		10KgCtn	24.00	30.00	36.00	27.00	PUMPKINS,Butternut	3267.70	18KgCtn	22.00	28.00	30.00	25.38
Baby,Qukes		250gLP	1.20	1.60	2.00	1.50	Jap		Bag	14.00	20.00	20.00	17.00
Continental		7KgBag	12.00	20.00	20.00	16.00	Butternut		Kg	0.50	0.90	1.00	0.65
Continental		8KgBag	16.00	22.00	22.00	19.00	Grey,Jarrahdale		Kg	0.50	0.90	1.00	0.70
Continental		9KgBag	14.00	22.00	22.00	18.00	Grey,Sampson		Kg	0.70	0.90	1.00	0.80
HERBS,Lemongrass	70.52	100g	2.20	3.00	3.00	2.60	Jap		Kg	0.30	0.80	1.00	0.54
Basil		Bunch	1.00	2.40	2.40	2.00	SALAD LEAVES,Baby Spinach	12.47	1.5KgCt	12.00	24.00	30.00	16.43
Chervil		Bunch	2.00	2.50	3.00	2.50	Rocket		1.5KgCt	14.00	24.00	30.00	19.38
Chives Garlic		Bunch	1.60	2.40	2.50	2.40	STATE: A=ACT, N=NSW, Q=QLD, S=SA, T=TAS, V=VIC, W=WA, Y=NT, I=IMPORTED						
Chives Onion		Bunch	2.50	3.50	3.50	3.25	IMPORTANT NOTICE: Reproducing, publishing, emailing or re-Faxing this report is prohibited as is the creation of a derivative work eg. Database.						
Coriander		Bunch	1.20	2.00	2.40	1.85	Privileged/confidential information may be contained in this document/message. If you are not the addressee indicated in the message (or responsible for delivery of the message to such person), you may not copy or deliver this document/message to anyone. In such case, please destroy this message, and notify us immediately. Opinions, conclusions and other information expressed in this message/document are not given or endorsed by the firm or employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised representative independent of this message. We use virus scanning software but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
Dill		Bunch	1.60	2.40	3.50	2.30							
Garden Thyme		Bunch	1.50	2.00	2.00	2.00							
Lemon Myrtle		Bunch	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.00							
Lemon Thyme		Bunch	2.20	2.80	2.80	2.50							
Marjoram		Bunch	1.80	2.50	2.50	2.15							
Mint		Bunch	1.60	2.20	2.20	1.90							
Oregano		Bunch	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.40							
Rosemary		Bunch	2.00	3.40	3.50	2.90							
Sage		Bunch	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.50							
Sorrel		Bunch	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.50							
Spearmint		Bunch	2.00	2.50	2.50	2.25							
Tarragon		Bunch	2.00	3.20	3.20	2.60							
Thai Basil		Bunch	2.50	4.00	4.00	3.25							
Vietnamese Mint		Bunch	2.00	2.80	2.80	2.70							
Lemongrass		Kg	10.00	12.00	12.00	11.00							
KALE,Green	24.42	250g	1.40	3.00	3.00	2.48							
Red		250g	2.00	3.00	3.50	2.50							
Green		Carton	18.00	26.00	30.00	22.00							
LETTUCE,Baby Cos	608.64	Carton	10.00	18.00	20.00	14.24							
Baby Cos,Midi		Carton	20.00	26.00	28.00	22.00							
Baby Cos,Sweet Gems		Carton	18.00	24.00	24.00	21.00							
Baby Cos Hearts		Carton	12.00	20.00	20.00	19.00							
Cos		Carton	8.00	32.00	36.00	19.31							
Headed		Carton	2.00	45.00	45.00	14.87							
Hearts		Carton	16.00	20.00	20.00	18.00							
Open Varieties		Carton	8.00	14.00	16.00	11.00							
Open Varieties,Butter		Carton	10.00	12.00	14.00	11.00							
Open Varieties,Green Oak		Carton	10.00	14.00	16.00	13.00							



FRUIT AND VEGETABLE WHOLESALE MARKET PRICE REPORTING

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LEGISLATION UPDATES

CLOSING LOOPHOLES ACT



workplace relations

Focus HR Founding Director
Naomi Wilson

The industrial relations legislation updates continue to come thick and fast, with the first round of Closing Loopholes amendments to the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) (FW Act) passed by both houses of Parliament.

These changes cover regulated labour hire, workplace delegates, criminalising wage theft and the introduction of an offence for industrial manslaughter, as well as family and domestic violence discrimination.

Below is a summary of changes that have already been triggered with further changes to come into effect on 1 July 2024.

'Same Job, Same Pay' for Regulated Labour Hire

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) now has the power to make orders requiring employers who provide their employees to a third party for work - described as a 'regulated host' - to pay their employees the same pay as employees of the host who do the same kind of work.

The new labour hire provisions create a right for various parties to apply to the FWC for a Regulated Labour Hire Arrangement Order (RLHAO).

The FWC must make a RLHAO if:

- an employer supplies or will supply, either directly or indirectly, one or more employees of the employer to a host to perform work for the host;
- a 'covered employment instrument' (generally an enterprise agreement) that applies to the host would apply to the employees if the host employed the employees directly to perform work of that kind; and
- the host is not a small business employer.

If a RLHAO is made by the FWC, the employer cannot, subject to limited exceptions, pay its employees less than the relevant rate of pay which would apply to the employee under the host's covered employment instrument. The rate of pay is the full rate (including bonuses, loadings, allowances, overtime, and penalty rates).

RLHAOs can commence operation on or after 1 November 2024.

A host employer must give notice of the RLHAO to any employer covered by a RLHAO and must, at the request of the employer, provide information to the employer to enable the employer to determine the rate of pay to be paid.

Workplace delegates' rights

There are also important changes to the rights of workplace delegates (a person appointed or elected in accordance with the rules of a union to be a delegate or representative for members who work in a particular enterprise).

These changes operate at the Award, enterprise agreement and individual rights level for a workplace delegate.

At the Modern Award level

At the Award level, the FWC will be required by 30 June 2024 to have included within all Awards a "delegate's rights" term. These terms must ensure that a workplace delegate is entitled to:

- reasonable communication with members and persons eligible to be members in relation to their industrial interests;
- reasonable access to the workplace and workplace facilities for the purpose of representing member and potential members interests; and
- unless the business is a small business, reasonable access to paid training during normal working hours for the purpose of their role as a workplace delegate.

Whilst the availability of workplace delegates training for the purpose of dispute resolution training is a feature currently of some Awards, it is not generally a feature across the Award system. Nor are the new "delegate's rights" concerning reasonable access to facilities and communication with members and potential members.

At the enterprise agreement level

All enterprise agreements (EA's) which commence their access period from 1 July 2024 (that is the employer has asked employees to vote on the EA before that date), need to have a "delegate's rights" clause that is at least as favourable as the clause within any Award that would otherwise apply to the employee.

If there is no term in the proposed EA, or the term is not as favourable as any aspect of the Award clause, then the Award clause applies as a term of the EA.

At an individual delegate's rights level

At an individual delegate's rights level, there are new "workplace rights" under the banner of "industrial activities" defined for workplace delegates. An employer of a workplace delegate must not:



FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Please contact the QFVG Workplace Relations line on 07 3620 3844 or email wrteam@qfvg.com.au

- unreasonably fail or refuse to deal with the workplace delegate;
- knowingly or recklessly make a false or misleading representation to the workplace delegate; or
- unreasonably hinder, obstruct or prevent the exercise of the rights of the workplace delegate.

Small Business redundancy exemption

Employees of small business employers (with less than 15 employees) are not generally entitled to redundancy pay.

The small business redundancy exemption is intended to remove the redundancy pay carve out for small businesses for circumstances where a larger business incrementally downsizes to become a 'small business employer' due to insolvency.

When a business incrementally downsizes in the lead up to liquidation or bankruptcy, the residual employees who are helping with the winding-up of the business, for example payroll and bookkeeping staff, historically have lost their entitlement to redundancy pay because the employer dropped to having less than 15 employees, thus becoming exempt from paying redundancies.

This exemption will now no longer apply in that circumstance.

Protections for those subjected to family & domestic violence

These changes extend existing anti-discrimination provisions within the Fair Work Act to offer better protection for employees who have been, or continue to be, subjected to family and domestic violence (FDV), in the following ways:

- Prohibit the creation and enforcement of 'discriminatory' terms within modern awards and enterprise agreements that discriminate against an employee on the basis of FDV or reasons relating to FDV;
- include subjection to FDV as a matter that the FWC must take into account when performing its functions or exercising powers; and
- expressly making subjection to FDV a 'protected attribute' (for the purposes of the Fair Work Act's general protections provisions), to offer more express protection for employees (and prospective employees) against adverse action (and unlawful termination) because they have, or are currently, being subjected to FDV.

Shutdown provisions

New shut down provisions will apply to periods of shut down this year. While the Horticulture Award is not listed; the Wine Industry and Clerks Award are.

Under the new rules:

- Employers must give at least 28 days written notice of the temporary closure for a particular period. If an employee is hired after notice is given, the employer must give them notice as soon as reasonably possible.
- An employee may be directed in writing to use their accrued annual leave during the shutdown period, provided that direction is reasonable.
- If an employee hasn't accrued sufficient annual leave to cover the shutdown period, the employer and an individual employee may agree for the employee to take leave without pay during the part of the shutdown period there is insufficient annual leave for. Agreement must be in writing and no longer is it possible to direct employees to take leave without pay during the shutdown period.

A clause in an employment contract which provides for unpaid leave during a period of annual shutdown may satisfy the requirement for an employee's agreement in writing. However, this point has not yet been considered by the FWC or a Court.

Employees without sufficient leave to cover the shutdown

If an employee doesn't have enough paid annual leave to cover all of the shutdown, the employee and employer can agree in writing to other options for the days not covered such as using:

- annual leave in advance in accordance with the relevant provision in the applicable modern award;
- leave without pay; or
- other paid time such as time off in lieu.

If there is no agreement, an employer's options are limited to:

- allowing the employee to perform work (if there is any) during the shutdown period; or
- paying the employee for the time for which annual leave cannot be used.

The shutdown notice period can be reduced if a majority of affected employees and the employer agree.



program update

Fair Farms National Program Manager
Sachin Ayachit

FAIR FARMS FOR WORKERS

The Fair Farms program impacts the lives of over 17,000 workers across nearly 700 horticulture sites throughout Australia. It rests on the foundational pillars of workers and growers, aiming to cultivate fair, safe, and ethical employment practices within the Australian horticulture sector.

We partner with growers to establish and implement systems that prioritise the well-being of workers in myriad ways. The process of Certification with Fair Farms signifies adherence to rigorous standards, including compliance with Australian regulations such as Fair Work and Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) requirements, independently verified for assurance.

But why is Fair Farms crucial for workers? Amidst an extensive array of criteria, workers experience significant benefits from five core requirements upheld by Fair Farms Certified entities:

1. Fair and responsible employment in compliance with Fair Work Act:

Fair Farms Certified growers implement systems in accordance with the Fair Work Act for all employees. The Fair Farms Certification provides

assurance (through a third-party audit) that the participant employs and treats workers in a fair and responsible manner and is compliant with the Fair Farms Standards.

This assurance includes that:

- the participant/grower engages and remunerates their staff in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules and Awards relating to fair work and immigration laws;
- the participant/grower understands and appropriately discharges their responsibilities towards workers engaged through third-parties (labour hire providers);
- the participant/grower ensures a safe work environment;
- the participant/grower follows an approach of zero-tolerance towards any form of forced labour, bonded labour or any form of modern slavery.

2. Documented procedures and a mechanism to address worker grievances:

The Fair Farms Certified grower is required to have a policy and procedure outlining how disputes

and grievances in the workplace are managed and resolved.

The policy and procedure ensure that no adverse action will be taken against a worker for making a complaint ('no retaliation').

The disputes policy outlines the:

- workers' right to know about any disciplinary action taken against them;
- workers' right to participate in a disputes process;
- workers' right to appeal a disciplinary action without fear of reprisal.

In addition:

- The policy is applied in a reasonable, equitable and fair manner to make sure disputes and grievances are managed in a timely way.
- Workers are aware of, and have access to, the disputes and grievances policy, and mechanisms.
- Workers have a way of anonymously reporting issues.



WATCH HERE

FAIR TALK WITH FAIR FARMS

Join Fair Farms on the first Wednesday of each month for 'Fair Talk' – a live, lunch time talk show where we invite guest speakers to share their insights on everything from current trends to future challenges.

To re-watch the first two episodes:



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3. Fair and ethical employment of overseas workers (including PALM & WHM)

If overseas workers are employed (either directly or through Labour Hire Providers), the business unit:

- has knowledge of visa types and compliance with visa rules/conditions
- uses VEVO checks to verify the legal entitlement of all workers on site to work in Australia
- A record of the VEVO checks is kept

The business unit demonstrates that overseas workers are properly employed under the relevant Industrial Instrument.

When necessary, the business is registered with the ATO as an employer of overseas workers and workers are taxed in accordance with the ATO requirements.

4. Safe working conditions

The program focuses on the WHS requirements for agricultural workers by implementing and enforcing safety regulations and guidelines. This includes providing proper training, protective gear, and regular audits to minimise the risks of workplace accidents and occupational hazards.

5. Safe accommodation and living conditions

If a Fair Farms Certified grower/ business provides accommodation to workers (whether on-site or offsite), the accommodation must meet occupants' basic needs and legal requirements for health and safety. They should also ensure accommodation is freely chosen and meets legal requirements.

Many certified Fair Farmers are using the Fair Farms certification as a point of difference to attract and retain workforce on farms. If you are Certified to Fair Farms and not using your credentials to inform workers about your Certification, we would recommend the following five ways to use your Certification as a point of difference for workers:

1. You should have received a 'We are Fair Farms certified' gate sign. Display the gate sign to inform workers that you are certified.
2. Display the Fair Farms information and logo on your website to outline how Fair Farms Certification would benefit workers.

3. Display the Fair Farms logo on your email signatures, promotional material, and invoices to notify your supply chain that you are certified.

4. Include the outline of the Fair Farms Certification in worker induction.

5. Display your Fair Farms Certification when you are advertising for workers.

The Fair Farms team is delighted to collaborate with you in sharing your Fair Farms success story with your invaluable workforce, who play a crucial role in its narrative.

Fair Farms is designed help you navigate and work through that complex landscape of workplace relations, workplace health & safety, and social/ethical compliance. We can guide and assist you through the Fair Farms process, so you get the most out of it.





HR / IR compliance

Fair Farms Workplace Relations Specialist
Amanda Higgins

ADDRESSING MODERN SLAVERY IN AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURE

The Fair Farms program plays a significant role in addressing issues related to modern slavery in Australian agriculture.

Modern slavery is a term used to describe serious exploitation.

The Fair Farms Standard is based on the foundations of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) and several of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and confirm that items such as:

- Employment is freely chosen.
- Freedom of Association and right to collective bargaining are respected.
- Working conditions are safe and hygienic.
- Child labour is not used.
- Living wages are paid.
- Working hours are not excessive.
- No discrimination is practiced.
- Regular employment is provided.
- No hard or inhumane treatment is allowed.

While specific statistics may vary, modern slavery remains a significant concern in Australia. According to estimates from the Global Slavery Index and other sources, thousands of people are believed to be living in conditions of modern slavery in the country. This includes forced labour, human trafficking, forced marriage, and sexual exploitation, occurring across various industries and demographics.

In response there have been proposals to introduce Australia's first Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

This commissioner would be tasked with overseeing efforts to combat modern slavery, including implementing actions from the recent review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018, and coordinating responses across government agencies, law enforcement, and civil society organisations.

By addressing vulnerabilities in high-risk sectors like agriculture, enhancing regulatory frameworks, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, these initiatives aim to eradicate modern slavery and protect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

So how does the Fair Farms program fit into the modern slavery landscape?

The Fair Farms program focuses on promoting fair and ethical employment practices within the horticulture industry, which is particularly vulnerable to modern slavery due to factors such as reliance on seasonal and migrant labour. By providing resources, training, and accreditation, the program aims to prevent exploitation, improve working conditions, and enhance transparency within agricultural supply chains.

The Fair Farms Program maintains a focus on prevention, awareness, and coordination, and all these efforts aim to mitigate the risks of exploitation, protection of vulnerable workers, and promotion of ethical business practices for transparency within the supply chains.

If you would like to speak to one of our dedicated team members about how the Fair Farms Program can assist in your business, please call us on 07 3620 3888 or



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FAIR FARMS



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- ✓ Work Health and Safety on Farms

This is the Conference not to be missed, hear from a great range of speakers and panelists with the program and speaker line up to be released soon.

DRONE TECHNOLOGY

GIVES BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE FUTURE

Third generation Innisfail banana and papaya farmers Matt and Ben Abbott have worked quietly and consistently to future-proof their family's farming operations.

More than a decade ago they converted their father's Mena Creek farm to certified organic. Then, in 2017, to shore up their agribusiness against biosecurity- and cyclone-related risks, the brothers purchased another banana farm in Wangan.

Now growing on 180 acres across two properties, Matt and Ben are looking to optimise the process of applying protectants and beneficial insects to their crop, as well as monitoring coverage and crop health using a drone.

A drone, they envisage, will afford them more regular, efficient, and targeted application and monitoring of their spraying programs than the traditional aerial application method, which they suspect will come under more scrutiny and face possible regulation in the future.

To support this technological development of their organic farming practices, the brothers were successful in their application for a 'Grow Your Field' seed funding grant as part of the Queensland horticulture's decade-long Future Fields strategy, supported by the Department of Agriculture.

The seed funding will assist the Abbotts to implement their vision while also providing the industry with important learnings on implementing drones in an intensive horticulture setting.

Understanding what kind of drone is best suited to their needs is the project's main question. Such a purchase requires consideration of associated imaging technology, licencing, and other aviation regulations.

It presents the Abbotts with a steep learning curve, but it's one they're eager to tackle, and they're not approaching it alone.

Kicking-off the project on the Wangan property in December last year, the Abbotts were joined by Paul Edwards of Cropwatch Information Services Pty Ltd, as well as members of the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC).

Already, the brothers have been testing drones, using dyes, and taking images to check coverage and efficacy. This trial-and-error approach is just one aspect of the buying process, but Ben and Matt are optimistic about what their eventual drone purchase will mean for their farm and the banana sector in the north.

"We're committed to good farming practices, and we're listening to knowledgeable people to help steer us in the right direction," Matt said.

As the drone is purchased and demonstrated in the coming months, there is no doubt many growers will be keen to see what this means for the future of large-scale spray technology, movement of beneficial insects, and broader crop monitoring.



L-R: Ben Abbott, Molly Blake, Stephanie Ruiz, Matt Abbott, Angela Seng-Williams, Paul Edwards, and Amelia Foster.

NEW ALLIANCE TO SUPPORT FINGER LIME INDUSTRY

Australian finger lime growers are set to be better supported through the establishment of the Australian Native Finger Lime Alliance (ANFA).

While native to Australia, finger limes are an emerging commodity in commercial farming, which to-date did not have any formal representation.

A 2021 AgriFutures report stated that the estimated farmgate value of the 'citrus caviar' commodity had grown from \$600,000 in 2012 to \$3.1 million in 2020.

With 20 major growers, predominantly along the east coast of Australia, Sunshine Coast native finger lime grower and Chair of the ANFA Board, Jade King said the alliance's mission was to support growers individually and as a group.

"As an emerging commodity, our efforts as growers will be 'better together' in refining our growing practices, as well as promoting this amazing native crop," Ms King said.

"Our growers can learn a lot more about cultivating finger limes through collaborative sharing of trials data, as well as developing best practice methods."

"I'm looking forward to working with finger lime growers in my capacity at ANFA to develop this industry both on- and off-farm, and increase the public's enthusiasm for finger limes."

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers welcomes ANFA to the horticultural family and looks forward to supporting its activities.



Chair of the ANFA Board, Jade King.



Finger lime growers looking to connect with ANFA can do so via the website:

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CARNARVON TRIALS PUSH JACKFRUIT GROWING TO *it's limits*

The picturesque backdrop of a Carnarvon sunrise or sunset belies the extreme environmental conditions under which research scientist Dr Melanie Ford and her team from the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) have operated their jackfruit variety research trial site.

The research station deals with extreme heat, cold winters, light intensity, and wind pressure, but this demanding subtropical desert climate provided an ideal setting for understanding the limits of what the jackfruit crop could withstand.

Established in November 2021, the Carnarvon site is part of the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia's (CRCNA's) Developing Next-Generation Orchards project. The project brought together expertise from multiple government agencies, and industry organisations.

Along with Carnarvon, the project has another Western Australian site in Kununurra, with a further six sites across the Northern Territory and Queensland.

The project is investigating high-density and trellis planting systems, varieties, and irrigation methods to examine production capacity, profitability, and cyclone resilience.

As the trial moves towards completion this year, it's clear the research has produced some insightful results.

While the benefits of trellising may be realised in other locations, in Carnarvon tying trees to the trellis formed more of a two-dimensional branch structure, reducing canopy cover, and exposing the plants to sunburn.

Increased exposure to Carnarvon's high light intensity did however provide an opportunity for the team to test different techniques to reduce sunburn. Namely, co-planting papaya to provide shade (and a secondary crop), as well as applying a kaolin clay spray on the jackfruit trees like sunscreen.

Dr Ford said it was envisioned that the "clay particles will be able to reflect sunlight and stop burning on the branches and leaves of the trees."

This experiment proved effective during the tree's establishment period.

The incursion of phytophthora on the research block presented another challenge, but again this was used as a learning opportunity for the researchers who successfully managed the pathogen, which attacks plant roots, through soil treatments and adding nutrients to the plants.

"The silver lining to our pathogen issues with this block is that we now have learnt different management techniques we can use to combat them, and this is information we can pass directly onto the growers," Dr Ford said.

CRCNA Chair, Ms Sheriden Morris said this is a great example of the collaboration occurring across Northern Australia, aiding agricultural diversification and climate resilience.

"Projects like this provide growers with sought after management advice, as well as strategies to mitigate the risks associated with tropical cyclones and severe weather in the north."

Although jackfruit was the catalyst crop in this trial, the lessons about production methods, dealing with climate, and managing diseases are useful to growers of different orchard crops in a variety of locations.

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.



[WATCH VIDEO](#)



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WELCOME AMY NASH SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND QAWN OFFICER



A love for people in the agricultural sector is what drew Amy Nash to her new post as the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (QAWN) Officer for South East Queensland.

Hosted by the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG), Amy will work under the banner of QFVG's project delivery arm, Growcom.

She joined the team in late November and is one of seven QAWN officers available to primary producers across the state.

Having worked in employment services and real estate on-and-off for six years, Amy's employment services experience exposed her to a range of industries.

"Working with farmers was a different space for me. They are genuinely good people and I want to work with them," she said.

Before joining QFVG, Amy was the Harvest Trail Service Manager with MADEC for two-and-a-half years, connecting employers and employees across the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, and Wide Bay regions.

Stepping into the QAWN Officer role, Amy's focus is on working with growers on attraction and retention of employees.

Primarily, Amy says there has been a shift in the kinds of workers growers need on their properties.

"We are used to calls for itinerant or unskilled candidates new to the industry, who do things like picking and packing, but with a shift towards on-farm automation, growers are looking for skilled labour to operate this machinery."

This is where QAWN Officers like Amy can help, forming connections with organisations that train this skilled workforce, identifying areas where transferable skills mean workers from other industries can use their expertise on farms, and importantly, connecting growers with these workers.

Amy is keen to support agribusinesses in creating sustainable workforce strategies and demonstrate to prospective employees how they can build a fulfilling career in horticulture.

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Working with farmers was a different space for me. They are genuinely good people and I want to work with them.

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Connect with your local QAWN Officer:

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YOUNG COUPLE UNCORKS FRUITFUL WINEMAKING CAREER



After completing three vintages, Ravenscroft Vineyard owners Nick and Caitlin Roberts' next goal is to increase their grape production.

As they sipped their way through idyllic wineries dotting the Granite Belt, London residents Caitlin and Nick Roberts were about to have a conversation with a renowned local winemaker that would change the course of their lives.

"We came across from London and we were visiting family, we happened to come out and do a wine tasting and met Mark Ravenscroft who is a well-known winemaker in the region," Nick said.

"He told us he was selling his vineyard and we thought it was a unique opportunity to actually have a real-life change from living in Central London."

Drawn to the allure of a change of pace and the flexibility to raise a family, Caitlin and Nick quickly fell in love with the idea of swapping their cramped London city lifestyles for a new beginning in Southern Queensland's wine capital of Stanthorpe.

"We've always loved food and wine, and it was important for us to have a business where we could work from home and spend time with our daughter," Caitlin said.

Following further conversations with winemaker Mark Ravenscroft and business advisers, the couple applied for a First Start Loan from the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) to help fund their purchase of Ravenscroft Vineyard.

Taking over Ravenscroft Vineyard has proved a big learning curve for the first-generation farmers, nevertheless, a worthwhile career.

"If you would've told me 10 years ago that I'd be out here in Stanthorpe owning a vineyard and a winery I just never would've believed you, never, and we wouldn't have been able to do it without the help of QRIDA," Caitlin said.

To find out how a First Start Loan could help you establish your Queensland primary production business, visit www.qrida.qld.gov.au/program/first-start-loan or contact QRIDA on 1800 623 946.



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



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

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



Farm Business Resilience Program

MENTORING FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

Maria Lorenzo of Lakeland Produce in Far North Queensland found herself at a crossroads recently with her organic banana and papaya business. Needing to invest in both expanded water storage as well as enhancing her approach to producing her value-add product range, Maria was unsure of which project to tackle first.



To focus her approach, Maria completed a whole farm risk analysis and Farm Business Resilience Plan through Growcom's Farm Business Resilience Program. Doing so allowed her to make an evidence-based decision to prioritise investment in further developing her value-add range, with profits from expanding this venture to go towards dam construction.

In pursuing the growth of her value-add product range, Maria sought business development advice from the FNQ Food Incubator. To help with the costs associated with this advice, Maria was successful in securing a QRIDA Farm Management Grant, which provides a 50 percent rebate on the cost of the FNQ Food Incubator's services.

Maria plans to implement this advice through building a commercial kitchen. This will allow her to increase the development and output of value-add products like chutneys and jams.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland (RFCS NQ) is also supporting Maria in updating her Farm Business Resilience Plan and applying for further financial assistance, like a QRIDA Sustainability Loan, as she works towards kitchen and dam construction.



Maria Lorenzo, pictured right, in the FNQ Food Incubator test kitchen.

Maria is also committed to the ongoing viability and growth of other agribusinesses. In association with the Farm Business Resilience Program, she invited a group of growers to her Lakeland property for the 'Building Resilience from the Ground Up' workshop in July 2023.

Farming organically in an area with limited water supply means environmental stewardship is a vital aspect of Lakeland Produce's success and mitigating future risks. So, Maria demonstrated to the group her application of best practice soil management and ecological farming

practices that have allowed her to maximise the health of her farm and efficiently use natural resources like water.

Lakeland Produce's story is one example of how developing a farm business resilience plan can enable agribusinesses to connect with organisations that can better their business and assist in making considered business decisions for the future.

The Farm Business Resilience Program is delivered by Growcom, the project delivery arm of the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers.

SHIPSHAPE GREENHOUSES A WIN FOR THE REEF

Jason Smith's approach to running his greenhouses is nothing short of meticulous. Maybe it's because he served in the Navy for nine years? Maybe it's because he just really loves his plants? Either way, the Carter & Spencer greenhouses he's in charge of turn out some beautiful eggplants.

The 1.2-hectare site is based in tranquil Moore Park Beach, 15 minutes outside of Bundaberg's CBD.

Jason's transition from fitter and machinist in the Navy to greenhouse manager was a happy coincidence.

Having moved to Bundaberg and looking for work, Jason found a job at a greenhouse where the grower manager noticed he 'had an eye for plants.'

He asked Jason if he wanted to become a grower, and the rest as they say is history.

Now he manages the only greenhouse facility in Queensland to be Hort360 Reef Certified.

Growcom—the project delivery arm of the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG)—delivers the Hort360 Great Barrier Reef (Hort360 GBR) program.

Using Hort360, horticulture growers can measure their approach to farm management against industry best practice and use this information to refine on-farm practices where needed.

Hort360 GBR Facilitator Michelle Haase congratulated the Carter & Spencer Group on their Reef Certification achievement.

"Carter & Spencer Group manage their farms to a very high standard and are proactive in adopting practices that ensure minimal losses of nutrient, pesticide, run-off, and sediment," she said.

"Becoming the first greenhouse to achieve Reef Certification is testament to their ongoing commitment.

"This sets a wonderful example for other protected cropping operations looking to ensure they are maintaining environmental best practice."

Pursuing Hort360 Reef Certification was an opportunity for Jason and his team to build on existing infrastructure. Ongoing engagement with Hort360 provides his team with a framework to guide future expansion on the site.

Running greenhouses with a crop cultivated in grow bags of coconut peat means soil management isn't part of Jason's operations, but there are plenty of measures his team takes around managing run-off and chemical use to protect the environment around their facility.

This is vital considering the greenhouses are only 600 metres as the crow flies from the southern Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

"Of a morning if the whole place is quiet and it's not windy, you can actually hear the surf crash from greenhouse three," Jason said.

"Moore Park Creek is also just up the road."

To preserve the sanctuary around them, run-off from the greenhouses goes into holding tanks that are then sprayed onto grass surrounding the greenhouses through sprinklers. Sedimentation beds around the site filter this water.

"So, we're not actually putting anything back (into the waterways) and it's going into the grass. It's a very slow filter through the sand," Jason said.

Looking to the future, maintaining Reef Certification while expanding operations is a priority for Jason.

"We have room for expansion, and whatever we do in terms of drainage, water storage, and chemical use will look to improve on standards we've already set," he said.

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Becoming the first greenhouse to achieve Reef Certification is testament to their ongoing commitment.

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



LINKING GROWERS WITH A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A grower's to-do list is never complete. Beyond the running of day-to-day operations there are longer term considerations around investing in improved on-farm practices and new products and equipment to minimise environmental impacts and get the most out of every crop.

The Southeast Queensland (SEQ) Water Quality Program is working with growers to promote sustainable land management practices and alignment with industry Best Management Practices (BMP).

Delivered through Growcom, the project delivery arm of the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG), the SEQ Water Quality team is comprised of agronomist Tim Wolens and climate adaptation expert Lene Knudsen.

Tim and Lene connect growers with knowledge, innovative solutions, organisations, and funding that helps them reduce sediment, nutrient, and pesticides entering local waterways and Moreton Bay.

They engage growers in one-on-one meetings, small groups or field days using on-farm demonstrations as a platform for collaboration.

Using digital tools to improve farm planning, replacing traditional chemical use with updated formulations, and upgrading farm infrastructure are some examples of the collaborations the team has worked on with growers from the pineapple, strawberry, vegetable, and tree crop industries.

The team also has built relationships with government agencies, natural resource management groups, industry associations, resellers, independent research organisations, and other service providers.

Tim and Lene have done the work to understand the range of tools, management interventions, and services available to growers to achieve profitable and sustainable farming practices. They take this knowledge about new approaches to growers and use their technical expertise and experience to guide them on which options may best suit their farms.

For instance, in the last year, growers, working with the SEQ Water Quality team, experienced success in nitrogen fertiliser efficiency and pesticide efficiency.

The SEQ Water Quality team promote innovative solutions to increase plant take-up, improve yields, and crop quality, while minimising inefficiencies for the greater benefit of the sustainable farming.

The SEQ Water Quality team presents an invaluable resource for growers across the region.

Get in touch with Tim or Lene today to see how they can support you.



Tim Wolens
SEQ Water Quality Program Manager
0409 848 076
twolens@qfvg.com.au

Lene Knudsen
SEQ Water Quality Facilitator
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lknudsen@qfvg.com.au

The SEQ Water Quality Project is proudly funded by the Department of Environment and Science.





North Queensland fruit, cane, and cattle operation Mackays received a Round Five RED Grant to build rural worker accommodation. IMAGE: QRIDA

ROUND SIX RED GRANTS CLOSING SOON

Agribusinesses across Queensland have until the end of this month to submit an expression of interest (EOI) for round six of the Government's Rural Economic Development (RED) Grants scheme.

The co-contribution grants of up to \$200,000 can be used for activities such as capital expenditure on buildings, plant, and equipment, as well as consumables used for the project.

EOIs for the sixth round of the RED Grant Scheme close 28 March 2024. Successful EOIs will be advised by 17 May 2024 and then be invited to submit a full application by 21 June, with final grants awarded from 16 August 2024.



[More information](#)

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www.qld.gov.au/FarminginReefCatchments



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MIXED FORTUNES FOR AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURE

New data shows mixed fortunes for an Australian horticulture however, the long-term outlook remains strong with total production value increasing by 2.8 per cent to \$16.3 billion.

The latest edition of the Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook, developed by Freshlogic on behalf of Hort Innovation, was released last month and includes information on 75 different horticulture categories across fruit, vegetables, nuts, and greenlife.

The Handbook captures the previous financial year's data and includes figures on national and state-level production values and volumes, exports and imports, processing volumes, fresh supply, retail, and food service distribution.

Insights from the 2022/23 Handbook include:

- Total production value of Australian horticulture in 2022/23 increased by \$434.3M (2.8 per cent) to \$16.3B. The rising value was driven by significant value increases in the fruit and vegetable categories – which increased 12.6 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively.
- It was a strong year for fruit value (increasing \$708.1M) with volume increasing marginally. Growing farmgate production value for fruit value was driven by large increases in production values for avocados (increasing \$196.9M), table grapes (increasing \$196.4M), bananas (increasing \$81.7M), apples (increasing \$78.4M) and cherries (increasing \$36.1M).
- Solid values for the vegetable industries have been achieved for another year. Overall vegetable production values reached a high of \$5.83 billion, increasing 5.4 per cent on 2021/22. While value increased, vegetable production volume dropped again in 2022/23 by 3.2 per cent, making 2022/23 the lowest year for production volume in six years.
- Overall nuts ended the 2022/23 year considerably weaker – decreasing by 42 per cent, or down \$527 million on 2021/22, to reach \$721.1 million. Volume also softened but at a lesser rate (23.7 per cent).
- The total value of fresh horticulture exports decreased by 3.4 per cent in 2022/23 to \$2.54 billion. Fruit export value increased 6.3 per cent on the previous year, while vegetable export values remained relatively stable dropping just one per cent and nut export value experienced a 15 per cent decrease.

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