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Fruit & Vegetable NEWS

Year of Horticulture gets carrot away
Loans to help growers build small-scale rural workers' accommodation
Energy productivity focus of new practical on-farm program



QUEENSLAND FRUIT
& VEGETABLE GROWERS



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welcome

Chief Executive Officer
Rachel Chambers



When we self-proclaimed this year as ‘The Year of Horticulture’ we hoped we would be able to effectively celebrate the work our growers do, educate consumers, and advocate to decision makers. We also hoped we could bring some fun and positivity into our industry, an industry which needs to shake off an image problem.

Our first learning after a jam-packed couple of months has been that we will need more than a year to celebrate horticulture having only celebrated a handful of our 104 Queensland commodities thus far.

We have spoken to thousands of consumers and learnt a lot about guerilla, pop up style, overnight activations. Of course, they’re a lot of work but it’s also a lot of fun to engage with consumers and showcase our amazing produce differently. However, more importantly, we have furthered our understanding of the knowledge and understanding gaps between growers and those we grow for.

Three of our learnings from the last few months have been:

Learning: We need to focus on educating our consumers as once they understand, they are our staunchest advocates.

Consumers genuinely want to know more about food production and find what growers may consider to be mundane, run of the mill information, quite fascinating. At our carrot activation we had a fact

sign that read, “You can fit 2000 carrot seeds in a teaspoon.” This one fact alone sparked conversation about how carrots are sown, how long they take to grow and what the impact of water and fertiliser is on taste.

Learning: We need to speak more about each link in the fresh produce supply chain and market our impact on employment.

Consumers have very little knowledge of the supply chain of fresh food, however, are interested in it. COVID has given us all a unique understanding of the impact of even one broken link. When we explain the variety of jobs in the horticultural supply chain we can see consumers start to comprehend the industry’s economic and social impact.

Learning: The feedback from retailers about what a consumer wants in fresh produce ‘specs’ should be up for debate.

The mini pineapples from our first activation consumers thought were fabulous for ‘purse size breakfast food.’ They also commented they were a ‘no waste’ size and that they didn’t like putting a half-cut pineapple back in the fridge. Are retail specs really what the consumer wants?

We can’t wait to see what else we unearth this year.

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LOANS TO HELP GROWERS BUILD SMALL-SCALE RURAL WORKERS’ ACCOMMODATION

Find out how you can fund the construction of housing for your rural workers with a Sustainability Loan from QRIDA.

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ENERGY PRODUCTIVITY FOCUS OF NEW PRACTICAL ON-FARM PROGRAM

Growers in the Southern Downs and Goondiwindi regions can access a new program to understand and manage on-farm energy consumption and at the same time, lower carbon emissions.



20.

YEAR OF HORTICULTURE GETS CARROT AWAY

After a quick stop at Brisbane’s Queen Street Mall the Easter Bunny burrowed her way to Queensland’s carrot capital, the Scenic Rim to stake her claim on the 600 million carrots grown in the region each year.



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CLOSING THE LOOP

Welcome to Horticulture Queensland's advocacy update - **Closing the Loop** – a snapshot of our advocacy efforts aimed at ensuring our 104 commodities across all growing regions have the loud, strong, and unified voice they need to thrive.

Rachel Chambers, QFVG CEO



Do we need a surcharge to survive?

Christmas eve last year I had a grower call me about a request to supply product during the Christmas period which would have seen them lose a great deal of money as picking, packing, and transporting costs would have all been incurred with public holiday rates. To counteract these losses, the grower requested an increase in the buy price, however this was declined, and the grower was told to provide the product as requested and absorb the cost. This is one of many stories we've been told where the power dynamic between grower and buyer most definitely sits with the buyer.

Australians love a good public holiday! For most people the days offer a welcome reprieve from work and an opportunity to have a little getaway while for others whose job doesn't afford them such conditions, they offer a pay increase for 'taking one for the team' so to speak.

Public holiday surcharges in the food service industry have been around for as long as I can remember and are thus far unregulated as to the amount they can add as a surcharge. The norm has been between 10 – 15 percent, however it has been reported that this is now creeping up to 20 percent. As a consumer I have no issue with these increases, as I understand that it costs the owner much more than usual to satisfy my hunger on these government gazetted days.

Paul Zahra, CEO Australian Retailers commented on the increases saying "...of course, this all comes down to the fact that with public holidays, they need to pay their staff more as part of their award or their contract with the individual staff members. So, to try and recover some of their costs, small businesses are actually looking at ways to pass on the cost of living crisis, but small business particularly are going through this cost of doing business."

Ahhh the ability to pass on costs – a foreign concept to any grower. In the supply chain the only ability for growers to recoup every and any cost rests in the hands of the buyer and their willingness to pay more.

In Australia, the Modern Slavery Act requires the Commonwealth Government, large businesses, and other organisations with annual revenue of \$100 million or more to undertake mandatory reporting of the risks in the supply chain (our supermarkets fall into this category). In its broadest definition, the term 'modern slavery' refers to any situations of exploitation where a person cannot refuse or leave work because of threats, violence, coercion, abuse of power or deception.

Abuse of power/misuse of power, in the food supply chain – now there's an interesting topic of conversation to be had...



New Chair announced for Queensland Horticulture Council

Bree Watson, Chief Executive Officer of Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers (BFVG) has been voted in as the new Chair of the Queensland Horticulture Council (QHC) following Joe Moro stepping down from the role after a four-year stint and recent appointment as Chair of Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG).

Mr Moro, a mango grower from Bibbohra near Mareeba, said it had been an honor to chair this important forum and to help guide input from regional growing areas into statewide horticulture policies for Queensland.

Mr Moro said, “The QHC plays a vital role in proactively planning for the future of Queensland horticulture. This year it is more important than ever to ensure a united voice in horticulture. QFVG has been happy to provide the secretariat support for this important forum since inception and will continue to do so to enable a loud, strong, and brave voice to government.”

The QHC was established in 2015 to bring together the voices of the regional horticulture bodies operating in Queensland and is the preeminent forum for deliberating horticulture policy in Queensland. It serves as a fundamental opportunity to raise issues and formulate agreed upon plans to move forward.

The Council is comprised of representatives from QFVG and each of the major regional grower groups in the State including FNQ Growers Association, Bowen Gumlu Growers Association, Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers, Gayndah & District Fruit growers Association, Lockyer Valley Growers Association and Granite Belt Growers Association.

The Council regularly meets with the Hon Mark Furner, Minister

for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities to ensure Queensland horticultural growers contribute directly to policy and position development.

Ms Watson brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role and looks forward to ensuring the views of Council members are heard and considered at all levels of Government.

“The QHC has been vital in contributing to policy development through consultations and submissions,” Ms Watson said.

“An example of this was the policy platform for the horticulture sector, ‘A Green Spring in Queensland’ which was informed by QHC for the 2020 Queensland election.”

The QHC thanked Mr Moro for his long service in the role and looks forward to his continued contribution.



BFVG CEO Bree Watson is the new Chair of the Queensland Horticulture Council.

SNAPSHOT: MARCH / APRIL 2023

Meetings with Government	Meetings with industry organisations	Submissions
7	16	4
Media articles published	Media mentions	Our Reach
10	145+	5,740,000+



Granite Belt information evening

In April, Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) travelled to the Granite Belt for an evening information session where the team discussed recent employment reforms.

Key takeaways from the session included:

- The original notion that providing case studies from workers, as a basis to prove that the 38 hours + overtime format would make them worse off, will fail. Fair Work will (and has) argue that the employee is better off under the new format, as they would be making time and a half over their 38 hours. Whether or not the farmer chooses to give them those hours is irrelevant as the law cannot control the lawful actions of an employer.
- Voluntary additional hours will not pass as above. One grower recently submitted an EA for approval, offering voluntary additional hours at 50c above the standard hourly rate. It was rejected on the grounds that the employee would be better off overall if they were paid at the overtime rate for their additional hours worked, and the fact that the employee could accept or reject the additional hours did not improve their position.
- TOIL is a valid way around the overtime model, however:
 - Time banked is banked hour for hour – 2 hours overtime, is banked at 2 hours TOIL. BUT,
 - If time accrued is not used within 6 months, it still must be paid at the overtime rate.
 - If the employee leaves before that 6-month period is up, it still must be paid out at the overtime rate.
 - This model can also apply to casual employees, however, may be viewed as an employment agreement that requires change of employment status.
- Workers can be paid their standard 38 hours, and then move to a piece rate model, provided that the piece rate model is properly structured, paid and documented. This can be an effective tool to manage overtime but must be structured correctly. Anything seen as an employer attempting to evade their obligations under the Award will not be looked upon favourably by Fair Work.

QFVG will continue to advocate on behalf of growers for voluntary additional hours; the increase of hours worked over number of weeks which currently sits at 152h/4wks for part/full time or 304h/8wks for casuals; and extending the time for using TOIL from 6 to 12 months.

We welcome feedback from growers as we continue to shape our advocacy position.

Emerging priorities for Queensland horticulture

The horticulture industry in Queensland is not only made up of a diverse array of commodities but has a number of regional grower groups who each strongly represent their own agendas to further the industry's progress.

Whilst regional representation is highly effective for pushing specific localised issues, a strong, united position across the state reduces the ability of government to play wedge politics, along with the ability to amplify the voice of the industry to the government on important state-wide impacts.

The Queensland Horticulture Council (QHC), which gathers regularly, provides this forum to advance issues and opportunities on behalf of industry. It does this by sharing information, framing unified policy positions, and developing a coordinated approach to advocacy effort. These QHC advocacy and policy positions are then fed into Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) as the state representative body for horticulture.

Recently the QHC met to begin discussing regional advocacy priorities for upcoming elections and potential solutions that have emerged across the state. It was interesting to note that similar issues were raised across regions although individual rankings of priorities differ.

For FNQ Growers road infrastructure and flood proofing the Bruce Highway, biosecurity protection, reducing the compliance burden, cost of production and IR laws are all top of the list. This is a similar list of priorities for the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association with the addition of energy and other input costs, and labour, particularly workers' accommodation.

Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers are focused on water security in the region – Paradise Dam, water meters and the push against telemetry in addition to connectivity and local government planning issues such as rates, and support for agritourism.

The Granite Belt Growers Association has also prioritised water security with Emu Swamp Dam, and evaporation covers amongst other initiatives. Employers' rights and welfare along with margin transparency from contracted retailers are also of major concern as is the right to farm and residential incursions into farming operations.

Gayndah Fruitgrowers and the Lockyer Valley Growers Association are currently working through their priorities.

QFVG will be information gathering across all growing regions to feed into the bigger picture. This year it is imperative horticulture comes together to have a strong, brave, loud, and cohesive voice in Queensland and indeed Australia.



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QRIDA Regional Area Manager for South East Queensland Brian Coe said having small-scale rural workers' accommodation could help primary production businesses fill important vacancies within their enterprise.

Loans to help growers build small-scale rural workers' accommodation

Fund the construction of housing for your rural workers with a Sustainability Loan from the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA).

QRIDA Regional Area Manager for South East Queensland Brian Coe said providing accommodation for workers could give farm businesses a competitive edge with Australia's low unemployment rate and rural housing shortage.

"The challenge of finding good workers in our tight labour market is compounded by the lack of rural rentals to house them," he said.

"If growers have their own workers' accommodation, it means they'll have less reliance on a changing housing market to secure their workforce and they can mitigate a risk to their farm business.

"Offering accommodation can also sweeten the deal for prospective employees, increasing growers' chances of attracting and retaining the best possible workers to help

grow top-quality produce, while they save costs on employee training in the long-run."

The Sustainability Loan eligible activity is part of the Queensland Government's Rural Workers' Accommodation Initiative which is a commitment to provide small-scale workers' housing options to support the agricultural industry and local economies.

Brian said QRIDA's friendly Regional Area Managers based across Queensland could answer any questions from growers about a Sustainability Loan.

"Wherever your primary production enterprise is located within the state, we have a Regional Area Manager nearby who can meet with you on-farm to discuss how a Sustainability Loan could benefit your operation," he said.

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Review of irrigation prices

The Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) has commenced a review of the irrigation pricing practices of Seqwater and Sunwater.

The purpose of the review is to recommend irrigation prices to apply for the four-year period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2029.

The QCA has published guidelines to help Seqwater and Sunwater in preparing their pricing proposals, which are due by 30 November 2023. The QCA has also published guidance for stakeholders to explain the scope of the review and how the QCA intends to conduct the review.

The formal consultation process will begin after Seqwater and Sunwater's pricing proposals are received. Initial stakeholder workshops are scheduled to commence in early 2024. Stakeholders will also have the opportunity to comment on the pricing proposals and draft report, due by 30 June 2024.

To allow time for business and the QCA to consult with irrigators, the Queensland Government has extended the 15% water discount to 2024/25.

Irrigators supplied by Seqwater and Sunwater-owned schemes will automatically receive the 15% discount on the prices used to calculate their bills.

Horticultural growers can access a further 35% rebate on charges associated with horticultural crops.

Any water charges incurred by a horticulture enterprise in relation to 1 July 2021 until 30 June 2024 are eligible for the rebate, including:

- allocation charges (Part A and Part C),
- usage charges (Part B and Part D)
- access charges.

The rebate program will remain open until 31 December 2024. Customers can make an application in relation to any charges related to horticulture for the three years from 2021/22 to 2023/24.



Irrigation Pricing Discounts Scheme including the Horticulture Irrigation Pricing Rebate Scheme

QCA Irrigation Price Investigation 2025–29





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QUEENSLAND STRAWBERRY GROWER RECOGNISED FOR ORGANIC PRACTICES

Ashbern Farms has seen their hard work and exceptional organic on-farm practices recognised by Australian Organic, with co-owner Brendon Hoyle being named as the 2022 Australian Organic Farmer of the Year.

Their excellent and innovative work, which includes use of biological and mechanical pest control agents, stands alongside their commitment to fair and ethical practices in their workforce, something they discussed when we paid them a visit recently.

“Ashbern started back in 2006 when we joined forces with the Carmichael family to tackle the strawberry world together,” said Brendon Hoyle, one of the four pillars that make up Ashbern Farms.

“The name of the farm is made up from the names of my wife Ashleigh and John’s wife Bernie.

“Prior to that, we were running John’s family strawberry farm in Palm View, so we’d had a bit of experience under our belts from there.”

Ashbern Farms grow 30 hectares of strawberries at the Glass House Mountains, while another 20 hectares of summer crop are grown in Stanthorpe – keeping their produce on local market shelves almost 12-months of the year, of which around 10 percent are grown for the organic market.

“This works well for us, we share equipment and ideas between the two families, as well as sharing a workforce, which is really important in this day and age when workers can be hard to get,” Brendon said.

The strawberry varieties grown mostly consist of Red Rhapsody, an easy picking and packing fruit, while they’re beginning to develop their Florida variety, an early-fruited variety, to help in picking up the start of the season.

“Our organics are fully certified and undergo an audit process every year,” Brendon said.



“Essentially, we have to follow rules and regulations to ensure the crop remains organic, we don’t have access to chemicals and fertilisers that others would, we’ve always got to be thinking outside the box to solve problems that otherwise would be a lot simpler on the conventional side of growing.”

Echoing this is their practice around their on-farm workers.

Ashbern Farms currently makes use of around 40 pickers and packers from the seasonal worker program on farm, alongside a handful of locals and backpackers.

“Workforce is really important to us, we moved to the seasonal worker program because we are building a skilled workforce, we have staff who come and are eager to work, eager to earn and we can transition them between our farms as the season progresses,” he said.

“After nine months they go back home, but our hope is that we can get pickers and packers back from season-to-season, to bring back that familiarity, to help us with the efficiencies in running the farm.”

That is where the application of fair, ethical and sustainable practice for on-farm workers has become so important to Ashbern Farms.

“We’ve been Fair Farms Certified for a few years, we realised that is the way the world is going, and we’re all for it,” Brendon said.

“We like to treat our workforce really well; we couldn’t do it without them, we need them all the same as they need us.

“The Fair Farms system suited us better than SEDEX did, when we saw how much more relevant it was to us, to the farming industry, we could understand the backing and a lot of the reasons the policies are in place.

“We pride ourselves of trying to maintain that, trying to improve ourselves every year, I think all of it is very important these days.

“You do hear stories from workers on places they’ve been working in, or ways they’ve been treated, and there isn’t a need for it anymore.

“If you’re proud of your brand and you want to do the right thing, you need to spend the time and effort on it and get these things right.

“We’re all in it together, it’s about building that trust so people can trust you, to understand what you’re all about and so people can know where their food is coming from.”





NOVEL APPROACH TO PEST MANAGEMENT RECOGNISED

BY JANE RICHTER, COMMUNICATION MANAGER, BERRIES AUSTRALIA

Brendon Hoyle from Ashbern Farms was recently named as Australian Organic Farmer of the Year, partly for his unusual method of managing the sucking insect Rutherglen bug in the 4.2-hectare organic part of their strawberry business at the Glass House Mountains.

In a radical innovation, Brendon uses an industrialized vacuum machine mounted on a tractor to literally ‘suck up’ the Rutherglen bug and other pests from the strawberry rows. This innovation allows the farm to continue organic production without the use of pesticides into a time window when traditionally these pest numbers explode due to the warming temperatures of spring.

The bug vacuum is only used for a few weeks at the end of the Sunshine Coast winter strawberry growing season, carefully timed to avoid periods of the day where beneficial insects like honey bees are most active. If the Rutherglen bug is bad, they run over the crop every couple of days. The first pass generally picks up a fair amount of leaf litter, so the screens need to be decluttered a few times.

Each season is different for pest pressure, but in the 2022 season this innovative way of tackling Rutherglen bug enabled the organic production to continue all the way to the effective end of the season in mid-October, giving the farm four additional weeks of viable high-quality production. The bug-sucker will also kill any other insects that are in the crop like Queensland Fruit Fly.

Brendon first saw a similar piece of equipment in use on a strawberry farm in California back in 2015, and with the help of some blueprints sourced from the internet one very handy team member fabricated a single row prototype to do a proof-of-concept, which is always a good idea when you are innovating. It worked and so a larger three-bed machine was made which operates via the Power Take-Off (PTO) at the back of a 50HP tractor.

“The focus in our organic production is to grow the best that we can and not the most that we can; we don’t want to be the biggest, we just want to grow the best,” Brendon said.

“We involve our team to help solve issues, drawing on their farming experiences and giving them a chance to be directly involved with a vested interest in the business.

“The Australian Organic Farmer of the Year award is such a privilege, and an achievement our team is proud to share for all the hard work, not only in growing but picking and packing, and tackling the challenges along the way.”

This article first appeared in the Australian Berry Journal Autumn 2023 edition and has been reproduced with permission.



Agricultural plastics: Pilot scheme investigates viability of collection and recycling of plastic mulch and drip tape

The Queensland horticulture industry is a significant user of a variety of plastic products within its production systems, in particular single use irrigation drip tape and plastic mulch for weed management and product quality, which face ongoing disposal issues.

The Queensland pilot established under the National Non-Packaging Agricultural Plastics Stewardship Scheme aimed to address the issue of the plastic mulch and drip tape supply chain across southern, central, and northern Queensland.

Specifically, the pilot sought to investigate and address the following problems:

- Awareness and knowledge of agricultural plastic recovery and recycling options.
- On-farm retrieval, source separation and contaminant minimisation of irrigation tape and plastic mulch in horticultural production systems.
- Strong support for local and regional recycling of agricultural plastics but limited processor capacity.
- Lack of coordination in collecting and recycling plastic mulch and drip tape across the supply chain.

KEY FINDINGS: QUEENSLAND

Through delivery of the pilot process the project sought to gain an understanding of the types of on-farm retrieval methodologies and plastic quality specifications. On farm assessments enabled the pilot to review and document the cost and time implications of current compared to revised retrieval methods to stress test barriers to adoption of recovering plastic mulch and drip tape on-farm.

The pilot targeted the high-producing vegetable and strawberry regions of Stanthorpe, Sunshine Coast (Wamuran), Bundaberg and Bowen Burdekin.

On-farm retrieval data was collected across multiple sites in a consistent way using a standard Field Data Collection Sheet. The benefit analysis presented a broad range of costings for retrieval and disposal of mixed plastic mulch and drip tape bundles. Of particular concern is the level of organic material contamination being exported off farm.

The project team developed a Standard Operating Practice (SOP) for the retrieval of drip tape and plastic mulch for the purpose of recycling. Due to the variability in equipment used for retrieval of drip tape and plastic mulch, there are significant differences in the quality and format of material supplied to the collection point.

The SOP attempts to address this variance by providing guidance for on-farm retrieval of drip tape which can be effectively recycled.

The SOP will be published and distributed to growers, recyclers, and other industry members to continue to raise awareness of meeting standards during on-farm retrieval of agricultural plastics.

The survey found that growers are willing to participate in a recycling program and undertake separation of drip tape and mulch on-farm however, there are a number of challenges such as time, cost and suitability of current retrieval equipment.

Key findings from the Queensland pilot include:

- Growers are currently ill-equipped to separate drip tape from plastic mulch.
- High volumes of organic material and soil contaminate the used plastic and reduce its potential to be recycled.
- Currently there are no collection points for recycling of plastic mulch, with it all going to landfill.
- Current landfill costs are acceptable with growers willing and able to pay \$250-300 per tonne.
- Overall low volumes of retrieved tape in Queensland are not attractive to local recyclers.

Recycling program a 'no-brainer' for old orchard poly, dripperline

When Kyalite Pistachios was considering a sustainable solution for disposal of the last remaining area of sprinkler irrigation at its 'Rivernook' orchard, plus extra poly and dripperline kept in storage from previous upgrades, the industry's leading recovery and recycling program largely became a no-brainer.

Pistachios are grown over 400 hectares on the Sunraysia property near Kyalite, which is situated on the southern New South Wales border near Tooleybuc and south of Balranald.

Andrew Bowring, who has chalked-up 27 years with the Kyalite Pistachios partnership enterprise, said the last area of under-tree sprinkler irrigation was converted to dripperline earlier last year, resulting in 230km of 19-millimetre poly to be disposed of. This added to another 50km of poly and 20km of dripperline stored on the property since earlier conversions.

Andrew said the new irrigation investment made the Netafim Recoil recycling program for the old poly and dripperline an easy decision.

The program incorporates hire of a Netafim Recoil machine for a fee of \$100 per day, which recoils poly or dripperline into dense, donut-shaped bundles, and transport to Netafim's Australian recycling partners.

The high-quality recycled resin, if suitable, is used in the production of Netafim's 'Regen' irrigation products as part of a closed-loop manufacturing system, or by other manufacturers of plastic products, providing a circular economy model to tackle unwanted plastic accumulating

in the landscape.

The poly and dripperline from Kyalite Pistachios added up to 27 tonnes, with the resulting resin earmarked for plastics manufacturers.

"We always knew we wanted to do something linked with recycling, but previously there was no easy opportunity to get it off-farm," Andrew said.

"Sustainability is now a strong focus for the industry, and it makes you feel good that you are doing the right thing and planning your pathway on a sustainability front.

"Netafim is well out in front in the industry with this program."

He said without it, they were faced with hiring or building a machine to help dispose of the poly and dripperline that later would have sat in the shed, as well as finding a recycler in the market and paying for freighting it off the farm.

"With Netafim Recoil, the machine is purpose-built with all the guards, easing any concern with operators. That was our strong feel – this thing is just purpose-built and has all the procedures. It's very well done. We just had to pay the freight from farm to factory," Andrew said.

"We recoiled the majority of the poly and dripperline in 12 days."

Netafim Recoil machines are based in areas where there is high demand for the service across Australia and are available to hire through approved Netafim resellers.

Netafim also tracks all consignments and recycling outcomes, culminating in a credible Certificate of Recycling for service users.





BRISBANE MONTHLY SUMMARY

April

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Fruits

Brisbane Monthly Special 6 - 10 Crop Summary

Page No 1

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
APPLES,Fuji	1677.52	10KgCtn	40.00	50.00	50.00	45.00	Afourer		13KgCtn	30.00	91.00	91.00	71.06
Missile		3KgCtn	24.00	28.00	28.00	26.00	Imperial		13KgCtn	20.00	70.00	70.00	45.50
Pink Lady		4KgTray	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00	ORANGES,Valencia	2327.63	1/2Bin	240.00	450.00	450.00	370.88
Sweet Tango		9KgCtn	40.00	48.00	48.00	43.77	Seedless Valencia		15KgTra	30.00	35.00	35.00	32.50
Granny Smith		AAcTn	15.00	45.00	45.00	24.65	Valencia		BulkCP	20.00	40.00	45.00	34.00
Pink Lady		AAcTn	60.00	80.00	90.00	70.00	Navel,M7		BulkCP	40.00	60.00	60.00	51.25
Red Delicious		AAcTn	25.00	40.00	40.00	31.91	Navel,Naveleana		BulkCP	25.00	40.00	40.00	33.50
Royal Gala		AAcTn	28.00	54.00	54.00	40.21	Navel,Unspecified		BulkCP	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
Ambrosia		DLcTn	40.00	50.00	50.00	44.41	Navel,Washington		BulkCP	30.00	50.00	50.00	40.00
Bravo		DLcTn	36.00	50.00	50.00	42.00	Valencia		CP	16.00	40.00	40.00	28.85
Envy		DLcTn	48.00	50.00	50.00	49.00	Blood		CP	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
Fuji		DLcTn	24.00	50.00	50.00	37.00	Navel,M7		CP	60.00	80.00	80.00	66.25
Granny Smith		DLcTn	12.00	45.00	45.00	24.49	Navel,Unspecified		CP	60.00	70.00	70.00	65.00
Jazz		DLcTn	48.00	64.00	70.00	55.00	RAMBUTANS	6.47	Kg	13.00	35.00	35.00	19.91
Kanzi		DLcTn	32.00	48.00	48.00	45.18	STATE: A=ACT, N=NSW, Q=QLD, S=SA, T=TAS, V=VIC, W=WA, Y=NT, I=IMPORTED						
Pink Lady		DLcTn	18.00	80.00	80.00	41.82	IMPORTANT NOTICE: Reproducing, publishing, emailing or re-Faxing this report is prohibited as is the creation of a derivative work eg. Database.						
Red Delicious		DLcTn	20.00	34.00	40.00	27.00	Privileged/confidential information may be contained in this document/message. If you are not the addressee indicated in the message (or responsible for delivery of the message to such person), you may not copy or deliver this document/message to anyone. In such case, please destroy this message, and notify us immediately. Opinions, conclusions and other information expressed in this message/document are not given or endorsed by the firm or employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised representative independent of this message. We use virus scanning software but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
Royal Gala		DLcTn	20.00	48.00	48.00	37.74							
Sundowner		DLcTn	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
Pink Lady		SLTray	30.00	32.00	32.00	31.00							
Red Delicious		SLTray	8.00	10.00	12.00	9.00							
Yello		SLTray	48.00	48.00	48.00	48.00							
Royal Gala		TLcTn	20.00	34.00	34.00	27.00							
AVOCADOS,Fuerte	2887.62	18LcTn	20.00	25.00	25.00	22.50							
Hass		18LcTn	15.00	40.00	45.00	28.87							
Maluma		18LcTn	30.00	45.00	45.00	35.26							
Shepard		18LcTn	10.00	35.00	40.00	24.52							
Sirprise		18LcTn	30.00	35.00	35.00	32.50							
Fuerte		SLTray	18.00	20.00	20.00	19.11							
Hass		SLTray	20.00	36.00	40.00	30.39							
Maluma		SLTray	16.00	40.00	40.00	28.09							
Sharwill		SLTray	28.00	30.00	30.00	29.00							
Shepard		SLTray	10.00	38.00	40.00	23.87							
Sirprise		SLTray	26.00	34.00	34.00	30.00							
BERRIES,Blueberries	192.09	125g	3.00	10.00	10.00	5.54							
Kiwiberries		125g	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.50							
Raspberries		125g	1.00	4.50	4.50	2.87							
Blackberries		250g	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.50							
Gooseberries		Kg	68.00	80.00	80.00	74.00							
FEIJOAS	10.52	2KgTray	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00							
		9LcTn	15.00	100.00	100.00	46.48							
		SLTray	40.00	60.00	60.00	50.00							
FIGS,Dark Skin	21.00	300gLP	3.50	6.00	6.00	4.94							
Dark Skin		500g	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50							
Dark Skin		9LcTn	20.00	30.00	36.00	25.00							
Dark Skin		DLTray	50.00	60.00	60.00	55.00							
Dark Skin		SLTray	30.00	40.00	40.00	32.00							
Dark Skin,Black Genoa		SLTray	30.00	90.00	90.00	46.25							
HONEYDEW MELONS,Dark Skin	383.88	30LTray	16.00	24.00	24.00	21.06							
Piel De Sapo		30LTray	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
Gold		30LTray	12.00	20.00	20.00	15.29							
Gold,Orange Candy		30LTray	16.00	26.00	26.00	18.69							
White		32LcTn	16.00	20.00	20.00	18.00							
LONGANS	48.06	8KgCtn	60.00	90.00	90.00	72.88							
MANDARINS,Afourer	1980.38	1/2CP	10.00	50.00	50.00	30.21							
Imperial		1/2CP	5.00	50.00	50.00	27.78							
Tangold		1/2CP	40.00	50.00	50.00	45.00							
Afourer		10KgCtn	40.00	50.00	50.00	45.00							

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
BEANS,Borlotti	244.28	Kg	4.00	8.00	8.00	6.00	STATE: A=ACT, N=NSW, Q=QLD, S=SA, T=TAS, V=VIC, W=WA, Y=NT, I=IMPORTED						
Broad		Kg	4.00	8.00	8.00	6.00	IMPORTANT NOTICE: Reproducing, publishing, emailing or re-Faxing this report is prohibited as is the creation of a derivative work eg. Database.						
Butter		Kg	6.00	8.00	8.00	7.00	Privileged/confidential information may be contained in this document/message. If you are not the addressee indicated in the message (or responsible for delivery of the message to such person), you may not copy or deliver this document/message to anyone. In such case, please destroy this message, and notify us immediately. Opinions, conclusions and other information expressed in this message/document are not given or endorsed by the firm or employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised representative independent of this message. We use virus scanning software but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
Flat,Continental		Kg	5.00	10.00	10.00	7.94							
Round S'less		Kg	0.20	7.00	8.00	2.60							
Snake		Kg	3.00	7.50	7.50	6.00							
Winged		Kg	8.00	14.00	14.00	11.00							
BROCCOLI,Baby	449.55	2.4Kg	16.00	20.00	20.00	18.00							
		8KgLPk	5.00	36.00	36.00	17.97							
CAPSICUMS,Green	794.83	10KgCtn	30.00	45.00	45.00	37.50							
Mixed Colour		10KgCtn	20.00	30.00	30.00	25.00							
Red		10KgCtn	30.00	60.00	70.00	41.46							
Gold		27LCtn	30.00	45.00	48.00	33.00							
Green		27LCtn	8.00	30.00	30.00	16.53							
Mixed Colour		27LCtn	12.00	24.00	24.00	18.00							
Red		27LCtn	8.00	40.00	40.00	24.73							
Gold		5KgCtn	30.00	35.00	35.00	32.50							
CELERY	420.62	15KgCtn	6.00	24.00	24.00	12.81							
CHILLIES,Hot Red,Reaper	68.96	400gBag	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50							
Hot Green,Long		6KgCtn	24.00	36.00	36.00	27.71							
Hot Red		6KgCtn	36.00	60.00	60.00	48.12							
Sweet Mixed Col.		6KgCtn	16.00	20.00	20.00	19.00							
Sweet Red		6KgCtn	10.00	20.00	20.00	15.25							
Sweet Yellow		6KgCtn	16.00	24.00	24.00	20.00							
Birdseye Red		Kg	12.00	16.00	16.00	14.00							
Hot Green		Kg	4.00	16.00	16.00	8.65							
Hot Green,Jalapeno		Kg	6.00	12.00	12.00	11.00							
Hot Green,Thai		Kg	8.00	20.00	20.00	11.41							
Hot Orange,Habanero		Kg	8.00	16.00	16.00	12.94							
Hot Red		Kg	6.00	18.00	18.00	11.76							
Hot Red,Habanero		Kg	12.00	16.00	16.00	14.00							
Hot Red,Thai		Kg	10.00	20.00	20.00	12.24							
CHOKOS	84.62	15KgCtn	15.00	20.00	20.00	17.50							
		18KgCtn	20.00	70.00	70.00	33.24							
		18LCtn	14.00	40.00	40.00	24.82							
CUCUMBERS,Apple	1123.55	10KgCtn	30.00	40.00	40.00	35.35							
Green		10KgCtn	10.00	36.00	36.00	23.48							
Green,Dragon		10KgCtn	30.00	40.00	40.00	35.00							
Lebanese		10KgCtn	10.00	45.00	48.00	23.60							
Lebanese,Mini		10KgCtn	20.00	28.00	28.00	25.00							
White		10KgCtn	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
Baby,Qukes		250gLP	1.50	2.70	2.70	2.10							
Continental		7KgBag	14.00	30.00	30.00	19.21							
Continental		8KgBag	20.00	36.00	36.00	27.41							
Continental		9KgBag	20.00	36.00	36.00	27.47							
LETTUCE,Baby Cos,Midi	963.07	Carton	16.00	24.00	24.00	20.00							
Baby Cos,Sweet Gems		Carton	14.00	22.00	24.00	18.88							
Baby Cos Hearts		Carton	12.00	20.00	20.00	16.12							
Cos		Carton	10.00	30.00	30.00	18.98							
Headed		Carton	2.00	30.00	30.00	18.41							
Hearts		Carton	12.00	20.00	20.00	16.00							
Open Varieties		Carton	6.00	12.00	12.00	9.00							
Open Varieties,Green Oak		Carton	8.00	16.00	16.00	13.00							
Open Varieties,Red Oak		Carton	8.00	16.00	16.00	12.71							
Radicchio Hearts,Treviso		Carton	24.00	30.00	30.00	27.00							
Radicchio		Tray	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50							
SPRING ONIONS,White	45.00	Bunch	1.20	3.00	3.00	2.50							
ZUCCHINIS,Green	1031.61	10KgCtn	2.00	30.00	30.00	15.52							
Lebanese		10KgCtn	10.00	30.00	30.00	20.00							



FRUIT AND VEGETABLE WHOLESALE MARKET PRICE REPORTING

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

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

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

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

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YEAR OF HORTICULTURE GETS carrot away

After a quick stop at Brisbane's Queen Street Mall the Easter Bunny burrowed her way to Queensland's carrot capital, the Scenic Rim, to stake her claim on the 600 million carrots grown in the region each year.

Organised Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG), carrots are the second commodity to be highlighted as part of a year-long awareness campaign of the state's 100+ various fruit, vegetable, and nut crops.

"The Year of Horticulture uses these activations to 'Celebrate, Educate and Advocate' all things fresh produce," QFVG CEO Rachel Chamber said.

From June to December each year, farms around the Scenic Rim supply most of the carrots consumed on Australia's eastern coast. According to data collected by Freshlogic this versatile staple is purchased by 91 percent of Aussie households, and here's a fun fact... you can eat carrot tops! They can be cooked like any other leafy green.



#YOH2023





YOH HEADS WEST TO THE CHINCHILLA Melon Festival

In February, QFVG CEO Rachel Chambers and Head of Engagement & Advocacy Angela Seng-Williams attended the Chinchilla Melon Festival as part of continued promotion of the Year of Horticulture.

After a four-year hiatus, almost 15,000 people descended on Chinchilla to partake in some crazy, messy, old-fashioned fun. Known as the 'Melon Capital' of Australia, Chinchilla produces a quarter of Australia's melons and for the past 29 years has celebrated this fantastic fruit!

Visitors to the 2023 festival consumed four tonnes of melon and despite a challenging season for growers the flavour was as sweet as it got.



Angela Seng-Williams snaps a selfie during the festival parade.



Angela Seng-Williams and Rachel Chambers promoting the Year of Horticulture in front of 'The Big Melon'.



Melons Australia Executive Officer, Johnathon Davey and QFVG CEO, Rachel Chambers taking in the sights! Grown by Chinchilla grower Bernie Davis, this 90-kilogram melon took out the top prize for the weigh-in at the festival.



workplace relations

Focus HR Founding Director
Naomi Wilson

The season for public holidays

The start and end of each year marks a period where public holidays seem to appear nearly every week. As businesses, we need to ensure that we are careful in how we manage employees working (and not working) during these times.

A recent landmark court case decision has underlined that employers must ask employees to work on public holidays rather than automatically rostering them on.

To be clear, the legislation has not changed. Case law such as the recent BHP case gives us guidance on how Fair Work interprets the legislation that is written.

So, let's cover the facts as they are written:

Public holidays

Public holidays can be different depending on the State or Territory you work in. For Queensland these are:

- Sunday 1 January - New Year's Day
- Monday 2 January - Additional public holiday for New Year's Day
- Thursday 26 January - Australia Day
- Friday 7 April - Good Friday
- Saturday 8 April - The day after Good Friday
- Sunday 9 April - Easter Sunday
- Monday 10 April - Easter Monday
- Tuesday 25 April - Anzac Day
- Monday 1 May - Labour Day
- Wednesday 16 August - Royal Queensland Show (Brisbane area only)
- Monday 2 October - King's Birthday
- Sunday 24 December - Christmas Eve (from 6pm to midnight)
- Monday 25 December - Christmas Day
- Tuesday 26 December - Boxing Day

A list for all states can be viewed at www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/public-holidays/2023-public-holidays

Right to not work on a public holiday

Employees should be provided with the choice to work on a public holiday or not.

Employers can request employees to work on a public holiday, but the request must be reasonable. An employee may refuse a request to work if they have reasonable grounds.

Requests and the responses should be captured in writing to protect the employer.

If an employer has determined that an employee's refusal is unreasonable, it is recommended that the employer negotiate and try to come to some sort of arrangement with the employee through further discussion.

Working on a public holiday

When an employee works on a public holiday, they may be entitled to penalty rates. This will be laid out in the modern Award or an Agreement if your business has one in place.

Under the Horticulture Award, Sections 27.3 and 27.4 cover the penalty rates that apply to permanent and casual employees.

Section 27.2 of the Horticulture Award also allows for employer and employee to agree to substitute another day for a day that would otherwise be a public holiday under the NES. For example, an employee can agree to work the public holiday (and be paid ordinary rates); then take another day off as a substitute for the public holiday and be paid at ordinary rates on that day also. It is best practice for such agreements to be captured in writing.

Employees not working on a public holiday

Employees (except casual employees) who normally work on the day a public holiday falls will be paid their base pay rate for the ordinary hours they would have worked if they had not been away because of the public holiday.

The base pay rate does not include:

- any incentive-based payments
- bonuses
- loadings
- monetary allowances
- overtime or
- penalty rates.

An employee's roster can't be changed to deliberately avoid this payment.



program update

Fair Farms National Program Manager
Sachin Ayachit



FAIR FARMS RELEASE LATEST TOOL IN GAINING AND MAINTAINING ON-FARM COMPLIANCE

Fair Farms is delighted to announce the release of our latest tool, the Fair Farms Manual, to assist horticultural businesses gain and maintain compliance with Fair Work and Workplace Health and Safety regulations.

The Manual provides current and up-to-date policies, procedures, and templates which can be tailored to an individual business's needs. It is available as a one-time purchase with ongoing updates to the Manual covered by the initial purchase cost allowing growers to continuously review their operations against updated standards and reinforce them.

The Fair Farms Manual came about through feedback from our members who asked for the tool to better understand and comply with the Fair Farms Standard, and as a way to revisit and review their compliance so as to stay ahead of the curve.

Each section of the Manual includes:

- Factsheets - providing basic information about the requirements

of each section, with directives to obtain further information from relevant legislation, codes of practice, and Federal and State Government websites.

- Templates – policies, procedures, forms and checklists, suggesting content that will meet the requirements of the Fair Farms Standards. The templates can be adapted to meet specific requirements of your business.
- Internal Audit Checklist - The Manual also includes a Fair Farms Internal Audit Checklist.

Fair Farms understands that some horticultural businesses may not have dedicated HR and WHS personnel. The Manual should be of particular assistance to these businesses.

Access to the Fair Farms manual is exclusive to Fair Farms participants who register and complete the Online Self-Assessment (OSA). Participants can purchase and access the manual via the Fair Farms portal: www.fairfarms.com.au



L-R: Rachel Chambers (QFVG CEO); Stacey Watson (QFVG Independent Director); Luke and Samara De Paoli (Sunripe); and Sachin Ayachit (Fair Farms National Program Manager) launch the Fair Farms Manual in Bundaberg.



HR / IR compliance

Fair Farms Workplace Relations Specialist
Amanda Higgins

ZOMBIE AGREEMENTS WITH BANKED HOURS VS HORTICULTURAL AWARD 2020 WITH TOIL

Many growers operating under Enterprise Agreements (EA) will have Banked Time Arrangement clauses included in their EA. These clauses often reflect that any time worked in addition to the employees normal working roster can be regarded as banked time.

While this has been of great benefit to many businesses as a way of managing overtime payments, there is much concern that when Zombie Agreements cease to operate, and a business reverts to operating under the Horticulture Award 2020 that this benefit may be lost.

The good news is that the Horticulture Award 2020 as per Clause 21.2 does allow for 'banking of hours', otherwise known as time off in lieu, or TOIL. However, there are several requirements for a business to ensure they are compliant when utilising TOIL.

Section 21.2 of the Horticulture Award 2020 details:

(a) An employee and employer may agree in writing to the employee taking time off instead of being paid for all overtime that is worked by the employee under this agreement.

(b) An agreement made under clause 21.2 will remain in place unless the agreement is terminated. The agreement can be terminated by the employer or employee at any time by notice in writing.

(c) An agreement made under clause 21.2 must be in writing and must state each of the following:

(i) that the employer and employee agree that the employee may take time off instead of being paid for the overtime;

(ii) that the agreement can be terminated at any time by notice in writing;

(iii) that overtime worked after the agreement is terminated will be paid at the overtime rate applicable to the overtime when worked;

(iv) that time off instead of overtime must be taken within 6 months of it being worked, at a time or times agreed by the employee and employer;

(v) that, if time off is not taken as mentioned in clause 21.2(c)

(iv) the employer must pay the employee for the overtime, in the next pay period following those 6 months, at the overtime rate applicable to the overtime when worked.

(d) The period of time off that an employee is entitled to take is the same as the number of overtime hours worked.

(e) Time off must be taken:

(i) within the period of 6 months after the overtime is worked; and

(ii) at a time or times within that period of 6 months agreed by the employee and employer.

(f) If time off for overtime that has been worked is not taken within the period of 6 months mentioned in clause 21.2 (e), the employer must pay the employee for the overtime, in the next pay period following those 6 months, at the overtime rate applicable to the overtime when worked unless the employer agrees to pay out the accrued overtime earlier.

(g) The employer must keep a copy of any agreement under clause 21.2 as an employee record.

(h) The employer must keep a record of the number of overtime hours worked by the employee, when those hours were worked and an updated record of the employee's time off instead of payment for overtime balance.

(i) An employer must not exert undue influence or undue pressure on an employee in relation to a decision by the employee to make, or not make, an agreement to take time off instead of payment for overtime.

(j) An employee may, under section 65 of the Act, request to take time off, at a time or times specified in the request or to be subsequently agreed by the employer and the employee, instead of being paid for overtime worked by the employee. If the employer agrees to the request then clause 21.2 will apply, including the requirement for a written agreement under clause 21.2(c) for overtime that has been worked.

NOTE: If an employee makes a request under section 65 of the Act for a change in working arrangements, the employer may only refuse that request on reasonable business grounds (see section 65(5) of the Act).

(k) If, on the termination of the employee's employment, time off for overtime worked by the employee to which clause 21.2 applies has not been taken, the employer must pay the employee for the overtime at the overtime rate applicable to the overtime when worked.

So, remember, not all is lost. There are provisions and mechanisms in the Horticulture Award to assist businesses manage overtime. You must ensure that you fully understand the requirements AND keep a close eye on when the TOIL hours have been accrued and the applicable overtime rate.

To minimise the payout at overtime rates, keep a close eye on accruals and actively engage with your employees about when is the best time to take the TOIL so that it benefits both parties.





engagement

Fair Farms Grower Engagement Officer
Donna Mogg



Donna Mogg speaking at the Carnarvon Growers Association Trade Show.



Participants at the Pickering Brooks Fair Farms workshop.



L-R: Stephen Brown (VegetablesWA CEO), Donna Mogg (Fair Farms Grower Engagement Officer) and Chi Nguyen (VegetablesWA RDO) in Carnarvon.

FAIR FARMS GOES WEST

Recently I had the pleasure of visiting growers and industry groups in Western Australia to discuss the emerging issues of social compliance as it relates to on-farm employment.

I was hosted by VegetablesWA CEO Stephen Brown and Regional Development Officer Chi Nguyen as we travelled to Carnarvon to attend the Carnarvon Growers Association Trade Show.

The show was an excellent example of the capacity of remote growing communities to attract industry and growers from far and wide. The trade show attracted around 300 growers with the dinner on Saturday evening hosting around 250 attendees.

Following this we then travelled south to Manjimup where I met with growers from the Manjimup and Donnybrook regions. Pome season was in full swing, and the apples, pears, peaches and nectarines are enjoying a bumper season.

Western Australia is fertile ground for the Fair Farms program, with members showing a real commitment to improving their knowledge and understanding of their obligations around workplace relations, workplace health and safety, and social compliance.

A return visit is planned for November this year to continue to engage with growers in the West and assist in their Fair Farms journey.

Don't forget – if you are a Fair Farms member and want to discuss any aspect of the program, please give me a call on 0472 922 811 or email dmogg@qfvg.com.au

If you are not a member, but curious – also please call – no heavy sales pitch here, just the facts about the program as a better Australian-based alternative fully supported by professional Workplace Relations and Social Compliance Officers.

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





FAIR FARMS

FOSTERING FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
IN THE AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY

After the success of our inaugural conference in 2022, we're proud to announce the

Fair Farms Fair & Ethical Sourcing Conference

Friday 20 October 2023

Cargo Hall, Melbourne City

This event will serve as a meeting place for discussion, for networking and for questioning leading industry experts, growers, workplace relations specialists, and peak industry bodies who will come together to discuss ethical sourcing within Australian horticulture, basing conversations around our conference tag line:

“Perspectives & Solutions in Australian Horticulture”

Speaker sessions and panels will focus on:

Fair Work and WHS regulation

ESG & Ethical Sourcing programs

Case studies on successful practices

Challenges and solutions in Ethical Sourcing

The Modern Slavery Act and it's implications on Australian Horticulture.

The full-day conference will consist of the daytime conference event, followed by a Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony held in the evening at Cargo Hall.



For more information on the Fair Farms Fair & Ethical Sourcing Conference, including tickets, sponsorship opportunities and speaker positions, visit www.fairfarms.com.au





L-R: Jonathon Mendez (QFF), Richard Ross (Ashbern Farms and Granite Belt Growers Association), Andrew Chamberlain (QFF), Jessica Andreatta (Granite Belt Growers Association), Kerry Battersby (QFF), Jo Sheppard (QFF), Brett Wickham (ACCIONA Energia), Katherine Gow (Gow Produce and Granite Belt Growers Association), Paul McMahon (Granite Belt Growers Association), and Bec Tkai (QFF).

Energy productivity focus of new practical on-farm program

Growers in the Southern Downs and Goondiwindi regions can access a new program to understand and manage on-farm energy consumption and at the same time, lower carbon emissions.

Delivered by Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF), the Energy Southern Queensland (EnergySQ) program is free for participating farms with the aim of identifying tangible ways they can achieve increased energy productivity and efficiencies while supporting environmental outcomes on farm.

The two-year program will enable QFF to work with between 100 and 150 farms during the project lifespan.

Growers are invited to participate individually or in a 'cluster'. Participation in the project is anticipated to take between two and three months, with ongoing follow-up and support. Farms

participating in a cluster will have the opportunity to attend a series of short workshops to help navigate the process.

QFF previously delivered the Queensland Government's Energy Savers Plus Program which supported more than 300 farms manage their electricity use and achieve savings through independent electricity audits.

Extending on this program, participants of the EnergySQ program will work with QFF's energy project team to develop their own individual Energy and Carbon Action Plan.

QFF have partnered with ACCIONA Energía Australia to fund the delivery of the project. ACCIONA Energía are developing the MacIntyre Wind Farm near Warwick.

Producers and growers can also contact qff's energy team on 07 3837 4729 or email energysq@qff.org.au

MORE INFO



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Compost-based crop nutrition and soil regeneration system focus for NQ grower

North Queensland watermelon and vegetable growing enterprise, Black River Produce is a family-run business with patriarch Jon Caleo overseeing operations at the Black River property, north of Townsville while his son Anthony and wife Tomi oversee the Sellheim property located on the Burdekin River outside Charters Towers.

In March 2022, Anthony and Tomi attended a Composting in Agriculture Field Day in Bowen hosted by Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) under their programs and service delivery arm, Growcom.

Using compost in farming systems leads to a reduction in the amount of synthetic nutrient fertilisers applied on-farm which in turn improves water quality entering sensitive waterways like the Great Barrier Reef. It also increases soil microbial activity boosting soil health.

With increasing costs of chemical fertilisers many growers are seeing composting as an essential component to rein in production costs and protect their soil assets.

Following their attendance at the 2022 Field Day, the Caleos have invested heavily in transitioning their Sellheim property to a compost-based crop nutrition and soil regeneration system.

Under the transition, 15,000 cubic meters per year of compost will be brought into their production systems to improve water holding capabilities as well as improve crop nutrition and soil health programs. The compost program will also be supported by continued extensive green manure cropping during fallow periods.

Wanting to also make a shift in attitude to other farming systems, Anthony has also

recently completed a comprehensive policy document for the business detailing how they would manage soil, water, fertiliser, and pesticides.

The Sellheim property transition will be the focus of a new three-year practice change case study being developed under Growcom's Hort360 Great Barrier Reef (Hort360 GBR) program.

The Hort360 GBR program sets out to promote and support horticulture best management practices, across Great Barrier Reef catchments, to deliver environmental sustainability and water quality outcomes relating to the reduction in nutrient, sediment and pesticides loads from horticultural production areas whilst ensuring profitable outcomes.

Black River Produce has also recently achieved Reef Certification, a key component of the Hort360 GBR program enabling the Caleos to be recognised as best practice custodians of land in Reef catchments.

Reef Certification is a third-party audit process designed specifically for the industry to demonstrate voluntary stewardship towards the Great Barrier Reef.

Bowen is a key producer of Australia's winter vegetables in rotation with melon production. The region has an estimated farm gate value of \$605 million annually. Currently 4,500 hectares or nearly one third of land in the region under horticultural production is Reef Certified.

For more information about the Hort360 GBR program including Reef Certification, please contact your local Hort360 GBR Facilitator.



L-R: Tomi, Anthony and Marina Caleo proudly hold up their Hort360 Reef Certified gate sign.



The Caleos have invested heavily in transitioning their Sellheim property to a compost-based crop nutrition and soil regeneration system.



DIRT WORK

DIGGING DEEPER FOR SOIL HEALTH



EVENT DETAILS

BILOELA

Thursday, 1 June 2023

9am - 12:30pm

Paul & Kim Stringer's
'Lynaura' 250 Meissners Road
BILOELA



ROCKHAMPTON

Friday, 2 June 2023

9am - 12:30pm

Paul & Kyrstal Caton's
Lush Lychees 123 Seymour Road
SOUTH YAAMBA



COST

FREE

Lunch and refreshments provided

GUEST SPEAKERS



Jonathan Freeman
Business Development
Manager
AGRITECHNOVATION

Precision sampling technology of top-soil and sub-soil; additional insights needed for crop production and landscape resilience.



Dr Theunis Smit
Head of Operations
CARBON FRIENDLY

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- minimising and preventing erosion.

Measuring soil health and monitoring plant performance throughout the entire growing season is crucial to identifying risks, challenges, solutions, and yield potential. But how do you measure soil health? And do you know what your soil health is actually worth? What's its currency?

Join Growcom, Agritechnovation and Carbon Friendly in June for two half-day on-farm get togethers in Central Queensland.

We'll dig deep on soil health specific to horticulture production systems, and best management practices for measuring, managing and making the most of everything soil has to offer.

Topics to be covered

- precision soil sampling technology
- using the data for soil health improvements
- having confidence in nutrient & irrigation decisions
- knowing your SOC from your SOM
- working out the value of SOC
- carbon market opportunities in horticulture.

Need more information?

Michelle Haase, Growcom - 0428 586 890 or mhaase@qfvg.com.au



The Water Quality and Soil Improvements in Grazing and Cropping Enterprises in the Fitzroy project is funded by the Australian Government's Reef Trust with support from Fitzroy Basin Association and Growcom.



Mission to create a weather service for water quality launched

CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, has launched AquaWatch Australia, a mission to deliver a world first ground-to-space water quality monitoring system for Australia and the globe.

AquaWatch will provide near real-time updates and predictive forecasting – a weather service for water quality – once fully operational.

Using an extensive network of Earth observation satellites and ground-based water sensors, it will support better water quality management, with early warning of harmful events such as toxic algal blooms, blackwater and runoff contamination.

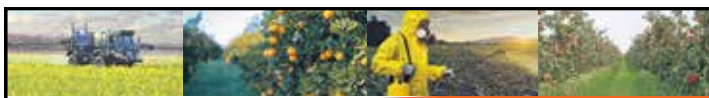
Working with a range of implementation partners, AquaWatch will extend from rivers to coasts, with the ability to monitor bays, coastal wetlands, aquaculture farming, mangrove forests and coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef.

Data from both the sensors in the water and on the satellites will be integrated at a central data hub where CSIRO's capability in data analysis and AI can provide forecasts a few days ahead.

AquaWatch already has six pilot sites set up around the country to test the system for several uses such as monitoring toxic blue-green algae blooms at Lake Tuggeranong in Canberra, a popular spot for recreation.

It is also being tested around our coasts, with another pilot focused on how sediment flow from the Fitzroy River out to the Great Barrier Reef affects water quality.

Additional pilots established overseas will demonstrate how AquaWatch can be used to monitor water quality for drinking, sanitation, species conservation, hydroelectricity, and carbon sequestration in mangrove forests.



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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 LEARNT A LOT. RODNEY W



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admin@countryco.com.au



Seed funding rolling out in the Pumicestone

Growcom’s SEQ Water Quality project is working with growers and the Department of Environment and Science (DES) to allocate the first round of ‘seed funding’ to pineapple farms located in South East Queensland.

The seed funding program is an opportunity for growers to trial new sustainable practices developed through various research programs and evaluated by the pineapple environmental team (PET).

The funds were contributed by DES to support farmers on-ground drive a sustainable future for horticulture.

Through the seed funding program, we will soon see new bioreactors near key waterways in the Pumicestone Passage and other new BMP practices such as droppers on booms for the precise application of chemicals and nutrients.

The seed funding for pineapple growers will initially be rolled out in the Beerwah and Glasshouse Mountains areas in the first year of the project.

Glasshouse Mountains farmers Trudy and Keith Morgan from Morgan and Co and Adam Pike from GO Pike and Sons are the first to benefit from the seed funding.

Both the Morgan and Pike families have been growing pineapple in the region for more than 80 and 100 years respectively. Both operations plant over one million pineapples each year for the fresh market and have been strong advocates for sustainable farming practices in the industry.

The Morgans and Pikes were one of the first farming families involved in the initial research for adapting bioreactors into the pineapple industry and many other sustainable practices for example soil stabilisers such as Stonewall to help mitigate soil erosion.

Today, they continue to support the sustainability cause with over one kilometre of wall and bed bioreactors and precision boomsprayers planned for implementation throughout Autumn 2023 season.

Trudy and Keith said there were many pressures in the industry such rising cost and extreme weather events impacting yield and profitability of the farm. However, as farmers they needed to do their best to ensure the longevity of the industry and individual farming operations into the future. Addressing sustainability is an important part of that future.

Adam said, as a grower sustainability is important as you need to try and work with the environment to create a sustainable future for industry.

The seed funding program will continue across the Pumicestone reaching into the Six Mile and Lagoon Creek sub catchments for growers looking to trial and support sustainable production practices in the region.

DES and Growcom will continue to partner farmers with funding support on-ground to help drive a sustainable future for horticulture in South East Queensland.



Trudy and Keith Morgan from Morgan and Co



Adam Pike from GO Pike and Sons

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



Farm Business Resilience Program

Tony and Irina Polsoni from Polsoni Pines, have been growing pineapples on Queensland's Sunshine Coast for three generations.

Through participation in Growcom's Farm Business Resilience Program water use efficiencies and storage were identified as key considerations for Tony and Irina as priorities to work towards to better prepare their business for future droughts and ensure long-term resilience.

Growcom Resilience Facilitator John Targett said QRIDA has a range of grants and loans available to assist primary producers with on-farm capital improvements.

"QRIDA funding can be used to install new water infrastructure including irrigation systems, water tanks, new dam construction and water pumps," Mr Targett said.

"To access QRIDA funding, horticultural businesses need to complete a Farm Business Resilience Plan.

"A Farm Business Resilience Plan spanning 5 - 10 years not only has long-term benefits but is helpful when working with financial planners and banking establishments."

Tony Polsoni said on-farm industry designed programs continue to drive productivity and profitable outcomes as well as demonstrate environmental benefits and natural resource stewardship.

"Best Management Practice platforms such as Hort360 are an effective mechanism to do this, by identifying on-farm management practice changes that lead to both environmental benefits and production gains," Tony said.

Tony's advice to others thinking about implementing practice change was, "If we keep doing what we've always done, we're always going to get what we've always got."

"We need to think outside the box and look beyond conventional methods.

"Talking about ideas stimulates thought processes for current and future land management practice, adapting current technology and developing new or innovative technology."

Tony and Irina are currently in the process of completing their Farm Business Resilience Plan outlining their current operation, who is involved, what goals they have for the future, and how they plan to get there. This planning process has identified further projects the Polsonis are considering implementing in the future.

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

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



Irina and Tony Polsoni with their son Joe (left) on their Sunshine Coast pineapple farm.



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

Get in contact to start your resilience journey.



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Brock McDonald
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Low emissions roadmap for Queensland agriculture launched

The Queensland Government has released their low emissions roadmap for Queensland agriculture.

The roadmap focus is on creating the best conditions for a sustainable future across five focus pathways:

- Livestock emissions
- Cropping and horticulture emissions
- On-farm energy opportunities
- Carbon farming and landscape management
- Regions and supply chains.

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, Mark Furner said the Roadmap was written following a consultation

process between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and key industry partners.

“The aim is to provide a structured, smooth transition, while minimising dramatic changes,” Minister Furner said.

“Now is the time to take action – adopt the roadmap’s strategies and yield the benefits of secure long-term economic and social prosperity.

“But this is not a set and forget approach—we will keep refining the roadmap as over time we develop even more emissions reductions solutions.”

[MORE INFO](#)



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MEET LYN TUCKER

from QCWA Bundaberg Branch in Burnett Division

“I have been with Country Kitchens for two years and am from the Bundaberg branch, Burnett Division. I am in an A cappella singing group and also enjoy gardening. I became a QCWA Country Kitchens facilitator because I loved the idea of being able to make much loved recipes healthier with just a few modifications. I love to use fresh fruit and vegetables in my meals and think Country Kitchens makes it easy to ‘health-a-size’ meals,” said Lyn.

The QCWA’s Country Kitchens program is a health promotion program supporting communities across Queensland to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviours.

It is a partnership between the QCWA and

Health and Wellbeing Queensland and the flagship program of the Association.

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

“Last year, I facilitated a Country Kitchens interactive showcase in my local community at the Taste of Bundaberg event. We made different cake, muffin, and slice recipes from the Country Kitchens recipe book to hand out as taste testers. The recipes used dried

fruit to give them their sweet flavour and had added fruit or vegetables for a boost of fibre.”

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

“Other people should get involved with the QCWA Country Kitchens program because I think it’s a great way to get hooked on healthy food and have more energy. I have certainly enjoyed making a difference in the health of my community and am looking forward to working with Country Kitchens in 2023,” said Lyn.

Loaded Sweet Potato

Recipe courtesy of the Country Kitchens team

INGREDIENTS

4 small, sweet potatoes, washed
2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil + extra for drizzling
1 onion, diced
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon ground coriander seeds
1 400g can black beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup cheddar cheese, reduced fat, grated

To serve
1 avocado, deseeded
Juice of half a lime
Freshly ground pepper
Sour cream, reduced fat
Coriander leaves, roughly chopped

METHOD

PREHEAT oven to 200°C. **PRICK** the surface of the sweet potatoes with a fork then drizzle each with olive oil and wrap individually in foil. Place on a baking tray.

ROAST for 30 minutes or until soft and a knife passes through with no resistance.

SLICE each potato in half lengthways and mash the insides to soften with a fork.

HEAT frying pan on medium heat then add oil once hot. Fry the onion, garlic and spices until soft, about 5 minutes.

ADD the black beans and heat through.

TOP each potato with bean mixture and a sprinkle of cheese.

MAKE guacamole by mashing the avocado in a small bowl and mixing through the lime juice and some ground pepper.

SERVE the sweet potatoes with a dollop of guacamole and sour cream and sprinkle with coriander.

Alternative: Prick the surface of the sweet potatoes with a fork and wrap each one in a damp paper towel. Microwave each potato individually on high for 6 minutes, or until soft and a knife passes through with no resistance.



10 min 30 min 4



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.

WORKERS BOOK TICKETS TO PARADISE

The Pick Paradise workforce attraction campaign has re-launched for the 2023 growing season, encouraging workers to experience all north Queensland has on offer. Following a successful social media blitz in 2022, the 2023 campaign will focus on connection and friendship that can be found as workers travel to support local growers. Combined with destination imagery, the campaign will inspire both domestic and international workers to book a ticket to the region promising adventure, beauty and the perfect work / holiday balance.

In 2022, the Pick Paradise campaign reached an audience of 391,000 through social media channels, generating strong interest from workers both domestically and globally. Metrics from the first phase of the campaign, combined with worker and grower sentiment, means Pick Paradise 2023 will be able to focus on target markets ready to travel to the Whitsundays and North Queensland for work in the horticulture, agriculture and aquaculture sectors.

Bowen Gumlu Growers Association Chief Executive Officer, Ry Collins, said the launch of Pick Paradise 2023 was once again timed to entice workers to the region when growers need them most.

“Highlighting the beauty of the region and the diversity of roles on offer was a great success in 2022. In 2023 we once again aim to support our industry through this platform and look forward to the vibrancy and economic benefits that an engaged workforce brings to the region” Mr Collins said.

The backbone of the Pick Paradise campaign is the website and free jobs board. Attracting close to 10,000 visitors in 2022, the website offers growers a large audience to share position vacancies and potential workers valuable information about the region and what is involved in farm work.

As the growing season commences for 2023, local producers are encouraged to visit the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association website for more information on how to post jobs to the Pick Paradise website. In addition, growers and workers can use the hashtag #pickparadise when posting to social media to spread the word on the campaign.

Pick Paradise is a joint initiative between the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association and the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network with funding from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.



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DAF principal plant breeder Dr Jodi Neal.

Bot-ready strawberries to become reality for Aussie farmers

Strawberries specially bred for automated picking will soon become a reality in Australia after the launch of an initiative to develop varieties that can be easily harvested by robot.

Scientists will naturally meld together the flavour, colour and aroma traits Aussies love the most with premium strawberry varieties from the world that feature single stemmed fruit ideal for robotic picking. The \$11.5M, four-year effort is being delivered through Hort Innovation and led by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF).

Hort Innovation Chief Executive Brett Fifield said recent data shows the horticulture workforce has decreased by 20 per cent over the past three years, which has resulted in 40 per cent of Australian growers adopting advanced machinery.

“The development of a sweet, rich red and aromatic strawberry that is ideal for automation will prove a game changer for growers who want to apply new technologies on-farm,” he said.

“While harvesting strawberries using automation is not common practice yet in Australia, it will be before we know it.”

Mr Fifield said Hort Innovation is working with tech companies and researchers on various horticulture related automation

projects, and scoping discussions with the berry industry to identify opportunities for technology adoption are underway.

DAF principal plant breeder Dr Jodi Neal said the program will reduce the time needed to pick and pack strawberries, resulting in a more profitable outcome for growers.

“It takes the same amount of time to pick a small strawberry as it does to pick a large one,” Dr Neal said.

“This breeding program is focusing on delivering a consistent fruit size that is preferred by consumers on unbranched flower stems – meaning that the fruit can be picked faster – either by conventional methods or through automation.”

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries Mark Furner said Queensland is a leader in agricultural innovation.

“Queensland remains on the cutting edge of AgTech, which will be vital to the future of agriculture and the thousands of good jobs it supports in our state,” Mr Furner said.

“I commend the great work of Hort Innovation and my department and look forward to seeing the fruits of this investment benefitting the industry for years to come.”



SCIENTISTS BRING FLIES TO VARROA MITE RED ZONE

In an Australian first, researchers have released pollinator flies in the Coffs Harbour biosecurity Red Zone in an effort to fortify close to 1,500 hectares of berry crops in the area.

Growers in the region have experienced a dip in pollination services after the eradication of bees following Varroa Mite incursions, and this program will investigate whether flies, that are not attracted to food or humans, can be as effective.

Delivered through Hort Innovation and led by the University of New England and seedPurity, data will be collected from berry farms in the Varroa Mite Red Zone to understand how different flies pollinate berry crops and how growers could harness their behaviour.

Coffs Harbour is the major berry growing region of Australia and

has been significantly impacted by the Varroa Mite biosecurity response. Preliminary work through a previous Hort Innovation investment identified several flies as effective pollinators, so conducting this research in Coffs Harbour is an opportunity to take this research further.

Australian Blueberry Growers Association president Andrew Bell said the discovery of the Varroa Mite in the Coffs region has emphasised to industry that research into alternative pollination methods is more important than ever.

“The recent Varroa Mite incursion has highlighted the need for growers to have multiple pollination strategies up their sleeves for times like this. I am looking forward to the outcomes of this research and learning about how we can encourage greater pollination by flies on berry farms.”

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Articles appearing in Fruit & Vegetable News do not necessarily represent the policies or views of QFVG.

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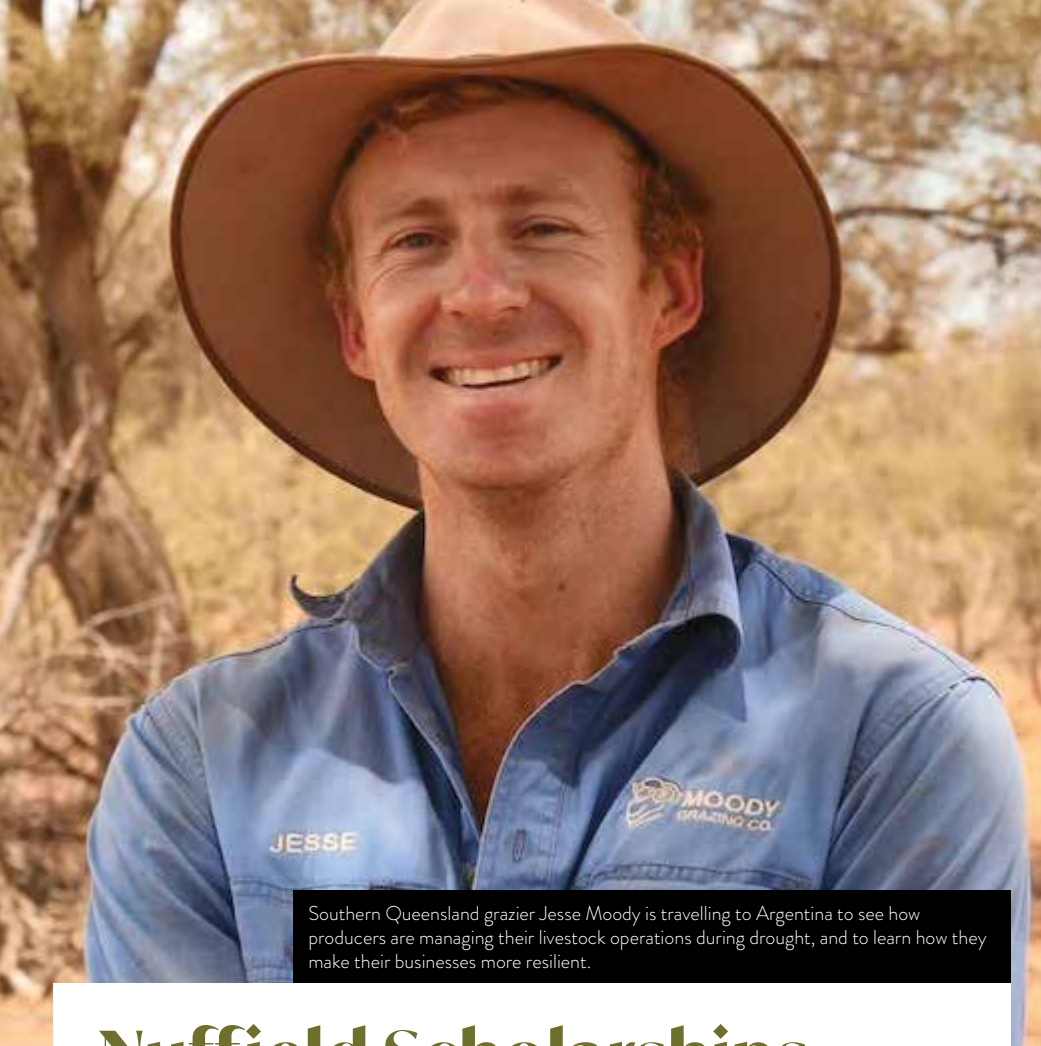
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KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Sachin Ayachit, Rachel Chambers, Michelle Haase, Luke Hargreaves, Joshua Harris, Amanda Higgins, Donna Mogg, Naomi Wilson, and Tim Wolens.



Southern Queensland grazier Jesse Moody is travelling to Argentina to see how producers are managing their livestock operations during drought, and to learn how they make their businesses more resilient.

Nuffield Scholarships applications now open to travel the world

Australian farmers and others working in food and fibre production are urged to consider how they could use overseas study tours to improve their business and industry, through a Nuffield Scholarship.

Nuffield Australia CEO and 2013 Nuffield Scholar Jodie Redcliffe said scholarships enable producers to travel the world and bring back the latest ideas and innovations to develop themselves, their businesses and wider agricultural industry.

“Recognising the uncertainty across the globe, we’ve strengthened our focus this year on enhancing the resilience and sustainability of Australian agriculture,” she said.

For the first time, Nuffield Australia will offer at least five specific drought resilience scholarships, supported by the Australian Government’s Future Drought Fund.

“Despite many areas experiencing floods recently, as farmers we know Australia is prone to drought. Of all the climate challenges to affect Australia, drought

is one of the most feared and costly in terms of production losses. Droughts also bring other emergencies like bushfires and take a toll on the mental health of farmers and their communities.

Applications for Nuffield Scholarships are open now and close on 9 June.

Each scholarship is valued at \$35,000. Nuffield Australia will award up to 20 scholarships this year. Scholarships on offer include the five drought resilience scholarships, as well as others covering horticulture, grains, dairy, wool, fisheries, cotton and more.

Nuffield Scholarships are open to all those involved in food and fibre production typically aged between 28 and 45. The bursary allows scholars to travel for 14 weeks over the next two years to study a topic important to their industry.

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