

Fruit & Vegetable



THE AVO-LUTION *of Donovan Family Investments*

SIGNIFICANT RAINFALL BRINGS DROUGHT REVOCATIONS ACROSS SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND | GETTING TO THE ROOT OF PINEAPPLE CROP LOSSES | SUNRIPE SET TO FLOURISH WITH FAIR FARMS | QLD FRUIT GROWERS STEPPING UP TO PROTECT GREAT BARRIER REEF



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6. Significant rainfall brings drought revocations across South East Queensland

Significant rainfall since October 2021 means 11 South East Queensland local government areas are no longer in drought, with the state's drought declared area dropping from 64.7% to 61.1%.

17. Getting to the root of pineapple crop losses

Pineapple crop losses caused by root rot may soon be a thing of the past, thanks to new research on environmentally friendly biofungicides at The University of Queensland. The project, led by University of Queensland molecular plant pathologist Dr Anne Sawyer, targets the pathogens that cause infected pineapple plants to wilt and die.

21. Sunripe set to flourish with Fair Farms

Sunripe grows some of the most delicious tomatoes in Australia and recently achieved an impressive three-year certification cycle with Growcom's Fair Farms program. For Administrative Director Samara De Paoli, Fair Farms was a no-brainer when compared to other ethical sourcing programs as it was purely relevant to the horticulture industry.

24. Qld fruit growers stepping up to protect Great Barrier Reef

With the health of the Great Barrier Reef of increasing concern and focus on a global stage, a growing number of Queensland horticulture producers are taking measures to reduce farming's impact on the heritage listed wonder.



welcome

Acting Chief Executive Officer
Richard Shannon

Welcome to the May edition of Growcom's Fruit & Vegetable News magazine. It has been another busy two-month period here at Growcom and within the horticulture industry.

In late March the Queensland Horticulture Council (QHC) held its first quarterly meeting for the year with Queensland Agriculture Minister the Hon Mark Furner MP.

Industry reported to the Minister and senior staff at the Department of Agriculture the most pressing issues for the industry. Top of the list were the rising costs of agricultural inputs, matched with market prices that were reflective of the growing cost of production.

QHC members also advised the Minister of continuing shortages of seasonal labour, and impacted members expressed thanks to the Minister for the response from the Queensland Government to the recent devastating rain and flooding event in South East Queensland.

Since our last magazine there has been some encouraging movement on the Ag Visa front.

Vietnam has signed a MOU with the Australian Government, signaling their interest in participating in the program, giving their citizens a chance to enter Australia and make excellent money in the horticulture sector and more broadly in agriculture.

Leading up to the Federal Election all eyes will be on Labor and their plans to secure a sustainable, reliable and productive workforce for the agriculture sector.

While Shadow Agriculture Minister Julie Collins acknowledged at the NFF Conference in early April that the sector would likely be short between 10,000 and 20,000 workers into the foreseeable future, she was unable to commit to keeping the Ag Visa.

Since then the ALP have announced plans for a dedicated agriculture stream under the existing Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) program, and have committed to funding part of the upfront travel costs of recruiting workers.

As an industry we will all feel much more comfortable if the ALP could provide more details of their plan with time to give it consideration ahead of the election, including confirmation our entire labour shortfall is able to be met by Pacific workers.

Coming up in June is the Hort Connections conference being held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre from 6 – 8 June. Hort Connections is the industry's biggest event bringing together supply chain members from right across the fruit, vegetable, nut, and floral sectors.

I would recommend to all growers and supply chain partners to attend this excellent event which showcases the exciting and new opportunities that will help shape your business. Tickets can still be purchased online via the Growcom Registration Portal: bit.ly/HC22Growcom for the heavily discounted price of \$500.

While you are at the event be sure to come and say hello to Growcom at our trade booth. Always a hive of activity this year our staff will once again be on hand to answer your most pressing questions. As part of the trade show program Growcom will also be launching the much-anticipated Future Fields, the new industry strategic plan for the next decade, and providing an update on Growcom's Fair Farms program.

Growcom is pleased to announce a date has been set for the inaugural Fair Farms National Conference – 14 October 2022 at the Opal Cove Resort, Coffs Harbour. The theme will be 'Celebrating Australia's Fair Farmers'. More information will be released in coming months.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the great contributions made by former Growcom Chief Executive Officer Stephen Barnard who finished up with the company in early May.

Stephen saw the company through the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic and has left the company in a financially strong and strategically well-placed position to best service the horticulture sector in Queensland and across Australia.

I join the Growcom Board and staff in wishing Stephen all the best and thank him for his leadership here at Growcom over the past 18 months.



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of Donovan Family Investments



policy & advocacy

Acting Chief Executive Officer
Richard Shannon

AGRICULTURE MUST MAKE HAY THIS ELECTION

With the inherent uncertainties of the agriculture sector and the environment, as primary producers we know the importance of making hay while the sun shines.

While we are undoubtedly still grappling with some significant constraints, in terms of labour and farm input supply and cost, there are a number of things lining up for agriculture that will be relevant this Federal election.

First, if there is a silver lining to COVID-19, it is that the public, politicians and policy makers are increasingly aware of the value of our regions.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recently revealed the population of regional Australia grew by 70,900 people during 2020/21, in contrast to a decline of 26,000 for the capital cities – the first time since 1981 that Australia’s regional population grew more than the capital cities.

Second, not only did agriculture help carry the economy through the worst of the pandemic, but our terms of our trade have also witnessed a significant turnaround, leading ABARES to announce a record forecast of agricultural output for the current financial year of over \$81 billion, beating the record of last year by an enormous \$12 billion margin.

Politicians, like all of us, enjoy backing in a winner. So, this particular election represents a unique opportunity for agriculture to reap a harvest in terms of strategic commitments from all parties that will set us up for long term success.

Both major parties are sniffing the breeze and have already announced what may prove to be their signature regionally focused initiatives.

The LNP through the budget announced \$2 billion for their Regional Acceleration Program, which will invest in priority areas including regional education infrastructure, supply chain resilience and manufacturing

The ALP has similarly announced setting aside a \$500 million pool specifically for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food and fibre to encourage investment in value-adding for both domestic and export markets as part of their broader \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund.

As a sector, the single largest pain point that must be addressed by the next Federal Government is the critical shortage of seasonal workers. With unemployment at record lows, this clearly must be solved through temporary migration. While the LNP have in government been working toward enacting the Ag Visa, at time of print we remain unclear about how exactly the ALP would meet the entire seasonal labour shortfall, estimated to be between 10,000 and 20,000 workers.

Other labour related priorities this election include the implementation of a National Labour Hire Scheme and significant investment in regional accommodation and housing.

We encourage all regional voters to take time to assess the plans and policies both major parties are expected to release before we all head to the polls on May 21.



RESIGNATION GROWCOM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, STEPHEN BARNARD

The Growcom board wish to advise of the resignation of our Chief Executive Officer, Mr Stephen Barnard. Stephen departed in early may after leading Growcom during the challenging period of the COVID pandemic and we are very grateful for his thoughtful and dynamic leadership at Growcom.

Stephen has successfully facilitated the Board’s mandate for enhanced service delivery and member value whilst building a sustainable

operating model at Growcom to support the Queensland horticulture industry.

Stephen has left Growcom financially strong and strategically well placed to best service the horticulture sector in Queensland and across Australia, as it moves out of the COVID pandemic and into business more normal.

Growcom’s Policy and Advocacy Manager, Mr Richard Shannon, will assume the role of Chief Executive in the interim while the board considers succession options.



workplace relations

Focus HR Founding Director
Naomi Wilson

Minimum rate guarantee

The piece rate webinar run by Growcom and Focus HR in February this year sparked a question in relation to whether or not overtime rates need to be taken into account when reconciling each day's work.

We have reached out to the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) for clarification on this and can confirm that:

- 2a(ii) defines that hourly rate for the pieceworker means the minimum hourly rate for the pieceworker's classification level plus for a casual pieceworker the 25% casual loading under clause 11.2.
- 2(f) then states that: Despite any other provision of clause 15.2 a pieceworker must be paid for each day on which they work no less than the amount they would have received if paid for each hour worked at the hourly rate for the pieceworker multiplied by the number of hours worked on that day.
- 2b(ii) states that overtime does not apply to a piece worker.

What this means is that overtime does not apply to pieceworkers, and will not be part of the reconciliation, done for each day, for the purpose of comparing the minimum hourly rate for the pieceworker multiplied by the number of hours worked on a day and the piece rate amount.

If we revisit the calculations given in the webinar, this means that we can now revise these to show:

FULLTIME/PARTIME

Employee works 10-hour day and picks 14 buckets in that time.

Piece rate earnings = $14 \times \$19.49 = \272.86

Award earnings = $(10 \times \$20.33) = \203.30

✔ Compliant

Employee works 10-hour day and picks 10 buckets in that time.

Piece rate earnings = $10 \times \$19.49 = \194.90

Award earnings = $(10 \times \$20.33) = \203.30

✘ Non-Compliant – \$8.40 make up pay ($\$203.30 - \194.90)

CASUAL

Employee works 10-hour day and picks 14 buckets in that time.

Piece rate earnings = $14 \times \$24.35 = \340.92

Award earnings = $10 \times \$25.41 = \254.10

✔ Compliant

Employee works 10-hour day and picks 10 buckets in that time.

Piece rate earnings = $10 \times \$24.35 = \243.50

Award earnings = $10 \times \$25.41 = \254.10

✘ Non-Compliant – \$10.60 make up pay ($\$254.10 - \243.50)

Superannuation under piece rate arrangements

What is included as 'ordinary time earnings' (OTE) is a question that bamboozles a lot of employers... and then we get to throw piece rates into the mix!

OTE is the amount payable to an employee for ordinary hours of work (including things like commissions and shift loadings). The ATO gives a comprehensive list of what is and isn't included in OTE for superannuation purposes.

Of note for the horticulture industry (please note this is not an exhaustive list), the things that are included are:

- Ordinary hours worked
- Casual loading
- Piece rates
- Allowances (eg. leading hand allowance)
- Paid leave

You will see that overtime is not included in that list and does not count towards OTE. However, please note that it is important that there is a clear distinction between overtime and ordinary hours. This is where it can get complicated – a lot of salaried employees have a salary which wraps overtime into the annual amount, there are also 'all up hourly rate' employees where they are paid a flat rate for each and every hour worked – in those cases, super is payable on the full salary/all up hourly rate (unless it is really clear in the contract what the break down is). Where an employee is paid an hourly rate and there is a clear distinction in the contract and on the payslip of ordinary vs overtime hours, then super is only payable on ordinary hours. So, it is particularly important that payslips clearly distinguish between ordinary hours and overtime and also TOIL when time is paid from TOIL.

If you would like to discuss this or another workplace relations matter in more detail, please don't hesitate to contact Growcom's Workplace Relations Team on 07 3620 3844 or wrtteam@growcom.com.au

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Queensland Farmers' Federation President
Allan Dingle

ESCALATING SUPPLY CHAIN COSTS MUST BE ADDRESSED IF WE ARE TO EASE COST OF LIVING PRESSURES

Election announcements and sweeteners have swamped all our news feeds. With many media outlets choosing to focus on meaningless 'gotcha' moments and with major parties competing for that 'winning headline', it is increasingly difficult to find policy detail and get a sense of long-term strategy behind election commitments.

Queensland farmers are faced with many opportunities but also many challenges. It is important that those seeking election are able to communicate the detail of policy announcements and not distract or distort issues with short termism designed to win votes.

The recent inclusion of a six-month fuel excise reduction in Federal budget announcements and the corresponding fuel tax credit debacle that has ensued is a good example of a smoke and mirror exercise that potentially does more harm than good.

While the average general motorist understandably raised a collective cheer at the announcement and our politicians gave themselves a collective pat on the back, the ramifications of the fine print contained in this decision has not proved useful for many industries including the agriculture and transport sectors – indeed any industry that relies on heavy vehicles to move product.

On one hand, the hand that gives, it was announced the fuel excise would be dropped to 22.1c/L from 44.2c/L for everyone for six months to ease cost of living pressures.

On the other hand, or the hand that takes away, the removal of on road fuel tax credit of 17.8 cents has meant trucking businesses will only see a

4.3c/L fuel tax reduction, not the 22.1c/L announced.

This policy on the run has been of no benefit to farmers and transport companies at a time when they need it most. The cut in fuel excise has not resulted in a reduction in freight costs as many were expecting. Transport is an integral part of the supply chain for farmers and many other industries across Queensland and the nation and this industry remains at the mercy of barrel price movements.

The outcome of this budget announcement may have meant mums and dads gained a weekly \$15 saving at the bowser, but the underlying causes of increased costs of living remain unchanged.

We are hearing from many trucking operators the removal of fuel tax credits is having an impact on the cashflow of their transport business and is causing stress and hardship for many operators. Australia runs on trucks, and we all rely on our transport industry significantly, farmers included.

Escalating farm input costs, transport and other supply chain costs are putting pressure on the long-term viability of Queensland farming enterprises and contributing to the overall increasing costs of living across the community.

Policy and budget decisions are levers that effect change. There needs to be more consideration given to the wider ramifications of this particular policy but indeed all policy. Industry stands ready and willing to work with governments of the day to find workable solutions for the issues facing us so that policy outcomes achieve the desired outcome for all involved.

SIGNIFICANT RAINFALL BRINGS DROUGHT REVOCATIONS ACROSS SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

Significant rainfall since October 2021 means 11 South East Queensland local government areas are no longer in drought, with the state's drought declared area dropping from 64.7% to 61.1%.

The drought status of these LGAs has been revoked:

- Bundaberg Regional Council
- Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council
- Fraser Coast Regional Council
- Gympie Regional Council
- Ipswich City Council
- Lockyer Valley Regional Council
- Scenic Rim Regional Council
- Somerset Regional Council
- South Burnett Regional Council
- Southern Downs Regional Council
- Toowoomba Regional Council.

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities Mark Furner said Local Drought Committees (LDCs) had assessed the response to the rain and flooding events over the past few months and noted a big improvement in conditions across the state's south east.

"While we acknowledge that some producers have suffered significant damage from the severe rain and flood events, the positive is that natural water courses and stock and irrigation water storages have been replenished, along with excellent pasture growth that will see us through to the next wet season," Mr Furner said.

The Minister said individual properties could still be considered for drought assistance by applying for an Individually Droughted Property (IDP) declaration.

The drought declaration map can be viewed at longpaddock.qld.gov.au and the prototype drought monitor can be viewed at nacp.org.au/drought_monitor

For further information, visit daf.qld.gov.au or call the Customer Service Centre on 13 25 23.



macpherson kelley.

Managing Principal Lawyer – Dandenong
Kelly Dickson

Compliance matters: Cracking the Horticulture Code of Conduct

An industry's Code of Conduct helps to even the playing field when it comes to compliance and the trade of goods – in the agriculture business, it's the Horticulture Code of Conduct (Code).

While no one wants to be slapped with a fine, regulation is necessary to keep the trade honest. However, recent investigations and industry research by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) have indicated that some industry standards have gone amiss.

A spotlight has been cast on growers, traders and merchants working in the horticulture sector following the ACCC's work on the Perishable Agricultural Goods Inquiry.

Horticulture businesses on notice

The ACCC's audits have found that some businesses trading or producing horticulture products are not compliant with the industry standards specified in the Code. The regulatory body intends to conduct further investigations into the industry and consider enforcement action for compliance failures.

The ACCC's recent announcement is a good reminder to pump the brakes, review the regulation and ensure that your business complies with the Code to avoid significant penalties. Breaches of the Code may incur penalties of up to \$66,600.

What did the ACCC find?

The ACCC's investigation highlighted some key failings and areas for improvement within the industry, including trading without a Horticulture Produce Agreement (HPA) and failure to report prices.

The HPA is a written contract between a grower, trader and/or merchant which is required to be entered into before the business relationship commences. A HPA has very specific, mandated content.

As for reporting prices, traders are required to report the price they pay a grower for their produce, and the price for which it is on-sold etc.

How to ensure your business is compliant

Review the Code!

If you have not already, acquire a copy of the Horticulture Code of Conduct and review it carefully. Ensure you understand it and what your rights and obligations are. The Code can be found via links on the ACCC's website.

Have compliant HPAs in place

Check that you have a correct and compliant HPA in place with your trading partners, which covers all of the elements of your trading relationship. Failure to follow the terms of the HPA, or attempts to trade outside of it, may breach the Code.

If you are a trader, you are also required to publish your terms of trade.

Report prices

If you are a trader, ensure that you accurately report to your growers on your relevant prices and pricing structures.

Seek legal advice

As the saying goes, it's better to be safe than sorry! If you are at all unsure about what your rights and obligations are under the Code, or if you need further clarification, seek legal advice specific for your circumstances.



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Australian Retirement Trust



Pat Twomey

AUSTRALIAN RETIREMENT TRUST: PUTTING MEMBERS FIRST

We know from experience that mergers require a huge amount of effort from both organisations. We spoke to Patrick Twomey, Head of Regions and Operations from Australian Retirement Trust about the recent merger and to gain insights into how Sunsuper and QSuper can leverage each other's strengths to provide a better outcome for their members.

One of the country's largest superannuation funds was formed when Sunsuper and QSuper merged to form Australian Retirement Trust? Why did both organisations decide to merge?

"Ultimately because it will benefit our members through the increased scale. As you can imagine, we already had a certain amount of scale and size being two of Australia's largest super funds."

"For two equals to come together to take care of more than \$200 billion in retirement savings for two million members was a significant responsibility, but we could see the benefits that would follow for members, and we also saw the opportunity to be a force for good and a respected voice on behalf of our members both in our industry and the broader community."

And do you see further growth in Australian Retirement Trust's horizon?

"Yes, two million members is just the start for Australian Retirement Trust and we know that further growth will continue to create scale benefits for members. This scale will allow us to build on our service capability and total offering for employer clients and members."

It's unusual to see a merger of equals in the industry right now – was it a difficult decision for both organisations to make?

"Sunsuper and QSuper have taken care of their members' super for a combined 140 years, so it was not a decision that either organisation made overnight. The decision really came down to whether a merged fund would serve the interests of members – Sunsuper's, QSuper's and the merged funds. Through the deep due diligence that both funds conducted it was clear there will be many benefits for members."

What will the merged fund, Australian Retirement Trust, help to deliver?

"Our size and scale with two million members will allow us to deliver benefits to members. It will enable us to drive down costs and the efficiencies that scale will afford will allow us to provide enhanced products and services, and lower fees. For example, we've already announced that the administration fees from member accounts for most members will decrease from 1 July."

What were some of the things that really stood out to you during the merger?

"The work and commitment of both legacy fund teams. There was unwavering commitment of both funds to continue to deliver for members and support our employer clients through the merger process. That both funds continued to service their members and employer clients and grow the funds throughout the merger process is again a credit to both teams."

"The largest and most complex merger ever in the Australian superannuation industry doesn't happen, and happen successfully, without enormous effort and collaboration."

What will you be focused on over the next 6-12 months?

"The next 12 months will see us focusing on our employer clients and helping them to understand and come to grips with topics like stapling, which is a new process for many employers. And while we have a national footprint, we still have a strong public sector heritage in Queensland and will look to continue to build on that strength."

"We're also squarely focused on supporting our members to and through retirement, and to support our members' future financial wellbeing. Whether our members are starting out their working life, already retired, or somewhere in between, we'll guide them to help ensure they feel secure, confident and protected."

Not currently with Australian Retirement Trust?

If you're not already with Australian Retirement Trust and you want to start making a real difference to you and your employee's retirement today – it's easy to join.

If you're an employer, register with **Employer Online** in only 5 to 10 minutes via our secure employer portal or become a member by joining through **Member Join Online** both available through australianretirementtrust.com.au

Prefer to speak to a member of our team? Call our Contact Centre on **13 11 84** between 8.00am to 6.30pm (AEST) Monday to Friday.

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Shed Talk

Events in Australia over the past two years have taken their toll on many people’s mental health. Looking after each other and yourself is vitally important. This June, join Growcom for an inspirational morning as we present Shed Talk 2022. Hear from three world class speakers as they share stories of leadership, courage, resilience, employer branding and much more.

GUEST SPEAKERS



Kurt Fearnley

Kurt Fearnley is a three-time Paralympic gold medallist and two time Commonwealth Games gold medallist. He has won over 40 marathons, including New York, Chicago and London in a career spanning more than 20 years. In 2009 Kurt crawled the Kokoda track, in Papua New Guinea, to raise awareness of men’s health. Kurt was also a member of the winning Sydney to Hobart yacht crew, Investec Loyal, in 2012. He is New South Wales Australian of the Year for 2019.

Kurt is an accomplished corporate speaker, a published Author (Pushing the Limits: Life, Marathons and Kokoda), host of Tiny Island, A Nation Changed and You Little Ripper podcasts and host of 2020 ABCTV’s One Plus One.



Major Matina Jewell

Major Matina Jewell (retired) grew up in the hinterland of Byron Bay and joined the Army at age 17. During her 15-year military career Matina served on five missions and earned nine military service & war medals. She was also the first woman in the Australian Army to complete the physically demanding Navy divers’ course.

Medically retired from injuries sustained during the 2006 Lebanon War, Matina served on the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council and continues to champion change for our injured war veterans..

Matina has been featured on the ABC’s Australian Story, is a best-selling author and now shares her unique insights on leadership and resilience with audiences around the world as a keynote speaker.



Mark Puncher

Mark Puncher is a Dad, a CEO and a big fan of gin. He’s spent much of the last 20 years with one hand in marketing, the other in talent attraction and engagement, and both feet in leadership.

He has run marketing or employer branding operations in the APAC and the UK for organisations including Guardian News & Media, Hobsons (formerly DMGT Group) and Hanson Wade. Mark lives and breathes employer branding and culture shaping. When he isn’t doing that, his current hobbies include finger painting, 5am ballet and building dens. He also has strong beliefs about the importance of wine.

Workshop details

DATE
Monday, 6 June 2022

TIME
9am – 11am

COST
Free

RSVP
<https://bit.ly/ShedTalk22>

LOCATION
Room M4
Brisbane Convention
& Exhibition Centre

ENQUIRIES
Blair Brown - Regional Agriculture
Workforce Officer
0456 639 098
bbrown@growcom.com.au



THE AVO-LUTION

of Donovan Family Investments

Had you asked Lachlan and Annalise Donovan 25 years ago if they'd be running a thriving horticulture enterprise employing over 100 people, forging export opportunities, and managing ten avocado orchards, they might have laughed you out the door.

Both hailing from grazing and grain growing families, Lachlan and Annalise moved to Alloway (near Bundaberg) in 1997, with two toddlers underfoot, and just a smidge of avocado experience under their belts.

Discovering they had a bit of a knack for growing avocados however, the Donovans steadily expanded their operations, purchasing orchards opportunistically. Eventually outgrowing their packing shed at Alloway, in 2016 they established their packing facility at Isis Central.

It's here that they changed things up a gear and broadened their packing capacities by investing in innovative, custom-made packing equipment and imaging ag-technology to grade fruit - one of the first in Queensland.

They also diversified to pack for other commodities such as citrus, as well as taking on fast-paced marketing, quality assurance and supply chain logistics on behalf of other avocado growers.

Although starting out from seemingly humble beginnings, the Donovans had a strong vision for the avocado industry and have been heavily engaged in progressing its growth, particularly the export market.

They were instrumental in founding the marketing group The Avolution and with other stakeholders contributed to the development of a guide for avocado growers to improve market access to Asia and the Middle East.

Both Lachlan and Annalise travelled overseas on several occasions to deepen their understanding of consumer needs and foster relationships for export opportunities.

Lachlan contributed hugely to the industry through representation on the board of Avocados Australia Limited (previously the Australian Avocado Growers Federation), for 13 years.

Known for being an open and inclusive industry body, Australian Avocados Limited, has served the Central Queensland avocado industry well, sharing knowledge freely amongst growers and boasting excellent participation at industry field days and events.

Despite their commitment to the industry however, it hasn't been all about avocados.

The Donovans pride themselves on being a strong family business, providing career opportunities for their sons Miles and Clayton, and a future for their own young families.

They hugely value each other's input and contribution, holding weekly family meetings.

"We're always going to have four different opinions, and that's great. I mean, the ideas that the boys have brought along are fantastic most of the time," Annalise said.

"We discuss everything. We're very open. Like, even before the boys came in, Lachlan would never make a decision without me. And I would never make a decision without him because we're in together."

Importantly, they maintain clear boundaries about each other's roles.

"It's one of those things that I don't delve into what the boys are doing outside, and they don't delve into what we're doing down in admin," Annalise added.

They also value gender diversity, employing two female agronomists; and offering positions that provide career pathways, skills development, and security for staff.

Currently they employ a full-time Pack House Manager, a Quality Assurance team of five, an Office Manager, forklift operators, IT technicians to run the Invision and Compac Fruit Grading Machine, and a Workplace Health and Safety advisor who sorts out those tricky WHS issues.

"Staff is such a big part of business," Annalise said.

"If you don't have good staff, it doesn't matter how good your business is, it will go downhill really quick.

"You have to have good key staff, good management across all levels."

For seasonal roles, retaining staff to return each year is crucial because of the skills they develop to visually assess the quality of fruit, rather than relying solely on technology.

"Computers make mistakes and the last thing you want is for a load of fruit to go out with a problem because it's very hard to get a good name in the industry, but it's very easy to lose your reputation," Annalise said.

They recently became accredited through Growcom's Fair Farms program, and this has been a hugely important move for the Donovans to ensure they were running a safe and ethical workplace that would encourage staff to return year after year.

Annalise first heard about Fair Farms at a Hort Connections conference and was inspired to pursue it because it is an Australian-based program, created specifically for the Australian horticulture industry.

"That was my big thing because it was done for the farmers on a more condensed level rather than other programs which are for multiple countries and industries," Annalise said.

"And the other thing for us, when we do something, we do it properly.

"We're not one of these businesses that just do enough to get by, to get the certificate, to say we've got it."

One of the changes they have implemented since becoming Fair Farms accredited is an employment contract for every single employee which clearly identifies their role, rate of pay, hours to be worked.

Previously they had only had these for part-time and permanent employees, of course, because that's the law.

"Through Fair Farms, there's a requirement to do this, and I can understand why it's in there," Annalise said.

"The employee knows exactly where they stand."

Recently, the Donovans also became Reef Certified (the first avocado growers to do so) through Growcom's Hort360 Great Barrier Reef program, certifying all ten farms.

As an agribusiness valuing stewardship for the land, they are strongly committed to continuous improvement of soil health, improving inter-row grass cover, preventing erosion and sediment loss particularly on farms with new plantings, and zero nutrient losses.

Challenges they're facing are not dissimilar to those faced by all farmers with fertiliser and fuel prices dramatically impacting their bottom line.

On a serious note, water issues - in what the Donovans described as the Paradise Dam debacle - have added significant stress on moving forward as a business.

"We have questioned our vision and growth during this challenging 18 months whilst the future of Paradise Dam was uncertain," Lachlan said.

"It's simple; no water security, no trees, no food."

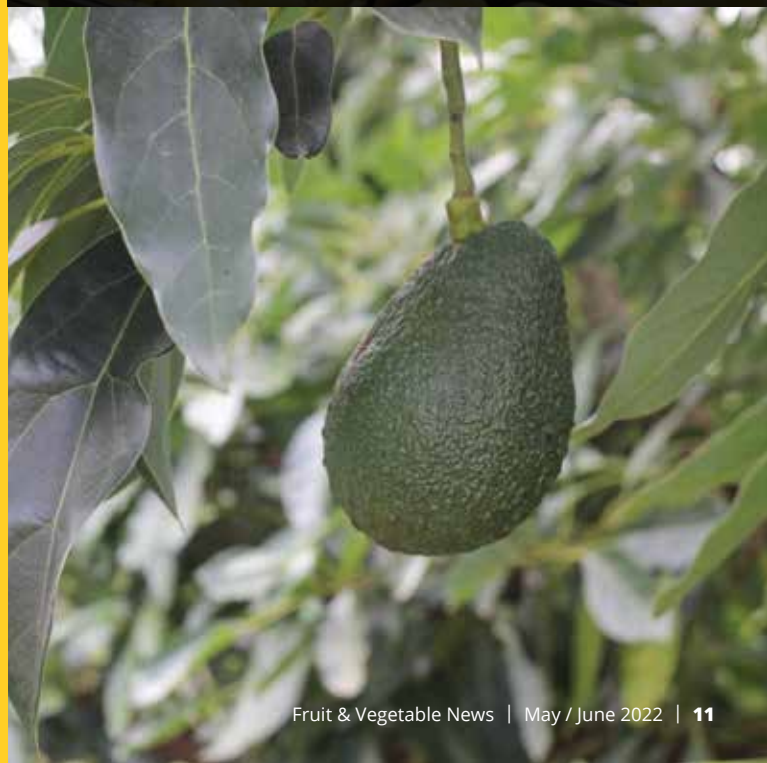
Looking forward, with a commitment for the Paradise Dam wall to be reinstated by the Queensland Government, the future for the avocado industry in the Wide Bay-Burnett is brighter.

When asked to reflect on the last 25 years, Annalise responded "I'm very proud of what we've done and where we've come from."

"If you'd asked me when we moved across here or before we'd even moved here, where we'd be in 2022, I wouldn't have thought we'd be where we are now."



The Donovans pride themselves on being a strong family business, providing career opportunities for their sons Miles and Clayton (pictured).



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Brisbane monthly summary for April 2022

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Fruits

Brisbane Monthly Special 6 - 10 Crop Summary

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
AVOCADOS,Fuerte	2595.15	12KgCtn	64.00	64.00	64.00	64.00
Shepard		12KgCtn	64.00	64.00	64.00	64.00
Fuerte		18LCtn	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00
Shepard		18LCtn	8.00	18.00	20.00	13.50
Fuerte		SLTray	20.00	50.00	50.00	32.00
Hass		SLTray	10.00	74.00	74.00	23.70
Shepard		SLTray	6.00	20.00	20.00	12.17
BERRIES,Blackberries	224.04	125g	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.67
Blueberries		125g	5.00	9.00	9.00	7.53
Raspberries		125g	1.50	4.50	4.50	2.99
FIGS,Dark Skin	35.25	300gLP	2.60	4.00	4.00	3.19
Dark Skin		6KgCtn	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
Dark Skin		SLTray	10.00	36.00	42.00	27.42
GRAPES,Dark Seeded,Autumn Black	1847.16	18LCtn	40.00	45.00	45.00	42.50
Dark Seeded,Autumn Royal		18LCtn	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50
Dark Seeded,Black America		18LCtn	20.00	40.00	40.00	24.06
Dark Seeded,Black Muscat		18LCtn	30.00	50.00	50.00	39.60
Dark Seeded,Muscat Cross		18LCtn	40.00	50.00	50.00	43.64
Dark Seeded,Red Globe		18LCtn	16.00	35.00	35.00	26.10
Dark Seedless,Crimson		18LCtn	16.00	42.00	42.00	31.28
Dark Seedless,Midnight Beauty		18LCtn	30.00	35.00	35.00	32.50
White Seedless,Great Green		18LCtn	32.00	40.00	40.00	36.40
White Seedless,Ivory		18LCtn	12.00	18.00	20.00	15.00
White Seedless,Mindee		18LCtn	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50
White Seedless,Sultana		18LCtn	20.00	36.00	36.00	23.75
White Seedless,Thompson		18LCtn	25.00	30.00	30.00	27.50
Dark Seedless,Sapphire		4.5KgCt	60.00	80.00	80.00	70.00
Dark Seedless,Sapphire		9KgCtn	36.00	70.00	70.00	57.25
White Seedless,Autumn Crisp		9KgCtn	130.00	130.00	130.00	130.00
White Seedless,Thompson		9KgCtn	26.00	30.00	30.00	29.20
KIWIFRUIT,Gold	299.16	5KgCtn	50.00	75.00	75.00	62.78
Gold		6KgCtn	40.00	45.00	45.00	42.50
Hayward		BulkPk	30.00	75.00	75.00	51.50
LEMONS,Eureka	573.97	BulkCP	2.00	40.00	40.00	18.35
LIMES,Tahitian	257.82	18LCtn	10.00	30.00	40.00	17.69
Tahitian		9LCtn	5.00	25.00	30.00	12.94
PINEAPPLES,Smoothleaf	869.62	Carton	12.00	26.00	26.00	20.63
Smoothleaf		Each	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.50
Hybrid Topless,Unspecified		SLTray	18.00	28.00	28.00	25.00
ROCKMELONS	638.03	30LTray	20.00	36.00	36.00	29.17
		32LCtn	20.00	26.00	26.00	24.00
WATERMELONS,Long Varieties	2113.00	Kg	0.60	1.00	1.00	0.79
Seedless		Kg	0.60	2.80	2.80	2.12

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Vegetables

Brisbane Monthly Special 6 - 10 Crop Summary

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
BEANS,Butter	292.65	Kg	6.00	10.00	12.00	8.00
Flat S'less		Kg	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00
Round S'less		Kg	0.80	10.00	10.00	4.54
Snake		Kg	4.00	10.00	12.00	6.06
BEETROOT	202.10	10KgBag	8.00	22.00	22.00	14.44
		Bunch	2.00	4.00	4.00	2.65
Baby		Bunch	2.40	3.00	3.00	2.71
BROCCOLI,Baby	473.37	2.4Kg	16.00	26.00	26.00	21.72
		8KgIPk	6.00	45.00	45.00	29.57
CAPSICUMS,Gold	911.17	10KgCtn	65.00	70.00	70.00	69.38
Red		10KgCtn	50.00	100.00	100.00	82.08
Gold		27LCtn	30.00	40.00	40.00	35.00
Green		27LCtn	8.00	36.00	36.00	20.44
Mixed Colour		27LCtn	20.00	50.00	50.00	28.31
Red		27LCtn	12.00	60.00	64.00	40.20
Gold		5KgCtn	5.00	50.00	50.00	40.28
Orange		5KgCtn	35.00	45.00	45.00	40.00
CAULIFLOWERS	1178.35	Carton	8.00	55.00	55.00	30.96
CELERY	354.60	15KgCtn	8.00	30.00	30.00	17.50
CHINESE VEG.,Bukchoy	264.77	Bunch	1.40	2.60	3.00	1.99
Choisum		Bunch	1.80	2.60	3.00	2.46
Kailan		Bunch	1.80	2.60	3.00	2.46
Pakchoy		Bunch	1.20	2.60	3.00	1.71
GINGER	145.36	Kg	4.00	30.00	30.00	16.73
LETTUCE,Baby Cos	785.73	Carton	18.00	36.00	36.00	23.56
Baby Cos,Sweet Gems		Carton	16.00	40.00	40.00	23.00
Baby Cos Hearts		Carton	20.00	36.00	36.00	23.33
Cos		Carton	26.00	60.00	60.00	39.85
Headed		Carton	10.00	50.00	50.00	30.74
Open Varieties		Carton	12.00	24.00	24.00	18.22
Open Varieties,Green Oak		Carton	14.00	24.00	24.00	20.22
Open Varieties,Red Oak		Carton	12.00	20.00	22.00	16.89
Radicchio		Tray	16.00	30.00	30.00	23.67
ZUCCHINIS,Green	691.32	10KgCtn	6.00	36.00	36.00	19.15
Lebanese		10KgCtn	26.00	40.00	40.00	33.00

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RESEARCHERS INVESTIGATE GARLIC'S HIDDEN POWERS

All Australian commercial garlic varieties have viruses. While they don't seem to affect taste or nutrition, they do have an impact on the crop's yield.

University of Queensland plant virologist Associate Professor John Thomas said there could be up to 10 or 12 viruses in infected plants and most garlic plants would have at least six viruses.

Understanding that suite of viruses and their impact is the problem Dr Thomas, UQ colleagues Dr Stephen Harper and Associate Professor Andrew Geering, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Dr Kathy Crew and PhD candidate Sari Nurulita, are investigating.

Ms Nurulita's doctoral study aims to develop reliable virus detection tests and investigate why both superior and inferior garlic plants share the same viral profile.

"Garlic is a vegetatively propagated crop, and once it's been infected, all the progeny are infected," Dr Thomas said.

"It's also possible for the crop to collect more viruses in the field, but not lose any plants."

He said in previous work led by Dr Harper and funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, researchers grew higher performing bulbs among virus-infected garlic crops.

"Through breeding selections over generations, Dr Harper was getting three times the yield from the best selections,"



Garlic in fields side-by-side showing different yield

Dr Thomas said.

"However, Ms Nurulita's work shows these elite garlic selections are still infected by the virus complement and we don't know why that is occurring."

Ms Nurulita also investigated the viruses concentrations using next-generation sequencing, and mapped the full genomes of the viruses.

"I did not find any significant differences in the viruses levels and was unable to determine a clear-cut difference between the two different lines of elite and poor performing garlic seed," Ms Nurulita said.

Dr Thomas said the team had also tried tissue culture propagation to generate virus-free garlic, but without success.

"We think maybe gene silencing is happening naturally in the plant. It may depend on which virus gets the upper hand in a particular clove, or the order they are infected in," he said.

"There are so many different possibilities and it's not a simple matter. But we are going to look at absolute levels of virus to see whether we can determine if gene silencing is responsible."



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Dr Anne Sawyer with BioClay pineapples



Pineapple treated with BioClay for root rot

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF PINEAPPLE CROP LOSSES

Pineapple crop losses caused by root rot may soon be a thing of the past, thanks to new research on environmentally friendly biofungicides at The University of Queensland.

The project, led by University of Queensland molecular plant pathologist Dr Anne Sawyer, targets the pathogens that cause infected pineapple plants to wilt and die.

“Our aim is to minimise losses caused by plant pathogens, which will strengthen food security,” said Dr Sawyer.

She is developing biofungicides to combat pathogens that affect pineapple, avocados, and native Myrtaceae tree species.

These pathogens include *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, a fungal-like organism transmitted through soil that causes root rot.

“Phytophthora is the most dreaded pineapple pathogen in Queensland and worldwide, infecting plants throughout production,” Dr Sawyer said.

“It causes rotting of roots and anthocyanescence (reddening or purplish coloration) of foliage.

“Phytophthora is also one of the main factors limiting avocado yields in Queensland. *Phytophthora*-affected trees produce small, poor-quality fruit.”

Dr Sawyer works with Professor Neena Mitter who, together with

Prof. Zhi Ping (Gordon) Xu, pioneered development of non-toxic RNA-based sprays – known as BioClay™ – to prevent a range of agricultural diseases and threats.

“These new biofungicides are designed to improve fruit quality, boost production efficiency, and reduce the use of chemicals in food production,” she said.

“BioClay uses a gene silencing technology that is precise and specific in the way it helps plants defend against pathogens.

“It is an environmentally sustainable alternative to chemical pesticides and leaves no residue on the produce.”

She is testing BioClay on pineapple tops and avocado seedlings to measure how effectively it protects against root rot.

Dr Sawyer said researchers were looking at using the technology to target insect pests as well as viruses and fungi.

Dr Sawyer’s work is supported by an Advance Queensland Industry Research Fellowships which fund research that has an economic benefit to the state. Other partners in the research include the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries who are supplying in-kind support through collaborative research and glasshouses for trials, Nufarm Limited, Scion New Zealand, Australian Pineapples, Greenlife Industry Australia, Kai Loa, Howe Farming Enterprises, Australian Native Products, and the Australian Tea Tree Industry Association.

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Native Australian ingredients with Country Kitchens

Modern Australian cuisine is a melting pot of multicultural influences. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in reconnecting with Australian First Nations bush foods and cooking using traditional techniques. Many ingredients are now more readily available and commonly seen in supermarkets and restaurant menus. Here are a few common native Australian bush foods.

Lemon myrtle has a sweet, yet spicy flavour with intense and refreshing citrus notes. It originated in Australia's rainforests and traditionally grows in tropical and subtropical regions of Australia. Lemon myrtle can be used in both sweet and savoury dishes. Use it as a substitute for bay leaf in marinades, soups, stews, casseroles and roasts. The flavour is intense, but when used sparingly (like a bay leaf), it will complement chicken, lamb, kangaroo and beef dishes.

Pepperberry, also known as mountain pepper, is an evergreen shrub often used as a culinary spice. It is native to the woodlands and cool temperate rainforests of Australia's south-eastern region. Both the leaves and berries of the plant may be used fresh or dried to add a spicy, peppery flavour to curries, cheese, salad dressings and sauces. The flowers can also be used fresh in salads, or as a pretty, peppery garnish for a variety of sweet and savoury dishes. The dried berries make a pungent native substitute for black pepper.

Strawberry gum is a medium-size tree which is endemic to the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales. The leaves have a strawberry and cream aroma and complement a range of cooking styles. Strawberry gum is commonly used to enhance the flavour of cooked fruit dishes, desserts or spiced preserves and chutneys, bringing out the classic 'berry' flavour. It can also be used in herbal teas and carbonated beverages, or even in curries, mustards and vinaigrettes.

Wattleseeds are the edible seeds from any of the 120 species of Australian Acacia that were traditionally used as food by First Nations Australians. They have had a traditional use for over 4000 years as a staple food. Wattleseed has a dominant nutty and coffee flavour with a slight bitterness. It is typically roasted and used whole or ground to flavour a range of dishes including cakes, damper, bread, curries, casseroles or desserts.

Bush tomatoes are traditionally found throughout the central deserts of the Northern Territory and South Australia. 'Desert raisins' are the most well known and consumed species of bush tomatoes. Bush tomatoes have a strong sun-dried tomato, caramel and tamarillo flavour and aroma. They are high in vitamin C and are a rich source of minerals, particularly potassium.

To learn more visit www.qcwacountrykitchens.com.au and browse our extensive healthy recipe collection. Sign up to our free Monthly Munch newsletter or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/qcwacountrykitchens



Lemon Myrtle and Macadamia Dukkah

PREP TIME 10 MINUTES COOK TIME: 5 MINUTES

Recipe courtesy of Meg O'Donnell, Country Kitchens team.

1 ½ cup	macadamias, roughly chopped
½ cup	sunflower seeds
1/3 Cup	cup sesame seeds
½ cup	cumin seeds
4 tablespoons	ground coriander
1 tablespoon	ground lemon myrtle
1 tablespoon	vegetable stock powder

METHOD

PREHEAT frypan over medium heat.

TOAST macadamias, sunflower seeds and sesame seeds for approximately 5 minutes or until lightly toasted.

TRANSFER to a plate to cool.

COMBINE all ingredients in large bowl and mix well.

STORE in an airtight container.

WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT IT?

This native Australian inspired dukkah mix is incredibly versatile, pairing perfectly with grilled meats, vegetables and more. Try sprinkling over hummus with a drizzle of olive oil, and serve with toasted flatbread or vegetable sticks.



FAIR FARMS

NEWS

MAY / JUNE 2022



THIS MONTH

Sunripe set to flourish with Fair Farms

DEVELOPING BUSINESS WITH GROWERS
FAIR EMPLOYMENT OF OVERSEAS WORKERS
INTRODUCING SUSTAINABLE ASSURANCE SOLUTIONS

National Fair Farms Conference & Awards

14 October 2022

Opal Cove Resort, Coffs Harbour

Join Fair Farms this coming October as we celebrate Australia's Fair Farmers at the inaugural Fair Farms Conference.





program update

Fair Farms National Program Manager
Sachin Ayachit

It has been a busy couple of months for the Fair Farms team. We've delivered information workshops to key industry leaders, created new gate signs, and have seen the steady addition of more members to the program. We've also facilitated training workshops for our approved auditors to enable them to better understand the program and to help ensure they deliver quality audits for our members. Last month, we also launched a quarterly e-newsletter targeted at our approved auditors to help inform and keep them up to date about the programs progress.

The Fair Farms Program Review was recently completed and from it we were able to identify key focuses for the Fair Farms team to tackle. There will now be specific timelines and deadlines for members to complete their Online Self-Assessment (OSA), training and audit. This is to ensure the program gives our members structure and a clearer timeframe on when they can achieve Fair Farms Certification.

An important focus that was addressed during the review was the lack of approved auditors available to administer Fair Farms audits. Fair Farms audits can only be conducted by independent third-party auditors who are members of the Association of Professional Social Compliance Auditors, and while this will not change, the program will work to offer a practical and fair approval process for eligible auditors so that we can increase the number of auditors available to audit for our members.

As part of the Program Review the recertification cycle for certified growers will remain the same as will the inclusion of half day audits. The decision to continue to offer half-day audits boils down to Fair Farms believing and recognising that there needs to be an equitable approach to auditing for smaller growers.

The Program Review outcome provides clarity and practical considerations for growers and the horticulture industry at large. Moving forward Fair Farms will be inviting industry leaders to form a technical committee to conduct periodic reviews of the program.

Outside of the Program Review I am delighted to announce Fair Farms will be hosting a conference in Coffs Harbour at Opal Cove Resort on 14 October 2022 – the theme will be Celebrating Australia's Fair Farmers. More information will be released soon. Make sure to follow our socials and to visit www.fairfarms.com.au to keep up to date.

If you would like to reach out to me, you can email me at sayachit@growcom.com.au



Fair Farms National Program Manager, Sachin Ayachit hand delivered Tou's Garden's Fair Farms gate sign on a recent trip to the Northern Territory.



business development

Fair Farms Business Development Officer
Desda Cullearn

It's been an incredible time for Fair Farms recently, program changes, team growth, new tools and resources for our growers and auditors – it's great to a part of it all. Since joining the program in late 2020 I've been working to really listen to what growers want from the program and working with the greater Fair Farms team to see the grower's vision for the program become a reality.

My focus with the help of the rest of the Fair Farms team going forward will be to facilitate opportunities for growth and engagement with the program. To this end we have been really focussed with engaging with Peak Industry Bodies and their members to increase the visibility of the program nationally.

We currently have plans to deliver information workshops to several key peak industry bodies around Australia and will be visiting South Australia, Western Australia, and the Victoria over

the next couple of months. We recently delivered workshops in the Northern Territory as well.

In addition to speaking with Peak Industry Bodies across Australia I've also seen to personally delivering some of our Fair Farms Gate Signs to our certified growers. These gate signs are gradually making their way out to our Certified Growers so they can show their community that they're Fair Farms proud.

Over the next coming months, I'll be at industry events continuing to raise the profile of Fair Farms and working to ensure our growers get the most of out the program. If you would like to chat with about the program, or want to simply say hi you can reach me at dcullearn@growcom.com.au

Sunripe set to flourish *with Fair Farms*

Fair Farms Certified Grower Sunripe grows some of the most delicious tomatoes in Australia and recently achieved an impressive three-year certification cycle with Fair Farms.

Sunripe, which is in Bundaberg, is a family run operation run by Dean De Paoli, his son Luke De Paoli, and Jason Gatt.

Luke's wife Samara De Paoli is also involved in the management of the farm working as the Administrative Director. Samara said the process for becoming certified with Fair Farms was straightforward and relevant.

"When compared to other ethical sourcing programs it is a no-brainer, Fair Farms is purely relevant to our industry," Samara said.

"Having a certification, like Fair Farms, that shows Sunripe is committed to providing fair and ethical employment, is so important."

Sunripe has been operating since 2020 and is the result of a merger of two, family run farms.

The farm is also known as one of the largest producers of field grown snacking tomatoes in the country. Sunripe grows a variety of cherry, mini-Roma and grape tomatoes and they also produce peas and watermelons.

Samara said they value their workers and have been working hard to ensure their people are well-looked after.

"Since we grow snacking tomatoes all year round it allows us to have long-term employees rather than seasonal workers," Samara said.

"This is a big help in attracting quality permanent employees and maintaining good working relationships.

"We try to plan our additional crops so the same workforce can be shared between crops wherever possible.

"Just over a year ago we hired a HR manager which has helped immensely with workplace relations."

Speaking about the Fair Farms process and why other Australian farmers should support the program over international versions, Samara said that while the process seemed daunting it was a huge help to her and the farm.

"We found out about Fair Farms from Growcom's Fruit & Vegetable News Magazine," she said.

"Going through a Fair Farms audit is a great encouragement to get your paperwork in order and to ensure proper procedures are in place moving forward."

Joining Fair Farms formed part of the farm's commitment to continue to improve and find better and new ways to do things on farm.

"We are extremely focussed on technology and efficiency, which has led to various state of the art equipment being implemented in both our packing facility and our farms – some the first of its kind," she said.

"We are doing what's necessary to future-proof our business and part of that is moving towards a more skilled workforce – and Fair Farms is part of that."



Introducing our Audit Bodies

To achieve a Fair Farms certification, members must complete an audit with an approved Fair Farms independent third-party audit firm. These audit bodies are independent of Fair Farms and administer audits in accordance with programs rules and standards. Auditors must be members of ASPCA (Association of Professional Social Compliance Auditors).

Sustainable Assurance Solutions (SAS) is a boutique Australian company specialising in Corporate Social Responsibility and is one of four audit firms conducting independent third-party audits for Fair Farms.

Founded in 2019 by Founder & Managing Director Arta Beikzadeh SAS has gone on to administer more than 200 audits.

"We have been working closely with the Fair Farms team to support growers and the industry and to improve the working landscape while also helping to educate and support growers," Arta said.

Arta, who is also currently completing an MBA with focus on ethical sourcing and corporate social responsibility, became aware of the Fair Farms program after discovering it was an Australian-centric program designed by the horticulture industry for farmers.

"At SAS we believe as an Australian business that we need to work together with other Australian programs like Fair Farms to achieve great things," Arta said.

"As a result of Fair Farms involvement within the context of employment in the horticulture industry we have seen a significant improvement in the industry in terms of employment ethics."

SAS works with many businesses across the Asia Pacific region to help them meet their ethical and sustainable sourcing obligations not just within a local context but a global one as well.

SAS holds full membership with the Association of Professional Social Compliance Auditors (APSCA), and our CSR Auditor training is recognised by APSCA as part of the Auditor's annual CPD (Continuous Professional Development).

To find out more information about Sustainable Assurance Solutions or to book an audit with them head to contact www.sasglobe.com



Fair employment of overseas workers

Employing overseas workers in recent times has helped to address labour shortages in Australia. However, overseas workers face unique challenges when working in Australia. English is often their second language, and they often lack a comprehensive understanding of Australian employment laws.

If you employ overseas workers, you need to take the time to understand the workplace laws that are applicable to your business and to your workers. Overseas workers are covered by the Fair Work Act, National Employment Standards and all WHS Laws.

To comply with the Fair Farms Standard, businesses need to maintain appropriate policies and procedures to ensure correct employment of overseas workers.

Understanding the visa system

The Australian Visa System is managed by the Department of Home Affairs within the Federal Government. There are dozens of Visas, and the system is constantly changing.

The main types of Visas used in the horticulture industry include:

- Working Holiday Visa (subclass 417)
- Work and Holiday Visa (subclass 462)
- Student Visa
- Seasonal Work Programme/Pacific Labour Scheme.

Industrial instruments

It's important that for the purposes of understanding overseas employment properly that you become familiar with industrial instruments. This is a catch-all term that includes any legally enforceable document that determines the employment terms and conditions of workers in an industry or business.

The National Employment Standards (NES), Modern Awards and Enterprise Agreements are all types of industrial instruments.

If you employ overseas workers, you need to demonstrate that they are properly employed under the relevant industrial instrument, they do not vary because of a worker's citizenship or visa status. It is important to remember that overseas workers are entitled to every workplace right that Australian workers are offered.

Worker eligibility

As part of the Fair Farms Standard and broader legislative requirements, you need to check the eligibility of the workers you employ.

Under the Migration Act 1948 it is illegal for employers to allow an unlawful non-citizen without work rights to perform work for them. There are penalties if you allow an unlawful non-citizen to work. However, the Migration Act provides for a defence if you take reasonable steps to verify that all workers have work rights.

If you employ overseas workers, you can easily check a workers eligibility rights using the Department of Home Affairs' free-to-use Visa Entitlement Verification Online System (VEVO). VEVO will also show you the visa restrictions on each overseas worker you employ. You should keep records of each employee's VEVO check to prove you have been meeting requirements.

It is important to note that VEVO can only provide information about people who have their details available in the VEVO system. If a worker migrated to Australia before 1990 and has not left the country since, their details may not be available. In that case, you can ask the worker to apply for an electronic visa record.

The Migration Act 1958 and the Migration Regulations 1994 also require you to check the working eligibility of all workers. Unfortunately, Australia does not have a national register or system in place that allows employers to easily check the working rights of all workers. This means that to check the working rights of workers without a visa, you need to obtain proof.

PINEAPPLE FIELD DAYS

SUNSHINE COAST | 21 - 22 JULY 2022



Growcom and Australian Pineapples invites you to join us this July for the 2022 Favco Pineapple Field Days!

Tickets are now on sale for this must attend two-day event showcasing the latest in research and development being undertaken by the Australian pineapple industry. The 2022 event will be held on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and will include tours of local farms, machinery demonstrations, trade stalls, industry updates and of course the industry Gala Dinner and Awards night.

Over the two-day event participants will view:

- A farm-wide bioreactor implementation
- Robotic plant material size grader
- Geopolymer soil erosion demonstration trial
- Alternate fumigation application methods
- and much more!

Ticket sales close Friday 1 July. For more information or to register, visit: www.growcom.com.au/pfd2022

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The Pineapple Field Days are funded by Hort Innovation using the pineapple industry R&D levy and funds from the Australian Government.

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QLD FRUIT GROWERS STEPPING UP TO PROTECT GREAT BARRIER REEF

With the health of the Great Barrier Reef of increasing concern and focus on a global stage, a growing number of Queensland horticulture producers are taking measures to reduce farming's impact on the heritage listed wonder.

Recently, pineapple, custard apple, lychee, mango, and avocado growers joined macadamia and sweet potato producers in the Fitzroy region in becoming Reef Certified, meaning their farming practices have been third-party audited and approved as low impact on the reef.

Most are achieving the "tick of approval" through Growcom's best management practice program, Hort360.

Hort360 provides an avenue for fresh produce growers in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchments to participate in a third-party audit to gain Reef Certification.

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

Yeppoon farming families, the Browns and brothers-in-law John Cranny and Ben Clifton, recently came on board becoming the first pineapple and custard apple growers in the Fitzroy region to be Reef Certified.

Valley Syndicate pineapple grower John Cranny had been hesitant initially but said he found the Reef Certification third-party audit to be straightforward, and an opportunity to discuss practices used within the pineapple industry to reduce losses of sediment.

"It was worthwhile, and I hope that other growers get on board. We should all be doing it," Mr Cranny said.

Joint owner and operator of family-owned Keppel Orchards, Ken Brown, grows mangoes, avocados and custard apples and expressed similar sentiment.

Since being involved in Growcom's Hort360 GBR project they've made significant changes to their pest management practices with excellent results.

Changes to their monitoring and record keeping system have resulted in substantial modification of their spray program, and a 10-fold yield increase in custard apples alone.

Mr Brown came across the Hort360 program and tools to improve pest management practices when he attended a workshop coordinated by Growcom, in early 2021.

As a result, Mr Brown invested in ag-tech sensor technology to assist in monitoring pest impacts, participated in peer-to-peer on-farm meetings with neighbours to improve scouting practices, and subsequently worked through the Hort360 module and third-party audit to become Reef Certified.

Sunnyvale Mango growers, the Pershouses, were easily able to demonstrate Reef Certification practices at their third-generation orchard in Benaraby, on the foothills of Awoonga Dam along the Boyne River.

This included:

- Retaining and maintaining native vegetation in the riparian zone along the Boyne.
- Heavily grassed inter-rows and mulch within their tree lines to minimise sediment loss.
- Pruning practices which encourage beneficial insects thus reducing reliance on chemicals.
- Exemplary monitoring and record-keeping to minimise inefficiencies with regards to spray and irrigation programs.

Growcom's Hort360 program is free to all commercial horticulture growers and completely voluntary.

The certification pathway involves benchmarking farm management practices, working through the certification requirements with a facilitator, and an independent third-party audit.

The audit is only required to be undertaken every three years and the cost is currently funded through the program.



Yeppoon pineapple growers John Cranny and Ben Clifton



GROWCOM'S HORT360 GBR PROGRAM PUTS SPOTLIGHT ON COMPOST

Growcom was pleased to host the Australian Organics Recycling Association's (AORA) Compost in Agriculture workshops in Bowen on Friday March 25 and Walkamin on Monday March 28.

Using compost in farming systems reduces the amount of synthetic nutrient fertilisers applied on farm which improves water quality entering the Reef.

It also increases soil microbial activity boosting soil health. Both are important milestones for growers on the path to Hort360 Reef Certification.

Growcom's Hort360 GBR Facilitators, Luke Hargreaves (Bowen) and Phil Laycock (Far North Queensland) said that combined, the two workshops saw about 80 attendees taking the opportunity to learn about the technical aspects of compost production including soil health, soil biology and how these are enhanced using composts.

"All growers said they were always interested in composting but now with the surging prices of chemical fertilisers they see composting as an essential component of trying to rein in production costs and protect their soil assets," Luke said.

"Well-known agronomist David Hall was on hand to present on the commercial and technical benefits of compost on-farm."

Following the Bowen workshop, attendees travelled to VJK Produce at Eurie Ck to look at this producer's composting operations where some 15,000 tons of compost is created yearly for use on some 2500 hectares of production land.

VJK Produce utilize sugar mill bagasse, a byproduct of sugar milling, and poultry manure, to support the recycling of the farms own waste products from production and packing operations.

VJK Produce Owner and Director, Jamie Jurgens, gave a presentation about the family's journey to organic farming and composting.

"Mr Jurgens had everybody's attention when he described how this large-scale horticultural production enterprise no longer uses any chemical fertilisers," Luke said.

"VJK Produce are also one of the first producers in Queensland to become Reef Certified under the Hort360 GBR program which assists growers to meet best practices for water quality on the Reef."

Far North Queensland-based Hort360 GBR Facilitator, Phil Laycock, said that the workshop attendees identified a need for a Wet Tropics regional compost network to be formed to continue discussing and investigating the opportunities and issues identified by the workshop, that are also reflected in the Regional Development Australia 'Compost for a farming future' project.

Some of the Wet Tropics' regional compost network major goals will include:

- Identifying and prioritising the needs to support improved access to quality compost for growers and graziers;
- Identifying opportunities for efficiencies in the compost production cycle/identify opportunities for cost recovery/offsetting/savings through the compost production cycle;
- Supporting the evolution of a sustainable compost economy from source to farm application.

"There is great interest in the horticulture industry of benefits to the crop and environment that compost brings," Phil said.

"Access to a consistent supply of quality farming compost is one of the factors limiting more farmers from experiencing the benefits of compost on their soil health, crop production and their ability to contribute to environmental stewardship.

"As well as presenting the latest knowledge to growers and industry extension officers about compost in horticulture this workshop presented an opportunity for all parts of the organic materials waste management and compost production chain to begin to discuss a regional approach to addressing the compost supply deficit."

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

A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of a person wearing blue denim jeans and brown leather boots. They are standing in a metal pen or stall. Several sheep with thick, woolly coats are visible behind the metal bars. The floor is dirt and covered with some dark spots, possibly manure. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit indoor setting.

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HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY UNITES TO FIRM UP SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH

Key decision-makers from the horticulture, technology, transport, and retail sectors gathered in Sydney recently to discuss the levers that need to be pulled for the horticulture industry to be more sustainable right now and into the future.

Following on from the release of the Australian-Grown Sustainability Framework last year, the Rural Research and Development Corporation, Hort Innovation teamed up with the International Fresh Produce Association to host an inaugural Horticulture Sustainability Summit to help inform annual reporting against a range of measures.

Hort Innovation General Manager of Stakeholder Experience Dr Anthony Kachenko said the Summit marked a shift in industry priorities.

“The Australian horticulture industry is seeing sustainability as a tangible, achievable and necessary part of their businesses,” he said.

“Times are rapidly changing,” he said. “This rise in sustainable business practices is driven by a growing collective conscience that is felt by not only growers but also the consumers they serve and those that invest in their businesses.”

Best-practice approaches already being applied by industry businesses were discussed at the Summit, along with what is working, what is not and how that can be harnessed to create annual sustainability reporting for the industry as a whole.

With more than 50 industry representatives in the room at the Grounds of Alexandria, many participants shared their sustainability journeys, including a panel featuring Warwick Hope from Woolworths, Dean Parsons from sustainable pallet and container provider CHEP and Shane Quinn from Queensland vegetable growing company Mulgowie.

International Fresh Produce Association ANZ chief executive Darren Keating said while IFPA, and others including major companies, may have sustainability policies in place, it is important to get everyone in the horticulture industry on the same page and share learnings wherever possible.

“When it comes to protecting the stewardship of our land, our people and our local and global reputations, there should be no competition between business’, just a collective agreement that we are all doing whatever we can to move in a positive direction.”

The information gathered at the Summit will help form part of the Australian-grown Horticulture Sustainability Report, an inaugural reporting document that provides baseline data aligned with the focus areas within The Sustainability Framework. Key focus areas include Nourish and Nurture, People and Enterprise, Planet and Resources and Less Waste, which consider the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and Hort Innovation’s Hort Frontiers strategic investment funding arm. The report is expected to be complete in October.

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NATIONAL PLANT BIOSECURITY STRATEGY RELEASED

The 2021-2031 National Plant Biosecurity Strategy (NPBS) released last month by Plant Health Australia (PHA) provides a framework to strengthen Australia's plant biosecurity system over the next decade.

The second-generation strategy outlines four focus areas needed to build a resilient and contemporary national plant biosecurity system that will continue to support Australian plant industries, economy, environment and communities.

"Plant biosecurity risks are mounting as is the challenge of maintaining Australia's pest free status," PHA Chief Executive Officer, Sarah Corcoran said.

"The strategy sets the direction for activities across the system and drives the way for effective collaboration and action by governments, plant industries and the community to protect our producers and the end-to-end supply chain."

Designed to inform investment across all aspects of the system, guide efforts to address the most important priorities and effectively manage current and future biosecurity challenges, the updated NPBS builds on the achievements of the 2010-2020 strategy while remaining agile and responsive to the changing

biosecurity environment.

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) will fund PHA to coordinate a National Plant Biosecurity Strategy Implementation Group to oversee implementation of the strategy.

DAWE's Chief Plant Protection Officer, Dr Gabrielle Vivian-Smith, said the investment recognised the importance of effective coordination to successful implementation of the strategy.

"Delivery of the strategy requires collective effort nationally. The implementation group will play a key role aligning efforts of participants across our system and highlights PHA's strong record bringing stakeholders together," Dr Vivian-Smith said.

The National Plant Biosecurity Strategy follows the release late last year of national sub-strategies and implementation plans on preparedness, surveillance and diagnostics that sit under the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy and support its implementation.

Download the National Plant Biosecurity Strategy at: www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/national-programs/national-plant-biosecurity-strategy/

STRIKING WIDE RANGE OF SOIL-BORNE DISEASES IN YOUR BULBS AND TUBERS

For years, farmers have been using a variety of methods to increase crop yield and improve quality. A growing number of farmers have realised the health of their crop depends on the health of their soil. This is the foundation on which best yields and pack outs are being built. Soil health varies depending on a number of factors, that is why we in the TriCal group developed a family of STRIKE conditioning products.

Given that crops like potatoes, onions or carrots develop most of their marketable yield below the soil surface, it is extremely important to start with the best conditioned soil. STRIKE products applied two to three weeks prior to planting, effectively manage many common pests and diseases such as Black dot, Rhizoctonia, Common scab, Pink Root, Fusarium, Sclerotinia and Nematodes.

At TriCal Australia, we have access to DNA Testing Technology. Soil tests are taken before and after fumigation to determine individual species of nematodes and fungal pathogens present. The before tests allow the fumigants to be prescriptively applied with the correct type and amount to the soil.

The after tests provide proof of kill rates on nematodes and fungal pathogens to provide soil health information prior to planting. For more information, check out our website or contact one of our soil specialists on (08) 8347 3838.



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Diverse Queensland Workforce Pathways: Building a solid base to enhance horticulture

Putting boots on farms in the Darling Downs region is in full swing, through the Diverse Queensland Workforce (DQW) program being delivered by Growcom in collaboration with The Mulberry Project.

Under the program migrants, international students, and refugees are being placed in agriculture-related jobs, Mulberry Project Founder and Managing Director, Louise Noble said.

"To date we have engaged 56 participants, 15 in the professional stream and 41 in the vocational stream," Louise said.

"The needs of these two groups are quite different and we have designed a range of training and support solutions to address the barriers to employment that each group faces.

"Many of the group in the professional stream are highly skilled researchers at the cutting edge of Ag Innovation: from waste processing and renewable energy, digital ag systems, through to integrated pest management and crop research."

Through Growcom's DQW program, each participant undergoes a skill gap analysis to determine what support and training they require to become job ready.

In all, the DQW program will link 80 students with career opportunities on the Darling Downs.

For many participants who first gained skills and qualifications abroad, the DQW program provides an opportunity to upskill and/or gain Australian accreditation of their prior learning with a goal to secure employment in their technical area.

There is a wide range of opportunities for participants to enable them to improve their skills. These opportunities are customised for participants depending upon their needs.

A recurring theme for participants in the DQW program is the contrast in agricultural production systems in their home countries and those in their new home on the Darling Downs.

For Diana Sanchez – a biological control agent specialist - the big, blue skies that spread out over vast cropland on the Darling Downs is in stark contrast to the green houses filled with row upon row of flowers in Colombia.

"I used to work in greenhouses with roses and here with the open fields it's a different implementation [of biological control agents]," Diana said.

While Diana and her husband are now settled and committed to living and working in the Toowoomba region, their move from Colombia to Australia took them via Melbourne.

"After COVID started we realised Melbourne wasn't the city to be in if I wanted to work in agriculture," Diana said.

"When I started looking for a job, Toowoomba came up a lot of times in the job advertisements.

"I don't regret that decision we took [to move to Toowoomba]. It's been an amazing change."

While Diana currently works as a seed analyst for Agetal, she said she wants to learn as much about Australian agriculture as possible – one of the main motivators for her enrolment in the DQW program.

For Sailesh Thapa, who will graduate from USQ with a Masters in Agricultural Engineering, he is motivated to explore the world of agricultural mechanisation in Australia.

"I have seen the hardships farmers go through with the terrace farming in Nepal," Sailesh said.

He said he has had a dream since childhood to contribute to the improvement of agriculture here as well as in Nepal.

"I always dreamt of mechanization like what I saw on TV in developed countries," Sailesh said.

"My parents are farmers and I wanted to contribute to them in a better way.

"These things always fascinated me.

"I want to build a career in agricultural engineering, helping me build my career, making me familiar with people and networks."

For Javier Jimenez, a biowaste specialist with a decade's experience as a lecturer and researcher in Colombia, the DQW program is an opportunity to connect with other industry stakeholders.

The QUT doctoral student said the science and engineering thesis he is currently working on involves developing new chemicals to treat bio-waste and the DQW program provides plenty of opportunities to network and connect with like-minded specialists.

"My impression of Australian agriculture is that there are a lot of opportunities around technology for foreign workers to get involved with. This is a growth area for us," Javier said.

This project is proudly funded by the Queensland Government through its Diverse Queensland Workforce program.

If you would like more information on the program or to learn how you could be involved, please contact Growcom's Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network Officer Kym Wessling on 0499 833 868 or email kwessling@growcom.com.au



In late March members of Growcom's Diverse Workforce Pathway program attended a long lunch hosted by The Mulberry Project as part of the Toowoomba Show to network and build connections.

Pictured: Sailesh Thapa, Diana Sanchez and Javier Jimenez catch up with The Mulberry Project Founder and Managing Director Louise Noble and Growcom's QAWN Officer Kym Wessling.



workforce

Growcom Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network Officer
Kym Wessling

I recently attended the Food, Fibre and Agricultural Educators (FFAE) Conference on the Sunshine Coast. This was a wonderful professional development opportunity where agricultural educators could learn more about different career opportunities for school leavers. AgForce hosted the event and did an amazing job ensuring a jam-packed three days of guest speakers, information sharing and industry tours.

Growcom was proud to be a major sponsor of the FFAE conference and I was delighted to give a presentation about Growcom's workforce programs. Former Growcom Chief Executive Officer Stephen Barnard also presented at the formal dinner, delving into the details and goals of our programs, including Gap Year, Hort360, Fair Farms and Farm Business Resilience Planning.

Teachers were able to attend curriculum-aligned workshops, listen to motivational presentations from industry leaders as well as gain exposure to an educators panel of teachers from all over Australia.

Teachers were given lots of up-to-date information which they can now use to integrate food and fibre into the curriculum as part of their Agriculture programs.

The information and resources they received will help them to promote food and fibre production as a career for their students.

It was an opportunity to promote my role as a Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (QAWN) Officer and talk about opportunities for high school leavers to get involved with horticulture either as a new experience or a career.

I also discussed with the audience about how the seven QAWN officers across Queensland can assist schools by linking them with information and connecting them with industry.

One of the many demonstrations was by Matt Golinski - Celebrity Chef and Regional Food Ambassador - who treated us to a cooking demonstration, and his takeaway message was about the connection between the producers/growers and the food that a chef delivers to the diners.

Matt said that diners now ask: Where did the product come from? They want to know the story, the connection between the grower, the chef and the plate of food. Really interesting and so very important for younger generations to learner about and to get involved. Food for thought you might say!



Contact your QAWN regional officer today

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The Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (QAWN) is an industry-led rural jobs initiative funded by the Queensland Government.



Queensland Agworkforce Summit
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NEW SUMMIT TO ADDRESS QUEENSLAND AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) will host the Queensland Agworkforce Summit from Wednesday 3 – Friday 5 August 2022.

The Summit aims to bring together Queensland agribusinesses to discuss workforce issues and strategies to ensure they have a sustainable workforce over the next five years.

“QFF and the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance are delighted to partner with Jobs Queensland and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to deliver this summit which is a first for the agriculture sector.” QFF CEO Jo Sheppard said.

“The future growth of the Queensland agriculture sector and the ability to seize new market opportunities are dependent in a highly trained and skilled workforce.

“Given the importance of this Summit, we want to make sure our sector has the opportunity to get involved and have the dates firmly locked in the diary.”

Registrations for the Summit are now open.

Jobs Queensland's Anticipating Future Skills suggests an additional 8788 people will be needed to support Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing in Queensland by 2025.

Minister for Training and Skills Development Di Farmer recently announced the new VET Emerging Industries initiative, as part of the \$200 million Future Skills Fund, designed to ensure the state has the skilled workers it needs.

“The VET Emerging Industries initiative will develop flexible industry strategies to grow the state's agribusiness, energy, manufacturing, and screen and digital sectors,” Minister Farmer said.

“Agribusiness is key to our plans for workforce development and economic recovery. The Queensland Farmers' Federation already provide valuable input on training and workforce development through our Industry Skills Advisors and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries manage our Agribusiness Gateway to Industry Schools program as well.

“We're investing in training and skills and aligning our priorities through our Queensland Agriculture and Food Research, Development and Extension 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan, and recently announced a further \$5 million Agribusiness Strategy, consisting of an Agriculture Skills Fund; a TAFE Agricultural, Rural and Regional Strategy; and a Beef Processing Skills Fund. So, we look forward to discussing our current activities, future plans and emerging needs with a range of stakeholders at the Summit.”

The Queensland Agworkforce Summit is the first of its kind as is designed specifically for the challenges of modern agribusiness, focussing on the key issues facing the sector concerning attracting, retaining and skilling the agriculture workforce. The Summit will also focus on adaptability.

“One thing we have learned since the beginning of the pandemic is we need to increase our capability to adapt as part of our business sustainability planning,” Ms Sheppard said.

“The impact of the pandemic these past couple of years particularly on our workforce has highlighted a couple of areas where the sector is vulnerable. Workforce was one and housing availability in rural and regional Queensland to support this workforce was another.”

To attract as many participants as possible, the entire program will be held online over 3 days, with a range of topics discussed and plenty of opportunities to network and contribute to the discussions.

The Summit will also feature a presentation about the five-year Workforce Plan for the state's agriculture sector, including the consultation process and results.

The Plan will respond to the major issues experienced by the industry while anticipating future workforce demand. Participants at the Summit will be asked for input to guide implementation of the plan.

The Queensland Agworkforce Summit 2022 will be held on 3 – 5 August 2022. You can find out more at www.qldagworkforce.org.au



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Then and now: recovering from the 2019 North Queensland Monsoon Trough

After losing more than three months of production and majority of their crops when the monsoon trough weather event devastated their property in 2019, life for the Caleo family now looks a little different.

"I can probably say for the first time in years, I sleep a full night. My wife is a lot more relaxed – it's a lot of pressure on the whole family when things aren't relaxed. The farming business is going well," Jon Caleo from Black River Produce in North Queensland says.

Jon accessed a North Queensland Restocking, Replanting and On-Farm Infrastructure co-contribution grant through the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) to replant his crops, replace damaged infrastructure and rebuild roads on the property following the disaster event.

"The farm wouldn't be up and running, the farm wouldn't be employing the people, earning the money that it is – none of that would have happened without the money from QRIDA," Jon explains.

"Honestly, we would have really struggled without the QRIDA assistance to be back where we are. I don't know where we'd be without it."

While predominantly growing watermelon, Black River Produce is still pushing forward with their asparagus production.

"The asparagus business is still in its infancy. We've planted another 20 acres this year, so now we're at 30 acres of asparagus, and we'll plant another 10 acres later this year."

Employing more than 15 people, the business is continuing to be a pioneer in the horticulture world.

"For four months of the year, all asparagus is imported, but we're trying to prove that it can be grown all year round. If we can do that, Australia won't have to import any asparagus. We're working



with another grower who is trying to do the same thing and produce asparagus through Australia's winter, so we're growing seedlings for him to plant up there," Jon explains.

Looking to the future, Jon isn't just looking forward to more restful sleep, but also for his son Anthony to take over a third of the farming business.

"With the QRIDA assistance we've survived and come out the other side. The farm is now a very well-established business with all our sales. It's a good business and a business that my son won't need to expand on," Jon says.

"We're probably 95-100% recovered from the disaster. The farm wouldn't be where it is without QRIDA."

North Queensland Restocking, Replanting and On-Farm Infrastructure co-contribution grants of up to \$400,000 are available for primary producers to restock, replant and repair after flooding caused by the 2019 North and Far North Queensland Monsoon Trough.

Applications for these grants are open until 30 June 2022.

For more information about the grants and how to apply visit qrda.qld.gov.au

QRIDA administers North Queensland Restocking, Replanting and On-Farm Infrastructure co-contribution grants on behalf of the Australian Government.

Advertisement

Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority

Restock, Replant, Repair your farm business

Are you a primary producer who was affected by the North and Far North Queensland monsoon trough in early 2019?

Applications for the \$400,000 co-contribution **North Queensland Restocking, Replanting and On-farm Infrastructure Grants** close **30 June 2022**.

These grants can help primary producers recover costs from **replanting lost crops, replacing lost livestock and rebuilding or repairing damaged or lost infrastructure***. Eligibility criteria applies.

Apply now at qrda.qld.gov.au

The North Queensland Restocking, Replanting & On-farm Infrastructure Grants are funded by the Australian Government and administered by QRIDA.

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



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Queensland Government

Authorised by the Queensland Government, Turbot St, Brisbane

Farm Business Resilience Program

Horticultural growers can now access the new Farm Business Resilience Program (FBRP) being delivered by Growcom and jointly funded under the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and Queensland Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program. The FBRP aims to build the strategic management capacity of Queensland horticultural growers to prepare for and manage business and climate risks. The program does this by supporting farm businesses to identify goals, business and climate risks, and then develop strategies to manage these risks. The new assistance focuses on greater preparedness and business planning to manage the ever-present risk of drought in Queensland. Growers can participate in this program irrelevant of their drought situation and do not require a drought declaration.

What financial assistance is available?

A range of grants and low interest loans are now available to help primary producers meet the cost of on-farm improvements including:

- Drought preparedness grants
- Drought ready and recovery loans
- Emergency drought assistance loans
- Drought carry-on finance loans

Assistance is being administered through QRIDA. For more information or to apply, visit: www.qrida.qld.gov.au/drought-support

To access financial support, you will need to complete a Farm Business Resilience Plan or similar. Growcom will be utilising our best management practice program for horticulture, Hort360 to develop business plans for horticultural growers. A new Farm Business Management module has been developed within Hort360 to facilitate this process. This module upon completion not only provides you with a list of actions to bolster your resilience on farm but also the auto-populated plan required to access funding.

Getting started: preparing your Farm Business Resilience Plan

You can complete your Farm Business Resilience Plan in your own time online, or with the assistance of one of Growcom Resilience Officers. To enroll in the program and use Hort360 to develop your plan:

1. Contact a Growcom Resilience Officer or go online to the Growcom website: www.growcom.com.au/portfolio/fbrp-horticulture
2. If not already, you will need to register with Hort360.
3. Once logged into Hort360 you can complete the Farm Business Resilience module, obtain your risk assessment and action plan, and fill in the property details required to access further financial support.
4. Once completed, you can apply for financial support through the QRIDA website or speak with your local QRIDA Officer for further assistance

OUT AND ABOUT

Lockyer Regenerative Agriculture Showcase

Southern Queensland Resilience Officer, Brock McDonald was recently invited to present at the Lockyer Regenerative Agriculture Showcase in late April. The Showcase put a spotlight on regenerative farming practices bringing together subject knowledge experts from fields such as regenerative farm management, soil health, biodynamics, natural fertilisers, biological pest control, and drought resilience.



Central Queensland Resilience Officer John Targett recently visited Evan Rasmussen at his Oakwood macadamia orchard to discuss building a farm business resilience plan.





UPCOMING EVENTS

There are many events planned over the coming months that primary producers are invited to attend. For more information or to register, visit Growcom's online events calendar: www.growcom.com.au/events

Focus on Finance – presented by Growcom

This practical workshop will walk you through the development of your Farm Business Resilience Plan. Participants will also gain a greater understanding of the program and what drought assistance is currently available through QRIDA.

On the day you will hear from a range of guest speakers including chartered accountants and business advisors Bentleys Queensland, gain an understanding of the Rural Financial Counselling Service, and the QRIDA grants and loans available.

- Burnett – 1 June
- Stanthorpe – 22 June

Dimbulah Drought Resilience Forum – presented by Growcom in conjunction with the Gulf Savannah NRM

Join other growers from the local farming community for this insightful, engaging and social event to learn about agricultural production and business systems and strategies for building drought resilience.

- Dimbulah – 16 June

Soils Conservation & Farm Resilience in Horticulture – presented by Growcom in conjunction with the Fitzroy Basin Association

With recent record-breaking rainfalls and several severe weather events throughout Queensland and New South Wales, there's never been a better time to assess your farm business resilience, sediment management practices and soil health.

- Rockhampton – 24 June

Understanding the new Queensland drought assistance – presented by QDAF and QRIDA

Queensland is leading the way by supporting drought preparedness activities for a broader range of primary producers. At these forums you can find out about the new preparedness grants and loans and hear what help is available for your Farm Business Resilience Plan. There will also be a seasonal climate forecast update.

- Warwick – 18 May
- Dalby – 19 May
- Mareeba – 25 May
- Ayr – 26 May
- Longreach – 1 June



Contact Growcom today

Growcom has employed three Resilience Officers who are available to help you complete your Farm Business Resilience Plan and access funding. Get in contact today to start your resilience journey:



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RAISING AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH

The above article first appeared in the Vegetables Australia Winter 2022 edition produced by AUSVEG.

Events in Australia over the past two years – such as bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic – have taken their toll on many people’s mental health. Therefore, it is important to look after yourself and each other. Knowing where to go for information on mental health can be a hurdle for many people.

In 2020/21, the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted the first cohort of the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing – a component of the wider Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study.

The figures are startling, with 3.4 million Australians seeing a health professional for their mental health in 2021/21.

- 13% of people saw a GP for their mental health.
- 8% saw a psychologist.
- 15% of Australians aged 16-85 years experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress.
- Women were more likely to experience high or very high levels of psychological distress than men (19% compared with 12%).
- One in five (20%) Australians aged 16-34 years experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress, more than twice the rate of those aged 65-85 years (9%).
- Suicide was the 15th most common cause of death overall (down from 13th in 2019), accounting for 1.9% of deaths.
- Suicide was the most common cause of death for adults aged 15-44.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and traumatic events such as floods can lead to long-term psychological distress. Therefore, it is vital that we start talking more openly about the importance of discussing mental health and seeking help if you or someone you know is experiencing difficulties.

There are organisations available for people who are looking for more information about mental health and they can give advice on how to deal with personal mental health issues or those that arise in your workplace, communities, friends or families.

Beyond Blue

For information on anxiety, depression or suicide visit beyondblue.org.au or call 1300 22 4636 (24 hours/7 days a week).

To chat to a trained mental health professional, please visit beyondblue.org.au/get-support/get-immediate-support

Black Dog Institute

Black Dog Institute is a proudly independent not-for-profit medical research institute affiliated with The University of New South Wales.

For more information, visit blackdoginstitute.org.au

Lifeline

For 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

The online Crisis Support Chat service is also available every night at lifeline.org.au/crisischat

MensLine Australia

MensLine Australia is the national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns. The service is available from anywhere in Australia and is staffed by professional counsellors, experienced in men’s issues.

For more information, visit mensline.org.au or call 1300 78 99 78.

MindSpot

MindSpot is a free service for Australian adults who are experiencing difficulties with anxiety, stress, depression and low mood. It provides assessment and treatment courses or can help find local services that can help.

For more information, please call 1800 61 44 34 or visit mindspot.org.au

SANE Australia

SANE Australia is a national mental health charity making a real difference in the lives of people affected by complex mental health issues through support, research and advocacy.

Counsellors are available via phone, web chat or email from 10am to 10pm Monday to Friday AEST/AEDT.

For more information, please call the SANE Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263) or visit sane.org.

Suicide Call Back Service

Suicide Call Back Service offers free professional 24/7 telephone counselling support to people at risk of suicide, concerned about someone at risk, bereaved by suicide and people experiencing emotional or mental health issues.

It also offers free professional 24/7 online counselling support.

Call 1300 659 467 or visit suicidecallbackservice.org.au.

Further resources

These are just some examples of the mental health services available in Australia. More can be found at ausveg.com.au/mental-health-industry/resources-2/

If you require emergency assistance, please contact 000.



Is insurance a key factor in building farm resilience? QFF and USQ think so.

The emotional and physical toll of drought and floods on Australian agricultural communities is costly, but the financial toll is forever front of mind for those in primary production – especially when it comes to insurance.

But thanks to researchers from the University of Southern Queensland, a new Drought Resilience Innovation Grants project led by the Queensland Farmers' Federation and funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, plans to transform how index-based insurance and optimal crop management can be used to reduce financial risk and improve income stability.

The project will see the Queensland Farmers' Federation collaborate with the University of Southern Queensland and will offer access to crop insurance so farmers can take better informed risks.

Queensland Farmers' Federation CEO Jo Sheppard said expertise provided by the University of Southern Queensland will assist them, as the lead project institution, to ensure that the targeted insurance products are deliverable.

"The ability for farmers to self-manage risk is an important part of building resilience and sustainability in their enterprises. The impact of prolonged drought and severe flooding events can be catastrophic on the viability of a farming business and the sector is working hard to develop ways in which farmers can plan for and mitigate this risk where possible," Ms Sheppard said.

"It is important that research is conducted closely with industry and the opportunity to collaborate with the University's Centre for Climate Sciences on this important work is welcomed.

"The issue of being able to access effective and affordable crop insurance has been raised many times by industry as a gap in terms of farmers being able to self-insure against risk. This project will bring research and industry together and enable further work to be undertaken to seek commercially viable solutions for farmers in managing risk."

Professor Shabaz Mushtaq from the University's Centre for Applied Climate Science said currently, it's common practice for farmers to plant earlier or later in the season in an attempt to reduce the frost risk, for example. Planting late can expose crops to more severe heat and drought events later in the growing season. Alternatively planting early to avoid heat stress exposes crops to frost.

"This makes sense however while those strategies might reduce weather impacts it does compromise yield, and income, because they're not planting at the best time for their particular crop," Professor Mushtaq said.

"Ideally, the farmer needs to plant in that optimal window and they're more likely to do that if the risk of doing so is covered by insurance.

"Through this process we want to explore optimal strategies and identify those key risks to better inform the grower so they can strategically use insurance to get higher yields and high income outcomes.

"Ultimately, we want farmers to use insurance as a risk management strategy through offering credible research to show them how it can be done."

Professor Mushtaq said by developing 'fit for purpose' affordable insurance projects and an industry discretionary mutual fund as a cost-effective channel for wider distribution and adoption, the project will grow the self-reliance and performance of the agricultural sector.

"There's also the case that this strengthens the well-being and social resilience of rural, regional and remote agricultural dependent communities too," he said.

"For example, if insurance money was triggered within the week post a disaster event (flood, drought, or heatwave), this will help growers to get back to their feet quickly. This then can have an immediate positive impact on the communities connected to the farms affected.

"By reducing farmer risk and creating viable insurance options that shifts the burden from the public sector to the insurance sector, there's also the likely outcome of reducing public costs of drought and flood assistance."



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Fruit & Vegetable news

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Grant to boost citrus exports to India

A \$485,771 Australian Government grant will help Aussie citrus growers tap into the Indian market with exports of high-quality oranges and mandarins.

Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia David Littleproud said the Citrus Australia project would map the Indian market and supply chains, build capabilities and boost sales through business exchanges and marketing campaigns.

"Australia has the ability to become the southern hemisphere supplier of choice for premium quality citrus products in India over the next 5-10 years," Minister Littleproud said.

"The past 2 years have been marred by market disruptions and global freight and logistics challenges, and India and the Indian subcontinent present real growth prospects for our high-quality, sustainable Aussie citrus."

"Now a new horticultural export specialist will help position our local industry to export high-value fruit to the sub-continent."

Citrus Australia spokesperson Nathan Hancock said regional workshops will inform some 1500 citrus growers – from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia – about how to capitalise on opportunities in India.

"Our project will provide the support for commercial businesses to enter and grow the market in India for premium quality Australian citrus," Mr Hancock said.

"The timing couldn't be better, just as our interim trade deal with India delivering the citrus industry an annual quota of 13,700 tonnes, with a 50 percent reduction of India's in-quota tariff, down from 30 percent to 15 percent.

"Where trade to date has focused on smaller sizes and composite-grade fruit for low return, this project aims to develop high-value niche markets within India for Navel oranges and Afourer and Murcott mandarins.

"Key elements involve developing strategic relationships with Indian importers, retailers, governments, cold-chain and warehousing providers, and the appointment of a celebrity citrus ambassador to support our promotional efforts."

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