

Volume 94

#6

NOVEMBER/  
DECEMBER 2023



Fruit &  
Vegetable  
NEWS

Data backs claim – It's never been harder  
AgTech solution to sweeten pineapple picking  
Top tips for the festive season



QUEENSLAND FRUIT  
& VEGETABLE GROWERS



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## welcome

Chief Executive Officer  
**Rachel Chambers**

# Oh, what a year!

**Welcome to the final edition of QFVG's Fruit & Vegetable News magazine for 2023, and let me just say, what a year it has been!**

As I write this much of the state is involved in emergency bushfire response, with the aftereffects yet to be known. Add this to a year of unrelentless IR changes, another year of increased input costs, biosecurity issues and further lackluster prices for the majority of commodities and it's appropriate to say the year won't be missed by anyone.

The irony in the above environment is that when we were researching the previous one hundred years of supporting growers through the challenges they faced, we discovered that the very reason we were formed as the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing in 1923 is still relevant to our growers 100 years later!

A century ago, in an attempt to promote more efficient arrangements for getting fruit from grower to consumer, the Labor Government of the day introduced the legislation

under which the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing was established as part of a wider program of agricultural reorganisation.

I challenge anyone to demonstrate that the previous 18 months haven't been one of the most active periods of political agricultural reorganisation since that time.

A century ago, the discussion of the industry's problems in the contemporary newspapers, parliamentary debates and government publications speaks of gluts in supply which then didn't provide growers with a sustainable income source. They blamed poor marketing and distribution arrangements.

One thing we did love is that the government referred to the issues as an 'underconsumption' rather than 'over-production' – let's bring this term back!

However, the statement that most resonated was this:

*"Whatever else is done for the agriculturalist, if prices remain unpayable and marketing is disorganised little advantage will accrue to him from the new organisation. The stabilisation of prices and a paring of the margin between producer and consumer is desirable from the standpoint of both the agriculturalist and the consumer."*

Fair margins and a fair market – imagine that.

The challenges falling on growers' shoulders today have never felt heavier. One thing we know for certain is that things must change. Our sector and the Australian public who rely on your produce depend on it. We give a fork. And in 2024 we're going to make sure every Aussie out there (decision makers included) gives a fork too.

## inside

### 5.

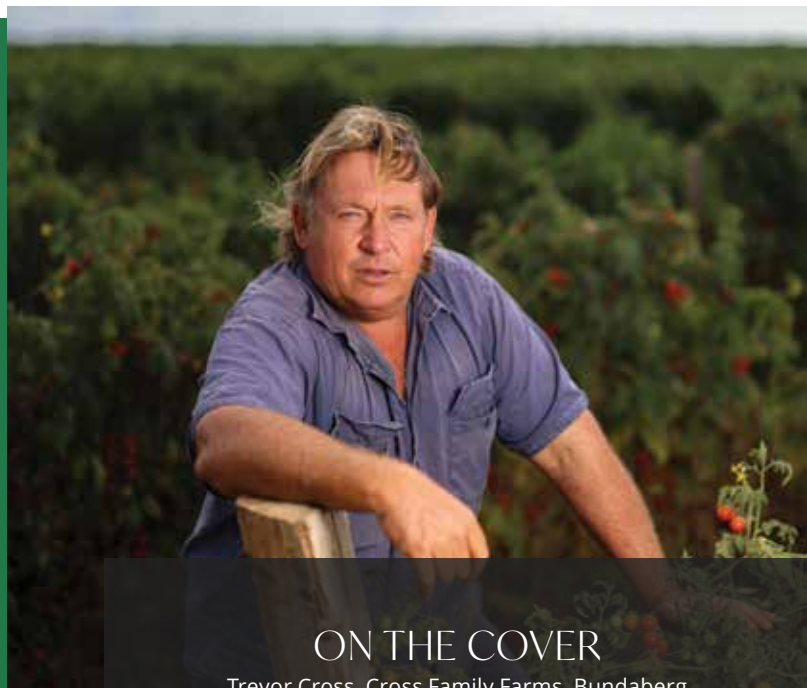
#### DATA BACKS CLAIM – IT'S NEVER BEEN HARDER

A new report released by the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce has put hard facts behind the industry's claim – it's never been harder.

### 10.

#### AGTECH SOLUTION TO SWEETEN PINEAPPLE PICKING

An innovative AgTech solution automating the selection and picking of pineapples is just one new project to be funded through QFVG's 'Grow Your Field' initiative.



#### ON THE COVER

Trevor Cross, Cross Family Farms, Bundaberg

WE GIVE A FORK.

Coming soon.

# IT DIDN'T FEEL RIGHT...

**CLOSING THE LOOP**

We listen.  
We act.  
We inform.

## WHY WE'VE CANCELLED OUR GALA EVENT

I recently wrote to members informing you of our decision to cancel the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) 100 Year Gala Event scheduled to be held on Friday 17 November. Although tickets were not yet on sale, we had advertised a save the date and as such we needed to let you know of the reasoning behind our decision to now cancel.

Typically, when discussing an event cancellation, one might say, 'We have made the difficult decision to cancel' and it was a difficult decision however in the end it simply felt like the right thing to do.

Here's why:

- You, our members are currently enduring one of the most trying periods in recent history. It felt inappropriate for us to request that you - who are grappling with financial, mental, emotional, and physical hardships - travel and participate in a gala event to commemorate our 100 years of supporting the industry.
- Similarly, it didn't feel right to approach sponsors and ask them to invest in a single night's celebration when there is a pressing need for substantial investment to help our growers weather the current challenges and survive.

- Regional gala events have been and will continue to be held to highlight and celebrate industry.

What felt right was the decision to cancel. What felt right was redirecting our resources toward our campaign to assist you, our members, rather than investing in an event that would conclude in a single day.

Let there be no doubt, we are all disappointed. We were looking forward to a grand celebration. The history of QFVG is extensive and incredibly fascinating. However, our primary focus is safeguarding the future of our growers, and you require our undivided attention at this moment.

We hope you understand our reasoning, rest assured we will support you now and for the next 100 years.



Rachel Chambers  
QFVG CEO

## SNAPSHOT: SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2023

Meetings with Government

16

Meetings with industry organisations

53

Submissions

5

Media articles published

9

Media mentions

33+

Our Reach

360,000+



# Data *backs* claim IT'S NEVER BEEN HARDER

Over the past year when asked what we believe is the main issue facing horticulture, this is our answer:

*"Within the last three years, input costs have risen between 30 and 65 percent and productivity has decreased by a third. What business can survive those numbers?"*

This data is a result of numerous conversations with growers across multiple commodities and so far, we haven't found one grower who falls outside these parameters. However, when asked for the report which consolidates this data as truth, we've had nothing but anecdotal evidence to substantiate our claims – until now.

Recently the Global Coalition of Fresh Produce released their 'Survey into Global production and operation costs for prices for fruit and vegetables.'

A summary of what they found globally included: rising prices for everything from fertiliser to packaging have added significantly to overall production costs. Labour shortages that existed pre-covid have been exacerbated across the supply chain from farm to retail. Logistics such as trucking have become increasingly expensive and difficult to find, congestion and delays at ports continue to further delay perishable products. The conflict in Ukraine obviously destabilised markets and disrupted product flow however shipping container costs have also seen massive increases. And to finish the supply chain off, rising energy costs have added to the impact across the supply chain.

*In Australian most production and operating costs have increased by 37 percent on average. Sell price increases have not been sufficient to compensate for rising production and operating costs.*

The Australian data, supported by evidence from AUSVEG and the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance, had unanimous agreement that nearly all production and operating costs have gone up by 37 percent on average along with all agreeing that any rises in selling prices have not been sufficient to compensate for rising production and operating costs.

We have so many questions to answer. How long can growers hold out to make a profit? What does 'holding out' mean for those growers who have been eating into their own personal capital to support farm production? Where is the data for growers to support their decision making on how long these costs and lack of profit will last? Who in government is watching this closely?

Whilst growers are not able to pay themselves, are trapped in debt, forced into working ridiculous hours putting their own safe working environments at risk, receive payments for produce which don't even reflect a break even and if they speak out live in fear of retribution – when is it time to realise our own growers are living the very definition of the term 'Modern Slavery'?

# A classic love-hate relationship

**During September QFVG CEO Rachel Chambers appeared as a witness to the Inquiry into the impact of climate change on Queensland agricultural production where she was given just three minutes to sum up its relationship with horticulture. Here's what was said:**

The horticulture industry is one that dances the fine line between nature's bounty and fury – a classic love-hate relationship.

We have seen firsthand how rainfall and temperature predictions are thrown out the window in the face of extreme weather events.

Last year, the Lockyer region experienced devastating floods that brought more rainfall in a week than was predicted for an entire year. Crops were lost on a massive scale. However, this year, the same region has seen a remarkable growing season thanks to near-perfect weather conditions.

The irony lies in the fact that even in a year of abundant produce, prices drop due to market dynamics, causing growers to still struggle financially. It's an unspoken truth that for growers to prosper, someone, somewhere else, must bear the brunt of unpredictable weather conditions. The financial toll and the resources required to respond to these events divert attention and resources away from proactive climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Growers who used to rely on having one good year every three, are now reporting this is pushing out to every seven to 10.

It's one thing to look at historical data, but it's another to proactively use the available information for the future. We must prioritise

the refinement and widespread utilisation of climate projection platforms and medium-term weather forecasts. Our own best management practice platform, Hort360, is currently undergoing significant review to incorporate climate data, emissions, and more.

A lack of financial resources is also another critical roadblock to implementing climate adaptation on farm. The Farm Business Resilience Program is making strides in building drought resilience, but it currently does not encompass much broader climate adaptation. This must change.

The unavailability or high cost of insurance coverage for risks beyond climate adaptation is also a major concern, as is lack of accessibility to farm management deposits due to low profitability and a consistent cash flow requirement, and the changing eligibility of disaster programs, that aren't designed for horticulture.

With a surging corporate interest in climate adaptation within the agricultural supply chain, we are hugely concerned that costs associated with mitigation and adaptation have already been or are planned to be passed down to growers into the future. This calls for initiatives and research that engage all supply chain members to collectively address emerging climate risks.

Climate change and its impact on our industry are undeniable realities. It's our collective responsibility to work through these challenges head-on, with a spirit of innovation, collaboration, and resilience to ensure sustainable profitability for Queensland's fruit, vegetable, and nut growers.

# Notice of AGM 2023



QUEENSLAND FRUIT  
& VEGETABLE GROWERS!

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the members of Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers Ltd will be held as follows:

DATE	Thursday, 23 November 2023	TIME	4pm
LOCATION	Australian Retirement Trust   Level 28, 266 George St, Brisbane City QLD 4000		
ONLINE PLATFORM	Microsoft Teams		

The AGM will be held in-person and for the first time in 2023, online.

**Attendance in person:** For building security reasons, QFVG is required to provide the Australian Retirement Trust with a list of all registered attendees prior to the AGM. Please register your intention to attend in person by COB Monday, 20 November 2023 via the QR code here:



**Attendance online:** To obtain the meeting link, Members are asked to please register online prior to COB Monday, 20 November 2023 via the QR code here:



Under the company's constitution, only Grower Members who are financial members may vote, either in person, by proxy, or by company representative. Eligibility to vote will be determined from the QFVG Register of Members.

A Notice of AGM, Proxy Form, and 2022/23 Annual Report were emailed to financial members in late October. If you haven't received your copy but believe you are entitled to vote, contact QFVG on 07 3620 3844 as soon as possible.

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## engagement

Head of Engagement & Advocacy  
**Angela Seng-Williams**

**It has been rewarding engaging growers, their innovative ideas and rolling out seed funding grants to start the practical implementation of the Future Fields Horticulture Strategy (2022 - 2032).**

Setting goals and charting the course of an entire sector for the next decade sounded like a daunting task, but Queensland horticulture hasn't hesitated in starting to execute the strategy. The recent call for seed projects unearthed a great diversity of ideas from each growing region. Successful applicants showed a high level of commitment to horticulture in the long term and put forward projects to achieve meaningful impact.

Streamlining on-farm compliance, an innovative AgTech solution for Australia's pineapple industry, and drone technology solutions in organic bananas are just some of the quality projects soon to commence.

These projects demonstrated clear links to one or more of the Future Fields priority areas, and will lead to tangible, practical outcomes to benefit their agribusinesses and the sector more broadly.

I will be working closely with the seed funding recipients as they work on their project to assist where needed and to record and share their progress with you.

If you have a great idea or innovation, I would like to hear from you too on 0427 217 077.



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# Ready, Set, grow your field



Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) recently announced the recipients of the 'Grow Your Field' seed funding opportunity. Congratulations to all recipients, we look forward to bringing our readers further updates on each in future editions.



## Coordinated Compliance for Queensland Growers

*Jennifer McKee* and *Taylor Family Produce* will work in partnership to review the compliance landscape for horticultural growers in Queensland and provide practical recommendations that make efficient use of digital technology and streamline the compliance process.



## Future Proofing Organic Farming in Tropical North QLD

*Jah Farming Pty Ltd* Ben and Matt Abbott will invest in drone technology for precision spraying of protectants and beneficials on their organic banana crop. After initial demos, they believe this technology will enhance the efficacy of protectants, assist in crop monitoring, and reduce overall reliance on chemicals by increasing use of beneficials crucial to organic banana and papaya systems. It will also enable them to better time and target their spray application.

## First Nations Foods

*The FNQ Food Incubator* will investigate, document, and publish a list of FNQ native food ingredients, suppliers, buyers, and farming best practices – much needed in this emerging industry.

This project aims to support growers in commercially farming First Nations food ingredients and connecting them with Indigenous food manufacturers.

## Granite Gate to the World

The *Granite Belt Growers Association* will be supported by expertise to investigate and document value-adding opportunities and markets for surplus produce across the Granite Belt region. Benefits to growers and the broader region include increased collaboration, opportunities for economic diversification and resilience, and most importantly increased profitability.



# AGTECH

## SOLUTION TO SWEETEN PINEAPPLE PICKING

**Wide Bay pineapple grower Jeff Atkinson has a strong track record in using engineering and technology to enhance his farm business.**

An experienced grower of sugarcane, pineapples, soybeans and cotton, Jeff already uses an integrated GPS-supported controlled traffic farming system across his operation. He also gains efficiencies by transferring technology, practices, and learnings from one crop to another.

Recently, Jeff has been developing an AgTech solution to select and pick his pineapples. He has modified his Terex harvester lifting and widening it to enable him to pick his pineapple crop along his standard 2m wide rows.

Jeff is now designing and installing camera technology for the harvester to detect when pineapples are ready to be picked; taking only the fruit at the targeted or optimum sugar level from the field, and leaving the green fruit to mature until the next pass.

Recently Jeff was awarded a \$19,000 seed grant through Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG's) 'Grow Your Field' funding opportunity to help make his AgTech vision a reality.

On the surface, one might struggle to join the dots, but Jeff believes his 'pick and leave' automated harvester will be the holy grail to meeting increasing consumer demand for pineapples.

"Currently, Aussies are eating on average one pineapple each year, if we can make that two, we won't be able to keep up with demand," he said.

Jeff said optimising the time of harvest is key.

"At the moment, we're hand-picking pineapples based on their colour, and even a well-trained eye can sometimes pick the fruit before they're sweet," he explained.

"Pineapples don't continue to ripen after they're harvested, so if the consumer's one pineapple a year isn't sweet, ripe and perfect, it's hard to get them to come back for more."

With the camera technology Jeff is looking to install on his pineapple harvester, it will mean the fruit is picked based on sugar content - that way, only the sweetest fruit will be picked every time.

This technology also provides a means to manage Jeff's workforce more safely and efficiently. Pineapples are a spiky, large plant requiring heavy duty PPE. Jeff's 'pick and leave' technology will also ensure his workers won't need to be sweating it out in the field.

"Picking more fruit means we'll have more packing work to offer. Sitting in the shade of the packing shed with a breeze makes a happier, safer workforce than walking the rows picking on a 35-degree day," he said.

*Over the next 12 months, we will be working alongside Jeff Atkinson and the other 'Grow Your Fields' seed funding recipients, documenting their project journeys, and showcasing their contributions to the future of Queensland horticulture.*



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### **Support Aussie products**

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### **Support Australian Ownership**

Our goal is for our Cooperative Members to be the majority owners of the Lockyer Valley Foods processing facility (incorporating a cannery). Lets stop the imports!



## **How to apply**

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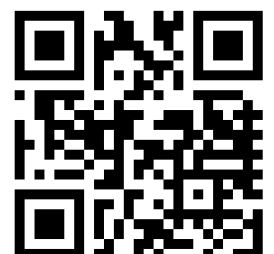
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# HOW'S YOUR elastic band?

Recently all Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) staff were asked to complete a mental first aid course by Christmas as it was recognised that horticulture is really struggling, and we needed to be prepared to support in any way we can. If a rubber band can be used as a metaphor for mental health, there's many growers and associated supply chain links very stretched right now.

Low prices across many commodities below cost of production; great growing conditions meaning quality and supply is high but prices are low; market manipulation tactics; debt levels leading to high stress and severe impacts to cashflow are all taking their toll. Of most concern is that size and scale of business does not appear to be a factor.

With the highly disturbing figures from National Rural Health Alliance 2021, the suicide rate among farmers in Australia is up to 94% higher than non-farmers, we have work to do in the industry.

If you've been putting off training or if you simply want to be prepared to

have a conversation when and if the need arises, please join us by becoming prepared. You may save a life.

## Mental health support for members

QFVG recently activated mental health support for Grower Members. Some might know this service as EAP Assist. This service provides Grower Members with access to three hours of confidential phone counselling throughout Queensland.

## What are the benefits of EAP Assist?

- Support available and provided when needed.
- Prompt appointments via the Booking Form.

- No lost time from the farm. No travel costs.
- Anonymous and confidential

If you are struggling, we encourage you to book an appointment today using the QFVG access code on the following page.

This service is available free of charge for Grower Members until 13 September 2024.

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QUEENSLAND FRUIT  
& VEGETABLE GROWERS

# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Employer Assistance Program (EAP Assist)

*For members*

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

*Do you experience...*

Stress, anxiety,  
and/or depression?

Workplace conflict?

Family, relationship,  
or succession  
challenges?

Alcohol and  
substance abuse,  
gambling, or domestic  
violence?

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**In her address to a packed National Press Club in Canberra, outgoing National Farmers' Federation (NFF) President Fiona Simson chose not to shine light on the NFF's \$100 billion roadmap agenda, but instead on their work in elevating the important role of women in agriculture.**

Fiona was the first female president of the NFF and has effectively changed the face of Australian agriculture to boost numbers of both women and youth entering the sector. Although the first to admit she would grimace at seeing her gender leading the headlines, she understood the significance of the opportunity that she had as a female leader.

"For far too long we saw only the faces and heard only the voices of white, male, middle aged farmers," she said. "Anyone who has sat around a kitchen table with a farming family will know, that women have always been an equal driving force within our farming businesses. They were visible in the day-to-day operations on the farm, but they weren't visible in board rooms or leadership structures of our industry."

She spoke about the NFF's Diversity in Agricultural Leadership Program, created to level up the leadership gender equity playing field, and believes it has been instrumental in creating a new generation of female advocates.

Whilst Fiona considers that we still have some way to go before we see equality in representation, her address emulated similar views of the three 'chiefs' at a Rural Press Club's event in Brisbane. The 'chiefs' were three of Queensland's most prominent and successful leaders who are at the forefront of the State's \$23 billion agriculture sector - Queensland Chief Biosecurity Officer, Dr Rachel Chay; Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Allison Crook; and Chief Entrepreneur, Julia Spicer OAM.

In a panel session moderated by journalist and ABC QLD Country Hour host Arlie Felton-Taylor, panellists reflected on the substantial gains in gender equality being made specifically in agriculture, and opportunities to elevate the voices of rural women. All emphasised the importance of women to be seen, to speak up, having a voice, and making the most of opportunities to be 'at the table' when it came to representing rural and regional Queensland.

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers' (QFVG) represented the horticulture industry at the event, along with industry partner Queensland Farmer's Federation (QFF).

"I was shocked to learn that when the diversity program began just six years ago, only 2.3% of CEO's in agriculture were women. Given women play such a huge role in all aspects of life on the land this figure didn't make sense to me. What does seem logical is that our industry leadership should better reflect the industry itself. To achieve that, we need to actively encourage and support more women to take up leadership positions. It's a source of pride that Queensland is leading the way with multiple women now holding key leadership roles in agriculture. Fiona has done an outstanding job during her presidency at NFF, and we wish her all the best in her new role," QFVG CEO Rachel Chambers said.

International Day for Rural Women is celebrated on 15 October each year and is a global initiative to raise awareness on the essential role rural women play in the food systems of the world.



# ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Fiona Simson



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

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



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# Celebrating THE GRANITE BELT

'Queenslander' was the war cry booming during the recent Granite Belt Growers Association Gala Dinner with former State of Origin stalwart and fellow Stanthorpean (his words) Billy Moore at the helm of the microphone.

Billy has been credited with the famous State of Origin Queenslander war cry however he humbly outlined what he believes this simple word really means:

- Teamwork – never leaving a mate behind
- Always finding a solution; and
- No excuses.

The growers of the Granite Belt, and indeed growers right across the state, personify these three things in so many ways every day. They work in teams on-farm and in regions to grow and harvest the fresh food we eat, they are also creative, innovative problem solvers who always get our produce to market – no excuses.



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# BRISBANE MONTHLY SUMMARY

## October

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

### Brisbane Monthly Special 6 - 10 Crop Summary

Page No 1

Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
BANANAS,Cavendish	744.55	10KgCtn	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	by the firm or employer unless otherwise indicated by an authorised representative independent of this message. We use virus scanning software but exclude all liability for viruses or similar in any attachment.						
Cavendish		15KgCtn	15.00	58.00	60.00	34.26							
Lady Finger		8KgCtn	32.00	50.00	50.00	43.00							
Cavendish		Carton	13.00	55.00	58.00	35.29							
Ducasse		Carton	30.00	35.00	35.00	32.50							
Lady Finger		Carton	12.00	60.00	72.00	30.16							
Sugar		Carton	45.00	45.00	45.00	45.00							
CARAMBOLAS	7.58	SLTray	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
CUMQUATS,Oval	2.21	Kg	8.00	12.00	12.00	11.00							
GRAPEFRUIT,Star Ruby	177.77	13KgCtn	15.00	25.00	25.00	20.00							
Star Ruby		CP	12.00	30.00	45.00	19.25							
LIMES,Tahitian	598.69	18LCtn	10.00	60.00	65.00	29.82							
Tahitian		9LCtn	5.00	40.00	40.00	17.02							
MANGOES,Calyпсо	510.50	18LCtn	24.00	40.00	40.00	32.82							
Kensington Pride		18LCtn	10.00	40.00	40.00	24.86							
Nam Dok Mai		18LCtn	30.00	60.00	60.00	38.81							
R2E2		18LCtn	10.00	50.00	60.00	29.35							
Calyпсо		9KgTray	50.00	90.00	90.00	65.53							
Culinary,Elephant		Kg	6.00	7.00	7.00	6.50							
Culinary,Falan		Kg	4.50	7.00	7.00	5.10							
Culinary,Kensington Pride		Kg	5.00	7.00	7.00	6.00							
Culinary,Keow Savoy		Kg	3.00	11.00	11.00	5.24							
Culinary,R2E2		Kg	6.00	7.00	7.00	6.50							
Calyпсо		SLTray	24.00	54.00	54.00	36.26							
Kensington Pride		SLTray	5.00	50.00	50.00	27.32							
Maha		SLTray	45.00	56.00	56.00	49.00							
R2E2		SLTray	15.00	50.00	55.00	30.51							
NUTS,Peanuts	99.38	20KgBag	110.00	120.00	120.00	115.00							
Peanuts		3KgBag	29.00	29.00	29.00	29.00							
Peanuts		500g	4.65	5.40	5.40	5.03							
Peanuts		5KgBag	25.40	25.40	25.40	25.40							
Macadamia		Kg	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.75							
OLIVES,Black	6.69	9LCtn	40.00	40.00	40.00	40.00							
PAPAWS,Culinary	766.54	18LCtn	24.00	30.00	30.00	27.00							
Red Flesh		18LCtn	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
Red Flesh		22LCtn	12.00	30.00	30.00	20.10							
Yellow Flesh		22LCtn	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
Culinary		30LCtn	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
Yellow Flesh		30LCtn	10.00	30.00	30.00	19.00							
Red Flesh		36LCtn	28.00	36.00	36.00	30.57							
Yellow Flesh		36LCtn	30.00	36.00	36.00	33.00							
WATERMELONS,Minimelons	1880.73	30LTray	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
Minimelons		32LCtn	16.00	30.00	30.00	28.00							
Champagne		Kg	1.00	3.20	3.20	2.00							
Champagne S'less		Kg	1.00	1.20	1.20	1.10							
Long Varieties		Kg	0.80	1.20	1.20	1.01							
Minimelons		Kg	0.90	1.60	1.60	1.34							
Seedless		Kg	0.60	2.60	2.60	1.62							

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

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Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg	Species/Group/Variety	Tonnes	Pack	Low	High	Best	Avg
BEETROOT	238.32	10KgBag	6.00	20.00	20.00	13.39							
Golden		10KgBag	20.00	40.00	40.00	35.16							
Bunch		Bunch	1.80	3.00	3.00	2.20							
Baby		Bunch	2.00	3.20	3.20	2.77							
Target		Bunch	3.00	3.50	3.50	3.25							
CARROTS,Purple	1222.04	10KgCtn	24.00	35.00	35.00	28.57							
		15KgCtn	14.00	24.00	24.00	19.24							
Baby		250gLP	1.80	2.20	2.20	2.00							
		Bag	12.00	24.00	24.00	18.00							
Dutch		Bunch	1.40	2.40	2.60	1.80							
		Carton	12.00	24.00	25.00	18.50							
CAULIFLOWERS,Caulini	1009.70	2KgCtn	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
		Carton	6.00	32.00	36.00	17.48							
		Each	1.00	1.40	1.40	1.20							
CHINESE VEG.,Bukchoy	221.25	Bunch	0.80	1.40	1.60	1.14							
Choisum		Bunch	1.20	2.00	2.00	1.30							
Kailan		Bunch	1.40	2.00	2.00	1.69							
Pakchoy		Bunch	1.00	1.40	1.60	1.14							
EDIBLE FLOWERS	5.34	20g	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.00							
Mixed		20g	4.00	6.00	6.00	5.50							
Zucchini		Each	6.00	8.00	8.00	7.00							
Zucchini		SLTray	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00							
EGG PLANT,Continental,Graffiti	149.91	5KgCtn	15.00	20.00	20.00	17.50							
Thai Apple		6KgCtn	22.00	30.00	30.00	26.00							
Continental		7KgCtn	14.00	25.00	30.00	22.43							
Thai Apple		7KgTray	25.00	35.00	40.00	30.00							
Purple		7KgTray	10.00	30.00	30.00	19.77							
Purple		8KgCtn	12.00	18.00	18.00	14.00							
GINGER	136.71	Kg	2.50	8.00	8.00	4.67							
LEEKS	87.98	10KgCtn	14.00	36.00	40.00	26.04							
		5KgCtn	20.00	24.00	24.00	22.00							
		8KgCtn	20.00	54.00	54.00	37.50							
		Bunch	1.60	2.00	2.50	1.90							
SILVERBEET	59.60	Bunch	1.40	2.40	2.60	2.06							
SWEET POTATOES,Gold	1457.12	15KgCtn	8.00	26.00	26.00	15.68							
Hawaiian		15KgCtn	30.00	50.00	60.00	45.00							
Red		15KgCtn	28.00	45.00	55.00	42.50							
Gold		32LCtn	8.00	30.00	30.00	18.15							
Hawaiian		32LCtn	36.00	50.00	50.00	43.00							
Red		32LCtn	22.00	40.00	50.00	31.00							
Gold		Kg	0.40	0.80	1.00	0.60							

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## FRUIT AND VEGETABLE WHOLESALE MARKET PRICE REPORTING

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

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

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

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

### AUSMARKET CONSULTANTS CAN BE CONTACTED BY:

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

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

# LEARNING FROM THE EA LANDSCAPE



## workplace relations

Focus HR Founding Director  
Naomi Wilson

**Since the announcement of the 'Zombie Agreement' legislation in December last year, we've been watching and waiting to see the decisions that the Fair Work Commission (FWC) may make for both extension applications and new Enterprise Agreement (EA) applications.**

It appears that the 'watch and wait' approach has been taken by many. There have been surprisingly few applications lodged at this point, but we can still glean some key learnings from these.

### Extensions to Zombie EAs

At the time of writing there had been 17 extension applications. Of these, eight have been approved and nine rejected. So, what seems to be getting these rare extension applications across the line? There are no hard and fast rules for this, but the rulings by the FWC give us some insights on what they have considered when granting extensions including;

1. Whether employees remain better off overall if they stay covered by the zombie agreement compared to Award.
2. Whether and when bargaining has been initiated and what steps have been taken in the EA renegotiation process already.
3. The coverage and complexity of entering into a new EA (things like the number of zombie agreements being brought together in an organisation, geographic scope, number of Awards being brought together in a future EA, number of unions involved – all can influence coverage and complexity).

4. Whether the employees support the extension application.
5. Whether the employer and employees are practically able to complete bargaining in time for the 6 December 2023 cut off.

None of these factors alone seem to be sufficient grounds for the FWC granting an extension – rather it is a combination of factors which may lead to a successful outcome.

### New Enterprise Agreements

A search of the FWC's approved EAs for this calendar year, citing the Horticulture Award 2020, yields just five results.

The terms in these approved EAs are quite varied, a couple points of interest include:

#### Pressure Fresh Australia Pty Ltd

- This EA is silent on overtime and ordinary hours of work and specifically precludes the Horticulture Award 2020.
- It has a greater focus on set piece rates and specifies that the employee can earn 16% more than the base rate (in the Award it is 15%).
- Their hourly pay rates are just \$0.01 higher than the Award rates.

#### Butler Market Gardens (Aust) Pty Ltd

Clauses that differ from the Award include:

- 170 standard hours over a four-week average (152 ordinary + 18 reasonable additional).
- Set 3% wage increase per annum.
- Set annual salary rates which include penalty and leave loading and 42.5 hours per week.



## WATCH AGAIN

### HORTICULTURE AWARD 2020 UPDATE

In this webinar, QFVG's Workplace Relations partner Focus HR covers updates to the Horticulture Award 2020 including ordinary hours of work; overtime / penalty provisions; shift work; managing TOIL; allowances and much more.



SCAN HERE

- TOIL does not include a clause about paying it out on the employee's request, but they only have three months in which to use it before it must be paid out.
- A flat four week notice period for termination (not climbing from 1 to 4 based on years of service).
- Interestingly, pay rates are only 1% above the Award rates however it was lodged pre-1 July so would likely be based on those rates.

#### Fullerton Farms Pty Ltd

Clauses that differ from the Award include:

- An all up hourly rate is an option to include up to 40 hours per week plus some applicable allowances.
- Averaging of hours over 12 months.
- Ability to have longer breaks - essentially setting up to have a split shift style arrangement if the weather/ picking conditions require it.
- Flexibility around Sundays at ordinary rates when it is at the employee's request.
- TOIL to be used to top up hours if full hours are not worked.
- No shift allowances included.

When we consider an EA, it is crucial to remember that the FWC is going to perform a BOOT (Better Off Overall Test) when considering the application.

This means that for each of the 'wins' or flexibilities that the employer achieves in the bullet points above, they need to 'give' something to the employees to ensure they remain better off than the Award. This is why you will see things like

slightly higher hourly rates, guaranteed wage increases, and higher piece rate potential earnings, all of which are to the employee's benefit.

We encourage members who are considering or in the process of entering into an EA, to explore the approved EAs to gain further insights into potential approaches to reach the right win-win for your operation.

#### Transitioning to the Award

Talking to members, we know there are a lot who have decided to transition to the Award (even if just for a season while they see if it works for them). Or you may be in the situation of still negotiating a replacement EA and not sure that you will meet the 6 December deadline.

Either way, now is the time to be planning for a transition to the Award. Things to consider:

- Do you understand how the Award differs to your EA?
- Have you communicated effectively with your people?
- Do you have the right documentation in place to replace the Zombie Agreement such as Contracts of Employment and updated policies?

#### FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Please contact the QFVG Workplace Relations line on 07 3620 3844 or email [wrteam@qfvg.com.au](mailto:wrteam@qfvg.com.au)





# TOP TIPS FOR THE Festive Season

It's that time of year again where everyone is preparing to wind down for the festive season. But let's be real... no-one is actually 'winding down'.

**The seasons don't stop turning in horticulture! And this year, on top of everything else we've had new rulings around how to manage when we need employees to work on public holidays.**

So, when all of that is in the melting pot, our present to you is some practical tips to guide you through the festive season.

**TIP 1:** Prepare and communicate early about what your plans are for working over the Christmas-New Year period.

If you are shutting down or operating on skeleton staff for a period, the time to communicate that is now.

For your permanent employees, discuss possible arrangements if you are shutting down. It is important to note that the Horticulture Award does not have provisions for instructing employees to take annual leave for a period of shutdown, so any discussions need to be focused on reaching agreement around this. Employers cannot simply enforce a shutdown period in which permanent employees must take annual leave.

**TIP 2:** Plan and communicate with employees on requirements for staffing on public holidays.

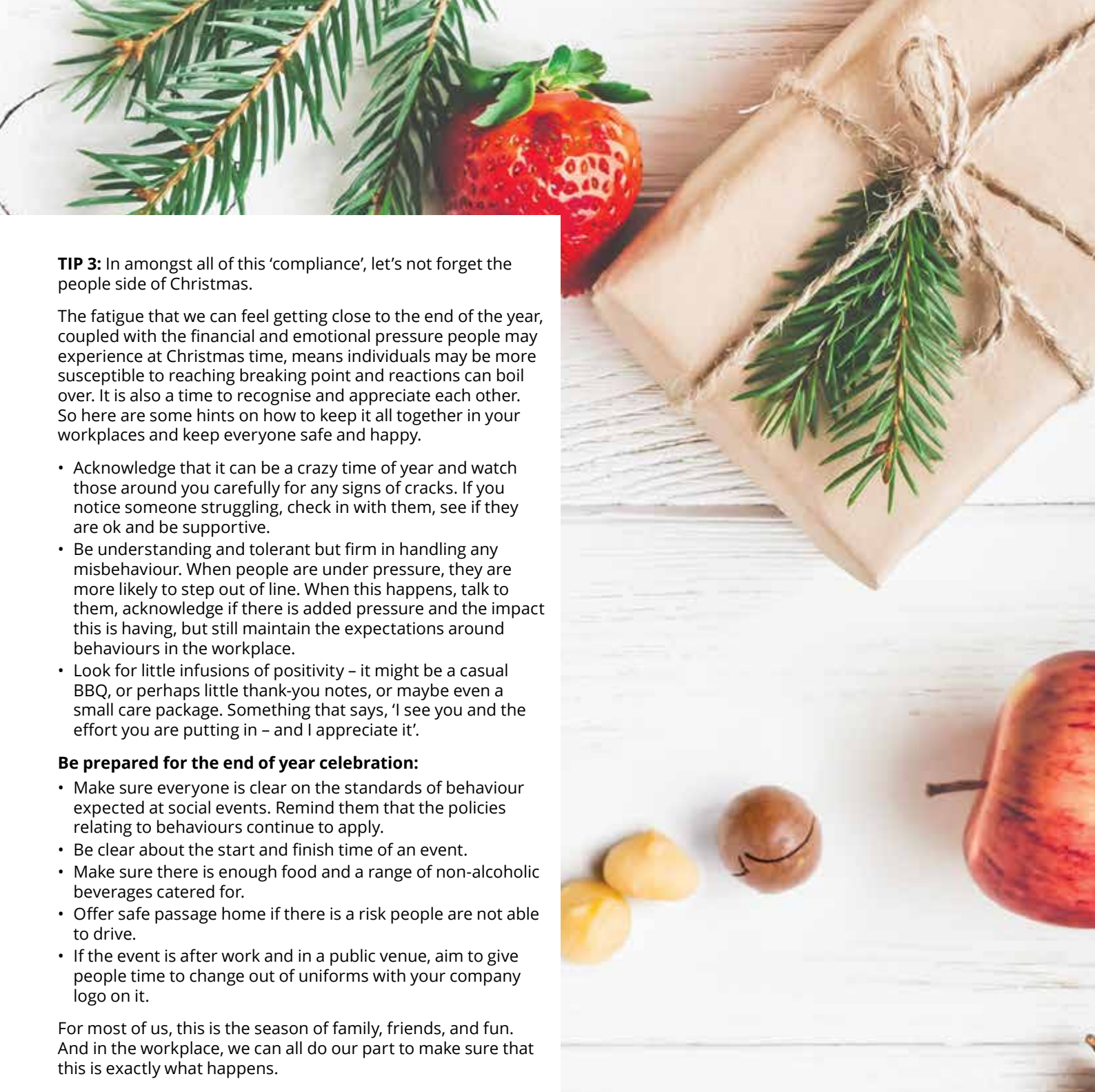
Remember that Fair Work has clarified that employees cannot be 'instructed' to work a public holiday, rather it must be 'by agreement'

Employees have the right to not work on a public holiday and requests for them to work must be reasonable in the circumstances. Factors that can be considered are:

- The nature of the workplace.
- The role and type of work the employee does.
- Employee's personal circumstances (including caring responsibilities).
- Employment status (full-time, part-time, or casual).
- An expectation that they might be asked to work on the public holiday.
- Any overtime, penalty rates or other payment the employee might receive.
- The amount of notice provided.
- Any other relevant factor.

Remember also that penalty rates apply on public holidays under the Horticulture Award. It is important to check this year if your employees are transitioning from a zombie agreement on 6 December and onto the Award. Under the Award, public holidays worked are to be paid as follows:

- Permanent employees – 200% of the ordinary hourly rate.
- Pieceworkers – 200% of the piece rate.
- Casual employees – 225% of the ordinary hourly rate (this includes the casual loading).



**TIP 3:** In amongst all of this 'compliance', let's not forget the people side of Christmas.

The fatigue that we can feel getting close to the end of the year, coupled with the financial and emotional pressure people may experience at Christmas time, means individuals may be more susceptible to reaching breaking point and reactions can boil over. It is also a time to recognise and appreciate each other. So here are some hints on how to keep it all together in your workplaces and keep everyone safe and happy.

- Acknowledge that it can be a crazy time of year and watch those around you carefully for any signs of cracks. If you notice someone struggling, check in with them, see if they are ok and be supportive.
- Be understanding and tolerant but firm in handling any misbehaviour. When people are under pressure, they are more likely to step out of line. When this happens, talk to them, acknowledge if there is added pressure and the impact this is having, but still maintain the expectations around behaviours in the workplace.
- Look for little infusions of positivity – it might be a casual BBQ, or perhaps little thank-you notes, or maybe even a small care package. Something that says, 'I see you and the effort you are putting in – and I appreciate it'.

**Be prepared for the end of year celebration:**

- Make sure everyone is clear on the standards of behaviour expected at social events. Remind them that the policies relating to behaviours continue to apply.
- Be clear about the start and finish time of an event.
- Make sure there is enough food and a range of non-alcoholic beverages catered for.
- Offer safe passage home if there is a risk people are not able to drive.
- If the event is after work and in a public venue, aim to give people time to change out of uniforms with your company logo on it.

For most of us, this is the season of family, friends, and fun. And in the workplace, we can all do our part to make sure that this is exactly what happens.



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# Fair and Ethical SOURCING Conference



## program update

Fair Farms National Program Manager  
**Sachin Ayachit**

**The 2023 Fair and Ethical Sourcing conference in Melbourne brought together growers, panelists, and industry representatives to discuss ethical and safe work practices in Australia Horticulture.**

We extend our thanks to our speakers, including Bernard Salt, Hon David Littleproud, Dr. James Cockayne, Steve Ronson, Cary Duffy, Steve Dargavel, Lucy Gregg, Emma Germano, Steve Burdette, Erin Cranwell, Kestra Bowskill, Jamie Willis, Terry O'Brien, Kelli McDougall, Andre Clarke, Jen Grigg, Alison Kennedy, Graeme Ison, and Blake Hillier. Together, they provided valuable insights into various aspects of ethical standards for growers, workers, and farms across Australia. Topics of discussion ranged from work health and safety (WHS), past and predicted social trends, employment procedures, and labour hire licensing in horticulture.

The conference examined critical aspects of the Australian horticulture

industry, covering responsible sourcing, fair work, and WHS workplace obligations in supply chain management. Discussions on fair labour practices and modern slavery were also key points of focus.

Panelists, Stephen Brown, Rachel Mackenzie, Jolyon Burnett, Meegan George, and Johnathon Davey provided valuable perspectives on their topic of discussion 'Social Compliance through the lens of your Peak / Regional / Industry Body'. With discussions led by Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) CEO Rachel Chambers, the panelists navigated what Social Compliance meant to them, and their industry.

Attendees had the opportunity to engage in discussions, offer valuable insights, foster mutual understanding between industry representatives and growers, network with experts, and gain information regarding challenges and opportunities in ethical sourcing. Questions from attendees were answered both throughout and

after the conference in a Q&A style environment.

The conference concluded with a gala dinner, where three guests were presented with awards for outstanding performances in their field. We'd like to again congratulate our award winners for the following categories:

**Fair Farmer of the Year:** *Velisha Farms*

**Auditor of the Year:** *Alice Freemantle*

**Ambassador of the Year:** *Robyn Francis*

We thank our sponsors Ask Your Team, AUSVEG, Endeavor Group, Swaggie, Agri Talent, and Southern Cross Certified. We also thank our supporters Vegetables WA, AUSVEG VIC, Berries Australia, SummerFruit Australia, National Farmers' Federation Horticulture Council, FMA (Fresh Market Australia), and The Australian Government - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry.

We would like to thank everyone who attended the Fair and Ethical Sourcing Conference 2023. We look forward to meeting with you again next year.





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# THE FAIR AND ETHICAL SOURCING CONFERENCE

# 2023





# Colleen Dunn

## COUNTRY KITCHENS FACILITATOR, GLENMORGAN BRANCH

Colleen Dunn has been a part of the Country Kitchens program for two years now, deciding to become a facilitator after seeing some Country Kitchen displays and becoming interested in learning about the program.

Upon discovering the training was delivered online, Colleen was enthusiastic because travelling long distances to training can be problematic when you live rural and work full-time.

"As a teacher I love to share my knowledge with others, both children and adults, and I see Country Kitchens as a way to promote healthy eating and living in a positive way across the generations," she said.

As a teaching principal at the local school, Colleen has strong links to the Glenmorgan district and has been

involved in a range of Country Kitchens activities within the school and wider community.

"Each month I promote something specific with my own QCWA Glenmorgan Branch. Sometimes we trial a recipe, try some new exercises, learn some new facts about sugar or discuss well-being and how we can support one another as busy women," she said.

"I have also shared the sewing of QCWA products of the year with my Branch and at a community level. These fruits and vegetable models have also been used to introduce students to particular foods.

"The sugar display was an eye opener at school and within our branch. One of my most successful activities this year were two Hands on Nutrition

Workshops - an adult version that we made vegan-friendly and a kids version making fruit kebabs with the students. I also regularly run the Back to Basics: Five Key Messages as part of our health units at school."

Colleen would love to see the Country Kitchens program in every school, so our next generation are educated into the ways of good health and living well.

Keen to work with the QCWA Country Kitchens program? We're always looking to increase our volunteer workforce. To learn more, please get in touch with the team on **0417 539 663**, or: [qcwacountrykitchens.com.au](http://qcwacountrykitchens.com.au)

Recipe courtesy of Maddy Noon, Country Kitchens team.



## Pumpkin, cheddar, & caramelised onion triangles

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ small kent pumpkin, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 brown onions, thinly sliced into rings
- 200g reduced fat cheddar cheese, grated
- ½ cup walnuts, finely chopped
- ½ cup dates, finely chopped
- 2 sprigs thyme (optional)
- 5 sheets reduced fat puff pastry
- 1 egg, whisked with 1 tablespoon of water for egg wash
- ¼ cup mixed sesame, pepita and sunflower seeds, for topping (optional)

### METHOD

- PREHEAT** oven to 200°C.
- COAT** pumpkin with 1 tbs olive oil and roast in the oven for 45 minutes. .

**COOK** onion in a frypan with remaining oil, stirring until soft and caramelised.

**MASH** roasted pumpkin in a bowl and combine with onion, cheddar, walnuts, dates and thyme.

**CUT** each square of pastry into quarters and spoon 2 tablespoons pumpkin mix into each pastry square. Repeat process until pumpkin mix has been used up.

**FOLD** each pastry square into a triangle and press down the edges with a fork.

**PLACE** pumpkin pastry triangles onto a lined baking tray.

**MIX** water with egg and coat the pastry with egg wash. Sprinkle with seeds.

**BAKE** in the oven for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

**SERVE** hot or cold as a snack or with a side salad for a meal.

 15 min  50 min  20

# MT ALMA ORGANICS BUILDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Mt Alma Organics owners Angela and Gary Spotswood funded their on-farm rural worker accommodation, and cold room and packing shed expansion with a QRIDA Sustainability Loan.

**Behind fields of organic cane and cattle, and rows of more than 40 different fruit and vegetable varieties at Mt Alma Organics in the Burdekin, farm workers put their feet up in a comfortable container home after a day of picking.**

With housing and labour shortages making it difficult for Mt Alma Organics owners Angela and Gary Spotswood to secure workers, the husband-and-wife primary producers used a Sustainability Loan from the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) to fund the on-farm rural worker accommodation.

“Our seasonal worker pool is growing so we needed extra accommodation,” Gary said.

“It’s hard to find suitable housing close-by and the nearest town is 30 kilometres away.”

The Spotswoods also used the QRIDA Sustainability Loan to expand their cold room and packing shed with demand for

their fresh produce increasing from some of Australia’s major supermarket retailers.

“We just find it’ll be more efficient. We can grow other crops and we can produce more; we can be faster in packaging, and it helps on labor as well,” Gary said.

As repeat QRIDA clients, the Spotswoods found completing the Sustainability Loan application was straightforward.

“We receive emails and information all the time on the Sustainability Loans, and we probably follow it regularly to see what suits and what’s available to our business,” Gary said.

“We would recommend QRIDA to other Queensland primary producers because we found them very easy to deal with.”

QRIDA’s Sustainability Loans of up to \$1.3 million can help primary production businesses construct on-farm small-scale rural worker accommodation.

To find out how a Sustainability Loan could help develop your primary production business, visit [qrda.qld.gov.au/program/sustainability-loan](http://qrda.qld.gov.au/program/sustainability-loan) or contact QRIDA on 1800 623 946.

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Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority



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



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

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1800 623 946

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residual  
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# Inspiring GROWTH

in value added products

Horticultural growers looking to maximise their outputs by producing value-add products were invited to a recent week-long tour hosted by the FNQ Food Incubator and NT Farmers. The event showcased primary producers who have created successful value-add product lines and took a deep dive into the viability of creating a value-add product.



# MEASURING BUSINESS SUCCESS AND PERFORMANCE

**If success breeds complacency and complacency breeds failure, then how do you know if your vegetable business is on track for long-term success and how does your business measure success?**

As input costs continue to rise in a post-covid business economy and the cost of living continues to place downward pressure on prices, being a successful vegetable producer in Australia looks set to be an ongoing challenge.

Every business has its own internal set of parameters to measure success whether that is seasonal cash-flow, labour force efficiency, continued demand, sustainable pricing or executing expansion plans. Many businesses also benefit from an external set of analytics of their business performance to test the robustness of internal measures and ensure that the business is on track for achieving success.

Level Up Hort is a new five-year program focused on supporting vegetable and onion businesses to increase profitability and build long-term resilience. Specialist consultants undertake a thorough analysis of your business and establish how every dollar invested into producing a crop is turned into profit.

No-one knows your business as well as you and this program enables you to gain a deeper appreciation of the efficiency of your vegetable business, profitability and return on assets managed all through a fresh set of eyes.

A farm business consultant will analyse production and financial metrics to assess the performance of your business and work with you to leverage this information. Our consultants will guide you to make data-driven decisions and support you to achieve your business goals.

The program will be delivered over five years. Vegetable and onion growers can access the equivalent of \$10,000 of specialised farm business consulting free of charge each year.

Level Up Hort is a national Hort Innovation funded program and is open for vegetable and onion businesses across Australia.

*An external set of eyes over your business which allows you to gain a deeper appreciation for the efficiency of your vegetable business, profitability and return on assets managed.*

To participate, complete an Expression of Interest form:

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# WELCOME

## SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND QAWN OFFICER



Liz Ford has never been far from agriculture. Having grown up in Mt Isa before settling in Laidley, Liz has spent the last 15 years working in agribusiness workforce management across the Lockyer Valley Region.

In that time, she has seen the ebbs and flows of the sector and sees her new role as the Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network (QAWN) Officer for Southern Queensland as an opportunity to find and support the next generation of agricultural workers across the region.

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) funds QAWN to assist producers and business to attract, train, and retain workers.

Each officer is hosted by a regional industry or economic body, with Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG), through our project delivery arm Growcom, hosting Liz in Toowoomba.

Liz will support producers from the Lockyer Valley to the Northern Territory in the west, and about as far north as Augathella.

Liz sees education as her first priority in taking up her QAWN Officer role, saying that fostering stronger relationships between schools and agriculture is vital for both young people and agribusinesses.

"The pandemic border closures have shown us we can't rely on a transient workforce, and that we need to grow our local talent base," she said.

"Where I live, our young people are surrounded by farms, but many still go to the cities because they haven't had the chance to understand the opportunities on their doorstep."

A first job as a labourer on a farm offers not only invaluable work experience, but is a gateway to careers in agronomy, horticulture, machinery, and business operations.

Liz is keen to show young people across Southern Queensland what is possible through facilitating farm tours, attending school and university career expos, and working to break down perceived barriers to pursuing a career in agriculture.

### CONNECT

WITH YOUR LOCAL QAWN OFFICER

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*"Fostering stronger relationships between schools and agriculture is vital for both young people and agribusinesses."*

Liz Ford  
Southern Queensland  
QAWN Officer



# COMMODITY IN FOCUS: MACADAMIAS



**Horticulture is playing a positive role in reducing the impact of farming management practices on water quality in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). Growers' commitment to participating in the Hort360 Great Barrier Reef project and becoming Reef Certified has been key to this achievement.**

Delivered by Growcom, the project delivery arm of Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG), Reef Certification through the Hort360 GBR project is a voluntary, credible certification pathway for horticulture growers to demonstrate stewardship and industry best practice standards in the GBR catchments.

The macadamia industry's participation in the project represents an exceptional 5,950 hectares of Reef Certified production. This is approximately a quarter of the total area of Reef Certified horticulture production. Geographically, 94 percent of Reef Certified macadamia orchards are in the Burnett-Mary region. Macadamia growers' interest and support is true testament to the industry's commitment to BMP and is a significant achievement.

The macadamia industry is encouraged to maintain this fantastic demonstration of industry leadership through continued involvement in the program. Growers who are not yet involved

are invited to contact their closest Hort360 Facilitator to organise an on-farm meeting and benchmark practices.

Growers that proceed to become Reef Certified receive a fully trademarked marketing kit, certificate, and farm gate sign. Benefits to macadamia growers involved in the program include:

- Evaluation of practices and identification of areas for improvement.
- Recognised demonstration of commitment to environmental stewardship.
- The potential to leverage a higher price for produce.
- An opportunity to educate consumers, government, and community on industry-wide values regarding the environment.

Participation in the Hort360 GBR project and Reef Certification is 100% free and voluntary. Growers who undergo Hort360 benchmarking are not obliged to become Reef Certified.

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

**Paula Ibell**  
Northern Reef Catchments  
0498 119 633  
pibell@qfvg.com.au

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



# STEPPING UP SUSTAINABILITY

Adrian and Mandy Schultz of Luvaberry are no strangers to the 's' word. They've had sustainability at the forefront of their operations since establishing their Wamuran farm 20 years ago.

The Schultz family's view of sustainability encompasses not only the environment, but also health of their business. As the President of the Queensland Strawberry Growers Association, the ongoing viability of other small to medium growing operations is close to Adrian's heart as well.



SEQ Water Quality Project Officer Lene Knudsen & Adrian Schultz.

Changes Adrian and Mandy have built into their operations to look after the environment have also provided them with new revenue streams.

The range of freeze-dried berry crunches, berry dust, and strawberry honey available on the Luvaberry website is a prime example. When a strawberry glut some years ago threatened to create a large amount of waste, Mandy froze and sold the fruit in one kilo bags. This evolved into the freeze-dried product range.

Meanwhile, out in the field, Adrian and Mandy take a fusion farming approach.

*"It's about taking the best of organic and the best of conventional practices,"*

Adrian pointed out that although historically strawberries were one of the most likely fruits or vegetables to contain pesticide residue, growers are working to reduce the use of harsh chemicals by either purchasing softer options or adopting non-chemical methods like integrated pest management (IPM).

Now, Adrian is exploring sustainability on another front with Growcom's SEQ Water Quality project, to investigate how the strawberry industry can further enhance its practices to protect waters in the Pumicestone catchment.

Project Officers Tim Wolens and Lene Knudsen have been working with the other most prolific crop in the Pumicestone catchment—pineapples—investigating a range of practices with growers.

These include bioreactors to manage nitrogen on farm, precision farming to improve nutrient and pesticide application efficiency, and soil erosion control measures.

The aim is to address nutrient, pesticide, and sediment entering local waterways leading into Pumicestone Passage and onto Moreton Bay.

As well as bioreactors, Adrian is also interested in polymer sprays that can prevent erosion.

He's open-minded about working with Tim and Lene to see what's possible.

Growcom is the projects and programs delivery arm of Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers.



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

**Lene Knudsen**  
SEQ Water Quality Facilitator  
0429 000 179  
lknudsen@qfvg.com.au

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



# Farm Business Resilience Program

## PIPELINE TO THE FUTURE

Mackays Group operate a portfolio of large-scale tropical fruit farms in Queensland's Far North. They are committed to minimising the environmental impact of their agricultural operations, investing in infrastructure and technology.





With the recent years of La Niña now behind us and the drier conditions of El Niño ahead, Mackays Group have been proactive in engaging Growcom's Farm Business Resilience Program (FBRP) to assist in upgrading the water infrastructure at the Group's Gold Tyne farm in Lakeland.

Currently bananas are the main crop grown at Gold Tyne. Passionfruit, avocados, lychees, and broad acre crops have also been established on the 1,724-hectare property.

Located in a region that predominantly relies on adequate rainfall, with limited water allocation, Mackays Group recognise that water security is paramount to Gold Tyne's future prosperity.

Working with Growcom's Resilience Manager, Karen George, Mackays Group were able to build climate adaptation and associated risks into

their business plan. Furthermore, the Group were able to provide QRIDA detailed information about their intended water infrastructure development to secure a Drought Preparedness Grant.

Gold Tyne is sustained through a groundwater allocation, together with a water offtake agreement from the Nina Dam, as well as a licensed water storage situated on an adjoining property.

Funding from the successful grant application contributed to the Group building an 800-metre extension to a 4.5-kilometre pipeline connecting Ninda Dam and the turkey's nest to Gold Tyne's irrigation network. Construction of this pipeline has effectively doubled the property's 2,000ML groundwater allocation.

The infrastructure upgrade bolstered the Group's agribusiness on two fronts.

First, the additional irrigable land is a critical step towards realising Gold Tyne's full cropping potential.

Second, this added water security means the farm can maintain operation levels that ensure continuation of best management practices during times of drought.

Fully developing Gold Tyne will benefit the wider Lakeland economy. Increased on-farm activity means more employment opportunities for farm workers, related agricultural industry specialists, contractors, and suppliers necessary to sustain operations.

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

The field day was hosted by Vee Jay's Kalfresh and showcased their on-farm adoption of the robotic farming platform, 'Robotti'.



## PILOTING CHANGE ON QUEENSLAND FARMS

**Growers and industry stakeholders from across Queensland's agriculture industry came together for an industry field day in October to see and learn about the autonomous technology advancing and improving practice on a vegetable farm in Bowen.**

Robotti, an impressive technological solution for modern farming, was the focal point of the event.

Attendees had the opportunity to witness firsthand how this cutting-edge technology is revolutionising farming practices. Through live demonstration, a Q&A session and hands-on experience for attendees, the true potential of Robotti in improving farming methods was showcased.

The event was successful in sharing real world experience with utilising the autonomous vehicle throughout the winter production season, providing attendees with useful information on cost, benefits, challenges, and future opportunities.

Bowen Gumlu Growers Association (BGGGA) CEO Ry Collins said the organisation was proud to have played a role in this project, continuing its advocacy toward the adoption of advanced agricultural technology.

*"This technology holds great promise in enhancing productivity and sustainability within the industry. We eagerly anticipate future collaborations that will continue to shape the future of farming in Australia."*

# Fruit & Vegetable NEWS

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

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Level 2, 231 George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

PO Box 12101  
George Street QLD 4003

ABN 51 090 816 827

07 3620 3844  
www.qfvg.com.au

 @qldfvg

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### PRODUCTION TEAM

Managing Editor: Natalie Brady  
Journalist: Katherine Kirkwood  
Graphic Design: Scribbly Inc Creative

### COVER PHOTO

Pete Wallis, Wallis Media

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McPherson Media Group

Justin Bowler  
0429 699 553  
justin.bowler@mmg.com.au

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### KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Sachin Ayachit, Rachel Chambers, Michelle Haase, Naomi Wilson, Angela Seng-Williams.



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