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Australian Banana Growers' e-Bulletin

25 November, 2016

Doug Phillips receives state recognition

Well-deserved recognition for ABGC Chairman Doug Phillips this week, acknowledged for his outstanding contribution to the banana industry at a Queensland agriculture conference.

Addressing the AgFuture Awards presentation in Brisbane on Tuesday night, State Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Bill Byrne described Mr Phillips as having an “extraordinary and profound impact” on Queensland and the Australian banana industry through “exceptional leadership and vision”.

“Most recently, Doug has navigated a path for banana growers and the industry in the turbulent aftermath of the outbreak of Panama disease Tropical Race 4 in North Queensland,” Mr Byrne said.

“Doug’s continued leadership has ensured the integrity, sustainability and resilience of the industry.”

During the awards, Mr Phillips was also named a top five finalist in the Peter Kenny Medal – honouring those who have made an outstanding contribution to the agriculture, fisheries or forestry sector through innovation, leading to profitability and sustainability.



Congratulations Tegan Kukulies - an emerging young leader

The banana industry was well represented at the AgFutures Awards night.

Tegan Kukulies – the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries’ senior development officer in Queensland’s banana industry – was also a top four finalist in the Minister’s Emerging Leaders Award category.

Ms Kukulies played a crucial role in the 2015 Panama TR4 outbreak, using her knowledge of the banana industry and extensive networks to provide critical training and communication material to growers through the joint ABGC- DAF Panama extension program.

She also organised the 2016 National Banana Roadshow series which aims to deliver the latest R & D information to growers. Moving forward she would like to help drive the integration of digital technology into banana production systems.



More accolades for innovative Tableland couple

November seems to be “award month” for the banana industry.

Atherton Tablelands growers Rob and Krista Watkins have received two more accolades for their ground-breaking technology developed to process green banana flour.

Their Natural Evolution company recently won the Best Proven Product Award at the Tropical North Queensland Innovation Awards, and days later they took home the 2016 Premiers Sustainability Award – Innovation in Sustainable Technologies award.

New Reef Extension officer joins the team!

The ABGC’s Reef Extension program has welcomed a new extension officer to the team.

Dale Bennett will play an integral role in the Extension program, rolling out the banana industry’s component of Reef Trust funding.

The ABGC believes Ms Bennett is well equipped for the role, having completed a Bachelor of Science from James Cook University, majoring in Environmental Science and is currently completing a Masters in Natural Resource Management.

Protect yourself from Panama disease over Christmas

With the festive season almost here, the Panama TR4 Program has some tips on keeping up your farm biosecurity to prevent the risk of spreading TR4 disease over the Christmas period.

Ensure any staff relieving on the farm during Christmas holidays are up to date with the property’s on-farm biosecurity measures.

Dial ahead, don’t drop in to visit banana growers, or to access farms. The usual recreational pursuits of riding motorbikes or quad bikes through farms, pig hunting, fishing trips, walking dogs or dropping by for a visit could spread Panama TR4. Keep to designated access roads and respect the grower’s farm biosecurity measures.

During the storm and cyclone season, maintain your on-farm biosecurity measures in wet weather and take extra care to avert soil movement in muddy conditions. Respect the welfare of neighbouring banana growers by implementing farm entry and exit decontamination procedures.

Impressive line-up of speakers for Banana Congress grows

The list of special guests and speakers at the Australian Banana Industry Congress (ABIC) 2017 continues to grow.

After locking in comedian Ahn Do and award-winning chef Peter Kuruvita, it's now confirmed Florida-based professor of plant pathology Dr Randy Ploetz – an authority on diseases of tropical fruit crops - will be among guest speakers, addressing TR4 disease management.

French researcher Frederic Bakry will speak on disease control and plant breeding for disease resistance, while Dennis Hoiberg, an expert in change management and emotional resilience will also share his knowledge with the conference.

Building better soils will be the focus of the CSIRO's Principal Research Scientist Nancy Schellhorn's talk, while Marketing Manager of Horticulture Innovation Australia Elisa King will impart her knowledge and wisdom on banana marketing.

Compliance operation to protect NSW banana industry

Department of Primary Industries officers have begun checking banana plantations on the New South Wales north coast in an effort to protect the state's banana industry from invasive pests and diseases.

Banana farms are at risk from many invasive threats and prevention is considered the most effective strategy.

DPI officers will be inspecting properties in the Coffs Harbour region, checking for neglect and excessive weeds that can contribute to the spread of pest and diseases, such as Banana Bunchy Top Virus, Panama Disease and Black Sigatoka.

Anyone who suspects an outbreak of invasive pests or diseases should report it immediately to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

Going bananas for National Ride2Work Day

Bananas were another huge hit during National Ride2Work Day held in Darwin, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart last month.

Australian Bananas provided \$4500 worth of home-grown bananas for the annual event – the largest celebration of commuter bike riding in Australia – organised by the Bicycle Network.

With more than 67,000 riders registered this year, it's great to see their pedal-power being fuelled by our favourite yellow fruit!

ABGC 2016 AGM

And, finally a reminder to ABGC members that the Australian Banana Growers' Council's 2016 Annual General Meeting will be held in Tully next Wednesday, November 30.

The meeting will kick off at 5.30pm at the Tully and District Senior Citizens Club, 19 Blackman Street.

**Horticulture
Innovation
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