

# Australian

Issue: 53 | AUGUST 2018

# BANANAS

## CHANGING OF THE GUARD

LOUIS READY FOR SPOT OF RETIREMENT

**EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES** Pages 10-12

**THAT'S GOLD(FINGER!)** Pages 14-15

**ROADSHOWS ROLL INTO TOWN** Page 16-17



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Front cover picture: Retiring ABGC Yellow Sigatoka Liaison Officer Louis Lardi.



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# OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE LONG-TERM PROFITABILITY

Jim Pekin, CEO



## EXPORTING POTENTIAL

Banana production value is similar to citrus and table grapes but exports from those industries account for 43 and 70 percent respectively. In addition, 15% of Australia's mango crop is now exported. However, less than 0.1% of bananas are currently exported.

A Hort Innovation-funded Banana Market Mapping study was recently completed by McKinna et al.

It shows that the best prospects are in places like Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Singapore. However, these prospects come with strong caveats. The main one is that Australia is a high cost producer compared to other countries and therefore to increase exports significantly, Australia would need to export bananas that are not Cavendish sold as a commodity. McKinna shows that some affluent customers in these countries would pay a premium for different bananas that taste great and are of a very high appearance. That

is, organic, different varieties, pre-packs or eco-friendly.

The last three financial years have, on average, been lean for Australian banana growers, due to plentiful supply. But exporting would not necessarily address domestic supply issues. The objective of exporting would be long-term profitability. Indeed, export contracts need to be honoured even at times when prices are better in Australia.

The main challenges that require serious time and money include supply chain development and specific consumer insights.

The Banana R&D Strategic Industry Advisory Committee has recommended that Hort Innovation progress with some further R&D on the potential of exporting. (See our special report on the Banana Market Mapping and future export opportunities on Pages 10-12)

## THE THREAT OF TR4

Some North Queensland growers invested millions of dollars protecting their farm from getting TR4. At the other end of the spectrum, some have spent very little.

Biosecurity is like home insurance. People who value their asset protect it.

ABGC understands the tough financial situation of many growers, and that there are no guaranteed measures against some ways that TR4 is spread, especially via flood waters. However, even some measures are better than none.

Some relatively cheap on-farm biosecurity measures include a boot exchange, a footbath, training of staff and keeping farm machinery and farm boots within your farming zone.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland (DAF) has produced an excellent self-assessment checklist for on-farm biosecurity. It is included in the recently released Grower Kit. DAF continues to do a great job in supporting the industry. This Grower Kit is just one example.

Biosecurity Queensland held grower meetings in mid-June in Silkwood and Mareeba to help growers prepare for any future detections, focusing on the immediate biosecurity requirements.

Growers who attended were impressed with the information provided by BQ and by Mackays. BQ is thankfully now planning more grower meetings.

## SHADOW MINISTER TOURS NORTH TO HEAR INDUSTRY ISSUES



Shadow Queensland Agriculture Minister Tony Perrett recently toured Far North Queensland, meeting with banana growers and ABGC to hear issues affecting the industry. During a tour of a LaManna Premier Group-owned farm at Innisfail, Mr Perrett (pictured third from the right) met with (pictured L-R) ABGC CEO Jim Pekin, Josephine and Chris Borsato from the Innisfail Banana Farming Company, Derek Pregl, LaManna General Manager Northern Australia, ABGC Chair Stephen Lowe and Mario Quagliata.

# INDUSTRY INSIGHT FROM BENCHMARKING

Stephen Lowe, ABGC Chair



Results from the latest round of benchmarking of Australia's banana industry has confirmed what growers have known for some time. The last three years have been extremely

tough financially, right across the board.

The benchmarking – conducted by Howard Hall of Pinnacle Agribusiness – analysed data collected from growers from the past two financial years, ending on June 30, 2017. The results have given us an insight into how the industry has changed since the previous round of benchmarking in 2013.

Sadly - but not surprisingly - there is little positive news for our overall bottom line. The major changes to industry since 2013 have been the discovery of Panama TR4 in North Queensland and the introduction of the 15kg international pack.

Data gathered from benchmarking participants shows that in this time nationally (for all regions and all varieties); gross price increased 2%,

total operating costs increased 7%, award wage rates increased 12 per cent and, despite labour productivity and yield both increasing by 21% and 41% respectively, cash profit (EBITDA) declined 56 per cent.

Over recent months, growers have enjoyed a much healthier price for their fruit. While this is a welcome change, it will take a consistent period of higher prices to recoup some substantial losses experienced by many growers over the past three years.

Howard Hall has been presenting his benchmark findings to the NSW, North Queensland and Carnarvon roadshows.

He has noted that the majority of growers who participated in his project tended to be quite innovative and efficient managers of their farms and therefore the average financial position of all growers collectively would be even more dire than the average of the benchmarking respondents.

For more information on Howard's benchmark findings see page 18, where he provides a more comprehensive summary of these results.

## NUFFIELD CONFERENCE

Registrations are now open for the Nuffield Australia National Conference, which will be held in Melbourne from 18-20 September, 2018.

I attended the last Nuffield Conference in Darwin last year and I can say that the event offers some great insight for growers over a range of agriculture industries, including Nuffield scholar research and practical on-farm practice changes that can be applied to your own businesses.

According to the Nuffield website, this year's theme is 'Produce Change', inspired by the Nuffield scholars that are redefining agriculture in an age of unprecedented technological advances and globalisation.

I would encourage any grower that is in a position to attend to do so. From a personal perspective, it certainly was an informative and inspiring event for me last year.

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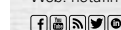
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## AUSSIE TR4 EXPERIENCE SHARED IN US

**Boston: home of the Red Sox, Harvard University and – for a few days this year – the world's brightest plant pathologists.**

The International Congress of Plant Pathology (ICPP) was held in the American city from July 29 to August 3, focussing on Plant Health in a Global Economy.

Among the attendees was Dr Rosie Godwin, Research and Development Manager at the Australian Banana Growers' Council.

Dr Godwin presented at a satellite meeting on Fusarium, sharing the Australian banana industry's experience of Panama tropical race 4.



Dr Rosie Godwin

"Learning about the Australian experience may assist countries not yet affected by TR4 in their preparedness, while I hope countries dealing with TR4 benefited from hearing how Australia implemented containment and management strategies that have effectively slowed the spread of the disease," Ms Godwin said.

She was also able to attend numerous ICPP sessions on topics ranging from banana blood disease through to new genetic technologies to create resistant plants and the use of aerial imagery to control diseases.

"The Congress is only held every 5 years and brings together the best plant pathologists from all over the world. It was a great opportunity to catch up on all the latest scientific developments being used to solve diseases issues on all our major crops." Ms Godwin said.

"The science presented was high quality and the range of topics both in the talks and posters on offer was extensive."



Delegates at the recent ICPP in Boston.

## FRECKLE FREEDOM ON TRACK

Australia remains on track to declare itself banana freckle free in 2018.

The final phase of the National Banana Freckle Eradication Program began in May last year and involved additional monitoring conducted by high skilled Plant Health Inspectors.

The aim of this phase is to provide a statistically high level of confidence that the disease has been successfully eradicated.

During the period from January to March 2018, almost 350 inspections were conducted on properties within all six of the 'red zones'.

There was no requirement to continue surveillance after this period, but the Plant Biosecurity Branch completed surveillance on the Territory's largest producer (Darwin Fruit Farms) in April.

With a national proof of freedom expected later this year, the end of program financial audit process has started.

As it stands, 12 operators are growing bananas commercially and eight nurseries are selling banana plants to the public.

The Banana Freckle Hotline remains active and interstate movement and access restrictions are still in place.

## SWEETER SHINES IN TURKEY



Doriana Mangili, Business Manager for Sweeter Banana Co-Operative has shared the company's marketing success at a conference in Turkey.

An Australian banana business manager has shared a subtropical marketing success story at a prestigious conference in Turkey.

Doriana Mangili, from Sweeter Banana Co-Operative in Western Australia, presented at the

International Horticultural Congress in Istanbul, held from August 12-16.

The event connects industry representatives from across Europe and Asia, with a strong focus on research and innovation.

The ProMusa Symposium took place as part of the Congress and focussed on growing and marketing bananas under subtropical conditions.

Sweeter Banana Co-Operative created its own niche market, using the Carnarvon fruit's sweet flavour to develop unique products and educate consumers.

Matt Weinert, Industry Development Officer from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, also presented at the Symposium, giving a keynote address on banana diversity in the subtropics and presenting a paper called 'A simple cold tolerance test for bananas.'

You can read more about the Istanbul experience in the December edition of Australian Bananas.

## BANANA GROWERS AMONG LEADers

**The banana industry was well represented at the first Leadership Exploration and Development (LEAD) program in Canberra from 2-4 July.**

LEAD involves growers from a range of industries including bananas, avocado, melon, strawberry, pineapple, lychee, passionfruit and persimmon. Participants learn from and collaborate with leaders across a range of industries, designed to improve their business and make a positive difference to industry.

Among those in attendance were Far Northern banana growers (pictured above right) James Howe, Ben Abbot and Luke Gilbert. Also pictured (right), Australian Banana Growers' Council Communications Manager Sonia Campbell who delivered media training to participants.

Topics of the workshop included effective lobbying, decision making, organisational governance and change; and workplace culture.

The next round of the program will be held in Brisbane in October.

*The LEAD program has been made possible through the Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund, administered by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to support Australian agricultural industry.*



LEAD attendees - Far Northern banana growers (L-R) James Howe, Ben Abbott and Luke Gilbert.



Australian Banana Growers' Council Communications Manager Sonia Campbell presenting during the Canberra LEAD program.

## MORE RECOGNITION FOR GROWERS

**Two banana businesses have continued to kick goals in 2018, recognized in two prestigious award programs.**

Frank and Dianne Sciacca, from Pacific Coast EcoBananas, took home the Environmental Award at the National Awards for Excellence in Brisbane. Held as part of Hort Connections, their award was presented in front of some 1300 attendees at a Gala Dinner.

The Sciaccas received the Prince of Wales Environmental Leadership – Reef Sustainability Award late last year.

In the Top End, Alan Petersen and Julie-Ann Murphy, of Rum Jungle Organics, were finalists in the NT Telstra Business Awards Small and Succeeding category.

The pair have also enjoyed other success in the past 12 months, taking home a Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year award in March.

## ONE-STOP BANANA R & D WEBSITE LAUNCHED

The latest advances in banana research are now available at the click of a button.

A dedicated electronic R&D resource has been developed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in collaboration with the Australian Banana Growers' Council and is accessible via the ABGC website [www.abgc.org.au](http://www.abgc.org.au) or directly at [www.betterbananas.com.au](http://www.betterbananas.com.au).

The website features easy to navigate menus and a comprehensive search function which was considered a 'must' amongst growers.

It is an initiative of the National Banana Development and Extension Project which is funded by Hort Innovation with co-investment from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and contributions from the Australian Government.

Department of Agriculture's Tegan Kukulies and Ingrid Jenkins who led the development of the new resource said they were excited about the ability to deliver the latest R & D information on the new platform.

"The type of information that you will find on the website ranges from the latest approaches being taken by the

industry to develop and access varieties with resistance to Panama disease tropical race 4, all the way through to the preliminary testing of alternative products to manage crown end rot," Tegan said.

The website also includes a pest disease and disorder ID system and will continue to develop over time.

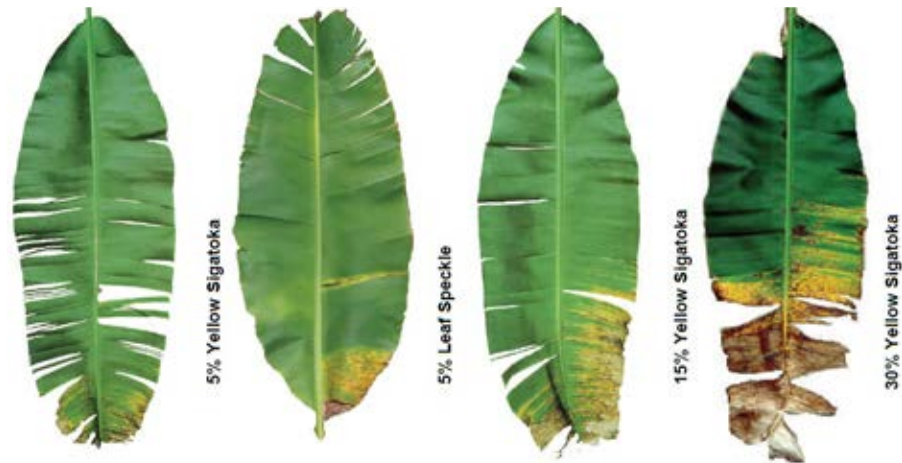
"We aim to use the website to host updates of research trials and outputs so that growers are kept up to date in a timely manner," Ingrid said.

*The strategic levy investment project National Banana Development and Extension Program BA16007 is part of the Hort Innovation Banana Fund. The project is funded by Hort Innovation using the banana research and development levy, co-investment from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.*





## LEAF SPOT ON RISE IN NQ



Banana growers are reporting an increase in the incidence of 'leaf spot' in the north Queensland production area.

The Australian Banana Growers' Council reminds growers that it is an unfair cost on neighbouring properties when one grower doesn't keep the disease under control.

The banana industry guideline recommends that growers keep leaf spot levels on the banana plant below 5 % of the total leaf area in order to meet their general biosecurity obligations.

High levels of leaf spot infection in your plants will cause problems such as:

- delays in filling bunches
- reduced 'green life' in fruit causing mixed ripening
- increased costs for de-leafing and spraying
- difficulty in detecting exotic leaf diseases if they arrive in your area
- restricted market access.

## LEVY UPDATE

The current compulsory levy rate totals 2.94c/kg.

This is made up of:

1.69 c/kg for R&D and marketing (for Hort Innovation);

0.75c/kg for the Emergency Plant Pest Response (EPPR) Levy for the Freckle eradication; and

0.50c/kg for the Plant Health Australia Levy (including the 0.4897c/kg to repay the costs of buying and securing the first TR4 infected farm).

The Freckle Response commitment is \$12.3m (not including interest accruing) and the EPPR levy receipts to repay that debt at as at 30 June 2018 were \$8.13m. ABGC forecasts this debt to be paid off by June 2020.

ABGC expects the debt for buying TIP also to be paid off by June 2020.

Further information: Jim Pekin 07 32784786

## VALUE ADDING THROUGH NICHE MARKET IDEA



Alana Sciacca and her partner Jake Siltanen with some of the seconds bananas they deliver to households across North Queensland.

It's clear the banana doesn't fall far from the bunch when you start talking to Alana Sciacca.

The daughter of Frank and Dianne Sciacca, of multi award-winning Pacific Coast Eco Bananas, is carving her own path to business success thanks to a creative idea to bring bananas to Aussie doorsteps.

About a year ago, while working on her parents' Boogan farm, Ms Sciacca founded the company 'Taste Before Waste', delivering seconds bananas direct to households across north Queensland.

"We recover seconds, or fruit that won't make it to market, and we sell direct to the consumer," Ms Sciacca explains. "When we first started we were doing around 20 cartons per week and I was stoked with that, I thought wow I didn't think the consumer would actually be on board."

"It's now grown and we are ranging between 300-500 cartons per week, depending on the delivery schedule. We're finding that most households will consume the 13kg carton in a fortnight, although you will get your vegan families that will do two cartons per week."

"We deliver straight to their door. So we've got customers who are just families, the regular consumer, we've also got some shops on board as well. I've had inquiries from Canberra and Brisbane, it's crazy."

Her growing niche business makes weekly deliveries to households from Tully, north to Cairns and west to the Atherton Tablelands. They also do a fortnightly service to Townsville.

With demand continuing to grow, Ms Sciacca credits the success of the business to good customer service and

offering a great product. She said consumers are happy to eat a product that may not be as aesthetically pleasing to the eye, as long as the taste is good.

"We've found that that is key. Consumers are more than willing to support the farmer. They love knowing they are supporting a local grower, but then the flip side to that is, if your product doesn't taste good there is no re-order."

"We also give our customers tips on how to make their fruit last longer. And we do recipes and give advice on better ways to utilise the fruit."

Ms Sciacca said the business had grown to a point that fruit wastage on the family's 120 acre farm had been virtually eliminated and they were now sourcing seconds bananas from other growers to meet demand.

The company has also branched out into other fruit lines, with plans for further expansion.

"We've got paw paws and limes and I guess my dream and vision would be to take on other fruits as well - it doesn't need to be from the banana industry - take on fruit that is sustainably grown and offset a growers' waste."

## LOUIS READY FOR A SPOT OF RETIREMENT

**In his eight years as Australian Banana Growers' Council Yellow Sigatoka Liaison Officer, Louis Lardi says he's traversed over 300,000km by road, received just one speeding ticket, cracked two windscreens and formed some lifelong friendships, destined to stand the test of time.**

**As he eyes retirement from his ABGC role, he sat down to talk about the highlights, the lower lights and the new chapters that lie ahead.**

By Sonia Campbell

There are a few things about Louis Lardi you can be certain of.

He's a devoted family man, he's absolutely passionate about the banana industry and he's a genuine straight shooter. In his own words – 'I like to tell it how it is'.

They are all traits that have served him well in his role as North Queensland-based Yellow Sigatoka Liaison Officer for ABGC. A role he will step away from at the end of this year, leaving big shoes to fill for his eventual replacement.

"I will definitely miss the job. It's been a big part of my life really. A great part of my life. But it's time for me to go."

He's served in the role since February 2010. His job entails visiting all 240 banana farms from Rollingstone in the south, to Cooktown and Hopevale in the north, and west to Dimbulah, checking each property twice a year for Sigatoka leaf spot and other fungal diseases.

Travelling up to 800km per week, it hasn't always been the easiest of jobs. He admits it has had its challenges, particularly when he first started and leaf spot was an industry problem.

"When I first began there was a very big issue with leaf spot. Ninety-five per cent of growers I visited were really good, but yes there has been challenges."

"I give the same information to all growers, but getting through to some is a big challenge. If they listen to what I have to say, they will not have an issue with leaf spot. The key was probably getting growers to know that I'm there to help them, not to hinder them."

"And that's the upside of the job, I'm still involved in the industry, an industry that I love. And, I'm helping the industry. I do believe I've helped get benefits for



Cassowary Coast Banana Growers' Association Chair Dean Sinton on farm with Louis Lardi.

the industry with this job."

His introduction to the banana industry began in 1980 when he began work on a banana farm co-owned by industry pioneer Mort Johnston after marrying his wife Patricia, who he met while living in Brisbane.

He was born into a farming family – his father grew cane at Tully – but his early working career included an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner and a three-year stint playing professional rugby league in the UK.

Eventually he ended up back on the family farm and planted his first banana crop in 1990.

"I quite enjoyed it when I was working for Mort and I thought there was an opportunity there to become a farmer, which I thought was in my blood."

"I had three young children and by this time I needed steady employment to make sure we could pay our way."

After 18 years growing bananas Louis decided to lease the family farm and he applied for the job with ABGC. A job created after the compulsory levy funding DPI leaf spot officers had ended and leaf spot became an issue of concern.

"The best part of the job is interaction with the growers, being involved in the industry and helping the industry. I really enjoy when I go to the Tablelands twice a year for the week and get to catch up with growers that have become friends. I've formed some very good relationships."

"The hardest time in my job was after Cyclone Yasi, when I was doing industry recovery work. It was

really hard talking to growers, they were devastated and the majority of them were not in a good place."

Outside of work, Louis is a motor cycle enthusiast and has trekked across America and Europe by bike - each time proudly sporting his ABGC shirt and Australian Bananas cap.

The devoted dad and grandfather of five says it's now time to hang up his banana hat to concentrate on his two greatest loves – family and travel.

"One thing on my bucket list is the horizontal waterfalls in Western Australia. I plan to travel across Australia and possibly another motorbike tour of Europe."

"I have five grandchildren and one on the way and there are things I want to do with my life and going to work is not one of them," he says with a laugh.



Louis on one of his overseas motorcycle adventures where he always sports his ABGC shirt and Australian Bananas cap.



# COME FLY WITH ME... PLANES,

## BANANA EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES INVESTIGATED

**Where in the world could Australian bananas make their mark? A recently released study investigated opportunities for locally grown produce in an already competitive environment. Amy Spear reports.**

Australian-grown bananas are a staple in most households around the country.

Up until now, the industry has been largely focused on the domestic market, supplying some 96 per cent of the nation's homes.

However, the recently released Banana Market Mapping - funded by Hort Innovation - asks whether there may be an opportunity to market some of the locally-grown produce abroad.

As part of the strategy, project leader Dr David McKinna and colleagues, have undertaken Banana Market Mapping based on research and stakeholder engagement.

Their findings show there are some potential markets available – but primarily to niche, differentiated products.

### THE CURRENT SITUATION

Bananas are, without doubt, an important crop in Australian horticulture. Worth \$600 million, the industry produced 414,000 tonnes of fresh fruit in 2016/17.

On a global scale, though, the local industry remains relatively small. India, one of the world's largest producers of bananas, produces close to 29 million tonnes of fruit annually.



Bananas being exported from Ecuador in 2014.



### PRIME PROSPECT MARKETS

1. Japan
2. South Korea
3. China (subject to market access)
4. Qatar
5. Singapore

In 2016/17, just 0.04 per cent of Australian fruit was exported. In the past, small shipments have been sent mostly to New Zealand, Singapore, Japan and Nauru, the majority on an opportunistic basis.

### THE POTENTIAL

Australian bananas are among the best in the world and there are, without doubt, some interesting avenues to showcase this internationally.

McKinna's Market Mapping identifies six potential countries where produce could be exported, albeit subject to caveats.

The list includes Japan, South Korea, China, Qatar, Singapore and New Zealand.

Japan, at the top of this list, is completely reliant on banana imports. Last year alone, they imported almost 960,000 tonnes of the fruit.

While the market is in decline, the country has a large population and a potential market for premium, specialty products.

In Japan, like most countries that were studied, there could be season gaps for Cavendish from Australia, but in general Australia is not in a position to be competitive in the mainstream banana market. That is, our costs in areas such as labour are massive compared to those in South America and the Philippines.

Exporters would also need access to cost-effective ripening facilities (Japan only accepts green bananas) and an understanding of complex Japanese trading houses.

In the case of almost all countries studied for this report, it was niche, differentiated products that offered the most opportunity.

# TRAINS AND BANANA-A-PEEL

If products are different and appreciated, for example, through taste or different varieties (like Lady Fingers), branding, organic certification or nutritional claims, there is a potential for price premiums internationally.

On top of this, Australia's reputation for quality produce, food safety expertise and product integrity could be leveraged to open doors.

### THE CHALLENGES

McKinna reported that Australia is simply not in a position to be price competitive on Cavendish with other major exporters throughout most of the year.

Exporting means a higher-risk environment and, of course, that needs to be worthwhile for anyone considering this avenue – hence the niche, differentiated products or targeted time periods.

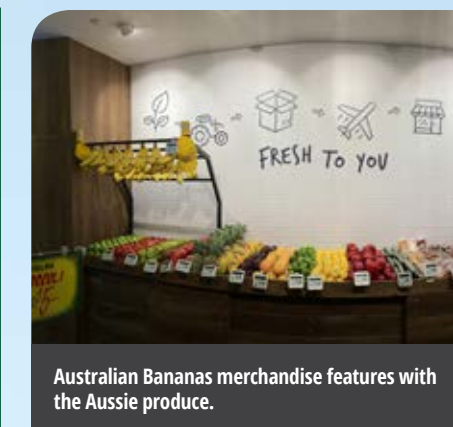
Another large challenge facing the Australian industry – in this context, at least – is the fact that the industry has been almost solely focussed on the domestic market. Supply chains for overseas markets are almost non-existent and would need to be developed, a process that takes time and money. Once those relationships are established, they would need to be maintained to support a sustainable, on-going export program.

### GLOBAL BANANA PRODUCTION 2016

143 million tonnes  
(Australia 0.2%)

### LARGEST PRODUCERS

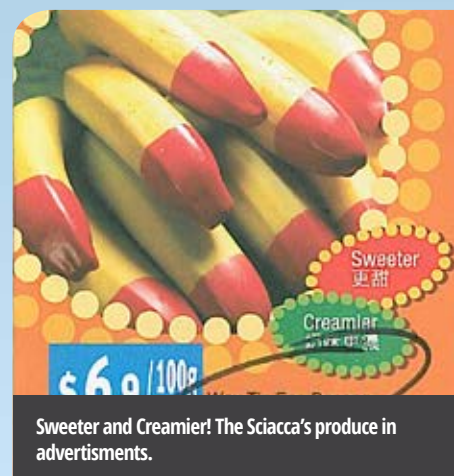
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Australian Bananas merchandise features with the Aussie produce.







## THE EXPERIENCE

Liverpool River Bananas currently export around 5% of their annual supply of Cavendish banana to Singapore.

"Our trade partners, Nutrano Produce Group, had a market for Premium Grade Australian grown bananas," Liverpool River's Sam Lizzio explained.

"It made commercial sense to our business to build our brand there."

In order to arrive in top condition, the fruit is ripened at the Sydney Markets, then consolidated with other premium products before being sent via a freight forwarder on a direct flight out of Australia.

At this stage, Liverpool River sends a small quantity to Singapore each week.

"Airfreighting bananas certainly has its challenges in maintaining the integrity of the supply chain, as our produce can sit on the tarmac for up to three hours in extreme temperatures," Mr Lizzio said.

However, he added that the team at Liverpool River have inspected their fruit in Singapore and were very impressed with the way the bananas were



Frank and Dianne Sciacca, of Pacific Coast Eco Bananas, with at the 2018 Hort Connections Gala Dinner. You can read more about their award on Page 07.

handled, presented and respected by the store owner.

Mr Lizzio believes there are definite benefits for exporting Australian bananas overseas.

"The Australian brand is very powerful and well respected," he said. "But there is fierce competition on pricing with other countries that can produce

### OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH DIFFERENTIATED PRODUCTS INCLUDING:

Organic

Eco-friendly

Branding (dipping, tattoos etc)

Ethical, fair-trade

Environmentally friendly

bananas at a much lower cost."

Liverpool River Bananas have been growing and producing Cavendish bananas for over 30 years and note they are extremely proud to supply the domestic market.

"We want to make sure that Australian consumers are getting the very best produce possible," Mr Lizzio said. "There's no doubt that's at the heart of what all Australian banana growers strive to achieve."

Frank and Dianne Sciacca, who own Pacific Coast Eco Bananas at Boogan, also export some of their produce. They have been supplying to a niche market in Hong Kong since 2009, on top of their domestic commitments.

"We've been looking for like-minded eco-friendly growers who could join us to supply larger markets there," Mrs Sciacca said.

"It's important to emphasise that we are not taking away from any existing relationships nor competing with larger exporters. This is category premiumisation through value-based pricing to supply a consumer who wants to have their food grown a different way."

She added that exporting was an important part of their overall business strategy.

"However, growers need to realise that export relationships take longer to mature, doing business is different and that there are more layers in the supply chain – so it is no short term fix.

"That aside, there are opportunities worth pursuing to achieve growth."

More information: Contact the ABGC office should you be interested in a copy of the Banana Market Mapping: 07 3278 4786.

*This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the banana research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government premium, specialty products.*



# A CONGRESS NOT TO BE MISSED



Resort photos supplied by Royal Pines Resort.

Preparations for the next Australian Banana Industry Congress (ABIC) are gaining momentum with an exciting program already in the works for the industry's premier biennial event.

ABIC 2019 will be held on the Gold Coast from May 22-24. We've included a magnet in this edition of the Australian Bananas Magazine to help remind you of this important date!

The Management Committee and Program Committee tasked with organising Congress in 2019 have listened to feedback following Congress 2017 and are designing a program of events growers and other industry stakeholders will not want to miss.

A Queensland location was the most common request in post-Congress surveying, which is why Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast was chosen to become 'banana central' for the 2019 event.

A shorter program will also be held next year, with plenary sessions to be held over two-days (instead of two-and-a-half), with Congress concluding on the Friday night at the Banana Ball.

Plenary sessions will be both banana-focussed and more broadly and will be an opportunity for growers to learn the latest research and developments on a broad range of topics that impact industry, including innovative ideas and problem solving that can be taken back and implemented on farm.

Delegates will also hear from international researchers, inspirational speakers from other horticultural industries and latest innovation in product development. Off-site tours are also being planned. These will be held on the Wednesday, the day before plenary sessions kick off on Thursday, 23 May.

Former Brisbane Broncos rugby league great Shane Webcke and Channel 10 news presenter Georgina Lewis are already among the celebrity faces that will be included in our 2019 program.

As well as an important think tank to share ideas, network and discuss the future of the industry, Congress is always a fantastic opportunity to get off-farm for a few days of valuable time out.

The Congress 2019 website has been launched [www.bananacongress.org.au](http://www.bananacongress.org.au) and will be constantly updated with the latest program information and registration details as they come to hand.

For further information contact Sonia Campbell on 0428 038 330.



Shane Webcke



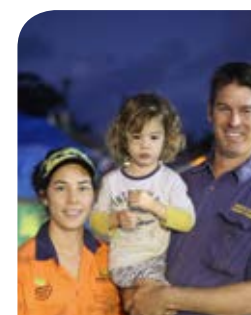
Georgina Lewis

## CONGRESS VOX POPS - "ARE YOU GOING TO CONGRESS 2019?"



"WE ARE DEFINITELY GOING. WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT IT BEING ON THE GOLD COAST, A BIT OF SUN AND SAND. WE MIGHT EVEN BRING THE KIDS."

Blaise Cini



"YES WE ARE GOING, BECAUSE IT'S THE GOLD COAST. WE HAVEN'T BEEN FOR A WHILE BUT THE PROGRAM LOOKS REALLY INTERESTING SO FAR AND WE'RE REALLY KEEN ON LISTENING TO ALL THE SPEAKERS AND TAKING AWAY AS MUCH INFORMATION AS WE CAN BACK TO OUR FARM."

Josephine and Chris Borsato



"I WOULDN'T MISS IT. CONGRESS IS ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE. THE GROWER/GROWER INTERACTION IS INVALUABLE. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE INFORMATION YOU GAIN BY TALKING TO OTHER PEOPLE AND IT'S GREAT TO CATCH UP WITH EVERYONE."

Stephen Lowe, ABGC CHAIR



"WE'LL HOPEFULLY TRY AND MAKE IT DOWN THERE. IT'S A GOOD THING TO GO TO, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG GROWERS TO SEE WHAT'S OUT THERE AND ALL THE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS."

Shannon Paton



"YES ABSOLUTELY, WOULDN'T MISS IT. WE GO EVERY YEAR."

Jenny Crema



# MUTAGENESIS OF GOLDFINGER – WILL IT BRING THE MIDAS TOUCH THAT WAS MISSING?

By Jeff Daniels, Katie Ferro, Massimo Bianco and Sharon Hamill - Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Queensland DAF gives an update on progress with the irradiated Goldfinger plants being evaluated at South Johnstone Research Station. The trial plants so far exhibit an amazing array of variations in plant and bunch characteristics. The coming months will reveal if the all-important changes sought in postharvest characteristics are realised. Here is the story so far.**

**Scene 1 - Jupiter's Casino 10 May 1995. Enter stage left. "Goldfinger – the banana with the Midas touch"**

With much song and dance, the banana variety Goldfinger was released to the Australian banana industry at the inaugural Australian Banana Industry Congress on the Gold Coast. After a promising start and plantings which eventually grew to about 120 ha by 2001, Goldfinger fell from prominence in 2009 when the big supermarkets removed it from their shelves. The reasons primarily for this were insufficient attention to the market research which had been undertaken and an inadequate marketing effort following this.

**Scene 2 – Tully March 2015. Enter TR4 – Cavendish banana 'Predator'**

As part of the R&D response to the incursion of TR4 in north Queensland, the Hort Innovation project BA14014 'Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 Research Program, commenced that year with funding from the Queensland and Australian governments.

Since TR4 resistant varieties are seen by many as the ultimate solution to the problem, the BA14014 project has as a component, mutagenesis. Mutagenesis is about creating bananas that are different in form directly from a particular variety, and in this project gamma irradiation of tissue culture plants was used to bring about such change.

Goldfinger was chosen as a candidate for mutagenesis because it has already been demonstrated as having resistance to TR4. It was hoped that its fruit eating characteristics could be improved by mutagenesis whilst retaining its TR4 resistance.

**Scene 3 – South Johnstone Research Station June 2017 - Enter transformed Goldfinger**

The mutation work is being carried out by Sharon Hamill and the Tissue Culture Team at the DAF Maroochy Research Facility QBAN Tissue Culture Laboratory.

Tissue culture plantlets of Goldfinger were taken by Sharon Hamill for irradiation treatment using UQ's gamma cell unit at St Lucia in October 2016.

After exposure to gamma irradiation the tissue cultured plants were then stabilised back at DAF's Maroochy Research Facility for four multiplication subculture cycles so that buds exposed to irradiation and hence changed, could develop into shoots and to minimise the incidence of chimeras. (A chimera, in this case, refers to a plantlet consisting of two or more tissues of different genetic/ epigenetic composition which is unstable but temporary in nature.)

Finally plants were subcultured onto media for elongation and root development and then despatched to South Johnstone as two fairly similar sized shipments - in June and August of last year - to help spread the fruit assessment workload and make things more manageable.

In total, including Goldfinger controls, there were just over 700 plants. In regard to postharvest characteristics, we are particularly seeking a firmer fruit pulp, longer shelf life and perhaps a sweeter and creamier texture. Differences in plant and bunch characteristics may be potentially useful as well.

Variations have so far been evident in plant stature

and degree of dwarfness; leaf angle; pigmentation of leaf lamina, midrib, petiole and pseudostem; bunch angle; finger length; flower and bract retention on the stalk below the bunch; and bell shape.

Some of the irradiated plants will be rejected due to gross deformities and extremely slow growth. About 13% of the irradiated plants are currently in this reject category. The photos in this article show just a sample of the large range of variants so far obtained. These alterations in form of the irradiated Goldfinger could be due to genetic or epigenetic changes. An epigenetic change is one caused by modification of



Jeff Daniels



Variations in plant stature – the progression from Dwarf through Normal to Giant

gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself, and can be heritable also.

We've only just begun to harvest bunches in the trial

and this will continue for the remainder of 2018. Any selections with improved fruit characteristics will be tissue cultured and then screened against TR4 in the Northern Territory to confirm TR4 resistance has been

retained. Concurrently ten plants of each selection will be established at South Johnstone from sucker and bit material to obtain replicated data sets for a plant crop and ratoons.

Whilst the broad range of changes in plant characteristics so far achieved is very encouraging, it is still nevertheless very early days in the assessment. But let's hope that we find an improved Goldfinger amongst those irradiated which does eventually bring success, profitability and enviable results as the Midas touch implies.

*This project has been funded by Hort Innovation with co-investment from Queensland Government and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.*



Variations in pigmentation of pseudostem, petiole and midrib



Variations in bunch angle, finger length and flower/bract retention



More background information about Goldfinger is available at <http://www.promusa.org/FHIA-01>.

Read more about the overall mutagenesis program in an article by Stewart Lindsay, 'Pursuit for Panama Resistant Varieties' published in the December 2017 edition of Australian Bananas and available on line at [www.abgc.org.au](http://www.abgc.org.au)

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# HIT THE ROAD, RESEARCHERS



'Speed dating' – but not as you know it. Growers have the opportunity to talk to researchers in small groups.

The latest banana research has been on tour, bringing valuable science and new on-farm strategies to growing regions around Australia.

The 2018 National Banana Roadshow began in Murwillumbah on July 24, making its way down the Pacific Highway to visit Coffs Harbour on July 26, before heading to Far North Queensland for shows in Tully (Aug 9), Innisfail (Aug 10) and Mareeba (Aug 17).

Well over 140 growers and industry representatives, took in the presentations across the five days.

Snappy, 10 minute speeches on topics including new varieties, Panama disease, nematodes and marketing were followed by interactive sessions and opportunities to ask questions.

Speed dating was also on the agenda - not a low-budget version of Farmer Wants A Wife - but rather time to speak with researchers in much smaller groups.

"Traditionally we've had the short, sharp

presentations but this allows for more interaction and it's a great networking opportunity," Shanara Veivers, research horticulturalist with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, said.

Ms Veivers was one of the organisers of the event, along with DAF colleagues Ingrid Jenkins, Stewart Lindsay and Tegan Kukulies.

Vicky McCudden attended the Coffs Harbour event and said she enjoyed the variety of information.

"I loved the short session times and the opportunity to ask questions."

Results from research into the effect of bag colours on bunch management, reject analysis and a video featuring Mackay's Bananas were also among the presentations.

Colin Singh, a Northern NSW grower said the Roadshow had been very useful.

"It's great to see so many other growers here," he added.



Wayne O'Neil (DAF) during the interactive session on nematodes.

Guest speaker was Howard Hall, from Pinnacle Agribusiness, who shared insights from the latest industry benchmarking.

His data provides a range of interesting comparisons when it comes to profit, yield, biosecurity implementation and environmental management.

"Howard has recently completed his benchmarking project and this is a good chance to deliver this relevant information to as many growers as possible," Mrs Veivers said.

The Roadshow also marks the launch of a new website specifically designed for growers: [www.betterbananas.com.au](http://www.betterbananas.com.au).

At the time this edition of the Australian Bananas Magazine was going to print the National Banana Roadshow was headed to Western Australia.



Researchers are quizzed on their presentations at the Coffs Harbour event.



Steven Atwall and Richard Piper (DAF) at the Murwillumbah event.



Getting hands-on during the interactive sessions, which focus on nematodes, marketing and crown rot.



Time for 'speed dating' discussion at Tully roadshow.



Jeff Daniels talks variety research during the interactive session at Tully.



'Speed dating' session at Innisfail Roadshow



Roadshow organisers Shanara Veivers (right) and Ingrid Jenkins (left) of DAF



Mareeba roadshow.

The strategic levy investment project National Banana Development and Extension Program BA16007 is part of the Hort Innovation Banana Fund. The project is funded by Hort Innovation using the banana research and development levy, co-investment from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture."

Hort Innovation  
BANANA FUND

Queensland  
Government



# HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, GROWERS

What does the latest round of benchmarking reveal about the banana industry? The 2016/17 results are in and Howard Hall, of Pinnacle Agribusiness, is here to help break them down.

By Amy Spear

It's clear banana growers aren't afraid of a bit of hard work – and know how to do things efficiently.

Over the past seven years, Australian banana production has increased by 34 per cent, with yield up by more than 40 per cent nationally, according to growers who participated in the banana industry benchmarking program.

However, that strong work ethic may well be out of need as much as passion, with operating costs up 7 per cent and – confirming what many growers already know – cash profit down.

In fact, cash profit has decreased overall by 56 per cent among participants.

The figures come as a result of the latest banana benchmarking, conducted by Howard Hall of Pinnacle Agribusiness.

His latest data, gathered during 2016/17, shows labour productivity has also increased by 21 per cent.

With operating costs up and cash profit down, Mr Hall said the data shows the industry is no longer sustainably profitable for many growers.

But, as he points out, this is not as dire as it sounds.

"Many industries have been in this position before – apples, tomatoes, citrus and potatoes just to name a few," he said.

"What they did successfully, and what the banana industry needs to do, is improve and diversify the supermarket offering."

Mr Hall explained that in the late 1990s, field grown 'Gourmet' tomatoes were the Cavendish of the banana category. Now, there are numerous options for consumers to choose from.

"And this doesn't have to solely be about varieties – it could be changes to marketing, merchandising and packaging a well."

The benchmarking data, based on a sample of growers that represent roughly 30 per cent of industry volume, takes in all varieties and growing regions across Australia.

It is gathered with the assistance of volunteer growers so, while it takes in both small and large operations, may represent a more active portion of the industry.

## AT A GLANCE - 2009/10 TO 2016/17 BENCHMARKING RESULTS

- Australian banana production increased by 34%
- Australian population increased by 10%
- Per capita (per person) banana consumption increased by 21%
- The cost of one Full Time Employee Equivalent has increased by 22%
- Labour productivity has increased by 21%
- Yield has increased by 41%
- Gross Price has increased by 2%
- Operating Costs have increased by 7%
- Cash Profit (EBITDA) has decreased by 56%

On top of overall insights into how the industry is performing, it also looks at particular issues like biosecurity and environmental management.

The data shows 97 per cent of participating growers use footbaths or a shoe exchange, but this doesn't take into account how effective each grower's set-up

**"MANY INDUSTRIES HAVE BEEN IN THIS POSITION BEFORE – APPLES, TOMATOES, CITRUS AND POTATOES JUST TO NAME A FEW. WHAT THEY DID SUCCESSFULLY, AND WHAT THE BANANA INDUSTRY NEEDS TO DO, IS IMPROVE AND DIVERSIFY THE SUPERMARKET OFFERING. THIS DOESN'T HAVE TO SOLELY BE ABOUT VARIETIES – IT COULD BE CHANGES TO MARKETING, MERCHANDISING AND PACKAGING AS WELL."**

**MR HALL.**

is. 64 per cent of growers have partially fenced their property and 28 per cent have full fencing, though some is not necessarily pig-proof.

Since the initial detection of TR4 in North Queensland, participating growers have spent an average of \$1600 per producing hectare on 'New Capital Items'.

Mr Hall suggested a new approach at industry level may assist to maximise the value, to the industry, of new biosecurity investment.

In the environmental space, more than 60 per cent of growers have groundcover greater than 60 per cent and almost half the growers involved used

## BENCHMARKING PARTICIPANT RESULTS BY REGION

SINCE BANANA LEVIES STARTED (2009/10) TO 2016/17

	YIELD	LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY	OPERATING COSTS	CASH PROFIT
FNQ CAVENDISH	32%	26%	9%	63%
NSW – ALL PARTICIPANTS	10%	7%	10%	66%
NATIONAL -ALL VARIETIES	41%	21%	7%	56%

## WHAT THE 'TOP 10' DO DIFFERENTLY

On average per 15kg:

- Higher yields (6%)
- Higher cartons / stool / annum (7%)
- Lower operating costs (-7%)
- More sold in 13kg packs
- Cash profit 5x higher

More likely to:

- Irrigate at least daily in peak demand
- Use water monitoring technology
- Utilise nurse suckering

Banana BMP.

When it comes to the bottom line, Mr Hall has identified two real options to improve production economics.

"The first is to reduce the cost of production. This could be through labour management and efficiency, continued yield improvement or freight, packaging, marketing and so on," he said.

"The second option is to increase the value of the product on the market."

Mr Hall, who has been presenting his findings as part of the National Banana Roadshow, said he hopes the latest benchmarking can provide some valuable key messages.

"The reality is that, of those top 5 costs, only one is really in a manager's control: labour."

"If you're having trouble with profitability, the best thing you can prioritise is process reengineering – basically you need to look at how you can improve those labour costs"

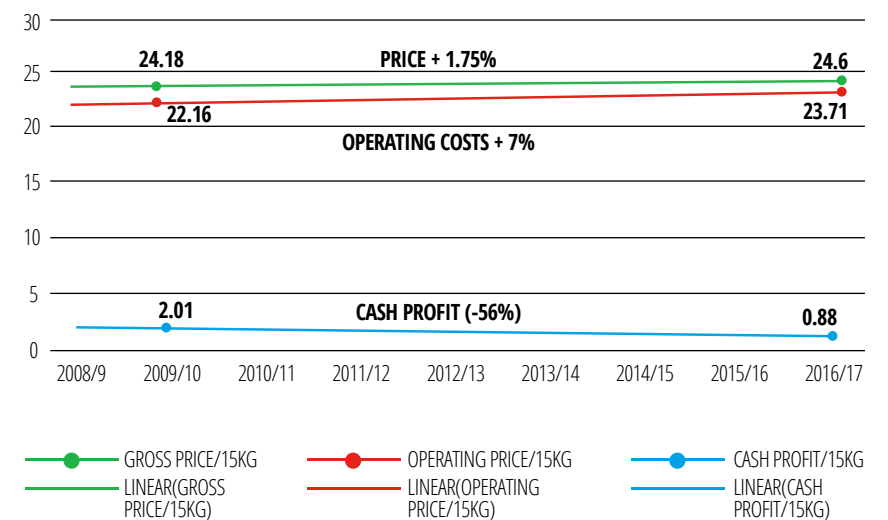
## ENVIRONMENT LEVELS

- Groundcover – 61% have greater than 60%
- Greater than 3% gradient – 20% producing land
- Silt traps – 55% have full capture of run-off into silt traps
- Banana BMP – 48% using

## MAJOR COST ITEMS

	UNIT	2009/10	2012/13	2016/17
EMPLOYMENT / LABOUR + CONTRACTING & CONSULTING + CONTRACT PACKING INC. UNPAID FAMILY LABOUR	\$/15KG	9.51	8.25	8.81
FREIGHT COSTS	\$/15KG	3.57	3.71	3.88
MARKETING AND RIPENING COSTS	\$/15KG	1.92	2.07	2.75
PACKAGING COSTS	\$/15KG	2.17	2.36	2.76
CHEMICAL AND FERTILISER COSTS	\$/15KG	2.45	1.82	2.33
TOTAL FOR THESE 5 LARGEST COST ITEMS	\$/15KG	\$19.62	\$18.21	\$20.53
% OF TOTAL COSTS IN THESE 5 ITEMS	%	89%	84%	87%

## CASH PROFIT PER 15KG



Information courtesy of Pinnacle Agribusiness.

*This project has been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia with fund from the banana levy and funds from the Australian Government.*



# ACORBAT CONFERENCE

## By Dr Tony Pattison

Miami, Florida is better known for its beaches, rather than bananas, but it was the host city for the 22nd ACORBAT Conference from May 2-4, 2018. ACORBAT is the Association for the Cooperation Of Research in Bananas in the Caribbean and American Tropics, and Ecuador, the world's largest exporter of bananas growing over 200,000 ha of bananas, was the host nation. ACORBAT is a forum where the global banana trade can get together to share new ideas and experiences, which attracts over 1000 participants from 22 different nations.

Dr Tony Pattison from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, South Johnstone was invited to present on the Australian experience in managing Fusarium wilt (Panama disease) Tropical Race 4 (TR4). The interest for TR4 management globally has been on resistant varieties. In a forum devoted to TR4, a summary of the current global situation was presented and how other countries like the Philippines and Mozambique, have dealt with the problem.

The ACORBAT conference allowed an opportunity for participants to be updated on issues affecting global banana production such as cultivar development, black sigatoka, rust thrips and climate change.

## CULTIVARS

The International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) reported it took 17 years to develop a banana variety using traditional breeding techniques. However, increased knowledge on flower fertility and use of molecular markers meant it was possible to develop improved banana cultivars in only five years. The breeding process also included input from growers at an early stage.

Other approaches to develop cultivars are also being used around the world. Rahan Meristem used mutation breeding to develop plants that do not show symptoms to TR4 in glasshouse trials and are currently undergoing field evaluations. The gene editing approach is being conducted on bananas by groups around the world, but it is unclear whether this is still considered to be genetic modification (GM).

## BLACK SIGATOKA

Black sigatoka is out of control in many Central American countries. With increasing resistance to chemical products, biological products are increasingly being investigated as options within a spray program. Typically, 50-70 cycles of fungicides

are applied per year, but it can be as high as 100 for programs largely relying on biological products.

## RUST THIRPS

Thrips are becoming an increasing problem, especially for organic producers and there are limited options for their control. Options being investigated include plant extracts, like neem, pyrethrums, garlic oil as well as biological organisms.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

There is increasing concern in Latin America about the impacts of climate change. Many banana producing areas have been experiencing climatic extremes like floods, droughts, heat stress and hurricanes. A long-term solution suggested was to select more stress tolerant banana cultivars. In the meantime, there is little that growers can be do, other than to develop contingency plans to minimise production losses during climatic extremes.

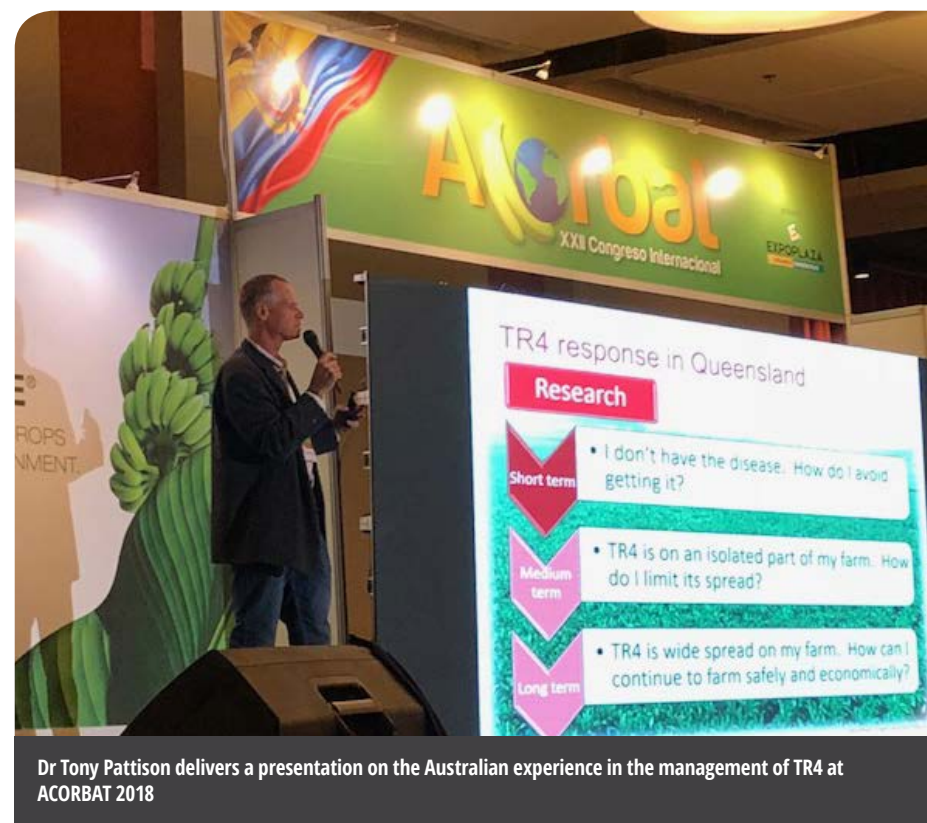
## POST CONFERENCE

Mr Vicente Wong CEO Favorita Fruit Company and Dr Freddy Magdama ESPOL conducted a post-conference tour to Australia from Ecuador. The aim of the visit was to improve their understanding of on-farm biosecurity and the research being

conducted to manage TR4. Mr Wong also saw how research and development activities around cultivar development, agronomic improvements and improved soil management were addressing many of the problems also being faced by banana growers in Ecuador. At the end of the visit Mr Wong stated that he was "now hopeful for the future of bananas". Greater awareness of the Australian banana production practices potentially allows export of technology, like bagging machines and packing shed troughs to major banana exporting nations like Ecuador.

ACORBAT is held every two years with the next conference being hosted by Colombia. It is an important opportunity to learn about the innovations being implemented on commercial banana farms and the challenges being faced by the banana industry in different parts of the world.

*This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the Hort Innovation banana research and development levy, co-investment from Queensland Government and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture. Dr Tony Pattison is a Principal Nematologist, Soil Health Team Leader, with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.*



Dr Tony Pattison delivers a presentation on the Australian experience in the management of TR4 at ACORBAT 2018

## QUALITY BANANA APPROVED NURSERY LIST (QBAN) SCHEME FACILITIES

Kool Bananas Tissue culture laboratory - contact Phil Berry-Porter			
LABORATORY			
0407 126 113	shazza141@bigpond.com	Mission Beach, Qld	Tissue culture plants only
Blue Sky Tissue Culture - contact Craig & Sue Althaus			
NURSERY			
07 4068 2208	admin@blueskytc.com.au	Tully, Qld	Potted plants for commercial sales
Lemara Tissue culture - contact Peter Bakker			
LABORATORY AND NURSERY			
07 4778 4441	lemara@bigpond.com	Townsville, Wulguru Qld	Tissue culture plants, potted plants or both.
Lowes Tc Pty Ltd - contact Natasha Marocik			
LABORATORY & NURSERY (NSW)			
02 4389 8750	Natasha@lowestc.com.au	Tumby Umbi NSW	Tissue cultured plants and plugs (where authorised)
Ramm Botanicals - contact Jason Dexter or Ryan Weber (owner)			
LABORATORY & NURSERY (NSW)			
02 4351 2099	jason.dexter@ramm.com.au or ramm@ramm.com.au (general inquiries)	Kangy Angy, NSW central coast	Tissue culture plants & 25mm diameter ellegaard plugs (where authorised)

Arakai Pty Ltd - contact James Howe			
LABORATORY & NURSERY			
0407 933 791	jhowe@howefarms.com	Walkamin, Atherton Tablelands 4872, Qld	Tissue culture plants, potted plants or both.
07 4093 3826			
Mission Beach Tissue Culture - contact Stephen Lavis			
LABORATORY & NURSERY			
0418 299 900	sdlavis4@bigpond.com	Mission Beach and Walkamin, Q	Tissue culture plants, potted plants or both.
Wide Bay Seedlings - contact Adrian Ross			
NURSERY			
07 4129 6684	office@wbseedlings.com.au	Pioneers Rest, Qld	Potted plants
Ausplant Nursery - contact Brady Cumming			
NURSERY			
07 4662 4934	brady@ausplantnursery.com.au	Dalby, Qld	Potted plants
El Arish tropical Exotics - contact Scott & Ann Cains			
NURSERY			
07 4068 5058	scott@elarithtropicaexotics.com	El Arish, Qld	Potted plants



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# PLANT-PARASITIC NEMATODES IMPACTING AUSTRALIAN BANANA PRODUCTION

By Jennifer Cobon and Wayne O'Neill

The most damaging nematode pest of bananas worldwide is the burrowing nematode (*Radopholus similis*). The burrowing nematode is common in the tropical and subtropical banana production areas of Australia and previous research projects have resulted in a reduction in its importance. However we suspected that over time that the populations of other nematode species have increased to levels that are now damaging plants.

To determine what nematodes species are impacting banana production in Australia, surveys were conducted in the tropical banana producing areas of North Queensland, and the subtropical banana producing areas of South East Queensland, Northern and Mid North Coast of NSW and Carnarvon in Western Australia. This activity is part of the Hort Innovation funded project 'Improved Plant Protection for the Banana Industry'.

In north Queensland, soil and root samples were collected from 38 banana farms in the Lakeland, Atherton Tableland, Tully and Innisfail areas and the plant parasitic nematodes recovered from these samples were identified. In north Qld, the root-knot nematode (*Meloidogyne* spp.) and the banana spiral nematode (*Helicotylenchus multicinctus*) were recovered from 71% and 11% of soil samples respectively with an average of 3,075 banana lesion nematodes per 100 g of root. The reinform nematode (*Rotylenchulus reniformis*) was recovered from 68% of farms with an average of 447/100 g soil.

In the subtropical banana producing areas, a total of 63 farms were sampled across the 3 regions; 10 in SEQ, 12 in NSW and 41 in WA. Again plant-parasitic nematodes were identified and quantified from soil samples and root samples taken from each farm. In subtropical south east Queensland, the root-knot nematode was recovered from 90% of farms and the banana spiral nematode was recovered from 20% of farms. This nematode was causing significant damage to roots where it was present with the average number of nematodes recovered being 5245 per 100 g roots. The lesion nematode and the burrowing nematode were both recovered from 30% of farms. In subtropical New South Wales, the root-knot nematode, the banana spiral nematode and the burrowing nematode were recovered from 83%, 67% and 17% of farms respectively. The lesion nematode was recovered from 25% of soil samples and 17% of root samples from the various farms with average numbers of 196/100 g soil and 2,216/100 g roots. This equates to 33% of farms surveyed in NSW having

lesion nematodes in soil and/or root samples.

In the Carnarvon area in Western Australia, the banana spiral nematode and the root-knot nematode were found on 100% and 98% of farms surveyed respectively. The average number of banana spiral nematodes was 402 per 100 g soil with 6,619/100 g roots and the average number of root-knot nematodes was 149/100 g soil and 4,254/100 g roots. With 41 out of 47 farms in the Carnarvon district surveyed, this study shows that both the banana spiral nematode and the root-knot nematode are widespread and abundant and may be impacting bananas production in the area.

This survey of plant-parasitic nematodes in the banana producing regions has determined:

- the most common plant-parasitic nematodes are two species of root-knot nematode, the banana spiral nematode, the reinform nematode, the burrowing nematode and the lesion nematode.
- a shift in north Queensland away from the burrowing nematode being the dominant species in banana producing soils
- that the banana spiral nematode is widespread in all banana producing regions
- that almost 100% of farms surveyed in Carnarvon, Western Australia have both the banana spiral nematode and the root-knot nematode.
- the lesion nematode is confined to south east QLD and NSW
- the burrowing nematode is confined to the east coast of Australia

Further research will now be conducted to determine the extent of damage each nematode species causes to bananas under Australian conditions.

The banana industry has been successful in reducing the amount of nematicides used through crop rotation and soil health management. As there are limited nematicides currently available to the banana industry, effective and sustainable control options for all plant-parasitic nematodes is required. A long list of non-host crops that can be used in rotation with bananas for the management of the burrowing and root-knot nematodes already exists. Consequently, the susceptibility of possible rotation crops to the other nematode species identified in this survey will now be assessed so suitable non-host rotations for all nematode pests in Australia can be identified.

It is vital to correctly identify all the nematode pests in your soil – the damage they cause can often look

similar. Once you know your pest, management strategies can be tailored to suit your situation

Our thanks to Matt Weinert (NSW DPI), Barry Sullivan (Bunbury Top Eradication Officer, southeast Qld), Annie Van Blommestein (Carnarvon Growers Association WA), Valerie Shrubbs (DPIRD WA), Tony Pattison (DAF north Qld) and banana growers nationally for their help and assistance with the surveys.



Root damage caused by the burrowing and lesion nematode.



Root damage caused by the banana spiral nematode.



Root damage caused by the root-knot nematode.

*The Improved Plant Protection for the Banana Industry (BA16001) is funded by Hort Innovation using the banana R&D levy and contributions from the Australian Government, with in-kind contributions from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.*

**Hort  
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## UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: BLACK SIGATOKA

Under the Microscope profiles the industry's emerging and exotic diseases. Sometimes you just need the facts, fast.

With higher rates of Yellow Sigatoka (leaf spot) in North Queensland currently, Black Sigatoka can be harder to detect so it is very important to remove infected leaves before the disease becomes established. Here, we tell you what you need to watch for to prevent this potentially devastating disease taking hold.

### WHAT IS BLACK SIGATOKA?

Black Sigatoka or Black leaf streak is caused by a fungus called *Pseudocercospora fijiensis* (previously called *Mycosphaerella fijiensis*) which belongs to a group of pathogens that cause leaf disease in bananas. It is related to Yellow Sigatoka and Eumusae leaf spot. The impact of Black Sigatoka is through early death of leaves reducing yield and the green life of fruit causing premature ripening of the fruit.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Small reddish brown flecks at the underside of the third or fourth leaves at the early stage
- Flecks grow to form narrow streaks with grey or light brown centres or black margins parallel to the leaf vein
- Streaks grow into dark brown to black lesions with water soaked borders surrounded by a thin yellow halo
- Centres of lesions become depressed and turn grey
- Many spots close together will cause large dead



1. Cavendish leaf destroyed by Black Sigatoka



2. Lesions of Black Sigatoka producing spores

areas and collapse of the leaf

- Under heavy infection no streaks are formed but large areas of the leaf turn black and die (Fig 1)
- Close inspection of the lesions reveals the production of spores (Fig 2)
- Symptoms can appear similar to those produced by Yellow Sigatoka (present in Australia) and Eumusae leaf spot (not present in Australia).

### HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Spread of the Black Sigatoka fungus is by movement of infected plant material (mainly leaves) and by spores produced in the dead grey areas on the upper leaf surface.

Two types of spores are produced on the leaves. Conidia are formed first and are water dispersed over short distances within plantations, while ascospores are formed in older lesions and are mainly wind dispersed over large distances between plantations.

### WHERE IN THE WORLD IS IT FOUND?

Black Sigatoka is currently found in most parts of Asia, PNG, Africa and Latin America and has been found in the Torres Strait. Mainland Australia is free of Black Sigatoka. There have been several outbreaks in Australia, but the country has been officially free of the disease since 2005 thanks to the determined efforts of banana growers resulting in the first ever successful eradication of Black Sigatoka from a banana production area.

It is currently the main plant disease affecting banana plantations in Latin America where around 30% of production cost in commercial plantations is spent on regular fungicide applications to control it.

### WHAT ARE WE DOING TO PROTECT OUR INDUSTRY?

- Strict regulation concerning import of plant material
- Regular surveillance for leaf diseases in North Queensland
- Use of molecular diagnostics to distinguish between Yellow Sigatoka, Black Sigatoka and Eumusae leaf spot
- Increase awareness among industry stakeholders

### WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY FARM?

- Use only disease-free planting material
- Effectively protect young fully expanded leaves through application of fungicides as they are most susceptible to infection
- Removal of inoculum from older leaves through regular deleafing
- Check your farm frequently for unusual leaf spot symptoms

*Photos and text provided by Prof André Drenth, University of Queensland as part of project BA16005 Strengthening the banana industry diagnostic capacity.*

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# NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX WORLD OF WH&S LEGISLATION

A recent round of audits by Workplace Health and Safety inspectors on banana farms in the Cassowary Coast prompted some immediate concern by growers over 'grey areas' within WH&S regulations and the necessity of some requirements.

Here - with the assistance of WH&S consultant Craig Althaus of AgSafe Advisory Services - we attempt to outline some of the compliance issues where growers have been issued improvement notices and dissect current legislation. Sonia Campbell reports.

The primary aim of developing a system to manage health and safety risks on a property is to protect workers' health; keep workers safe from injury or greater harm; and to protect business owners from avoidable compensation payouts, litigation and/or criminal charge.

There is little doubt every grower wants to keep their workers and their workplaces safe, and the vast majority in the banana industry do their best to ensure this is the case. However, the complexities of Work Health and Safety Regulations can often be tricky waters to navigate.

Firstly, there is generally no hard or fast rules for what constitutes compliance to the WH&S framework, as many of the regulations come down to an individual business owner gauging their level of compliance, by conducting their own risk assessments.

Some growers argue that it is not a case of not wanting to comply with some regulations, instead the ambiguous nature of WH&S rules means in many cases they simply don't know how.

Secondly, some regulations are arduous and require significant cost to the grower. One example – which most growers were previously unaware of – is the continual upkeep and repair of bagging machines, which require a 'major inspection', including full strip-down and re-build, by a qualified person every 10 years.

In July, the Australian Banana Growers' Council organised two workshops at Silkwood and Mareeba for growers to express concerns over WH&SQ audit processes and some regulatory requirements – particularly in relation to bagging machines - and to have them addressed by Craig Althaus and Far Northern-based WH&S inspector Adam Spinelli.

Some growers have questioned the need for bagging machines to be fitted with safety harnesses (or positioning belts) believing it would pose a safety risk to the operator if the machine rolled or fell to the ground.

The harness regulation was a direct result of a Coroner's recommendation following an inquest into the death of a bagging machine operator in Far North Queensland in 2004. Mr Althaus said harnesses (restraints) could be equipped with a quick release system and were designed to prevent operators falling from bagging machine baskets.

## DISSECTING CURRENT WH&S LEGISLATION

### MOBILE ELEVATED WORK PLATFORMS (BAGGING MACHINES)

All banana bagging machines must be fitted with a fall restraint system, to prevent the risk of falls from banana bagging machines.

There is no specification under WH&S legislation on what type of fall restraint is needed for compliance, however one suggested option is a positioning belt (see pic 1) – with either one or two tethers – which can be connected to a certified anchor point on the bagging machine.

Craig Althaus said if an existing anchor point is not labelled as certified, an anchor point must be engineer certified and retro-fitted by a qualified person.

"The tether attached to the anchor and positioning belt needs to be a length whereby the worker cannot exit the basket... they cannot get up on the rail ... essentially it is to stop the worker being ejected from the machine," Mr Althaus said.

Howe Farming Group at Walkamin in Far North Queensland has undertaken extensive trials of restraint systems in their bagging machines. General Manager Kim Mastin said the company had found that a positioning belt with two tether points was the most effective.

"We found one tether at the front and one from the back was the best, to avoid them (workers) being able to fall out, backwards or frontwards," Ms Mastin said.

"At the moment we've seen no operational issues with this system and the lanyards that we've put into place and we are purely just waiting for more to be built, otherwise all our fleet will be done.

"It's 100 per cent about safety. We don't want injuries, we want them to be able to work and be happy."



1. An example of fall restraints for bagging machines.

### RISK OF FALLS FROM LOADING DOCK FACILITIES

Measures must be taken to prevent workers from falling from loading docks. This can be done with either a fixed gate system, or in low traffic areas, simply use a yellow chain. (See pic 3)

### RISK OF FALLS FROM MEZZANINE FLOORS

The risk of falls from mezzanine floors should be controlled with fixed railings and gates to access storage areas where needed. (See pic 4)

### FIRST AID

"Farmers must have an adequate number of workers trained to provide first aid at the workplace," Mr Althaus explained.

"The number of first aiders will vary depending on the size of the business - geographically - and the number of people working on-site. It will come down to doing your own risk assessment," he said.

Workers must also be provided with first aid equipment. Generally, the main first aid kit will be in the packing shed, but workers outside also need to have access to basic first aid equipment – stored either in vehicles, quad bikes or tractors - to treat snake bites, deep wounds and sprains.

### TRANSPORTING WORKERS IN THE FIELD

The common practice of transporting people/workers on trailers and in the back of utes is illegal under WH&S regulation. This is because there is no control against workers being ejected from the vehicle or trailer.

"Growers can purchase a trailer specially designed to carry workers in the field. It needs to be fitted with seats belts, certified by an engineer and be constructed by a competent person." Mr Althaus said.



The two tether point positioning belt trialled by Howe Farming Group.



3. Examples of fixed, and non-fixed systems, to reduce falls from loading dock facilities.

"A cheap commuter bus could also be a possible option."

### HEAT RELATED ILLNESS

Growers must provide information, instruction and training around managing heat-related illnesses. This includes effective ways to prevent the onset of heat illness, by providing ice and water in the field, encouraging breaks in shaded areas and rotating tasks for new workers and allowing time for workers to acclimatise to a tropical region.

"For example, if you did have a worker who has just arrived from a northern European country, you would initially assign them less strenuous tasks, like tractor driving or shed work and then work up to more strenuous activities over time, say a month, where you would expect them to be able to handle the rigors of humping bananas," Mr Althaus said.

Supervisors and managers must be trained to recognise the symptoms of heat related illness and prevent the condition from worsening.

### PALLET STACKERS

An effective way to prevent entry (and injury) under pallet stackers is a movable gate that is put in place when the machine is in use. (See pic 5)

### GUARDING ON CONVEYOR BELTS

Guarding should be installed on conveyor belting to prevent a worker getting body parts caught or clothing and hair entangled in the conveyor belt.

### COMMUNICATING WITH WORKERS

Growers must have a means of communicating with all workers, even those working in isolated areas. This can be accomplished either through mobile phones (if there is effective coverage) or portable UHF. There is also a variety of rescue Apps available online.

### INDUCTION TRAINING

All workers must be provided with effective induction training. This includes not only showing them how to do their job but be supervised to ensure that they are doing their job in the correct manner and safely. If a worker is non-English speaking, induction and training must be delivered in the manner they understand. Growers must be satisfied that all workers can complete tasks safely and correctly after they are trained. This training must be also be documented. This needs to be

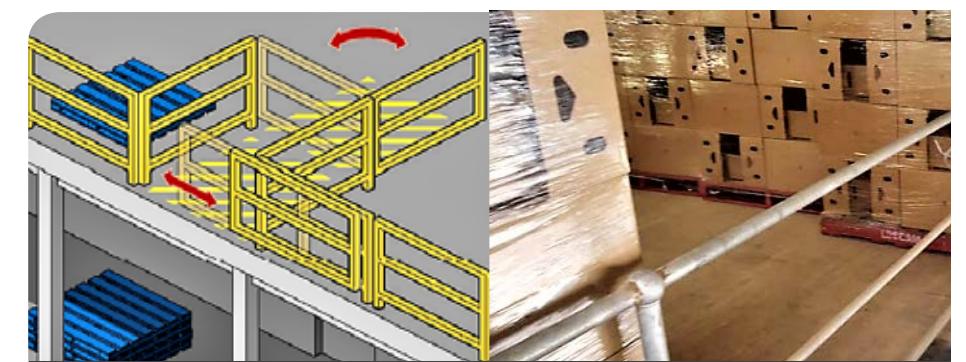
signed by the worker and supervisor.

"Yellow Card is an induction course worker can do online. It is translated into eight languages including English, Korean, Tongan, Samoan, French, Chinese and Japanese. This is an in-depth safety induction into the banana industry. It's free to the grower, the worker pays for the course and can undertake it prior to employment and not have to go through such an extensive on-farm safety induction when they start. It saves a grower about half an hour per worker in training."

### FARM SPECIFIC TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Growers must provide a site-specific induction, which covers information about hazards specific to their farm, such as cane rail crossings, the presence of crocodiles and other safety related issues.

Again, all safe work procedures need to be clearly understood by the employee. If the worker does not speak English, growers must be able to verify the worker's level of understanding and be sure that all workers understand the work and can complete tasks safely.



4. Examples of fixed railings and gates to reduce the risk of falls from mezzanine floors.

### MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION OF MOBILE ELEVATED PLATFORMS (EWP) INCLUDING BAGGING MACHINES

All Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWPs), including bagging machines, must have pre-operation or daily checks. They must also have routine or pre-harvest inspections (200 hourly or as per the manufacturers' guidelines) as well as an annual third party inspection.

A major 10-yearly inspection is also required. This

For further information on farm WH&S regulations go to; [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

[www.farmsafe.org.au](http://www.farmsafe.org.au)

[https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/83778/5564-serious-about-farm-safety.pdf](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/83778/5564-serious-about-farm-safety.pdf)

Growers also have access to the Injury Prevention and Management (IPaM) program, a joint initiative between Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) and WorkCover Queensland, designed to help businesses develop better WH&S and injury management systems.

Craig Althaus can be contacted by phoning 0429 682 206 or email [craig@agsafe.net.au](mailto:craig@agsafe.net.au)

involves a strip-down, through inspection and re-build of the EWP, checking all structural components for cracks, corrosion and damage.

Forklifts require the top three checks – daily, routine/ pre-harvest and third party.

"Any agricultural safety management system has to be reviewed and updated constantly and you have to have someone maintaining it. For example, you need to keep records up to date, ensure training is completed and all your inspections are completed," Craig Althaus.



5. Example of movable gate to put in front of pallet stacker when machine is in use.



# SPREADING THE BENEFITS



Mick Horsford's spreader has roughly halved the time spent on fertilizing.

Efficiency on a North Queensland banana farm has spiked, thanks to the recent introduction of a locally-built spreader.

Mick Horsford farms at Mena Creek and Pin Gin Hill, along with his brother Kris and father Lance. His grandfather began growing bananas in the area more than five decades ago, and the family now runs approximately 90 hectares.

Mick applied to purchase the spreader with the assistance of incentive grant funding through Reef Trust III, knowing there would be a number of benefits on-farm and to the environment.

While it's hard to put an exact figure on the improvements, he estimates a time saving of 40-50 per cent, as they only have to drive down every other row.

"It can apply any fertilizer product we put through it," he explained. "We farm 7m rows and it spreads the product uniformly across the whole bed in every second row. It's very time effective and better for the plant uptake."

The Horsfords are moving towards more sustainable forms of nitrogen such as composts, meat and bone, and treated manures, with the aim of improving soil health while growing their crop.

"The spreader also helps us control the amount of leaching and run-off by applying the product weekly if needed in wetter months, and at lower rates.

"By entering every second row, it also ensures the rows aren't damaged, which helps maintain ground cover and ensures minimal soil and nutrients leave the property."

The spreader was built by Chris Grant of Cando Mechanical.

"I'm extremely happy with the spreader," Mick said. "It has improved the efficiency in both time and accuracy, and I would strongly recommend this option to any farmer."

*The Reef Alliance Project is a partnership between agricultural industry, regional NRM bodies and facilitated by the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF), with a common goal of securing the future of the Great Barrier Reef. The Reef Alliance Program is funded by the Australian Government and delivered through the Reef Trust.*



# SLASH YOUR COSTS WITH HOME-GROWN INVENTION



Mena Creek grower David Rolfe uses a wick wiper to apply herbicide.



The invention is already used by a handful of other growers.

If time and money are two things you value, a Wet Tropics invention may be right up your alley – or inter-row, in this case.

David Rolfe, a Mena Creek grower and 2017 Reef Award finalist, designed his own wick wiper four years ago.

Already used by a handful of other growers, a wick wiper works by directly applying herbicides via a wick or curtain of material that brushes directly against target plants. The wick or curtain is attached to a frame which is primed from a reservoir of herbicide.

Essentially, it is a simple and inexpensive way to maintain grassed inter-rows and reduce the need for slashing.

"It is quite normal for me to not use a slasher for a

couple of months since fitting the wick wiper. It has reduced slashing a lot and it keeps ground cover at a nice height in between. It's a significant saving," Mr Rolfe said.

David designed his wick wiper to fit between the axels of his bagging machine.

The PVC pipe (which holds a 50:50 solution of glyphosate at a concentration of 450 g/L) is supported by a frame made of angle iron. The frame is attached to the bagging machine with chains.

David uses hoses and fittings as his wicks, but some growers use old carpet instead.

The height of the wick wiper is set so it targets the taller weeds and grasses, allowing room for the low-growing

grasses to flourish. Low-growing ground cover is preferred by growers as it makes access to the blocks much safer and easier.

The majority of growers look after their inter-row ground cover to help reduce sediment loss, which is important for a variety of reasons, including reducing the risk of Panama TR4 spreading.

And while it can be a time-consuming task, this North Queensland innovation could make a world of difference.

If you would like more information on wick wipers, please contact the ABGC Reef Extension Team on (07) 4015 2797 or email Sarah Simpson on sarah@abgc.org.au

*The Reef Alliance Project is a partnership between agricultural industry, regional NRM bodies and facilitated by the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF), with a common goal of securing the future of the Great Barrier Reef. The Reef Alliance Program is funded by the Australian Government and delivered through the Reef Trust.*



## MECHANICAL BANANA HARVESTER WAY OF FUTURE SAYS INVENTOR

A former Far North Queensland banana farmer believes a mechanical banana harvester he developed 20 years ago will eventually become the way of the future.

With horticultural farming practices increasingly moving towards automation and robotics, Tom Johnston maintains his robotic harvester reduces fruit damage, is more cost and labour efficient and reduces the risk of injury and disease to workers.

He said he built the first prototype of the device in 1998 and has had it commercially available for the past 15 years.

"It started in 1996. I had a banana farm and I sold it. I had an illness and was paralysed and that is how I came up with the idea, how am I going to cut bananas if I can't walk," Mr Johnston said.

Today, his device is not the only mechanical banana harvester on the market, however Mr Johnston believes it was the first.

The robotic device can be fitted to the lifting arm of an excavator or other articulated machine. It works by cutting the stalk from the trees and placing the bunch onto a trailer.

"No one touches the bunches so they don't get damaged. You can save seven cartons per trailer through less fruit damage."

"There are no knife injuries, no-one is slipping over on their way to the trailer. I can lift a 70kg bunch with three fingers, no man on this earth will outwork a hydraulic pump. One machine can replace three men."

The harvester costs between \$20,000-\$110,000 depending on whether the buyer wants Mr Johnston to supply the vehicle that the robotic arm is attached to.

So far, Mr Johnston has only sold one of the machines, but believes the lack of interest is because - to use the machine - a grower needs to change their existing planting methods and paddock structure.

"You have to time your paddocks into 100 days of bunching, instead of 365 days of bunching. However you can increase the density of plants because the space between the bunches is not required because workers don't need to walk between the trees to get to the trailer."

Mr Johnston believes an even greater benefit of using the device - which extracts the bunch but leaves the banana tree in tact - is the products that can be derived from the tree itself.

"There are 1000 products in a banana tree, the tree is gold. The fibre is the fastest growing fibre on earth. If we leave the fibres in tact we can use a veneering machine to make paper, wallets, hats ... building products that are fire resistant, including bricks to build houses that don't burn, and the outside leaves can be turned into stockfeed."





## CAN ECONOMICS HELP BANANA FARMING?

Banana growers in the Wet Tropics can increase their profitability and sustainability by adopting the banana industry's suite of best management practices (BMP). That was the message from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' (DAF) economists to growers at a workshop in Innisfail last month.

The DAF economists have just completed a three year project to evaluate the profitability implications for banana growers adopting BMPs, as well as the corresponding improvement to water quality.

Forty six growers in the Tully and Innisfail districts took part in the research project, through one-on-one surveys and interviews. The results are good news for both banana farmers and the Great Barrier Reef.

South Johnstone banana grower Gavin Devaney said the economic study highlighted to growers what worked and would be good for their business.

"The right agronomic advice at the right time really assists our business and helps to inform our fertiliser program with recommended rates. It's a bit like paying attention to the weather forecast before planting - it's up to you to do so, but if you don't then you might have to go and replant your crop. In the same way, growers who don't make use of the best agronomic advice available are missing out on

the best results," Mr Devaney said.

"Looking at this study has helped me to understand the value of different elements of banana best management practice, and although some things may seem expensive at first, they make sense when you weigh up the potential benefits of cost savings and improved production."

DAF agricultural economics manager, Mark Poggio said the study investigated a range of management practice changes, including nutrient management, irrigation, tillage and fallow management.

"The project included grower case studies, socio-economic surveys and scenarios representing typical banana growing farms in the Tully and Innisfail districts and investigated variations in farm size, soil type and slope," said Mr Poggio.

"The representative modelling found that a farming system change to best management practices generally provided overall economic and water quality benefits.

"Additional economic analysis also indicated that the growers, in the three case studies, experienced economic benefits after making various practice changes, through cost savings on farm.

"Prior to this project being completed there was limited info for growers to use to make informed decisions about BMP changes.

Mr Poggio said that the project would not have been possible without the generous support from growers, extension officers, technical experts, the Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC) and other organisations.

ABGC Extension Officer Robert Mayers said that the economics study was an excellent tool to help growers make informed decisions to move to Best Practices.

"The study shows that there is an overall economic benefit even though it may not be seen straight away," he said.

The project outputs included case studies, representative economic analyses and water quality information, a technical report, grower surveys and an adoption innovation profile report, which are available at <http://bit.ly/bananaBMPeconomics>

*This project was funded by Department of Environment and Science through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.*

## AGINDUCT TRAINING SERVICES YELLOW CARD



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The Yellow Card is translated into Italian, French, Japanese, Korean, Traditional Chinese, Tongan and Samoan.

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To promote a strong unified safety culture for the entire banana industry

### Topics covered include

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## WET TROPICS MIP TRIAL WORK



Michelle McKinlay and Robert Mayers look at the draft designs for a treatment system on a banana farm.

Soil and topographic work is underway at sites for bioreactors (nitrogen traps) and constructed wetlands on farms in the Cassowary Coast region.

Contractors are undertaking topographical surveys and soil samples at five sites in the Johnstone and Tully catchments to help guide the design and construction stages of systems repair technologies.

The Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project (MIP) initiatives aim to reduce nutrient and sediment loads entering the Great Barrier Reef, and serve as a pilot program for other catchment areas.

MIP Catchment Repair Officer Suzette Argent said 40 on-farm sites were assessed over the past 3 months and detailed investigations were now happening on 'first-stage' sites.

"We're grateful for the opportunity to work with banana and cane farmers to trial these technologies in the Wet Tropics."

James Cook University's Dr Alex Cheeseman said soil samples had been sent off for laboratory analysis.

"The topographic surveys identify key landform heights, and help determine how the water moves in the landscape," he said.

"With them we can ensure whatever is designed doesn't impact drainage, and does a good job at treating water."

"We also take core soil samples to learn about the underlying soil. The designs for the catchment repair technologies need to work with the underlying soil materials – understanding what we've got helps manage earth movement and on-ground works appropriately."

The Queensland Government is investing up to \$15 million in the MIP – a program led by a consortium of over 40 organisations and designed by hundreds of people from the community.

An industry based project panel oversees the project, and recently visited some of the first stage sites. Michelle McKinlay and Robert Mayers from the Australian Banana Growers Council are panel members.

"There has been a lot of work to get to this point, and as stakeholders and panel members it's valuable seeing sites in the flesh and hear more about the challenges (and successes!) of getting ideas off a table and onto the ground," said Ms McKinlay.



# PANAMA TR4 READY CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

To ensure everyone plays their part in helping to minimise the spread of Panama disease tropical race 4 (Panama TR4), Biosecurity Queensland has been implementing a number of key projects to raise awareness with growers and the wider community about what they can do to be Panama TR4 ready.

By Deanna Belbin, BQ

Growers and community members told the Panama TR4 Program that they would like to see more public information about Panama TR4 and what can be done to minimise the spread of this devastating disease.

So Biosecurity Queensland teamed up with ABGC to create a website - [panamatr4ready.com.au](http://panamatr4ready.com.au) - with clear calls to action for growers, banana farm workers, community members, and service providers to be #PanamaTR4ready.

The website is part of the Panama TR4 ready advertising campaign launched by the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, Mark Furner in late June, followed by a community launch at the Innisfail library community hub on 19 July.

When the Minister visited Cairns, he urged the community to continue to get Panama TR4 ready and reiterated that Panama TR4 has the potential to have a huge impact on our banana industry and severely affect livelihoods.

He said we need growers to keep selling bananas and continue to support our thriving Far North Queensland community.

He asked the public to familiarise themselves with the information provided through the community campaign to see what they can do to protect the industry and the local economy.

The multi-media campaign kicked off on 15 July and ran for 3 weeks while the website is available for three months from July to early October.

For more information contact Sarah Flenley at Biosecurity Queensland via email [sarah.flenley@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:sarah.flenley@daf.qld.gov.au) or call 07 4091 8159.



Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries Mark Furner accompanied by Member for Cairns Michael Healy urged the community to continue to get Panama TR4 ready at a media event in Cairns in June.



Members of the Far North Queensland community are getting behind the Panama TR4 ready campaign.



Panama TR4 Program communications and engagement manager Sarah Flenley at the community launch in Innisfail in July.



## DID YOU GET YOUR NEW GROWER KIT?

As part of preparing growers for Panama TR4, we want to make sure you have the right information at the right time. That's why we've updated the Panama disease tropical race 4 grower kit.

The kit includes new resources such as updated fact sheets, a disease identification guide and new shed posters. All Far North Queensland growers should have received the new kit in the mail by now.

If you haven't received your kit or you'd like additional copies, please contact the Panama TR4 Program on 07 4091 8140 or via email on [panamatr4.qld.gov.au](mailto:panamatr4.qld.gov.au). You can also access the new resources online here. (<https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/panama-disease-tropical-race-4-grower-kit>)

If we've missed something that you would like to see in the grower kit, email Sarah Flenley on [sarah.flenley@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:sarah.flenley@daf.qld.gov.au) or call 07 4091 8159.

## Farming with Panama TR4 workshops

It was great to see so many members of the banana industry attending the 'Farming with Panama TR4' workshops in Silkwood and Mareeba in June.

Feedback from workshop participants showed that they had gained a better understanding of the biosecurity requirements needed to keep trading if their farm was detected with Panama disease

tropical race 4 (Panama TR4).

This was a great outcome as the more prepared growers are, the better.

A key takeaway from the workshops was that the main biosecurity requirement growers will need to meet is that no soil or plant material can come off an infested property.

How growers achieve this can vary from farm to farm.

If a farm is confirmed with the disease, Biosecurity Queensland will work with the grower to help meet the requirements and get them trading again as soon as possible.

If growers want to workshop some ideas around getting prepared for a detection, BQ is offering on-site farm visits. Email [panamatr4@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:panamatr4@daf.qld.gov.au) or phone 07 4091 8140 to book a visit.

A warm thanks to Gavin and Stephen Mackay who volunteered their time to speak about their first-hand experiences in farming with Panama TR4. Their input was invaluable and well received by the audience.

Thanks also to NextGen farmers Kris Horsford and Adam Gilbert who shared their knowledge of the varieties being trialled for resistance to Panama TR4 in the Northern Territory.

We're also interested to hear feedback from banana growers and the industry to guide future workshop and information sessions.

If there are any other workshops about Panama TR4 growers would like to see us running, contact us on the details provided in this story.



Authorised by the Queensland Government, William Street, Brisbane



Industry members attend the Farming with Panama TR4 workshop in Silkwood.



Panama TR4 communications and engagement manager Sarah Flenley with Rebecca Askey-Doran at the Silkwood workshop.



L-R ABGC CEO Jim Pekin, Panama TR4 program leader Rhannon Evans, Gavin Mackay from Mackay's Bananas.



# BANANA MARKETING CONTINUES TO

**Australian Bananas continues to reach consumers in innovative, exciting ways – using both new and traditional media to target their audience. Marketing Manager Kylie Drumond reports.**

Hort Innovation is responsible for investing the banana marketing levy into a range of activities to drive frequency of purchase and consumption, under the Hort Innovation Banana Fund.

The 2017/18 marketing program was bursting with activity.

The program focussed on getting our target markets to snack on bananas more frequently – in particular, people aged 25 to 39 and families with kids 12 years and under.

It involved a number of activities, from advertising and traditional media outreach, to a strong social media program and participation in community events.



## ADVERTISING

During 2017/18 a range of advertising channels were used, with a goal of increasing the frequency at which Australian consumers purchase bananas. The activity building on the successful theme of 'Nature's non-stop energy snack'.

## TELEVISION ACTIVITY

The Australian Bananas TV campaign aired in two bursts during the financial period – during August and September 2017, again during March and April 2018. The ads retained the iconic 'Make Your Body Sing' jingle and showed a fast-moving montage of people powering through their day thanks to an energy burst from bananas. Activity took place across all major capital cities and in key regional markets, across major free-to-air networks and also on pay TV.

## OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING

Driving awareness of the campaign and frequency of messaging to remind consumers about bananas, the out-of-home campaign involved Australian Bananas advertising on bus panels during September to October 2017, and between March and April 2018, across five capital cities.

The out-of-home approach also involved digital display ads in shopping centres, placed in close proximity to supermarkets and grocers. Involving 805 panels, the first 11-week burst took place from early September 2017, and the second burst involving 714 panels ran from mid-March to early-June 2018 across the country.

## DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

Digital Australian Bananas advertising was run across desktop, tablet and mobile phone devices at various stages from August to November 2017, and then again from mid-March to May 2018. We employed a number of digital strategies for this Bananas campaign, ranging from Programmatic Video (automated video advertising based on our specifications), Coles Fly Buys Signal Data, Woolworths data through Quantum, YouTube Bumper ads as well as Snapchat.

There were three components, including:

» Video and online display advertising

The first burst saw us serve almost 8 million impressions over the 12-week campaign period.

Video ads (excluding Youtube) were served to more than 7.4 million people during the financial year with a strong result of, on average, 77.89 per cent of all people watching the ad through to completion. The activity involved 15 second Australian Bananas ads delivered across some of the most-visited websites in market, including the catch-up TV services of channels Seven, Nine and Ten. There were particular strategies around targeting sports and time targeting of news sites to ensure the ads would appear when the highest number of people were on these sites during the day.

» 6 second Youtube bumper

This was used to extend our reach via YouTube cost effectively. This is a new non-skippable format with a variety of creative options. Our Bumper Ads ran with age demographic targeting across each video. In total, 6 videos ran for the duration of the campaign. The best performing piece of creative was the 100% delicious which had an overall completion rate of 84.81%.

» Quantum data and Coles Flybuys

Using Quantum and Coles Flybuys data (which gives insights into shoppers) we were able to target lapsed/lapsing and New/Active banana buyers through Woolworths and Coles sales data with the aim of changing buying behaviour and ensuring a sales uplift in both segments. Overall the campaign using Quantum data, saw an uplift in sales of \$200.1k which amounts to an extra 4.73% resulting in a Return on Ad spend of \$2.93 (for every dollar spent on the platform). The best performing segments were our Banana Lovers (New and Active), these had a higher propensity to purchase more bananas during the campaign period. While the trend of active users making the bulk of purchases remains consistent, the results of lapsed and lapsing audience are quite different to the campaign run with Coles data as a larger purchase uplift came from the lapsed and lapsing group (Graph 1 and Graph 2).



## WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

Throughout the year, the consumer-facing website [www.australianbananas.com.au](http://www.australianbananas.com.au) remained a hub for recipes and banana facts, as well as health and nutrition information. The website remains the number-one result in Google for the search term 'bananas'. Growers (via a log-in) can also gain access to monthly marketing updates and research reports through the site.

The industry's 'always on' approach to social media also continued during 2017/18 as an important channel for keeping bananas top of mind. Across Facebook ([www.facebook.com/AustralianBananas](http://www.facebook.com/AustralianBananas)) and Instagram (@australianbananas), the social media program delivered content and messaging around core content themes including bananas as a fun fruit; bananas as a source of energy/nutrition; and bananas as 'a-peeling snacks'; plus there was content on the growers behind the produce.

# HIT HOME WITH CONSUMERS



## EVENTS

During 2017/18, the marketing program continued to promote the health benefits of Australian bananas on a national stage through product sampling, promotion and supply of merchandise at various sporting and community events around the country. Events included the Weet-Bix Kids TRYathlon 2017/18 series, which had nearly 13,756 participants and 27,198 spectators to cheer on competitors. Two new events were added to 2017/18 – the Western Sydney Marathon and MS Walk Fun Run. These two events had in total 6,207 participants.

Australian Bananas also sponsored breakfast tents at family focused Little BIG DASH events in Sydney and Brisbane in mid-2017.

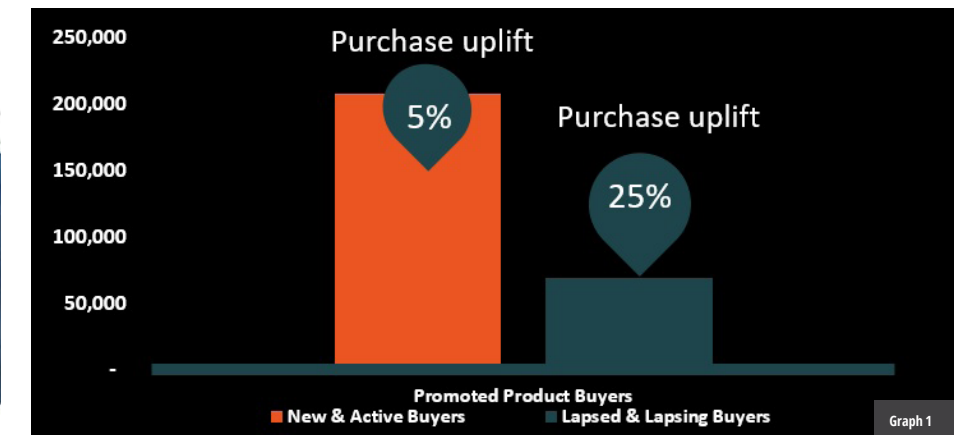
Other events from the financial period that saw promotion and sampling of bananas included Ride2Work, with eight events held in October across all states. Ride2Work is Australia's largest celebration of commuter riding and promotes the benefits of riding to work. Australian bananas were handed out at breakfast activations in each state to refuel riders on their way to work.

Other events that Australian Bananas participated in were the Fleurieu Fondo Festival held in South Australia and the JP Morgan Corporate Challenge held in Sydney in November.

Australian Bananas continued sponsorship of community events held in growing regions around the country, including the Innisfail, Tully and Atherton Shows, the Banana Industry Race Day in Innisfail, the Nambucca Banana Hurl, and various sporting clubs in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. More than 3000 pieces of Australian Bananas merchandise were handed out at these events.

## SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

During 2017/18, Australian Bananas sponsored two school programs in Western Australia and Victoria. The Melbourne Market Authority Schools Program



Audience type	Sales uplift	% of incremental sales contribution
Hort Aus - New Banana Buyers - Exclude Control	1.56x	23%
Hort Aus - Active Banana Buyers - Exclude Control	1.04x	72%
Hort Aus - Lapsing Banana Buyers - Exclude Control	1.02x	1%
Hort Aus - Lapsed Banana Buyers - Exclude Control	N/A	

Graph 2

reached over 20,000 people over the year-long duration of their program, while over 2000 students were involved in the Foodbank WA program. These sponsorships were a great way to educate children about fresh fruit and bananas specifically, building consumers for today and into the future.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY (INCLUDING AMBASSADORS)

Taking banana messaging to the Australian media, the Australian Bananas public relations (PR) strategy for 2017/18 had a focus on young families and people aged 25-39. It was designed to encourage this audience to snack on the fruit more frequently.

Activities included the distribution of banana tips and recipes to media, plus interviews and the production and distribution of content with Australian Bananas ambassador Susie Burrell.

Susie is one of Australia's leading dietitians and runs her own healthy eating blog. As well as media activities, she posted regularly about bananas to her website and social media channels during 2017/18 with content including banana recipes produced for the campaign, reaching more than 9.8 million people. Likewise, ambassador Billy Slater continued to post about bananas to his social media audience.

Over the last 12 months, we had 139 pieces of coverage with a total combined audience reach

of 30,151,674 people.

## BOUNTY BAGS

The Bounty New Mother bags, as the name suggests, are designed for women with newborns and distributed through hospitals nationally by midwives and Bounty representatives.

204,000 Australian Bananas banana cases were included in the bags during 2017/18. Inside the banana case there is a leaflet detailing the benefits of bananas as both a baby's first food and an ideal snack for busy mothers.

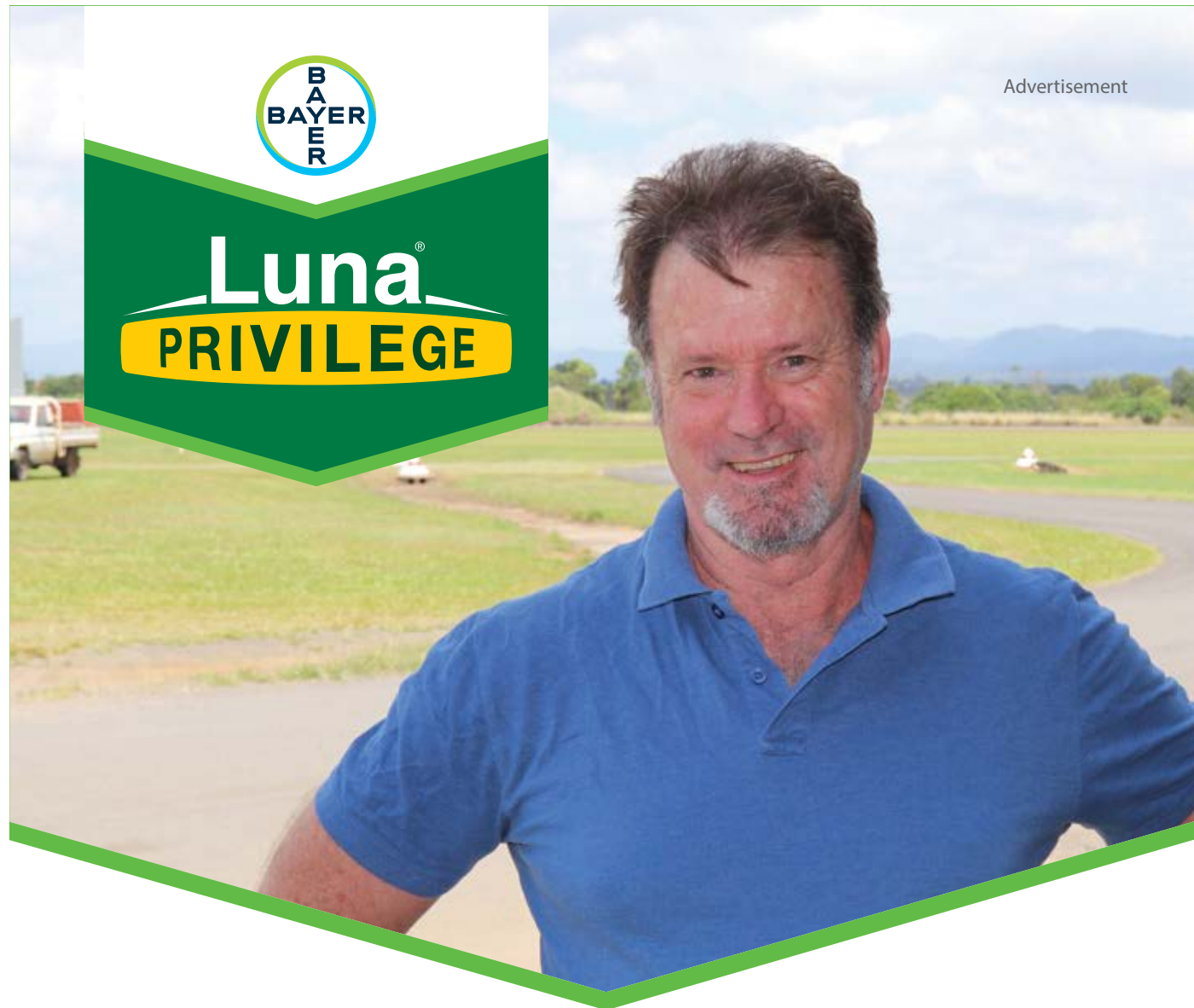
## CAMPAIGN RESULTS

Overall there's been an enormous amount of activity for Australia's most consumed fruit! And the advertising is definitely resonating. Tracking data shows advertising recall from Apr/Jun 2017 to Apr/Jun 2018 increased from 31 to 40 per cent.

2018/19 marks the first year in a three-year marketing plan for the banana industry.

The last three-year campaign was strong, with Nielsen data showing 91.6% of Australian Families purchasing bananas (Nielsen Homescan, MAT to 19/05/2018) and maintaining a leading position in both the snack and energy snack categories.





## The most powerful fungicide for use against yellow sigatoka

Group 7 fungicide chemistry puts banana industry on front foot

**Luna® Privilege offers unparalleled in-field control of problematic fungal diseases that can otherwise reduce the vigour of your bananas**

The banana industry now has the upper hand in disease management, thanks to the introduction in recent years of new fungicide chemistry with an alternative mode of action to traditional chemicals.

That's according to Bill Farnsworth manager of Farmsnorth Research, a consultancy based in Innisfail, north Queensland. Mr Farnsworth works in plant protection across all the main crops in north Queensland, including sugarcane, bananas, mangoes and avocados.

His research involves testing of new compounds, testing rates, comparing the efficacy of new compounds versus registered compounds, all to gather data that will allow a new compound and product to be registered.

It's this expertise that led Mr Farnsworth to work extensively with Luna Privilege from Bayer Crop Science, particularly in the lead-up to its registration for the 2015 season.

"I was involved in generating trial data for APVMA to have Luna Privilege registered, and prior to its launch I did some commercial grower-scale trials to compare disease control against the standard products we used at the time," Mr Farnsworth explains.

"I remember that Luna performed well in those trials, it didn't have any problems at all, and it was quite exciting to have a new compound coming on the market, which could be used to manage a difficult disease like yellow Sigatoka.

"Since 2015, I've continued using Luna Privilege in small-plot trials with ground spraying and it's performed very well, there's been no signs of any weakness - it's still quite an outstanding product compared to some of the older chemistry."

Luna Privilege is unique chemistry in the banana industry as it's the only Group 7 product available to control key banana leaf diseases such as yellow Sigatoka, leaf speckle and cordana leaf spot.

"There's not a big range of products available - there are the protectants, which are pretty steady, reliable sort of products like mancozeb and chlorothalonil, and then there's also Biopest® oils or paraffinic oils, which offer a form of protection," Mr Farnsworth says.

"But the systemic chemicals are vital for managing disease, and in situations where disease might get out of hand, you need something a bit stronger, something with a different mode of action - it's important to not have too much pressure on DMI triazoles by relying on them exclusively if a problem arises.

**"But now with Luna Privilege providing us with an alternative mode of action, we've got the upper hand on disease management."**

Mr Farnsworth says the strong stewardship program Bayer Crop Science built around Luna Privilege was an important step in protecting this valuable chemistry with its unique mode of action.

"There's cases in the past where compounds have been overused or abused, and not used according to label or not used in limited amounts, which reduces efficacy over time, so the controls in place around using Luna Privilege for the correct application window maintains the susceptibility of the disease, which is a good thing," he explains.

"I think Luna Privilege is going to maintain a vital role in the fungicide programmes designed to manage yellow Sigatoka, and it's important the product is used in a carefully controlled way to maintain its efficacy for the long-run, for the benefit of everyone."

To read about other experiences, visit [crop.bayer.com.au/lunaprivilege](http://crop.bayer.com.au/lunaprivilege), or talk to your local supplier to find out more.



[crop.bayer.com.au/lunaprivilege](http://crop.bayer.com.au/lunaprivilege)

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# NO BUSINESS LIKE BANANA SHOW BUSINESS

There's something undeniably special about regional shows.

They are a great chance to socialise and there is no better way to celebrate local produce, creativity and skill.

In Coffs Harbour, Innisfail and Tully, bananas – and the people behind them – are very much part of their show communities.

The efforts of organisers, judges and growers who enter the local competitions are clearly appreciated by show-goers, who get a glimpse into another side of their favourite fruit.

On top of that, there's very real prizes at stake for the three Banana Exhibits – and a whole lot of bragging rights to boot.

## Coffs Harbour April 27-28

Among the flowers, photographs, cakes and quilts on display in the Coffs Harbour Exhibition Hall, three banana plants stand tall.

Concrete floors and florescent lights don't normally lend themselves to horticulture, but in this case, they're in place to educate.

Along with competition bunches, various cartons, taste testers and merchandise, the Coffs Harbour BGA is doing its bit to raise awareness of bananas and their different varieties.

"I think it's important for bananas to have a presence at the show, and for us to let people know what's around," said the BGA's Wally Gately.

While punters admire the hanging bananas, volunteers give out locally grown Cavendish, Lady Finger and Ducasse fruit – the latter proving very popular and resulting in some return visits.

"I enjoy meeting people and hearing their stories," said BGA volunteer Liz Knoblock. "And the kids just make it worthwhile – they love getting something for free!"

The competition itself was judged by Greig Ireland and Arthur Akehurst, who've been involved in bananas for decades.

"We look for pack, quality, confirmation," Mr Ireland explained. "In bunches it's very important that they have a similar shape and size."

Mr Akehurst adds that though they score each entry



Are they a-peeling? Greig Ireland and Arthur Akehurst judge the bananas at the 2018 Coffs Harbour show.

individually, more often than not, they find they've come to the same conclusion.

Brian Singh took home this year's prestigious Banana Cup, a perpetual trophy that's been handed out since 1929.

### Coffs Harbour Winners

#### Cavendish

**Champion:** Brian Singh

**Heaviest:** Brian Singh

#### Lady Fingers

**Marketable:** F&R Slaverio

**Heaviest:** F&R Slaverio

#### Ducasse

**Marketable:** G Regan

**Heaviest:** G Regan

#### Cartons

**Cavendish Clusters:** M&J Eggins

**Lady Finger Clusters:** L&D Pilati

**Ducasse Clusters:** L&D Pilati

**Banana Cup:** Brian Singh



The Champion Bunch (Brian Singh) under the watchful eye of a friendly monkey.



Jeff Eggins prepares a bunch for judging and display



Bailey Pilati was on deck to lend a hand – he's pictured next to his uncle's Senorita bananas (Monkey Bananas)

## Innisfail July 12-13

It may have been State of Origin night but it didn't stop a sizeable crowd gathering for the official banana weigh-in at the Innisfail Show.

The usual procession of utes pulled up to deliver cartons and offload bunches, with judging conducted early the next day.

Two of those involved in the judging process were Nick Lulham, Sales and Supply Manager of Nutrano Sydney, and John Bletsas, Director-Owner of Soils First.

"I'm fairly impressed with what I've seen this morning," Mr Lulham said.

"Those who've entered have done a good job under trying weather conditions."

Mr Bletsas said they're looking for bloom in fruit, for fruit that isn't marked and is presenting well.

"The weather has been challenging and it's been

affecting bunches in particular, but I think this is a great turnout."

Among the winners were Celledoni Farming, who received 1st place in five classes and the title of Most Successful Exhibit.

Banana Exhibit Chief Steward Rob Zahra said he was pleased with the turnout, despite tough conditions.

The two growers that did particularly well – Celledoni Farming and Reidy's Bananas – they're always great supporters of our exhibit and good luck to them both."

Mr Zahra also noted the effort involved in getting the Banana Exhibit together each year.

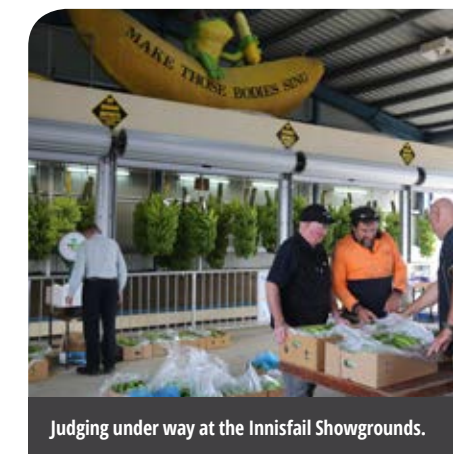
"There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes. But there's a good group of people involved and we enjoy each other's company – that's why we keep coming back each year."



Shannon Paton and Rob Mayers hang and weigh bunches



Grahame Celledoni, who won Most Successful Exhibit, with some of his prize-winning fruit.



Judging under way at the Innisfail Showgrounds.



Janette Dobson, who has been part of the show – and the banana exhibit – for years.

## Innisfail Winners

### Champion Ratoon Bunch

Innisfail Banana Farming Company

### Champion Plant Bunch

Celledoni Farming

### Champion Carton of Hands, Ex Large

Celledoni Farming

### Champion Cluster Carton Extra Large 13kg in 6 per layer carton only

Sellers Bananas

### Champion Cluster Carton Large 13kg 6 per layer carton only

Kalbo Fresh

### Champion International Cluster Carton 15kg carton only

Sellers Bananas

### Champion Hand

Di Carlo Bananas

### Champion Lady Finger Bunch

Woopan Creek Bananas

### Champion Lady Finger Carton Hand Pack

J.A Dobson

### Most Successful Exhibition on Aggregate Points

Celledoni Farming

### Most Outstanding Exhibit

Sellers Bananas

### Heaviest Ratoon Bunch

Reidy's Bananas

### Best Two Ratoon Bunches

Celledoni Farming

### Best three (3) Clusters

Di Carlo's Bananas

### Heaviest Hand

McCarthy Farming

### Heaviest Freak Banana (any variety)

Hampson Bros Pty Ltd

### Best Six Singles

Hampson Bros Pty Ltd

### Organic Carton 13kg

1st: McCarthy Farming

### Highly Commended Award

Mengotti Pty Ltd

### Heaviest Plant Bunch

Nucifora's Banana

### Best Two Plant Bunches

Celledoni Farming

### Champion Pair of Hands

Celledoni Farming

### Heaviest Single Banana

Hampson Bros Pty Ltd

### Open Heaviest Ratoon Bunch

Reidy's Bananas



# NO BUSINESS LIKE BANANA SHOW BUSINESS CONT'D

## Tully July 27-28

Sellers Bananas at Mission Beach scooped the pool again at the Tully Banana Exhibit, taking home the honours of Most Successful Exhibitor for the fifth year running.

Sisters Naomi Brownrigg and Belinda Nissen took home the exhibit's highest accolade after winning five categories including: Champion Large Carton (13kg), Champion Cluster Carton XL 13kg, Champion Cluster Carton 15kg, Champion Hand and Champion Carton (Tully district).

"It's always very humbling to win Most Successful Exhibitor," Naomi said. "We really enjoy exhibiting fruit at the Tully and Innisfail Shows. We do a bit of planning beforehand and pick bunches out in advance and harvest them on the day. There is a bit of mucking around on the day, but we always put fruit in, and you have got to be in it to win it."

The Flegler Group took home Champion Plant Bunch, while Serra Farming won Open Heaviest Plant Bunch with a 77kg entry.



Tully grower and ABGC deputy chair Leon Collins weighs in some bunches.



Judges Greg Bradshaw of P W Chew (left) and Richard Clayton, Mackays Banana Marketing CEO, inspect fruit.

Greg Bradshaw, who has been judging at the Tully Show for the past 12 years was impressed with the overall quality of entries.

"Overall the quality was better than I anticipated, (because) we had seen some fairly ordinary fruit in the central market system," he said.

As always, the annual weigh in on the Thursday night was as much about a good social catch up as entering fruit for judging, with a good crowd gathering to see the fruit on show.



Ross Reid (right) and son Jack at the Tully weigh in. Their entry of a 70.5kg bunch saw Reidy's Bananas win Heaviest Bunch.



More fruit weighed in.

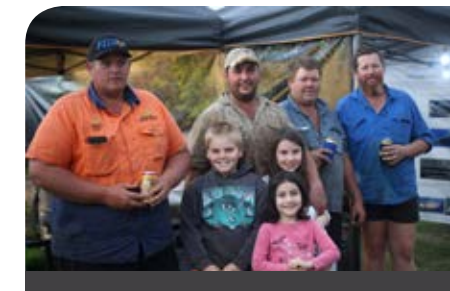
### Tully Winners

**Champion Bunch**  
**1st Flegler Group**  
**Champion Plant Bunch**  
**1st Mackay Estates, Mullins Rd.**  
**Heaviest Bunch**  
**Reidy's Bananas (70.5kg)**  
**Heaviest Plant Bunch**  
**1st Celledonis (37kg)**  
**Champion Lady Finger Bunch**  
**1st Costa Group**  
**Champion Lady Finger Carton**  
**1st Costa Group**  
**Champion Pair of Ratoon Bunches**  
**1st JR & V Dickinson**  
**Champion Pair Plant Bunches**  
**L & R Collins**  
**Champion Carton extra large hands**  
**1st M & G Dunne**  
**Champion Large Carton 13kg**  
**1st Sellars Bananas**  
**Champion Cluster Carton extra large 13kg**  
**1st Sellars Bananas**  
**Champion Cluster Carton extra large 15kg**  
**1st Sellars Bananas**  
**Champion Hand**  
**1st Sellars Bananas**  
**Champion Pair of Hands**  
**1st Flegler Group**  
**Heaviest Hand**  
**1st Celledoni Bananas**  
**Best 6 singles**  
**1st McCarthy Farming**  
**Heaviest single**  
**1st Flegler Group**  
**Heaviest Freak**  
**1st We-Own-A**  
**Best 3 Clusters**  
**1st McCarthy Farming**  
**Open Heaviest Bunch**  
**1st Serra Farming (77kg)**  
**Open Heaviest Plant Bunch**  
**1st Mackays Ranch Rd**  
**Champion Carton (Tully District)**  
**1st Sellars Bananas**  
**Champion Bunch (Tully District)**  
**1st Flegler Group**  
**Most Successful Exhibitor**  
**1st Sellars Bananas**  
**Stewards Choice**  
**We-Own-A**

## OUT AND ABOUT AT REGIONAL SHOWS



Steven Bailey and Wayne Holdcroft at Innisfail show.



(L-R) Mark Harding, Trastan Silvia, Scarlett Di Carlo, Mia Di Carlo, Gino Di Carlo, Matt Harding and Jack Harding at the Innisfail weigh in.



Lino Spagnolo and Rob Zahra, at the Innisfail weigh in.



Kuldip, Jaspreet and Lakhbir Singh, Innisfail show



Wally Gately, Coffs Show



ABGC Yellow Sigatoka Liaison Officer Louis Lardi (left) and ABGC Chair Stephen Lowe at the Tully Show.



(L-R) Jade Buchanan, Leon Collins and Gavin Mackay caught up at the Tully Show weigh in.



(L-R) Gabby Pascoe, Richard Clayton and Tayla Mackay at the Tully weigh in.

### FEEL THE NEED FOR SPEED



Congratulations to Matt Abbott and Joshua Rolfe who have claimed a place among the world's fastest outrigger canoe paddlers.

The North Queenslanders, both from well-known banana growing families, competed at the Va'a World Sprint Championships in Tahiti last month.

Beating out a field of about 50 talented paddlers for a finals berth, the pair finished in the top eight of

the Open Men – V1 500.

The competition was fierce, with first place setting a new world record in their event.

Matt and Joshua are both members of the Coconuts Outrigger Canoe Club in Innisfail.



# Collect the Pair.

Stop the suckers and borers wherever they're hiding in your banana crop, with the innovative combination of the two active ingredients of Movento® Energy insecticide:

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- Controls early nymph stages of rust thrips.
- When used as directed does not cause mite flare.

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or talk to your local Bayer representative.



**MOVENTO**<sup>®</sup>  
ENERGY



Banana rust thrips  
(*Chaetanaphothrips  
signipennis*)



Banana weevil borer  
(*Cosmopolites sordidus*)

**WIN** 1 of 10 **POLARIS**<sup>\*</sup>  
RANGER FARM BUGGIES

in our Year of the Grower Promotion

Receive one ticket into the draw for every \$100 spent on participating Bayer Crop Science products.

To enter visit [www.yearofthegrower.com.au](http://www.yearofthegrower.com.au)

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\*Conditions apply, see [www.yearofthegrower.com.au](http://www.yearofthegrower.com.au). Must be 18+ or a growing/farming business in AU to enter. Starts: 12/3/18 Ends: 7/3/19. Retain receipt/s. Draws: 18/9/18 and 11/3/19 at 11am at Engage Australia, L8, 56 Clarence Street Sydney NSW 2000. Winners published at [www.yearofthegrower.com.au](http://www.yearofthegrower.com.au) on 21/9/18 and 14/3/19. Prize: Polaris Ranger 570 HD off-road vehicle valued at \$16,490 (1 per region, 5 per draw, 10 in total, see full terms for details). Promoter: Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd (ABN 87 000 226 022) Level 1, 8 Redfern Road, Hawthorn East, VIC 3123. NSW Permit No. LTPS/18/21472, ACT Permit No. TP18/00072, SA Permit No. T18/51