

# Australian

Issue: 55 | APRIL 2019

# BANANAS

## BEND IT LIKE BROTHERS

NEXT GEN'S DYNAMIC DUO

**DAVID PEASLEY RETIRES** PAGES 14-15  
**BIOSECURITY UNDER \$1000** PAGE 22  
**COUNTING DOWN TO CONGRESS** PAGES 24-28



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# CONTENTS

Issue: 55 | APRIL 2019

## REGULARS

CEO's Report .....	4
Chair's Report .....	5
QBAN list .....	21
Under the Microscope .....	23
Marketing update .....	38-39

## INDUSTRY NEWS

Mort Johnston scholar sets sights on future .....	6
Sweeter shines at WA festival .....	6
Vale Vicky Kippin - O'Connor .....	7
Foodbank keen to hear from growers .....	7
Banana Levy Rate from July 1 .....	8
Defence targeting pigs in Tully .....	8
Cassowaries benefit from feral pig fight .....	8
Board visit to Coffs .....	9
Make the call on clean planting material .....	9
Entry callout for Coffs Show .....	9
Oma batters Northern NSW farm .....	17
Keep an eye on Erwinia .....	36
Other options available on TR4 land .....	37
Farming with a view .....	40
LEAD program wraps up .....	40

## BANANA FEATURE

National Banana Day .....	10
Bend it like Brothers .....	11
Coffs growers continue bypass battle .....	12-13
David departs after decades of service .....	14-15
Biosecurity under \$1000 .....	22
Counting down to Congress .....	24-28

## RESEARCH

Tweed grower takes on trial site .....	16
Goldfinger mutagenesis update .....	18
Wanted Dead or Alive: Ground Covers .....	19
Hitting the right spot with leaf disease management .....	20
The global spread and impact of TR4 .....	34-35

## REEF

Nutrient dynamics research in the Wet Tropics .....	29
New Queensland water quality regulations .....	30-31
New BMP Coordinator .....	31
Farming, fishing and the future .....	32
Score funding for sediment run-off .....	33

## BANANA EVENTS

Banana Women's Network at Charley's Chocolate Factory .....	41
Coffs Harbour board dinner .....	42
Feast of the Senses .....	43

Pictured front page: Brothers Stuart (left) and Angus Gilbert



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# ABGC ISSUES AT HAND

**Jim Pekin, CEO**



**This column discusses three of a range of matters ABGC is working on; Great Barrier Reef**

**regulations, farming with TR4 and national levy changes.**

## Reef Regulations

At the time of going to press, the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) was still in discussion with the Department of Environment and Science (DES) on the new Water Quality Regulations for Queensland and was hopeful of achieving a practical outcome for growers.

ABGC has provided a submission to a parliamentary committee, outlining aspects of the proposed regulations that are not acceptable to the industry, especially the cap on the adjustment method. That is, originally DES proposed regulated minimum standards for N and P rates with an adjustment method to justify higher rates if needed, i.e. where there is reliable evidence, provided through leaf and soil tests, that plants need more. Unfortunately, the Government then introduced a maximum cap on this adjustment.

ABGC has strongly urged the Government to acknowledge the lack of agronomic evidence required to confidently set a hard cap on the adjustment method and delay the establishment of this cap until there are results from trials established on commercial banana farms.

ABGC has scheduled meetings with the Agriculture and Environment Ministers to explain the complexity of banana farming and the importance of banana growers being able to farm profitably and sustainably.

ABGC's submission to the parliamentary hearing is located on our website [www.abgc.org.au](http://www.abgc.org.au).

As the new minimum industry standards won't start until July 2020 at the earliest, growers can use the next twelve months to prepare for this reef regulation. If you've successfully completed the quick and easy BMP Checklist and you have found that you are farming at Best or Okay level practice, it's likely any new Reef Regulations won't have much impact on your farming. If you aren't sure,

haven't completed the Checklist or can't remember your BMP log in, give Rob Mayers a call on 4015 2797. ABGC extension staff are keen to work with you if you need to change your practice to make improvements.

## Farming with TR4

ABGC and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) advise growers that the best way to address Panama Tropical Race 4 (TR4) is not to get it on your farm in the first place. Hence, the consistent messages about on-farm biosecurity, to keep potentially infested soil or planting material out of your farm.

Scientists and experience to date tells us TR4 will slowly spread, rather than not spread. So, the worst-case scenario is that it is found on your farm. Then what? Is it all doom and gloom? The short answer is 'no'.

The current Biosecurity regulations prevent the movement of soil and plant material (other than fruit) off a TR4-infested farm, so you could grow bananas or other crops (or produce cattle) provided you don't move soil or plant matter in doing so.

The TR4 Program would assist you to keep your infested farm working so that you meet certain biosecurity requirements, to protect your farm and

the industry from potential spread.

The 2019 Banana Industry Congress will hear from three growers, from the NT and Queensland who are farming with TR4. Expert government and industry advice can also be obtained privately at the Congress.

## National Levy Changes

In December, ABGC requested the Australian Government to remove the 0.75c/kg Freckle levy from 1 July 2019 because that Emergency Response was being wound up. This was approved by the Governor General on 21 March, so the required regulation will be in place on 1 July. That will mean a saving of 11.25c per 15Kg carton.

In other words, the total levy will be reduced by 0.75c/kg from 2.94c/kg to 2.19c/kg from 1 July 2019.

As growers would have seen from our mailout of 12 March, ABGC proposed that industry retain the Plant Health Australia part of the levy to ensure the TR4 Control and Containment Program continues.

The components of the Banana Industry Levy, exemptions from it and other details are at page 8 of this edition of *Australian Bananas*.



ABGC CEO Jim Pekin, far left, was among the board and staff members who visited the Oz Group pack house in Coffs Harbour while they were in town for a meeting.

# FUNDING AND THE FUTURE

Stephen Lowe, ABGC Chair



## TR4 funding

By now, all banana growers nationally should have received a letter from ABGC detailing the proposal for a joint government / industry response program for Panama

disease tropical race 4 (TR4) in Queensland.

The ABGC believes that an efficiently run TR4 program will continue to restrict the spread of this disease and is a worthwhile investment for industry as a whole.

The Queensland Government recently advised the ABGC that it would continue to fund the existing TR4 management Program until 30 June 2019. However, from 1 July onwards, government funding for the program would only continue under a cost-sharing arrangement with industry.

ABGC and Biosecurity Queensland recently formed a working group with the aim of developing a formal partnership agreement setting out how the TR4 Program will be designed, delivered, funded and governed until 2023.

The ABGC board's proposal to government consists of a phasing in of industry contributions over the 4 year period.

The board believes the most appropriate method to fund this investment is through the existing PHA levy, without raising the cost of this levy to growers.

When the PHA levy was increased to 0.5c/kg in 2016, ABGC gave growers a commitment that this would be regularly reviewed. As part of that process, we have asked all growers to consider sharing their thoughts on the use of this levy to fund the continued TR4 Program.

Currently banana growers pay a total of 2.94c/kg in levies, including the PHA levy. However, this will drop to 2.19c/kg from July 1, when the Emergency Plant Pest Response levy for Banana Freckle comes to an end.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank growers for their general positive response to this plan and their acknowledgement that while Panama TR4 so far has been contained to a relatively small area in Far North Queensland, slowing the inevitable spread of this disease is beneficial to the banana industry as a whole.

The efforts of industry, government, community and researchers in minimising the spread of this devastating disease have been world class. No other country with Panama TR4 has had the same success in containing the disease as we have here in North Queensland.

But, the reality is that Panama TR4 is here to stay and it will eventually spread. Therefore, planning for the future is critical.

**Growers who wish to discuss the issue further or give additional feedback can contact ABGC on 07 3278 4786 or via email to the CEO – [jim.pekin@abgc.org.au](mailto:jim.pekin@abgc.org.au).**

## Congress

It's a little over one month now until the Australian Banana Industry Congress 2019 is hosted at Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast.

Registration numbers so far are excellent and if you haven't registered yet, I'd urge all growers to consider attending Congress from May 22-24.

The program is quite different to previous years and has been tailor-made to ensure growers walk away from the two-day event with plenty of learnings and innovative ideas they can take back to their farms.

Personally, I find Congress a great chance to catch up with other growers and get away from the farm for a few days of R&R. So hopefully I'll see you on the Gold Coast next month!



Federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources David Littleproud was briefed on issues facing the Australian banana industry during a trip to Far North Queensland in March. Mr Littleproud visited the Mackay's Bolinda farm, listening to various industry concerns including continued funding for research into TR4 resistant varieties as well as feral pig control in TR4 infected areas and high risk zones. Pictured (L-R) Robert Mackay, Gavin Mackay, Minister Littleproud, ABGC Chair Stephen Lowe, Barrie Mackay and LNP Candidate for Kennedy Frank Beveridge.



# MORT JOHNSTON SCHOLAR SETS SIGHTS ON FUTURE

**Nicola MacKay might be wrapping up her stint as the Mort Johnston scholar, but it's likely this won't be the last time you read about her in the Australian Bananas magazine.**

The past twelve months of industry experience have only enhanced her passion for bananas, giving her an insight into both biosecurity and plant breeding.

"I've been privileged to spend time with both Howe Farming and Mac Farms, participating in a range of activities including sorting and clustering, stringing, packing, agronomic activities and tissue culture," Ms MacKay said.

"I was able to further my knowledge in processes relating to biosecurity and the sampling of plants, as well as seeing first-hand the devastation and potential of Panama tropical race 4."

Ms MacKay, who was eligible for the scholarship through her study at the University of Queensland, examined current TR4 management techniques, focussing on prevention and limiting the spread.

She also investigated current research in this space, particularly work that has looked at introducing single-gene resistance into Cavendish cultivars.

"This could be viewed as a major area for a young person coming into the industry to develop further – not only to find a resistant variety but one that has good agronomic traits," she said.



Mort Johnston scholar Nicola MacKay on site in her role at Costa Farms.

At Howe Farming, she had first-hand experience of the entire tissue culture process: "From retrieving the core of the banana plant in the paddock, to the protocol in the lab of washing and decontamination, before plating to grow."

Ms MacKay is currently working as an agronomist on avocados with Costa Farms and will venture into bananas soon.

"I would highly recommend the Mort Johnston Scholarship for young people coming into the banana industry," she said.

"I am looking forward to working in this industry among others who work tirelessly for a brighter future."

Ms MacKay thanked the Johnston family and the Australian Banana Growers' Council for the opportunity.

Details about the Mort Johnston scholarship can be found on the ABGC's website [www.abgc.org.au](http://www.abgc.org.au).

## SWEETER STARS AT WA FESTIVAL

**The Sweeter Banana Co-Operative took centre stage at Western Australia's largest free community festival in March.**

More than 100,000 people were expected to take part in the much-loved Mandurah CrabFest – and plenty of those got a taste of the famous Carnarvon bananas.

The Sweeter team were on hand to hand out samples and answer questions, as well as supplying produce for the Coles - Buy West Eat Best Cooking Stage, where WA's Food Ambassador Don Hancey cooked up a storm.



Celebrity chef Ben O'Donoghue was among those who tried the tasty bananas.  
Image: Sweeter Banana Co-operative



WA Food Ambassador Don Hancey stops by the Sweeter marquee.  
Image: Sweeter Banana Co-Operative

# VALE VICKY KIPPIN-O'CONNOR



Vicky Kippin O'Connor was a fourth generation primary producer and studied agriculture as a foundation student of James Cook University.

## The banana industry farewelled longtime industry advocate Vicky Kippin-O'Connor last month, remembering her for her dedication and commitment to bananas.

A fourth generation primary producer, Vicky was well-respected and well-known for going above and beyond during her time serving as a Director and President of the Australian Banana Growers' Council from the late 1990s until 2007.

"She put in a lot of effort," said Len Collins, who she replaced as Chair when he took over the Imports Committee.

Mrs Kippin-O'Connor, well-known in Innisfail and Far North Queensland, sadly passed away on March 24.

She served as a director of ABGC for a number of

years, including a stint as President, and spent 25 years in public office, as a Member of Parliament, a Local Authority councillor and as the Northern Australia Development Council administrator.

A fourth generation primary producer, she came from a large farming family based in the Burdekin.

"I think her main contribution was when the Black Sigatoka outbreak came," Mr Collins reflected.

"Vicky put her whole life into it. Every day, she was working with growers or the DPI – she really did put a tremendous effort in."

Patrick Leahy succeeded Mrs Kippin-O'Connor as ABGC Chair. He joined the Banana Sectional Group Committee (Growcom) when she was chair, a position she held through to 2003 when the statutory levy ended.

At that point, Mr Leahy explained, ABGC only had two members – one was the banana committee from NSW and the banana committee from Queensland, which came from that sectional committee.

"At my first meeting I was elected to go onto the ABGC, which I did with Vicky," he said.

He described Vicky as very industry focused, noting she also gave time to other industry-related groups including as chair of Freshcare.

"She was very thorough and gave her everything," he said.

Mrs Kippin-O'Connor received a Banana Industry Award of Honour in 2009 for her contribution to the industry at a state and national level.

She was farewelled at a funeral in Innisfail on April 2.

## FOODBANK KEEN TO HEAR FROM GROWERS

**If you've got fruit that doesn't quite hit the mark for your normal retail avenues, or are looking for a great way to give back to the wider community, consider directing your perfectly edible fruit to Foodbank Australia to help feed hungry Aussies.**

The Foodbank Hunger Report 2018 highlighted more than four million Australians have experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months. Foodbank provides food relief to over 710,000 Australians every month, but only 36% of charities are currently meeting the full needs of the people they assist – many in regional or rural areas. Demand truly outweighs supply with the team always in need of donations, and tasty and nutritious bananas are very welcome.

While Foodbank currently has active banana sourcing programs in Queensland and NSW, the team are keen to ensure they can deliver fruit right across the country. If you'd like to discuss donating, on any scale, contact National Program Manager Jacqui Payne [jacqui@foodbank.org.au](mailto:jacqui@foodbank.org.au).

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## BANANA LEVY RATE TO DECREASE FROM 1 JULY 2019

The components of the Banana Industry Levy are currently as follows, and ABGC has requested the Australian Government to remove the 0.75c/kg Freckle levy from 1 July 2019.

Levy Amount	Purpose
0.75c /kg	Emergency Plant Pest Response (EPPR): For repayment of the industry's share of the cost of the national Banana Freckle eradication program in the NT.
0.50c /kg*	Plant Health Australia (PHA) levy: Mostly to repay the industry's share of the costs of buying the first TR4 infested farm in Tully
1.69c /kg	R&D and Marketing: 0.54 c/ Kg for R&D and 1.15 c/kg for Marketing
<b>Total = 2.94c /kg**</b>	

\*\* This will be 2.19c/kg from 1 July 2019.

In December 2018, ABGC formally asked the Australian Minister for Agriculture to change the regulation so that the Freckle Levy of 0.75c/kg is reduced to zero from 1 July 2019. This will save banana growers 0.75c/kg.

This means that on 1 July 2019 the total compulsory Levy will be reduced from 2.94c/ kg (44.1c per 15kg carton) to 2.19c/kg (32.85c per 15kg carton) – a reduction of 0.75c/kg (or 11.25c less per 15kg carton).

\* The current total rate has been in place since 1 April 2017 when the PHA levy rate was increased to its current (0.5c/kg) rate to repay the industry's share of the costs of buying and maintaining the first TR4 infested farm in Tully. Prior to that increase, there was a small amount of levy (0.0103c/Kg) set by Regulation to pay for the pre-existing commitments – Torres Strait Exotic Fruit Flies Eradication Response, PHA membership and Government levy collection.

Formal advice on banana levies can be seen at this link - <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates/bananas>

**Further information:**  
**Jim Pekin, CEO, ABGC**  
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**Phone - 07 3278 4786**

# CASSOWARIES BENEFIT FROM PIG CONTROL

**A reduction in feral pig numbers in the Cassowary Coast is contributing to a rise in the region's iconic, namesake bird.**

The Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) is leading a coordinated feral pig management effort, which involves aerial shooting, as well as ground shooting, baiting, trapping and exclusion fencing.

Since 1 July 2017, more than 3700 pigs have been culled on the top of Tully Gorge.

The primary reason for the feral pig program is to reduce the risk of feral pigs spreading Panama tropical race 4.

However, an unexpected bonus has been an increase in sightings of cassowaries in the target area.

"It's a great side-effect of the program," said ABGC deputy chair Leon Collins, who established and co-ordinated the aerial shooting campaign.

"Not only has it discouraged illegal hunters and their dogs from entering the area, but it's reduced the number of pigs eating cassowary eggs too.

"As for the effect on banana plantations – most people had no idea of the level of pig pressure we were under before July last year.

"In the first three months we took out almost 700 pigs and we are still getting fairly big numbers."



## DEFENCE TARGETING PIGS IN TULLY

**The Department of Defence advised that they commenced a program of night shooting on their Tully lands to help control feral pigs in late March.**

The program will run until June and follows a series of discussions between Defence and the Australian Banana Growers' Council.

Feral pigs are a known vector of Panama tropical race 4.

Defence is funding this activity and will report on its effectiveness to the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Feral Pig Management Strategy Executive Oversight Committee (of which the ABGC is part).



# BOARD VISIT TO COFFS



Pictured (L-R) ABGC Directors Tom Day, Leon Collins, Stephen Lowe (chair), Paul Inderbitzin, Stephen Spear and Coffs grower Mick Gentle.

ABGC directors and senior staff travelled to Coffs Harbour in late February to meet with local growers and hold their quarterly board meeting.

A tour of three banana farms and the Oz Group pack house was conducted during the visit, giving directors the opportunity to hear growers' issues and concerns, which included the Coffs by-pass proposal and HARPS auditing.

The board continues to work through these issues in consultation with NSW growers and thanked those who made time to meet with directors and staff during their visit to the region. Growers and the ABGC also caught up at an informal dinner, pictures on page 42.

## GO BANANAS AT COFFS SHOW

**Entries are now open for the banana exhibit at the 2019 Coffs Harbour Show (May 17-19.)**

There are a range of categories to enter across Cavendish, Lady Fingers and Ducasse, with thousands of dollars in prizes up for grabs.

On top of this, it's a great way to support the banana industry and promote local produce to the community.

More information and entry forms can be found online at [www.coffsharbourshowsociety.com.au](http://www.coffsharbourshowsociety.com.au), or in hard copy at the Show Society Office, Norco, Golden Dawn and Lindsay Rural.

Entry forms must be submitted no later than 5pm, May 15.

## MAKE THE CALL ABOUT MOVING PLANT MATERIAL

Queensland growers concerned about the movement of planting material between farms, increasing the risk of spreading TR4, are reminded that they can report this activity to Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**.

Using clean planting material is critical to reducing the spread of Panama disease tropical race 4, banana bunchy top virus and other pests and diseases.

For more information, visit the ABGC website. You can also find out more about using clean planting material in the Banana Industry Biosecurity Guideline.



# NATIONAL BANANA DAY



**If you're reading Australian Bananas magazine, chances are you celebrate the much-loved fruit on a daily basis.**

But on May 1, the rest of the country is getting on board for National Banana Day - an initiative of the team at Australian Bananas. It's about supporting the industry and the people who make it tick, by ensuring bananas are top of mind for all consumers.

#### **National Banana Day will involve four core activities:**

- **PR/Media Engagement:** Inviting media to National Banana Day, nutrition-based segments on morning television, banana drops to media
- **Retailer Engagement:** Seeking out partnership opportunities with key retailers

- **Grower Profiles:** Sharing the stories of growers in local and national media

- **Day of Celebration:** Celebrating at the Big Banana in Coffs Harbour on May 1, with ambassadors Billy Slater and Susie Burrell

The Australian Bananas team will also be hosting a social media competition for Australia's youngest 'Banana-ologist', a quest to find a young banana lover who can show the world how bananas power their day.

On top of this, fitness buffs and active families in Sydney will also benefit from a Banana bootcamp, where participants will tackle burpees while they learn about banana health benefits.

In fact, health will be a key focus with leading

dietician and Australian Bananas ambassador Susie Burrell excited to be on board.

"Australian Bananas have a wide range of nutritional benefits – packed with natural carbohydrates, vitamin B6 and potassium, making them ideal in combating muscle fatigue and enhancing optimal brain function," she said.

Hort Innovation Marketing Lead, Elisa King said: "Australian Bananas are encouraging all Aussies to 'Peel Good, Feel Good' on May 1 by grabbing a banana from their nearest store."

"Supporting Australian growers is important to fostering the industry and ensuring we continue to provide Australians with the highest quality produce," she said.





# BEND IT LIKE BROTHERS

Stuart (left) and Angus on their family's Tully banana farm.

**If you ever have any doubts about the future of the banana industry, sit down and have a chat to Gilbert brothers, Stuart and Angus. You will quickly learn the future is certainly bright, with these two young guns showing how it's done on their family's Far North Queensland farm.**

*By Sonia Campbell*

To their mates, Stuart and Angus Gilbert are most likely just typical teenage boys.

But, on their family's Tully banana farm, they are the epitome of fourth generation farming prodigy.

At just 18 and 15 years of age, the young brothers can cut, hump and pack a banana bunch faster and "better than most" twice their age, according to their grandfather Paul.

It's little wonder though, when Mr Gilbert tells how his grandsons' have followed in their father's footsteps on the farm, since they could walk.

"They've been going out and working on the farm since they were in nappies. They probably didn't do much at first, but they still went out with their dad on the farm to work," Mr Gilbert recounts.

Sit down and chat with Stuart and Angus and there is no denying they have a genuine love of farming – and their knowledge of the industry is well beyond their years.

Stuart – the eldest of six siblings - has been working full-time on the family farm for the past three years. Angus will join him full-time, after finishing school at the end of this year.

"It's what I've wanted to do since I was young. Our grandparents, great grandparents have all had

farms at some point in their lives. It's always been there," Stuart said.

"I just love everything about it. Everything about it," Angus adds.

There's no shortage of sibling rivalry when out in the paddock together, with the pair constantly trying to out-do one another.

"We're always trying to beat each other. Just trying to have bragging rights I guess," Stuart said. Angus nodded in agreement.

The boys' father, Stuart (Snr) said he's extremely proud of his sons' achievements on the farm and that he'd always hoped his children would want a farming life.

"But in saying that, I would also be supportive of anything that they chose to do."

Stuart (Snr) said both the boys had been taught every aspect of working the farm and the business as a whole, but it's something they had wanted to learn about from a very young age.

"They are dedicated and extremely keen. Saturday mornings, Sunday mornings, they are there (on the farm) rain, hail or shine. There is no slacking with them.

"Angus, every afternoon after school, he'll come

home, quickly have something to eat and then he goes straight down to the shed and starts packing bananas.

"Every facet of the farm they can do. They can do just about anything, and to a big degree, they can do it as good as any man. They are young, but they learnt young."

Stuart (Jnr) acknowledged that it was important to gain an understanding of all elements of the business, from the paddock to the pack house.

"I guess it's all important to get to the end product. If everything is not right, then it costs you in the quality of the bunch," he said.

Not surprisingly, the boys prefer the more active jobs. Angus admitting he's even tried skipping school to get out in the paddock.

"My favourite part is probably cutting bunches and packing. I've only really started doing that since I was 14," Angus said.

"Generally you have to be more experienced to do the cutting. But we do it," Stuart (Jnr) said.

Both the boys see a long-term future in farming, with them both acknowledging that they'd like to "keep expanding it and hopefully pass the knowledge on to our kids one day".

# COFFS GROWERS CONTINUE BYPASS BATTLE



**For 15 years banana growers in Coffs have faced an uncertain future over the proposed \$1 billion Coffs Harbour bypass project, first mooted in 2004. Today, they continue to fight tooth and nail, to ensure the best outcome is achieved for local farmers.**

**By Sonia Campbell**

Coffs banana growers are continuing to maintain pressure over the proposed Coffs Harbour bypass project, in an attempt to minimise the impact the roadworks will have on their farming.

In the 14 years since the preferred bypass route was confirmed, up to a dozen banana farmers have left the industry, choosing to walk away from properties in the direct path of the 14km project, rather than re-establish on farming land elsewhere.

One of those spearheading the on-going campaign to ensure tunnels are built into the bypass, instead of large open 'cuttings', is banana grower and NSW Farmers Coffs Harbour Branch secretary Paul Shoker.

Mr Shoker's family-owned Gatelys Road property is also in the direct path of the bypass. While he and his family have spent 15 years preparing for the significant transport project - buying a second farm to re-establish their operations on - he said the roadworks would still have a significant impact on most remaining farms.

"Generally, I don't think farmers should get in the way of progress, it's a major transport link and it's going to benefit everyone," Mr Shoker said. "However remaining farms will be impacted by

roadworks particularly if they choose cuttings over tunnels."

"Deep cuttings, which will require significant earthworks - changing the hills and landscape - have the potential to change the whole micro-climate of the area, including wind direction, noise and the overall environment that we grow in."

"The result is likely to be exposure to severe winds, evaporation and reduced crop yields."

Farming in the local valley generates between \$10-\$15 million annually in economic activity for the area. It's a figure Mr Shoker has highlighted consistently during a lengthy community-driven campaign to lobby government to reintroduce original tunnel options to the bypass plan, arguing that cuttings would result in significant economic losses.

## Political pressure

In January 2019, following intense public pressure from local action groups, the NSW State Government announced that tunnels were back on the table in the bypass design.

Now, with a Federal election looming, lobby groups have set their sights on all Federal candidates in the Coffs-based Cowper electorate, seeking

commitments by major parties to bipartisan support for the tunnel option.

The Federal Government is a major player in the bypass proposal, as it will fund 80 per cent of the \$1 billion project.

"We can't change the route, so it's up to grower groups to ensure the next best outcome is achieved," Mr Shoker said.

## Moving forward

While the level of impact from the bypass project on local banana growers will be dependent on a final 'Tunnels vs Cuttings' decision, Mr Shoker said industry would adapt, as it had done since the project was first mooted.

"I'd say growers are quite resilient. We've been through a lot, but the growers that have survived will continue," he said.

"We will stabilise. We are going to lose a couple more farms, but we will diversify. There is interest from growers in putting in other varieties such as Lady Finger and Ducasse, more cold tolerant."

Kaye Adriaansz, business manager of Golden Dawn, which supplies locally grown fruit and vegetables to the major and independent supermarkets on the mid-north coast of NSW, as well as central markets



in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne & Adelaide, said the 30 year-old company had also had to make modifications to compensate for losses in banana supply, including diversification.

"We definitely have had to diversify. We have moved into expanding the blueberry range and reach, because obviously that has taken off in the Coffs Harbour area," Mrs Adriaansz said.

"There is no stopping it (the bypass), the route has been planned for 15 or more years. We are not sure at this stage whether the growers will go and find land elsewhere and replant. They've accepted that it has to happen one day, but I think once all the machinery moves in, that it will be a different story. That's when it finally becomes a reality for their lifestyles and livelihoods."



Paul Shoker discussed local industry concerns, including the bypass proposal, with ABGC directors at Coffs in late February.

# FAREWELLING A FARMING LEGACY



David Pike on the verandah of his home which is in the direct path of the Coffs bypass.



David as a young boy with his dad on the farm.



David's grandfather Jack in early days on the farm.

**By Sonia Campbell**

**The Coffs Highway bypass project might well be a fait accompli.**

**But, talk to the likes of third generation banana grower David Pike, and the raw reality of 'making way for progress' really sinks in.**

His sprawling 50 acre banana farm sits in the direct diagonal path of current bypass modelling.

When the new transport link eventually pushes through, it's likely he'll not only lose his beloved family home, he'll also farewell almost 100 years of Pike family farming.

"Initially it was a really heartbreaking period. We thought, what have we been working for? Is nothing we do important?" Mr Pike said.

"We were told that we shouldn't worry, because we are all hobby farmers and tree huggers. It was a real kick in the guts in that respect. That what we do on the coast doesn't matter.

"It was a real rough period for me. That we had nothing to fight for."

Mr Pike's grandfather Jack originally purchased the family farm in the 1920s. His father Glen (best known as Mick) followed in his footsteps. Today, Mr Pike has children of his own, however, they won't be continuing the family's farming legacy.

"Our children were babies when we first knew about it (the bypass) and they grew up knowing that there was nothing for them to inherit," he said.

"It was always known that one day the RMS (Roads and Maritime Services) would end up getting this farm."

Mr Pike has yet to negotiate with the government over the future of his farm, however it's almost certain he'll seek a complete buyout.

"The final design for the highway is literally still being drawn up now. The house will almost certainly be unliveable and key infrastructure, sheds, dams severely affected. It's not even

Australian Banana Growers' Council's board of directors met with Coffs banana growers to discuss concerns over the by-pass link, during a number of NSW farm visits in February.

The ABGC Board offered its support to growers and committed to lobbying on their behalf. ABGC has since written to the Coffs Harbour City Council and the NSW Transport Minister to reiterate grower-related issues and concerns.

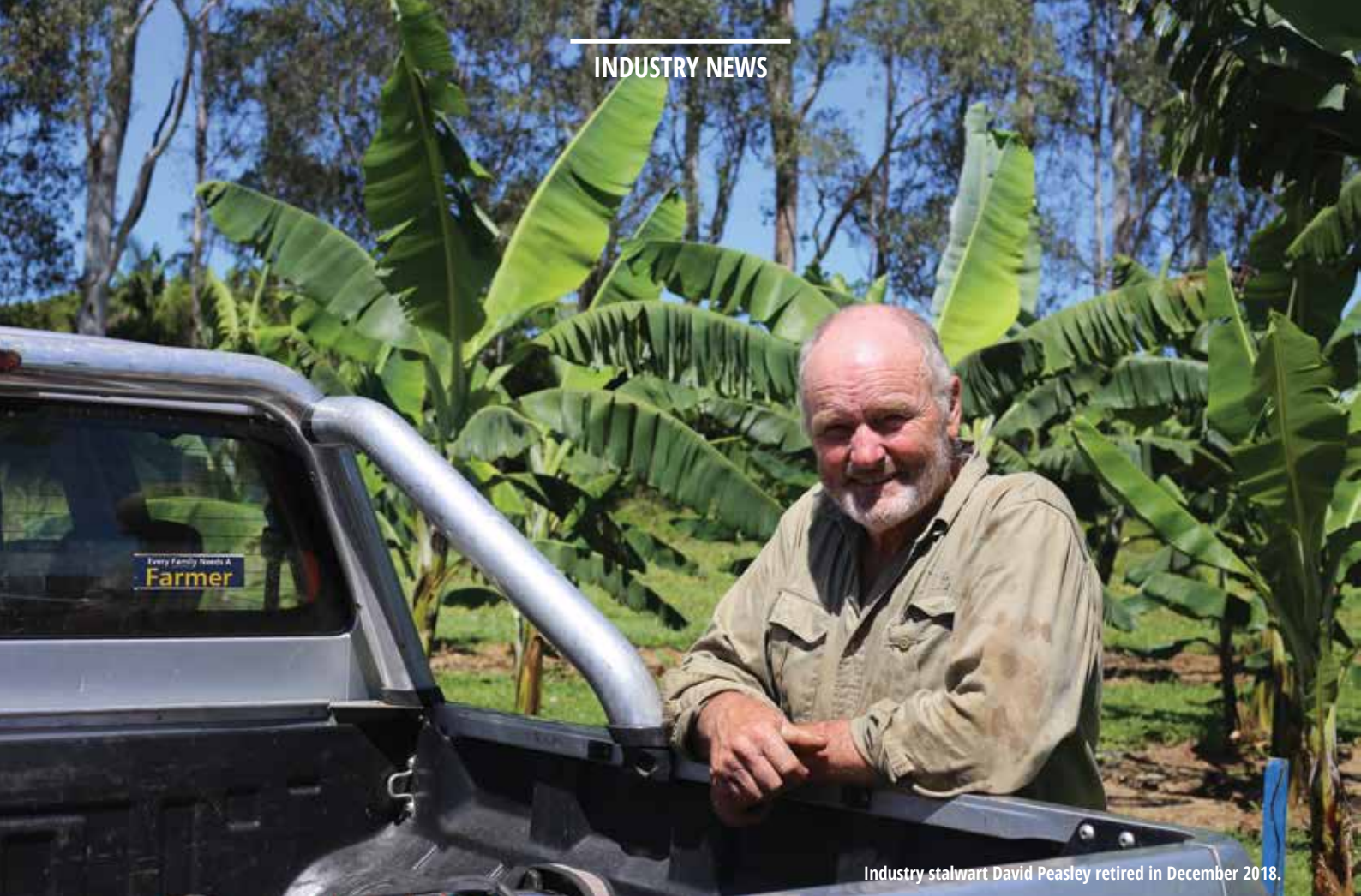
possible to say that there will be enough farm left to bother farming with, so we're planning on a total acquisition."

For now, he says he's not sure what the future holds, come the day he is forced to walk away.

"I really have no idea. Part of me says, yes I can start retirement, but I'm not one to sit down, so I'll need a shed somewhere to bang around in."

Perhaps the shed can accommodate the many old photographs which currently adorn the walls of Mr Pike's home, capturing early days on the family farm. Among them, Mr Pike as a child, following his grandfather and father around the banana plantations and enjoying everyday farming life.

"They're a part of my past. I have a giggle at some of those sometimes. I hate to think I was born in the horse and cart days! But they'll find a new space to hang when we go. Who knows where that will be."



Industry stalwart David Peasley retired in December 2018.

# DAVID DEPARTS AFTER DECADES OF SERVICE

**Amy Spear caught up with David Peasley in his final weeks at the Duranbah trial site in Northern New South Wales.**

After almost fifty years in the banana industry, David Peasley knows there's a lot to love about the golden fruit and the people behind it.

Announcing his retirement at the end of 2018, he acknowledged he'll miss many aspects of the business – including growers, researchers and Bunchy Top inspectors.

"I've had a terrific experience with the banana industry," he said. "It's been my favourite industry, despite a couple of hiccups – and I suppose you've got to expect that in your career!"

David began his time in bananas working on a farm in Mooball, New South Wales. It was the farm owner's passion for nutrition that inspired David to take the next step, heading to ag college where he wrote his thesis on cultural management of bananas on the Tweed.

The rest, as they say, is history.

David worked tirelessly over the years for the industry – a feat that is acknowledged by many growers and industry representatives.

Northern New South Wales grower Peter Molenaar said the industry had benefited from David's passion during his time as District Horticulturalist, Consultant and in various Project Management positions.

"He is well known for not giving up and achieving positive outcomes," he said.

"I have had the pleasure of working with David on a number of projects over the years.

"The standout has to be the way in which he instilled attitudinal change into growers' psych in their quest to rid the area of Banana Bunch Top Virus."

Peter described David's evaluation and communication skills as 'invaluable' to the industry.

"I thank David for sharing his vast library of knowledge to make our industry a more sustainable one."

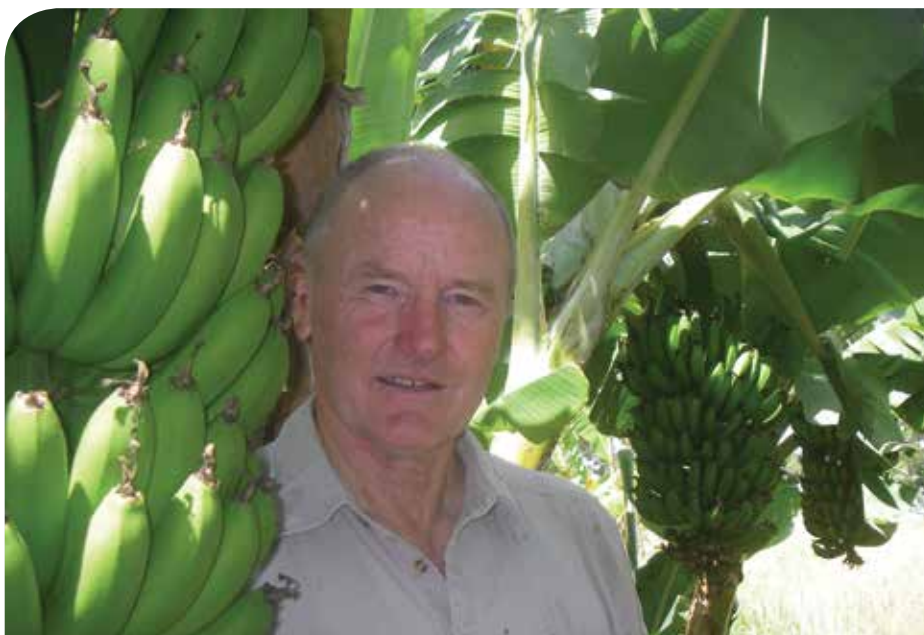
Like any new kid on the block, David admits he faced some skeptics when he started approaching growers at the beginning of his career.

"It takes a fair bit of time to win their confidence," he said.

"They're hardworking and tend to be cynical – and I was in government. But I think if you get your head down, show an interest, and know your stuff, you do get respect."

And it's not just the people growing bananas that have become, in many cases, firm friends.





Getting among the fruits of his labour in 2013.



David judging bananas at the EKKA in 2008.

The industry's dedicated researchers have also impressed David throughout his extensive career.

"I think the banana industry has some of the best research support in the world. The plant pathologists in Australia are admired internationally and people should appreciate this. When I've hosted visitors, they speak in awe of our scientists."

It's a feeling that is mutual, with Professor Andre Drenth, of the University of Queensland, summing up David as someone with deep know-how of banana cultivation, combined with an energetic approach to deliver practical outcomes.

"David has a unique combination of industry insight and practical knowledge, which he has always shared with researchers and growers for the benefit of the banana industry," he said.

"There is never a dull moment when you are around David."

David Peasley was instrumental in the industry's fight against Philippine banana imports, serving on the risk analysis panel for eight years.

"There were some very trying times in that," he acknowledged. "I wasn't allowed to engage with industry and I had to maintain confidence in Canberra."

He described the time as a real eye opener about what happens 'behind the scenes' and eventually voiced his objection to two senate inquiry findings on the topic.

"I'm glad I stood up, but that was at a lot of personal cost to myself and my family. In the end, we won out and Philippines bananas were kept out of Australia."

One of the other key challenges in David's career played out in 2016.

The year marked the end of his long-time association with the Bunchy Top Project.

A tough but critical project, David acknowledged there were always people who didn't agree with what was happening.

"But I think in the end, growers knew that if they didn't control Bunchy Top, they wouldn't be in business. To the credit of ABGC, the growers up north, and those around Coffs Harbour, they could see that if Bunchy Top wasn't controlled here [in Northern NSW], it could destroy the industry."

While not without its challenges, David sees a bright future for the industry he gave so much of his life to.

"I think there's some really exciting things happening," he said. "You can see some of them here [at the Duranbah Trial Site]."

He's hopeful the industry's focus will expand to include more than just Cavendish. He'd like to see a range of bananas available to consumers who are browsing grocery stores.

"Sooner or later, a major change is needed," he said, noting the variety that is already available in other fresh food categories like apples, potatoes and peaches.

"The demand is there. Consumers are missing out on some fantastic flavours and alternative uses – like cooking and processing, or even as a replacement for potatoes."

David is also keen to see a united, industry-driven focus for bananas into the future.

"It's an Australian banana industry," he said. "We simply can't afford to fight among ourselves."

So after five decades, and countless stories, one might question whether David Peasley will be able to step away from an industry he's been so involved in.

"My wife says yes," he laughed.

# TWEED GROWER TAKES ON TRIAL SITE



Zac McKeever, who grows bananas in the Tweed area, is now working at the Duranbah trial site.



The trial site is a tour option at the 2019 Australian Banana Industry Congress.

**By Matt Weinert and Amy Spear**

**A local banana grower with a scientific background has taken the reins at the Duranbah trial site.**

Zac McKeever, who has been growing his own bananas in the Tweed area of New South Wales for two and a half years, took over management following David Peasley's retirement in December.

"It's been hectic lately with the blow [winds from Cyclone Oma in late February] and getting used to the new role, but it's all settling down now and seems to be working well," Mr McKeever said.

"It's a great opportunity to continue working in the banana industry."

Mr McKeever – who began a degree Photonics and Nanoscience before deciding to something more manual – lost a couple of hundred plants on his own block in strong winds caused by Oma. However, his efforts in holding up the bananas at the site in Duranbah meant they only lost two plants in the best bets trial.

When he's not bracing for wild weather, work on the trial site includes general upkeep, as well as

collecting growth data like bunch dates and heights with NSW DPI Industry Development Officer Matt Weinert.

"At the moment I'm bagging bunches in the Best Bets trial. These are the varieties selected by the Banana Plant Protection Program that showed superior disease resistance," Mr McKeever explained.

"These varieties are ready to undergo semi-commercial testing, develop postharvest handling and ripening procedures and consumer acceptance testing.

"We need to make sure that people are happy to eat the fruit, because even if the variety performs well in the field, if it's not accepted by consumers, it's not worth growing!"

The work at Duranbah is part of the national project called 'Improved plant protection for the banana industry' that is addressing pest and disease issues. This site is one of three across Australia (the others being South Johnstone in Queensland and Coastal Plains in the Northern Territory) that are investigating new banana varieties, with Duranbah

having a primary focus on Panama disease Race 1 and cold tolerance.

Those attending the 2019 Australian Banana Industry Congress will have the chance to explore the Duranbah trial site and Mr McKeever's work first hand, if they choose to take part in a site tour to Northern NSW (Wednesday 22 May).

"The trial site really is well worth seeing. It's the only Panama race 1 trial in Australia, so it's very important – particularly in this area where that disease is a big issue," he said.

"We have 16 varieties, sourced locally and from international programs, we're testing for Panama race 1 resistance.

"We'll also still have some plants in the agronomy block, where we collected the original data for the plants that ended up in the best bets trial, so growers will be able to see these and other varieties on their 4th and 5th ratoons."

More information on Congress Site Tours can be found at [www.bananacongress.org.au/site-tours](http://www.bananacongress.org.au/site-tours)



# OMA BATTERS NORTHERN NSW FARM



Tweed grower Colin Singh, pictured in 2018, has been hit by a number of severe weather events.



Scenes of devastation following severe winds at the Singh's farm in Northern New South Wales.

**By Amy Spear**

**Colin Singh's love of bananas is well known.**

**He's the president of the Tweed BGA, always happy to show people around his farm, and keen to promote the industry in any way he can.**

And it's probably that love that will keep him going, despite being hit by two severe storms in three years.

Most recently, in late February, Colin and his family lost 95 per cent of their bananas to strong winds associated with Cyclone Oma.

While Oma didn't make landfall, she could be felt along the Northern New South Wales and South East Queensland coast, with many growers bracing for damage.

However, while some other damage was recorded, it seems the Singh farm at Cudgen copped the brunt of this weather event.

"These sorts of things are supposed to make you stronger," Colin said. "But you do wonder 'why me?' You can't think too negatively though, because you'll talk yourself out of doing it."

Colin, who also works away from his farm, estimates he won't harvest again until about this time in 2020.

"You've still got to pay your mortgage and your lease," he said. "I was hoping I could build it [the banana business] up so I didn't have to go away to work. Everything was looking really good this year."

The winds, at about 80/km per hour, snapped thousands of stools, with bunches left lying on the ground.

"There wasn't many bags left hanging, that's for sure."

The winds were so strong that some of the followers were also twisted. Thankfully some of the Singh's other varieties – including plantains – were left standing, though they didn't have as many of those planted.

Needless to say, Colin is hoping the next few years will be more favourable weather-wise, as he's not sure how he'll cope if another big storm takes out their crops.

"You put so much time, money and effort into it, but it's a gamble," he said.

"In some ways it's like raising a kid – you can't give it up, no matter how much you feel like throwing it in."



# GOLDFINGER MUTAGENESIS – ELITE TASTING SELECTIONS TO BE PROPAGATED FOR DETAILED EVALUATIONS

*By Katie Ferro, Jeff Daniells, Massimo Bianco and Sharon Hamill, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries*

**The results are in and the most promising candidates have been selected for stage two of the Goldfinger Mutagenesis studies. From the original 630 irradiated plants, 20 elite variants were chosen based on their strong performance in taste-testing sessions along with favourable agronomic characteristics.**

The Panama disease resistant variety Goldfinger was commercially released more than 20 years ago. It had some initial success in the marketplace but eventually it failed commercially so far as the big supermarkets were concerned. Some blamed the lack of continuous market-end support for the fruit. Others claimed it failed to appeal to consumers – not being able to compete with Williams or Lady Finger when it came to taste.

But with the ongoing threat of TR4 spreading further in north Queensland, disease resistant varieties are seen by many as an important part of ensuring the sustainability of the banana industry. The aim of this trial has been to take a variety like Goldfinger, with known TR4 resistance, and create variants with improved eating characteristics via gamma irradiation.

After spending the first half of 2018 examining the variation exhibited in plant and bunch characteristics, the trial plants were harvested between July and December. Fruit from each plant was ripened at the South Johnstone Research Station and the postharvest characteristics were examined. The range of characteristics measured included fruit size and shape, any abnormalities, as well as fruit sugar content (°Brix) and acidity (titratable).

Taste-testing sessions, which involved staff tasting fruit and answering a short questionnaire, were conducted at the research station. Panellists were asked to rate the overall eating experience on a standard 9-point hedonic scale, and comments were sought on the relative sweetness, tartness, firmness, creaminess and how mucilaginous (slimy/sticky texture) the samples were. They were also asked whether they would purchase the banana if it were commercially available (yes/no). In general, the variants that rated better than the standard Goldfinger controls were favoured because of their relatively firmer texture.

After combining the postharvest results with the data collected on agronomic performance, we have chosen 20 elite variants to carry onto stage two of the study. The majority of the selected variants are also different in fruit appearance to the unirradiated Goldfinger controls.

Sucker and bit material will be prepared from these selected plants after the wet season with the aim to establish 10 plants of each in the field. Material will also be sent to Sharon Hamill and her team at the Maroochy Research Facility to go back into tissue culture. Plantlets will then be sent to the Northern Territory to be screened against TR4 to ensure that the original resistance of Goldfinger has been retained.

In the middle of 2020, when the new planting of the elite Goldfinger selections has bunched, we will organise a field walk at the South Johnstone Research Station for growers to check out these new varieties along with an opportunity to taste them.



**Volunteer taste-testers at the South Johnstone Research Station answering a questionnaire to assist with the selection of elite varieties.**

**Two of the better tasting selections being multiplied.**

**For more information about the Goldfinger mutagenesis studies see Australian Bananas Vol 53 pp. 14-15 and the Better Bananas website <https://betterbananas.com.au/2018/04/17/gctcv119-mutagenesis-work-2/>**



# WANTED, DEAD OR ALIVE - GROUND COVERS

By Tony Pattison, DAF South Johnstone

Organic matter plays an important role in maintaining the physical, chemical and biological health of soils, and is a key component in developing disease suppressive, productive banana soils. Retaining organic ground cover on the soil surface is one of the ways of increasing organic matter inputs, as well as protecting the soil surface from erosion - keeping the soil on the farm. Maintaining grass in the interrow is common for many north Queensland banana plantations, but is it possible to increase the amount of cover in banana plantations around the base of banana plants, effectively leaving no bare soil?

When it comes to using ground covers, banana farmers have a choice of using living ground covers by selecting low growing species, or using mulches like hay applied to the surface of the soil. Both methods can protect the soil surface from the impact of rainfall, reducing erosion from around the plant. The benefits of living ground cover or surface applied mulch are;

- **Physical improvements in soil properties**
  - better soil temperature regulation
  - reduced water evaporation from the soil surface
  - increased water infiltration into the soil
  - increased soil aggregate stability and
  - reduced erosion from the planting bed
- **Chemical improvements in soil properties**
  - increased organic matter
- increased nutrient retention and recycling
- increased pH buffering
- **Biological improvements in soil properties**
  - increased soil biological activity and diversity
  - suppression of plant-parasitic nematodes
  - suppression of weeds
  - increased numbers of beneficial insects

However, there are management implications that need to be considered when implementing ground covers around the base of banana plants. Some of the management implications that should be considered are listed below;

## LIVING GROUND COVER

### Management advantages

- are grown on site and self-sustaining
- reduce herbicide use
- reduce wheels ruts
- give under canopy cooling
- reduce mite activity

### Management disadvantages

- require mowing
- cause plant competition with bananas
- take time to establish
- may increase vermin
- interfere with micro-sprinklers
- can cause field worker discomfort

## MULCHES

### Management advantages

- reduce herbicide use
- increase water retention
- can be spread mechanically

### Management disadvantages

- require importing
- are costly
- need replacing periodically
- can introduce weeds

The choice of which method is most appropriate for your farm depends of the availability of water, with mulches more suited to dry environments - like the Tablelands - and living ground covers to wet environments like the wet tropical coast.



Pinto peanuts used as a living ground cover established on a commercial banana plantation amongst Lady Finger bananas.



Naturalised low growing grasses allowed to grow from the interrow into the banana row to provide a living ground cover.



Dirty water leaving bananas with no ground cover after heavy rainfall and mixing with cleaner water from an area with grassed ground cover.



Grass hay mulch spread around banana plants to suppress weeds, reduce the need for herbicides and retain soil moisture.

# HITTING THE RIGHT SPOT WITH LEAF DISEASE MANAGEMENT



Retired Yellow Sigatoka Liaison Officer Louis Lardi.

## Integrated management of yellow Sigatoka and other diseases in north Queensland (BA15003)

By Dr Rosie Godwin, R&D Manager, Australian Banana Growers' Council

Yellow Sigatoka and leaf speckle, commonly referred to as "leaf spot", are established and serious foliar diseases of bananas in the North Queensland (NQ) production area.

Uncontrolled leaf spot causes significant economic loss from reduced yield, premature ripening and reduced market access. Leaf spot also has the potential to mask an outbreak of the similar but far more destructive exotic disease, black Sigatoka.

Importantly, if leaf spot is left untreated, it is highly likely to affect the productivity of neighbouring plantations. It therefore requires a united effort to keep the disease under control.

Prior to the introduction of the Biosecurity Act of 2014, leaf spot levels were officially regulated under biosecurity legislation. Now, it is the Banana Industry Biosecurity Guideline - established under the Biosecurity Act 2014 - that provides guidance to banana growers on meeting their general biosecurity obligation (GBO). This includes the management of leaf spot in plantations.

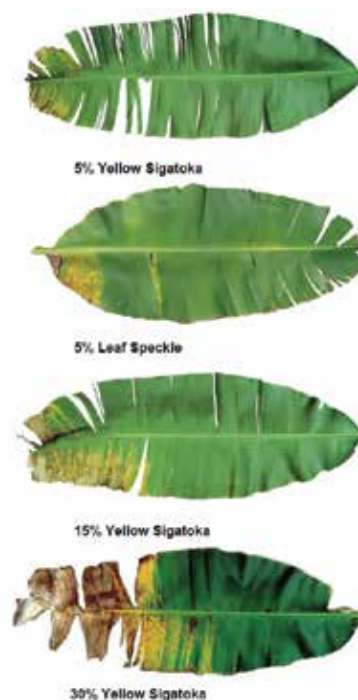
The banana industry has made a significant investment over almost a decade in series of levy-funded projects through Horticulture Australia and Horticulture Innovation Australia. These projects are aimed at the integrated management of yellow sigatoka and other diseases (for example, Panama TR4) in NQ. They have also supported the valuable work of Mr Louis Lardi (the Yellow Sigatoka Liaison Officer) of the Australian Banana Growers' Council

(ABGC). Mr Lardi's North Queensland-based role was to educate growers on yellow Sigatoka and leaf speckle ('leaf spot') symptoms and their integrated control; and to assist growers to voluntarily keep levels of leaf spot disease on their plantations below the 5% recommended level.

Mr Lardi undertook leaf spot inspections on all North Queensland (NQ) commercial farms and in some backyards. A key part of the role was the sharing of information with and between growers, aerial operators, chemical sellers, government and university research staff. Mr Lardi also supported NQ banana growers by promoting best-practice disease management.

The leaf spot projects have been highly successful with comprehensive disease surveillance data collected from all farms in the NQ region. A wide range of educational material and information has been disseminated through various activities and media to growers and the communities of NQ. Leaf specimens that were taken allowed the confirmation of leaf spot diagnosis and some testing for fungicide resistance. Complaints of excessive disease levels were also investigated and acted upon within 48 hours.

Through the efforts of Mr Lardi as the Liaison Officer, 97% compliance with relevant leaf spot requirements was achieved in NQ through a voluntary industry approach. This has meant greater biosecurity for the banana industry as a whole. Low



disease levels help maintain a consistent quality and supply of bananas, minimise production costs and are beneficial to the environment and workplace safety through the reduced need for chemical spraying.

Data generated during these projects has provided an important resource to monitor and understand disease outbreaks in the target region and assess compliance levels with legislation. Professional working partnerships with Biosecurity QLD and AgriScience Queensland were facilitated through the Liaison Officer, which enhanced biosecurity for the banana industry. These features are of great importance for the ongoing management and containment of diseases including TR4, as well as assisting growers to meet their biosecurity obligations. Containment of TR4 is critical to reducing the impact of this disease on banana farming in Australia's largest production area.

Owing to the success of these projects, it was recommended that the work be continued through a similar project, which aims to provide effective disease surveillance, biosecurity extension advice and integrated disease management in NQ. Mr Lardi retired at the end of 2018 but his excellent work is being continued by Mr Carl Rickson who is employed by ABGC through BA18005, a new 3 year project funded through Hort Innovation Banana Fund.

**For further information on these projects, contact Rosie Godwin [rosie@abgc.org.au](mailto:rosie@abgc.org.au).**



## QUALITY BANANA APPROVED NURSERY (QBAN) SCHEME FACILITIES

QBAN is the Australian Banana Industry's high health, clean planting material scheme.

*Note: Laboratory is where plants are produced using tissue culture, Nursery is where the tissue culture plantlets are grown in pots for the grower*

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
Lowes Tc Pty Ltd - contact Natasha Marocik LABORATORY & NURSERY (NSW)	02 4389 8750	Natasha@lowestc.com.au	Tumbi Umbi NSW	Tissue cultured plants and plugs (where authorised)
Arakai Pty Ltd LABORATORY & NURSERY	Landline - 07 4093 3826	nursery@yuruga.com.au	Walkamin, Atherton Tablelands 4872, Qld	Tissue culture plants, potted plants or both
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

# BIO-FORGE + = SUCCESS!

- Maximise yield/ marketable fruit
- Higher sap movement
- Less 'under peel chill'



"Trees look healthier and the bunch quality, size and weight has maintained through the winter period (I would have expected production and quality to drop)! I have also seen a reduction of 'under peel chill'. I would be happy to recommend Stoller's Bio-Forge to other Banana growers."

- Andrew, QLD



For more information call:

**Morgan Lewis**  
morgan@stoller.com.au  
0438 766 355

**Martin Shaw**  
martin@stoller.com.au  
0418 808 438



# KICK-START YOUR BIOSECURITY FOR UNDER \$1000

If you have minimal on-farm biosecurity in place and want to get started on an improved plan, these simple but effective measures help protect your farm from pests and diseases while you are planning and implementing the next stage.



## BIOSECURITY SIGNS

Install signs that list your current phone number.

**\$100**

## HABIT CHANGE



**FREE**

## ZONING

Divide your farm with physical barriers – temporary barriers can be created with flagging tape, roadside bunting, mesh panels etc. You can also build a divider - like a small brick wall – to help segregate where to change shoes.



**\$180**

## SHOES/ GUMBOOTS

Purchase footwear that stays on farm –

**10 STAFF@  
\$30 EACH**

**\$300**



## STAFF AWARENESS AND TRAINING

Get your staff together regularly to ensure they're informed.



**FREE**



**\$100**

## FOOTBATH

Use heavy duty plastic containers (don't forget to add disinfectant and test regularly – test strips are approx 35c per piece)

## DISINFECTANT AND SPRAYER

Find a suitable disinfectant like Agriquat. You'll also need hand-held spray equipment for applying disinfectant AFTER you have cleaned off any dirt/debris.



**\$300**

**TOTAL \$980**



# UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: BANANA WILT ASSOCIATED PHYTOPLASMA

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

## What is Banana Wilt Associated Phytoplasma?

Banana Wilt Associated Phytoplasma or BWAP is a disease caused by very small bacteria which do not have a cell wall and cannot be grown on artificial media. These bacteria live in the phloem tissues of the plant that transport sugars. Disruption of sugar and nutrient transport leads to disease symptoms such as leaf yellowing and poor yield.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of BWAP are leaf yellowing and leaf death (Fig 1). When the pseudostem is cut we see discontinuous brown to black vascular streaks associated with necrotic pockets of rot (Fig 2). Bunches are very light while in some cases they do not develop well and miss fingers (Fig 3). Internal in the male bell there is a decay of the flowers (Fig 4).

## How do they spread?

Phytoplasmas are transmitted from plant to plant by a range of sap-sucking insects such as leafhoppers acting as vectors. The plants are systemically infected including the fruit. Phytoplasmas can be acquired by an insect feeding on an infected plant. Movement of these insects and infected plant material over larger distances by humans is another major source of spread of the disease.

## Where in the world is it found?

Banana Wilt Associated Phytoplasma is found in East Sepik, Morobe, Madang and Western provinces in PNG. Very closely related strains causing similar symptoms on banana have recently been identified in other parts of PNG and the Solomon Islands. More research is needed to determine if Phytoplasma strains killing other hosts such as coconuts, called Bogia Coconut Syndrome in the same area belong to the same pathogen species and if they can cause disease on bananas.

## What are we doing to protect our industry?

- Strict regulation concerning import of plant material requiring screening for absence of Phytoplasma's.
- We are using a molecular diagnostic test to screen imported plant material during the Post Entry Quarantine process.
- Increasing awareness among industry stakeholders.

## What can I do to protect my farm?

- Use only disease-free planting material.
- Check your farm frequently for new pests and unusual symptoms.
- Maintain good biosecurity practices.

**Who can I call?**  
**Professor André Drenth**  
**07 3443 2460**



Figure 1: Leaf yellowing and leaf death.



Figure 3: Light and poorly formed bunches.



Figure 2: Discontinuous necrotic pockets in the pseudostem.



Figure 4: Flower death in the male bell.

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

# CONGRESS COUNT DOWN IS ON!

**Excitement is building for next month's Australian Banana Industry Congress, to be held at Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast from 22-24 May.**

An amazing line-up of speakers and entertainers have been locked in to a comprehensive, grower-focused program, bringing an exceptional range of expertise, insight and motivation.

The dedicated Congress organising committee believes this year's two-day plenary line-up will be one of the best on record, offering a great cross-section of innovation and diversity, and providing growers with plenty of opportunity to take valuable learnings back to their farms.

As always, Congress will be a great chance for growers and other industry stakeholders to catch-up, socialise and celebrate our great industry and its continued vibrant future.

Here we've put together some of the major Congress highlights, including information on some of our great speakers and entertainers. You'll see it is a program not to be missed!

**For complete information and registration go to**  
**[www.bananacongress.org.au](http://www.bananacongress.org.au)**

**Hear from four fellow banana growers trialing innovative farming practices during an Innovation Discussion Panel in the plenary program on Friday, 24 May.**

**This innovation panel includes;**

- Peter Inderbitzin (Lakeland) bunch cableway system/composting
- Rob Zahra (Innisfail) High efficiency sediment basin
- Mark Nucifora (Innisfail) track bagging machine
- Matt Abbott (Innisfail) pivoting head slasher

## BANANA WOMEN'S LUNCHEON

**Have fun while networking and connecting by booking into the Banana Women's Network lunch at Congress on Thursday, 23 May.**

**The lunch will be held at Videre restaurant, inside the Royal Pines Resort, at the same time as the Congress lunch break, ensuring no-one misses out on plenary speaker sessions.**

**The cost is \$65 and includes a two course meal and welcome drink on arrival.**

## QUESTION: YOU'VE REGISTERED FOR CONGRESS... WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO?



**Geoff Eggins**

I'm looking forward to representing the industry from this area (Coffs Harbour), as well as the chance to network with the other growers, hear about innovation and talk to the trade exhibitors.



**Gavin Devaney**

I'm looking forward to hearing about innovation and ways to take the industry forward, as well as how the TR4 Program will work into the future. On top of that, Congress is a great chance to network with people you don't normally see.



**Cameron Mackay**

It's always good to catch up with growers in that relaxed, more laid-back environment, as well as other people involved in banana business.



**Rob Zahra**

I'm looking forward to a holiday! Also networking with other growers and industry stakeholders. It's hard to get them all in one room and Congress does that.



**Bruno Franco**

I'm looking forward to seeing where the industry is heading!

## OFF SITE TOURS

Two optional off-site tours have been included on the Congress program, to be held on the morning of Wednesday, May 22, prior to the official Congress opening that evening.

The two tours will be restricted in numbers, so it will be first in best dressed! They can be booked while registering for Congress online.

**The two options are;**

**Tour 1 - Duranbah Trial Site – Tropical Fruit World – Husk Gin Distillery**

**Tour 2 – Visy pack house, Riviera boat factory, Rocky Point Mulching. (Tour kindly sponsored by Visy).**

**More details on each of the tour sites is available on the Congress website.**

## Other popular functions:

- **Welcome Reception – Wednesday, 22 May**
- **Banana Ball and Awards Ceremony – Friday, 24 May.**





## WE HAVE A HUGHESY!

### SPECIAL GUEST – COMEDIAN DAVE HUGHES

Known for his laconic humour and honesty, Dave Hughes is not only one of Australia's most loved comedians – he's also the kind of guy you'd happily invite over for a barbie.

A former abattoir worker, he's held a number of hosting roles on television and radio, most recently on HIT FM Drive and Network Ten's Hughsey We Have a Problem.

He's also spent time hosting The Project, AFL Football show Before the Game and weekly segments on Rove.

Dave returned to his first love – stand-up comedy – in 2014 and has been touring nationally and internationally since.

Away from work, Dave's a passionate Carlton fan who married his partner Holly in late 2006. They have three children – Dave says he wants a fourth because they're good for material but his wife says that's not a good enough reason.

We are very excited that Dave will be joining us as the special guest comedian at the Banana Ball on the evening of Friday, 24 May.

## CONGRESS 2019 GUEST SPEAKERS



### Shane Webcke

**When: Thursday, 23 May**

Farmer, family man, businessman, author, news presenter, safety ambassador, speaker and former professional footballer, Shane Webcke will be the first keynote speaker at Congress.

At the peak of his rugby career, he was renowned as one of the best front rowers in the world. Shane represented Queensland on 24 occasions and represented Australia in 26 tests. He played for Brisbane Broncos for 12 years and was named Daly M Prop of the year three times.

Shane is still a Bronco through and through and has a few tales to tell about football life, retirement, managing a farm through drought and remaining grounded through it all.



### Rachael Robertson

**Focus: Leadership**

**When: Friday, 24 May**

Rachael led the 58th Australian expedition to Davis Station, Antarctica - the second female to lead a team at the Station and the youngest ever leader.

She managed a team of 18 people through the long, dark, Antarctic winter and through trial and error built a resilient and highly successful team based on the foundation that 'respect trumps harmony'.

Since returning Rachael has completed her MBA, written a best-selling book, *Leading on the Edge*, and has presented at over 1200 events around the world.

At Congress Rachael will speak about the valuable leadership skills she had to use to lead such a diverse group of people in a demanding and isolating environment.



### Bernard Salt AM

**Focus: Demographic, consumer and social trends**

**When: Thursday, 23 May**

Bernard Salt is widely regarded as one of Australia's leading social commentators by business, the media and the broader community.

Bernard heads The Demographics Group which provides specialist advice on demographic, consumer and social trends for business. Prior to that Bernard founded KPMG Demographics.

Bernard Salt is one of the most in-demand speakers on the Australian corporate speaking circuit and has been so for more than a decade.

He is perhaps best known to the wider community for his penchant for identifying and tagging new tribes and social behaviours such as the 'Seachange Shift', the 'Man Drought' and the 'Goats Cheese Curtain'. He was also responsible for popularising smashed avocados globally.



### Georgina Lewis

The popular Brisbane Channel Ten newsreader will be the special guest at the Banana Ball, presenting Banana Ball Award Recipients with their awards.





**Dr Bruce Campbell**

**Focus: Crisis disease management**

**When: Thursday, 23 May**

Dr Bruce Campbell is the former Chief Operating Officer of Plant & Food Research in New Zealand.

In 2010, the New Zealand kiwifruit industry was widely impacted by the devastating bacterial disease *Psa*, *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *actinidiae*. Dr Campbell led a team of more than 100 scientists who conducted an intensive screening program leading to the discovery of a SunGold kiwifruit variety tolerant to *Psa*.

At Congress, Dr Campbell will tell the story of the *PSA* crisis and how industry responded.



**Dist. Professor James Dale**

**Focus: The future of bananas and the potential impact of R&D**

**When: Thursday, 23 May**

Distinguished Professor James Dale is the inaugural Director of the Centre for Tropical Crops and Bio-commodities at the Queensland University of Technology and founded Australia's first molecular farming company.

Professor Dale is well-known for his work in modifying bananas to treat Vitamin A deficiency in developing countries, as well as his efforts to find varieties resistant to key banana diseases such as Panama TR4 and Bunchy Top Virus.

His presentation at Congress will focus on the future of bananas and the potential impact of R&D.



**Eli Khayet**

**Focus: Banana breeding and genetics**

**When: Thursday, 23 May**

Eli Khayet is the Vice President of Research and Development at Rahan Meristem, Israel. The agro-biotechnology company has more than 30 years of experience in plant propagation and breeding.

Mr Khayet's presentation at Congress will focus on 'Advances in Banana Breeding and Genetics', including Panama disease and the genes that predispose plants to this disease.



**Pam Brook**

**Focus: Value adding**

**When: Friday, 24 May**

Pam Brook is the co-founder of Brookfarm, which she established with her husband Martin Brook in 1999. Brookfarm is Australia's leading producer of gourmet macadamia products. From humble beginnings at local markets, Brookfarm now employs over 75 staff and supplies to both Australian domestic and international markets.

Mrs Brook will speak at Congress on value adding and sustainability.



**David Daniels**

**Focus: Exporting success**

**When: Friday, 24 May**

David is the General Manager Market Development at Citrus Australia Ltd.

David has a background in food service with a formal qualification in food technology. For over a decade, David worked in market access research and development with both the New South Wales and Australian Governments.

At Congress he will speak on the rapid expansion of exports in the citrus industry in recent years.



**Tate Connolly**

**Focus: A-peeling to future consumers**

**Thursday, 23 May**

Tate Connolly is Hort Innovation's Marketing Manager for Australian Bananas.

Prior to this role, Tate spent ten years in foodservice marketing including Nando's and Wagamama where she specialised in brand management and communications, leading the both brands through global expansions.

Ms Connolly will share Peel Good insights into all things Australian Bananas marketing.





**Marc Jackson**

**Focus: Global banana business**

**When: Thursday, 23 May**

Marc Jackson is currently the Special Projects manager at Fyffes, a company synonymous with bananas globally.

Marc has an extensive experience working in the food production industry and has most recently overseen construction for the world's largest and most technologically advanced pineapple packing house, based in Costa Rica. He will speak at Congress about his life after Australian bananas in a global business, including an update on global banana trends; opportunities for Australians to trade in a global market and routes to make this possible.



**Wayne Prowse**

**Focus: Global trade trends**

**When: Thursday, 23 May**

Wayne Prowse is Principal of Fresh Intelligence Consulting and one of Australia's leading horticultural market analysts with a focus on global trade.

In 2011, Wayne established Fresh Intelligence after a long marketing career with food companies and Horticulture Australia. His Congress presentation – Global Banana Trade Trends – will look at major trends, which countries are the main players and how Asia is changing the fabric of international trade and the opportunities for Australia.



**Mark Smith**

**Focus: Living and farming with TR4**

**When: Friday, 24 May**

Mark Smith is the Farm Manager at Darwin Fruit Farms. Mark started his working life qualifying in a trade before moving on in 1986 to growing bananas at a banana farm in Kununurra, WA. In 1994 Mark moved with the company to the Northern Territory to take advantage of sandier loam soils and a climate more suitable to banana farming.

In 1997, Panama TR4 was confirmed at a farm 50km away and by 2006 there was only one of the nine original commercial banana farms still operating in the Territory. A range of strains of the Cavendish banana were tried on the farm, all with different growing characteristics that requiring adjustments to the way they are managed.

Mr Smith's Congress address will focus on living and farming with TR4, including different trials and practice changes trialed on-farm to suppress the disease.

## OUR SHOUT!

### Would you like to shout the bar at Congress?

Any grower that registers for Congress before May 1 – National Banana Day – will go into the draw to win a \$250 bar tab, which will be drawn at the Welcome Drinks at Congress on 22 May, 2019.

Or, if you'd rather spend the cash on something else, there will be the option of spending your \$250 voucher on a wide range of services at Royal Pines Resort, including food, the hotel spa and entertainment.

**So, don't miss out! Register for Congress before May for your chance to win!**

## WINNER! WINNER!

Tully banana grower Rachel Zonta was the very lucky winner of our inaugural "Win your way to Congress" competition.

All growers who registered for Congress during the 'early bird' period went into the draw to win back the cost of their registration – and more – a prize valued at up to \$2170. As well as the cost of her registration, Rachel was also reimbursed for her accommodation and received \$500 towards travel costs.

**Congratulations Rachel! See you at Congress!**



# PROGRAM

## Wednesday, May 22

10am-3pm Off-site tours – Optional Extra  
**Tour 1** – Duranbah trial site, Tropical Fruit World, Husk Gin Distillery.  
**Tour 2** – Visy pack house, Riviera boat building factory, Rocky Point Mulching.  
 3pm-6pm Registrations  
 5pm-7pm Welcome drinks  
 7pm onwards Banana Bar

## Thursday, May 23

7.30am-5.30pm Registrations  
 8.30am-8.45am Official opening ceremony  
 Paul Inderbitzin  
 8.45am-9.15am Opening keynote address  
 Shane Webcke  
 9.15am-10.15am Global Banana Trade Trends  
 Marc Jackson, Special Project Manager, Fyffes Bananas International  
 Wayne Prowse, Principal & Senior Analyst, Fresh Intelligence Consulting  
 10.15am-10.30am Q&A – Mark Jackson and Wayne Prowse  
 10.30am-11am Morning tea in the exhibition area  
 11am-11.30am Banana marketing - A-peeling to future consumers.  
 Tate Connolly, Hort Innovation Marketing Manager for Australian Bananas  
 11.30am-12.10pm Bernard Salt AM – leading media commentator, demographer and global trends expert.  
 12.10pm-12.30pm Q&A – Tate Connolly and Bernard Salt  
 12.30pm-1.30pm Lunch in the exhibition area – Trade Show  
 1.30pm-2pm Science in a crisis: The story of PSA in kiwifruit  
 Dr Bruce Campbell, former Chief Operating Officer, NZ Plant and Food Research  
 2pm-3pm Science Speed Talks  
 3pm-3.45pm Afternoon Tea and Science Poster session

3.30pm-5pm

Future of Bananas and R&D  
**The future of bananas and the potential impact of R&D**  
 Dist. Professor James Dale – Centre for Tropical Crops and Biocommodities, Queensland University of Technology.  
**Advances in Banana Breeding and Genetics**  
 Eli Khayet, Vice President of Research and Development at Rahan Meristem.  
**Feet on the ground, eyes on the future – The role for R&D in the banana industry.**  
 Stewart Lindsay, DAF Team Leader, Banana Production Systems.  
**Banana Plant and Soil Microbiomes**  
 Dr Paul Dennis, School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, University of Queensland  
 Panel discussion – Future of bananas and R&D  
 Prof James Dale, Dr Bruce Campbell, Eli Khayet, Stewart Lindsay, Paul Dennis  
 Tradeshow Exhibition Evening

5.15pm-5.30pm

5.30pm-7.30pm  
**Friday, May 24**  
 8.30am-9.10am

Exporting Success  
 Michael Coote, AusVeg, National Export Development Manager.  
 David Daniels, Citrus Australia  
 9.10am-9.20am Q&A – Michael Coote and David Daniels  
 9.20am-10am Growing your business and dealing with change  
 Speaker – TBA  
 Andrew Dewar, Managing Director, Pilton Valley Produce/SAS Pastoral  
 10am-10.30am Morning Tea  
 10.30am-10.50am Living and farming with TR4 - Mark Smith, Farm Manager, Darwin Fruit Farm.  
 10.50am-11.20am Living and Farming with TR4 – Discussion Panel

11.20am-12pm

Mark Smith, Farm Manager, Darwin Fruit Farm  
 Gavin and Stephen Mackay, Mackays, Tully Grower Innovation Panel – Learn from four banana growers trialling innovative farming practices  
 - Peter Inderbitzin (Lakeland) Bunch cableway/composting  
 - Rob Zahra (Innisfail) High efficiency sediment basin  
 - Mark Nucifora (Innisfail) Track bagging machine  
 - Matt Abbott (Innisfail) Slashing machine  
 12pm-12.20pm Grower Innovation – Discussion Panel  
 12.20pm-2.00pm Lunch and Trade Show – Exhibition area  
 2.00pm-2.20pm Value Adding  
 Pam Brook, Co-founder of Brookfarm  
 2.20pm-2.40pm Innovating through technology  
 2.40pm-3.40pm Rachael Robertson – Rachael was chosen to lead the 58th Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition to Davis Station. She was only the second female to ever lead a team at the Station and one of the youngest ever leaders. Rachael is an entertaining and engaging presenter who will speak about the valuable leadership skills she had to deliver to led such a diverse group of people in a demanding and isolating environment.  
 3.40pm-3.50pm Q&A – Rachael Robertson  
 3.50pm-4.00pm Closing ceremony  
 7pm-late Banana Ball and Awards night  
 Comedian - Dave Hughes  
 Awards presenter – Channel Ten  
 Newsreader Georgina Lewis

ABGC would like to thank our major sponsors.  
 Without their support Congress 2019 would not be possible.

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# NUTRIENT DYNAMICS RESEARCH: NEW BANANA TRIALS IN WET TROPICS



*Curtis Lanham, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries*

## A new trial examining plant-nitrogen use across banana production systems in the Wet Tropics recently commenced at South Johnstone research station and commercial farms.

This three year trial will be conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) across a number of locations in the area and will incorporate the variability of current management practices, climate, soil and commercial factors that affect nutrient dynamics on farm.

A great deal has changed in the Australian banana industry in the last two decades, but in the same period, there has been very limited research conducted on nutrient use in banana production systems.

The RP191 - Banana Nutrient Trails will address the research gaps and uses a "hub and spoke research model" to ensure the network of trial sites gives the best results, assessing applied nitrogen rate treatments across a series of commercial farms, or spokes.

The trial at the South Johnstone DAF Research Station will act as the central hub linked to a network of commercial farm trial sites within the Innisfail-Tully region. The work at the DAF Research Station will be conducted at a higher intensity and frequency; something that would be too intrusive on a commercial farm.

The trial design allows for the accuracy of a replicated, controlled experiment, while at the same time providing greater understanding of how this specifically relates to commercial farms within the Wet Tropics.

The South Johnstone site has remained fallow for over a decade and is deficient of most plant-essential nutrients, creating a rare opportunity to test the critical value of soil phosphorus and define what levels are required to support production over time.

The trial will run across a plant crop and minimum of two ratoons. Nitrogen application treatments across the network sites are:

### South-Johnstone Research Station

- Plant crop - 100-325 kg N/ha/yr
- Ratoon crops - 200-425 kg N/ha/yr

### Participating farms

- Plant crop - 250 kg N/ha/yr & growers' rate
- Ratoon crops - 350 kg N/ha/yr & growers' rate

In addition to the nitrogen rate trials, a study of soil nitrogen mineralisation will also be undertaken. This will determine how much nitrogen is supplied to plants from the soil and how this changes over time.

A key outcome of the trial is to determine how applied nitrogen effects agronomics and economics and how this changes with area and management practices. The results will provide industry with vital research data to assist them in determining best nitrogen fertiliser use on-farm.

Along with assessing agronomics, the investigation will examine how nitrogen moves through production systems in plants and soil, and identify losses through deep drainage of soil water. This information will then be used to produce models to inform better nutrient use efficiency in future banana production systems.

**The RP191 Banana Nutrient Trial is funded by Queensland Government through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program. To get involved, or for more information, please contact DAF at 13 25 23.**

# WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS – STAYING AFLOAT

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**The decline in water quality in catchments and sub-catchments is a problem attracting government and community interest across Australia and the world. Water quality on the Great Barrier Reef has been an especially hot topic for some years now but the Queensland Government's recent introduction of environmental protection legislation has lifted the controversy to a new level in some industries.**

**ABGC Strategy Manager Michelle McKinlay explains what's going on, what the ABGC is doing and how the regulations may impact growers in north Queensland.**

### **Why regulations?**

The Queensland Government is acting on advice from an independent taskforce, that while significant improvements in water quality had been achieved in recent years, they are not enough to stop the overall decline in the health of the Great Barrier Reef. Responding to this, the Queensland Government has decided to regulate the practices of a number of industries including sewerage treatment, waste disposal, certain mining and agriculture.

To regulate the agriculture industry, the Queensland government is proposing a number of minimum standards for each impacted industry – cane, grazing and now bananas. The standards cover nitrogen and phosphorous application, erosion and sediment control, record keeping, and farm design standards for new cropping developments. Cane and grazing have had minimum standards

for some years but the way they have been policed has differed under the last few governments. While reef regulation is new territory for banana growers, farming at best management practice standards is not. The industry has a good track record of farming responsibly and this history will make the transition to regulation easier.

### **What is the ABGC doing?**

The ABGC has been in discussions with the government for the past two years and negotiations continue as this magazine goes to print. We have been educating policy makers so that they understand banana production to make sure that if there has to be regulations, they can be practically implemented and won't reduce productivity or profitability. There has been good progress that will hopefully continue as we focus sharply on a few remaining points of contention.

**Read the ABGC's submission to the Queensland Government at [www.abgc.org.au](http://www.abgc.org.au)**  
**The ABGC also appeared at a public hearing in North Queensland to represent the interests of banana growers.**

### **Concerns with a cap**

One of the remaining contentious issues is the government's proposal to set an upper limit (or cap) on the amount of nitrogen that can be applied to plant and ratoon crops using an 'adjustment' method. For a plant crop, the government wants to limit the amount of nitrogen that can be applied to 250kg N/hectare/year. For a ratoon crop, the

government wants to set a limit at 350kg N/hectare/year. For both plant and ratoon crops, the grower could then add another 50kg N/hectare/year if there are soil and leaf test results that demonstrate the need for additional nutrients. This means there is an immovable cap of 300kg N/hectare/year for a plant crop and 400kg N/hectare/year for each ratoon.

The ABGC has argued strongly that the results from the single research trial published in 2002 simply do not provide enough evidence to justify this cap. Last year the government agreed to fund a four-year project to give growers more information about the relationship between production (particularly bunch weight and finger size) and nitrogen rates. With this evidence likely to be available in a few years, the ABGC is arguing that the Queensland Government must abandon any plans to introduce a hard cap until there are results from this research. Growers should be able to apply the amount of nutrients required by the plant when test results show they are needed. This reduces the grower's risk of a negative impact on production and profitability.

### **Farming on land that hasn't been cropped**

The other main issue of contention is the environmental requirements that will apply to new farms (30+ hectares) that are established on land without a 'cropping history'. A cropping history is demonstrated where the land has been used three out of the last ten years (with one of those years being in the last five years). These farms will require a site-specific land assessment that will cost growers time and money. Discussions on this point continue.



### There's time to plan

While some of the regulations will start when the legislation is passed, others - such as the minimum practice standards - will not commence before July 2020. The good news in all of this is that growers have time to consider the way they are farming, calculate their nitrogen and phosphorus rates (if they don't already know) and get some help to work out what they need to do so that they comply with the regulations. Many of the minimum standards align well with the Banana BMP Guidelines and a number of the privately accredited environmental schemes. Growers who are farming at or beyond the BMP industry standards will find the regulations have little impact on them.

### GET 'REG READY'

The ABGC extension team is keen to help growers to use the BMP to do their own assessment of their farming practices and then focus on making the necessary improvements. The team will help you every step of the way. There is also a new round of grants available to banana growers that will help to reduce the costs of improvements for some growers.

So do yourself a favour and get your farm 'reg ready'. Check out the proposed minimum standards on the ABGC website and see how your farm measures up. And if you are not sure, give the ABGC extension team a call and they will help. The number for Rob Mayers is 40152797.



## NEW BMP COORDINATOR IN FNQ

A Tully local with banana experience and an extensive career in policy and project delivery has been appointed to the position of Best Management Practice Coordinator at South Johnstone.

The Australian Banana Growers' Council welcomed Amelia Foster to the Reef Team in early April.

Ms Foster had most recently been working with

Biosecurity Queensland and the Panama TR4 Program, but her career spans roles across transport, health and asset management.

Ms Foster will work closely with growers and the ABGC's Reef Team to improve water quality outcomes for industry and the community.

**Say hello or find out more about the BMP by contacting [amelia@abgc.org.au](mailto:amelia@abgc.org.au).**

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# THE BEST F-WORDS: FARMING, FISHING AND THE FUTURE

Shane and Rachel Zonta's passion for making real, environmentally beneficial change on their farm is infectious.

On top of that, the Tully-based growers and keen recreational fishos know that preserving their land and the Reef for future generations isn't just a labour of love - it makes good business sense.

Twenty years ago, the Zontas followed what were industry-standard sediment management practices that resulted in bare beds and inter-rows with no living ground cover.

Fast forward to 2018 and that has changed dramatically.

Shane and Rachel now operate with some of the best on-farm practices in the Australian banana industry.

"The catalyst for us occurred about six years ago, when we moved to FreshCare Environmental," Shane said.

The highly regarded program is designed to aid in achieving real environmental outcomes.

"That, on top of the industry's BMP Environmental Guidelines, increased our understanding of the benefits of inter-row ground cover."

## On-farm adjustments

The Zontas have changed a number of practices in line with this knowledge, including introducing a herbicide wick-wiper into ground cover management.

The wick-wiper 'wicks' taller vegetation, using a minimum amount of herbicide to control the taller grasses and weeds over time. This has reduced the need for inter-row slashing, which in turn has reduced soil compaction and rutting. Essentially, it means more effective protection and promotion of lower ground cover and better sediment control.

Other measures introduced on-farm include grassed drains, spoon drains and practiced fallow periods.

Shane, with Rachel, has followed in his mother's footsteps, continuing to invest in riverbank maintenance and stabilisation over the years.

"Our property borders the Tully River – something we're very conscious of," Rachel said.

"We know restoration is incredibly important and we'd love to see more focus on this issue."

## Boosting the business

While the Zontas are always seeking out ways to improve the health and productivity of their farm, as well as water quality, they've also noticed some bottom-line benefits.

Perhaps the most tangible of these came when they implemented the wick-wiper on farm. This has dramatically reduced the amount of time spent on slashing of the inter-rows. Not only have machinery maintenance and fuel costs dropped, but it's been another step toward that elusive work-life balance.

Other decisions, including new drainage systems, might be harder to quantify immediately but the increased efficiency will cut costs into the future.

## Looking ahead

The idea of resting on their laurels is not one the Zontas are likely to entertain.

Despite decades of experience, they continuously investigate ways to improve their practices.

And while their focus is on good farming, the knowledge that they're helping safeguard the Reef for future generations provides added motivation – that, and maintaining a pretty spectacular place to cast a line.



The wick wiper in among the bananas.



The Zontas have also put in place grassed waterways.



A grassed inter-row on the Zontas' property.



# SCORE FUNDING FOR SEDIMENT RUN OFF



Soil conservation consultant Darryl Evans on farm. © Commonwealth of Australia (GBRMPA), Photographer: Matthew Evans.

*By Michelle McKinlay, Strategy Manager*

**Banana growers will get a financial helping hand to better manage nutrient and sediment run off, thanks to additional funding secured by the Australian Banana Growers' Council.**

The funding will go towards another round of grants under the successful Reef Trust III program.

The ABGC has also employed Darryl Evans, a well-known soil conservation consultant, to help growers make on-farm improvements.

Mr Evans has worked with hundreds of landholders over a career spanning almost four decades - but has always had a soft spot for the banana industry.

"Many banana growers are innovative, environmentally conscious and willing to change practices to reduce erosion," Mr Evans said.

The ABGC recognised his great contribution and reputation as the industry's "go to guy" for soil by nominating him for a Reef Alliance Reef Award in 2018.

Mr Evans has a wealth of practical sediment management experience with banana farms – from major works like designing contour layouts for the whole farm, through to individual issues such as eroding headlands or table drains.

Mr Evans is also helping ABGC extension officer Dale Bennett run an innovation trial that is looking at the effectiveness of tracked bagging machines in reducing sediment run off. Growers will have the chance to find out more about this exciting project at the 2019 Australian Banana Industry Congress in May.

This latest round of funding provides a great opportunity for growers to tackle a project that may have been on the backburner – at a reduced cost.

Access to the grants start from mid-April and the works need to be completed by October.

**If you are interested in learning more about reducing nutrient and sediment run off from your farm, getting some free expert advice, or accessing some funding to make a change on your farm, give the ABGC reef extension team a call on 07 4015 2797.**



# TR4 AROUND THE WORLD: ONGOING SPREAD AND IMPACT



Replacing TR4 affected Cavendish with dragon fruit.

*Prof André Drenth, Centre for Horticultural Science, The University of Queensland*

**Fusarium wilt TR4 was first identified in Cavendish plantations in Indonesia and Taiwan in the early 1990s. Since then, it has spread across many banana-growing countries.**

## A global threat

TR4 is currently present in 17 different countries. The initial spread in the 1990s was to China and the Northern Territory of Australia, followed by the Philippines. Other major banana producers in Asia, including India, Pakistan, and Vietnam, have also reported the presence of TR4. Although it was only recently reported in India (2018), it is already present in four different states. Since India is by far the world's largest banana producer, the impact on food and income security will be huge.

Until a few years ago, the spread was contained to Asia but it has since been found in the Middle East (Oman, 2012; Jordan, 2013; Israel 2016) and it was detected on the African continent in Mozambique in 2014. A large Cavendish based plantation enterprise developed there was declared bankrupt in 2018 due to an inability to keep TR4 under control.

## The UK detection

The extreme mobility of TR4 is illustrated by the latest incursion in the United Kingdom. A large tropical glasshouse was built in Cornwall as part of what is called the 'Eden Project.' It contained

banana varieties including *Pisang mas* and Cavendish. These bananas recently succumbed to fusarium wilt TR4. This demonstrates that the importation of a wide range of tropical plants to populate this glasshouse most likely led to the introduction of TR4. It seems likely that TR4 is moving in plants and soil widely traded on a global scale in amenity horticulture.

The lesson from this is that although the Australian banana industry has very strict controls concerning the import of plant material of bananas, other pathways outside of our industry exists which may pose significant risks.

## The situation in Australia

Australia is about the only country to have mounted a significant effort to contain TR4 and prevent its spread. It has been calculated that the potential impact of unlimited spread of TR4 in Australia would cost \$138 million a year industry wide (Cook et al 2015). The impact on regional and rural communities affected will be very high. To get some insight into what may happen if we are not actively trying to reduce the spread of TR4, it is worthwhile looking at how the TR4 situation unfolded in China.

## China's TR4 story

Fusarium wilt TR4 was first identified in Southeast China in 1996, a year before it was detected in the Northern Territory. Over the last 20 years it has spread significantly. It's estimated that by 2017 over 100,000 ha of Cavendish bananas had been destroyed by TR4. At current market prices, that represents a loss of over 1.4 billion US Dollars.

After TR4 devastated production in the Eastern States, the producers further west stepped up to meet demand. However, in the absence of any biosecurity measures the disease soon caught up with them. Mounting losses in existing plantations led to a frantic search for new clean land. In China, villages own land collectively. Individuals have land-contract rights, and only the land-use is transferable for certain amounts of time. This means that a plantation manager is able to lease new land but he does not own the land, which limits his responsibility to invest in infrastructure. There are no packing sheds as harvesting is done by contract crews who pack directly into refrigerated trucks. The devastation brought on by TR4 is illustrated by production figures in the Guangxi province,

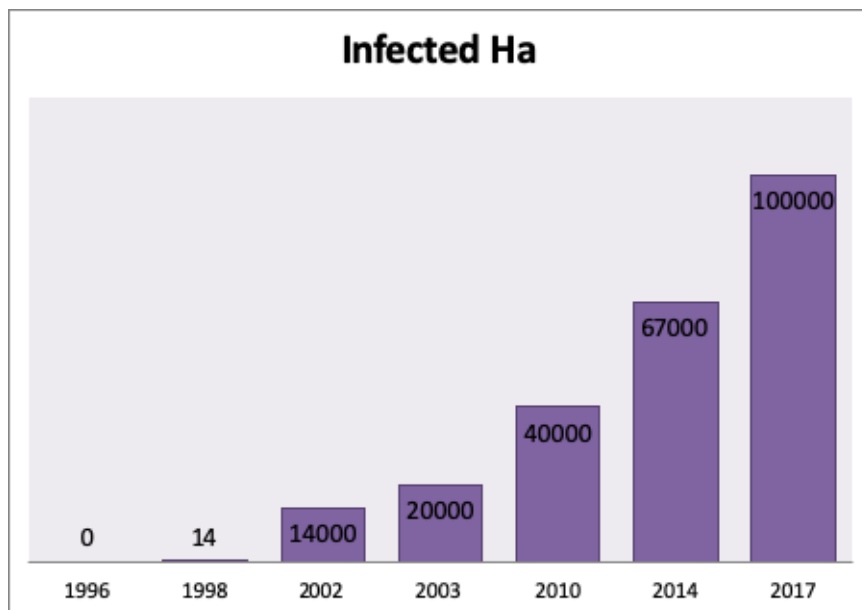




Harvesting, washing and packing in truck in the plantation.

### The impact of TR4 in China.

(Note that Australia's industry is about 14,000 ha)



where banana production rose from 80,000 ha in 2011 to 120,000 ha in 2015, before dropping to approximately 40,000ha by 2018 as a result of the disease.

Most of the affected land is converted to other horticultural crops such as citrus or dragon fruit. New land not affected by TR4 is now becoming very scarce in this province and operations are moving further West into the Yunnan province and across the border to Laos and Myanmar. Due to the lack of biosecurity, they are taking the pathogen with them, giving rise to recent first reports of TR4 from these countries. DNA sequence information confirmed that these strains were identical to the ones found in China (Zheng et al 2018).

### Gros Michel as a 'yardstick'

To get some insight into the potential global effect of TR4, the past impact of fusarium wilt Race 1 on Gros Michel production can be used as a yardstick. It's estimated that the global damage of the fusarium wilt race 1 outbreak – which led to the demise of that variety - cost about 2.4 billion USD in today's dollars. Globally the banana industry has grown four to five times that size and is at present valued at 52 billion USD. A very rough calculation could mean a global damage bill of approximately 10 billion USD from the ongoing spread of TR4.

Clearly, solutions in the form of effective resistance are urgently needed to avoid losses at this scale.



Internal symptoms of TR4 in Cavendish.



Cavendish plantation in Guangxi province devastated by TR4.



On site in China.

1. Zheng S-J, García-Bastidas FA, Li X, Zeng L, Bai T, Xu S, Yin K, Li H, Fu G, Yu Y, Yang L, Nguyen HC, Douangboupaha B, Khaing AA, Drenth A, Seidl MF, Meijer HJG and Kema GHJ., (2018). New geographical insights of the latest Expansion of *Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *cubense* Tropical Race 4 into the Greater Mekong Subregion. *Front. Plant Sci.* 9:457. doi: 10.3389/fpls.2018.00457  
 2. DC Cook, AS Taylor, RA Meldrum, A Drenth, 2015. Potential economic impact of Panama disease (tropical race 4) on the Australian banana industry. *Journal of Plant Diseases and Protection* 122 (5-6), 229-237

# KEEP AN EYE ON ERWINIA

**Deanna Belbin, Biosecurity Queensland**

**Biosecurity Queensland is asking growers to be extra vigilant when dealing with plants showing symptoms of Erwinia, (bacterial corm rot) as plants with Erwinia can also have Panama disease tropical race 4 (Panama TR4).**

Panama TR4 Program Leader Rhiannon Evans said Erwinia is more common at this time of year because of the increased heat and rainfall.

“On the first infested property, during the months from February to April, the majority of the plants that tested positive for Panama TR4 also had Erwinia,” Ms Evans said.

“In fact, corm rot was the suspected problem rather than Panama disease in the very first plant sampled on the property in February 2015.”

Ms Evans said if growers were unsure if it was Erwinia, to give Biosecurity Queensland a call on 13 25 23.

“Erwinia has similar external symptoms to Panama TR4 such as wilting leaves and a skirt forming around the pseudostem. If you’re not one hundred percent sure, give us a call and we’ll come and check it for you – it’s better to be safe than sorry,” Ms Evans added.

Ms Evans praised the growers who were reporting suspicious looking plants to Biosecurity Queensland.

“It’s great to see growers are checking their plants for signs of disease and calling us if they have any doubts. This shows that they understand if Panama TR4 is contained early, their farm viability can be extended.”

Ms Evans said the collaborative effort between industry and government had greatly contributed to the success of the Panama TR4 control and containment effort.



**Erwinia has external symptoms similar to Panama TR4.**

“Even though we’ve successfully contained this challenging disease to only three farms over four years, we can’t be complacent. We don’t know where or when it will surface next. It pays to be prepared and to protect your farm with sound biosecurity measures,” she added.

To report symptomatic plants phone Biosecurity Queensland immediately on **13 25 23**. For more information about Panama TR4, visit our website [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au). Banana growers who have not received a Panama TR4 Disease Identification Guide can contact the Panama TR4 Program on **07 4091 8153** or email [panamatr4@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:panamatr4@daf.qld.gov.au).

## SNAPSHOT: AUSTRALIAN BANANA GROWERS' COUNCIL PROJECTS

*This table provides an insight into the projects currently run by the Australian Banana Growers' Council.*

Funder	Project Title	Main Project Deliverer
Department of Environment & Science	Queensland Reef Water Quality Program	Robert Mayers
Hort Innovation	Communications project for the banana industry	Sonia Campbell
Hort Innovation	Banana Strategic Industry Development	Michelle McKinlay
Hort Innovation	Congress Project	Sonia Campbell
Commonwealth	Reef Trust Three Project	Dale Bennett
Hort Innovation	Management of Banana Pests and Diseases in North Queensland	Carl Rickson
Hort Innovation	Banana Industry R&D Coordination	Rosie Godwin
Commonwealth Levy	PHA TR4 Program	Jim Pekin
Hort Innovation	The QBAN Transition Project - Nursery Production Farm Management System Services Biosecurity BMP Online Project	Rosie Godwin
Hort Innovation	R&D Portal as part of the National Banana Development & Extension Program	Rosie Godwin
Hort Innovation	Improved Plant Protection for the Banana Industry – Theme 5 – A Program Approach.	Rosie Godwin

\*List current at the time of going to print.



# OTHER OPTIONS AVAILABLE ON PANAMA TR4 AFFECTED LAND

*Deanna Belbin, Biosecurity Queensland*

## Did you know you there are alternative farming options available for Panama TR4 affected land?

If you want to grow crops other than bananas or raise livestock on a parcel of land that has been confirmed with Panama TR4, Biosecurity Queensland can help.

To minimise the risk of disease spread, we'll conduct a risk assessment to determine if the parcel of land could be contaminated with Panama TR4.

This is achieved by firstly visiting the site to check its proximity to the Panama TR4 infestation and by taking into account factors such as previous use of the land and its possible exposure to Panama TR4 through activities such as movement of people and/or machinery.

We'll then assess whether the land could have been contaminated by Panama TR4. Once the level of risk is determined, the land will be classified as either clean or dirty.

- Clean land means the risk of Panama TR4 is negligible and the land will be designated as a clean and become part of the farm's clean zones.
- Dirty land is considered at a higher risk of contamination by Panama TR4 and the land will become part of the farm's dirty zones. Dirty zones are subject to more stringent biosecurity requirements.

There's a list of requirements written in the farm's Notice of presence of Panama disease tropical race 4 that have to be met. These can vary depending on the farm and the farm situation. We'll work with you to tailor the requirements to your farm, while making sure adequate levels of biosecurity are in place to protect your farm and the wider industry.

**Check out our mixed farming fact sheets 'Managing the risks' and 'Grazing Cattle with Panama TR4' in the online grower kit at [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](https://biosecurity.qld.gov.au)**



Alternative farming options are available for growers on Panama TR4 affected land.



Billboards in key regional areas helped promote bananas to Aussie consumers.

# BANANA MARKETING KICKS OFF 2019 IN STYLE

*Tate Connolly, Marketing Manager*

Welcome to the Australian Bananas 2019 Summer marketing update. This activity is managed by Hort Innovation on behalf of the industry and is funded by the banana marketing levy.

## Above the Line activity

TV plays a key role in driving mass awareness of campaign communications, ensuring key messages for Australian Bananas are established at scale. The latest television burst started on January 27 and finished up after 4 weeks on air on March 9. The campaign launched into a strong slate of programming with some of our first spots appearing in the men's final of the Australian Open, followed by the launch of Married at First Sight and My Kitchen Rules. The activity continued in February with strong programming throughout. Australian Bananas appeared in a number of key prime time programming slots across all markets as well as off peak, subscription TV and digital channel spots to extend out reach further.

The television activity is supported by a burst of cinema activity. The Australian Bananas' TVC appeared in cinema for 8 weeks from March 7, aligning with several blockbuster releases. Australian Bananas will be on 286 screens, supported by 280 Digilites screens in foyers providing an additional touchpoint in the cinemagoer journey and adding incremental reach.

Australian Bananas featured on bus sides in all five metro markets from Feb 17 – March 13. This was supported by large format billboards, which provided coverage in key regional areas.

Australian Bananas is also currently live within the retail landscape, driving awareness and consideration. Retail provides time targeted reach,

impact and keeps bananas top of mind on the path to purchase. We have 178 panels live from February 3 to the May 11, with 100% of our retail panels directly outside supermarkets.

Another element of the Out of Home (OOH) activity is the gym activity. Australian Bananas will be seen throughout gyms nationally, targeting consumers within their healthy routines. Australian Bananas is targeting consumers during their mid-morning social sport & gym visits. The gym activity is live for 10 weeks, and features on over 2,500 panels and one insert in Fitness First Magazine.

Australian Bananas continue to hit the demographic by targeting their online viewing habits across the major networks catch up television offerings



as well as via contextual sites, app and Flybuys shopper data targeting. Australian Bananas have also targeted consumers via mobile advertising, using their historical location data. This data has allowed Australian Bananas to create a segment of consumers who frequent gyms and health food stores to serve them an Australian Bananas ad to keep the healthy snack top of mind. This ensures we are using our budget efficiently to hit the right people at the right time.



### Social Media

We are regularly reaching over a million people a month with Australian Bananas content on Facebook.

### Edentify

The results for the latest Edentify consumer tracking are in, with key highlights below.

- Bananas remain the clear number one energy snack and are gaining in popularity over healthy packaged snacks - 1 person in 3 ranks banana as their **#1 energy snack**.
- Thanks to consistent and continuous communication messaging over time, bananas are spontaneously associated with "healthy energy snack".
- Purchase frequency has been building up wave on wave, with now **three quarters purchasing at least weekly**.
- Number of people using bananas for more

than just snacking is improving - with a **clear increase of banana consumption at breakfast** (60%), "to start the day". This new trend has been holding well for the last 2 waves, suggesting a positive behaviour shift.

- Spontaneous ad recall is already picking up the recent media activity after a slight drop during the off media period in December 2018. This nicely shows **the efficiency of the media activity**. Both key target audiences are responding especially well to the latest campaign messages.
- **Online and Out Of Home media activities are adding incremental ad recall** within the younger age group and families respectively.



## WELCOME TATE CONNOLLY



**Tate Connolly started as the Hort Innovation Marketing Manager for Australian Bananas in 2018.**

Prior to this role, Tate spent ten years in foodservice marketing including Nando's and Wagamama where she specialised in brand management and communications, leading the both brands through global expansions. Tate is accredited by the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Tate has a passion for building and developing brands so that they come to life in the minds and heart of consumers. Combining this with

a love of the latest tech and innovation, Tate blends her classical marketing training with the ever moving digital media world to strive for forward thinking campaigns that deliver results back to industry.

Tate lives and breathes all things food. Whether it be discovering new ingredients or new cuisines through her travels or developing recipe with some old favourites- she even runs a twice yearly pop up restaurant!

You'll get to meet Tate in person when she presents at the Australian Banana Industry Congress on the Gold Coast in May.



Brothers Brian and Ian Luxton on their property in South East Queensland.

## VALLEY VIEWS FOR TALLEBUDGERA GROWERS

**It'd be safe to say there are few banana farms with a better view than the Luxton family's in the Tallebudgera Valley.**

Brothers Brian and Ian, along with Brian's wife Kathy, have about 20 acres of bananas on their South East Queensland property.

Being the subtropics, they're grown on a (very steep) hill – with the view from the top capturing some of the rolling hinterland.

The Luxtons have been involved in the industry for about 45 years, with Brian and Kathy now growing

herbs alongside their Lady Fingers and Cavendish.

"It's a good lifestyle but it's hard work these days," Brian explained.

They sell their produce at local markets and directly from their farm, with regular customers often seeking out their Lady Fingers.

"People are certainly more interested in where and how you grow bananas now," he added.



## LEAD ON: GROWERS BENEFIT FROM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

**In a room filled with colourful butcher's paper, post-it notes and connector pens, a speaker holds the attention of a small, engaged audience.**

It's fitting that the group seems to take it all in – the topic being discussed is 'listening'. A simple concept, but not without its challenges, as the workshop facilitator explains.

Sitting around the table are emerging leaders from nine different horticultural industries.

They're wrapping up their time with the LEAD Program, aimed at equipping them with skills to take on the next phase of their career.

This is the second group involved in LEAD and their second face-to-face workshop.

"This workshop here in Brisbane has focused on personal leadership – how you grow yourself as a leader in industry, but also in business and your personal life," organiser Dianne Fullelove said.

"The first face-to-face workshop looked at how you operate in the wider world – engaging with government and your industry bodies, for example."

The LEAD (Leadership Exploration and Development) program was designed to give participants a chance to collaborate with people from a range of industries and develop practical skills to make a difference – be it on-farm or in their wider field. Through workshops and webinars, it's delivered an introduction to a range of topics, including crisis management, lobbying and managing teams.

"We asked the groups for feedback on what they'd done, even just since the first face-to-face workshop – some had gone on to other leadership programs, some had taken up new positions, some were lobbying their local council about an issue," Ms Fullelove said.

Banana growers Shayne Cini and Mick Horsford were among those at the final session.

"It's been really good," Mr Cini said. "Since I've been back there have been occasions where I've realised the relevance of what we learnt, particularly about personality and leadership styles."

"It was a really well run course," he added. "The facilitator was engaging and it got me out of my



Banana growers Shayne Cini and Mick Horsford at the final in-person workshop in Brisbane.

comfort zone with things like public speaking."

Both Mr Cini and Mr Horsford agreed that it was beneficial to learn about managing different employees and understanding their various needs.

"It also helped with ways to manage other problems on-farm," Mr Horsford said.

"On top of that, it highlighted the fact that a lot of the industries involved shared similar issues, with labour being the main one."

Ms Fullelove said that cross-industry collaboration had been key to the program's success.

"There's common issues and different perspectives. It's such a diverse group – in age, work and geographically."

Social media has been crucial too, with both groups able to link up and discuss ideas away from the formal sessions.

"The important thing now, going forward, is for industry bodies – like the Australian Banana Growers' Council – to connect with people who have done the program. They're fired up, they want to get out and get involved, and they need a pathway to do that."



# BANANA WOMEN'S NETWORKING

What more could a girl want?

Catch up with friends and sample chocolate at the same time!

This is exactly what members of the Banana Women's Network (BWN) did on Sunday, 10 March during a visit to Charley's Chocolate Factory at Mission Beach. The group learnt about growing cocoa and how it is turned into chocolate.

The tour included a taste-testing and was followed by a lunch. Late last year the BWN was also given an exclusive tour of Mackay's frozen banana process plant at Tully. Cameron Mackay graciously gave up his time to walk members of the group through the facility. The night concluded with dinner at Plantations Restaurant.



Cameron Mackay explains the workings of the Mackay's frozen banana processing plant at Tully during an exclusive Banana Women's tour.



Touring Charley's Chocolate Factory at Mission Beach.

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# COFFS CATCH UP

Coffs banana growers joined ABGC directors and senior staff for dinner and drinks in Coffs Harbour earlier this year. Earlier in the day, ABGC board members toured three local banana farms as well as the Oz Group pack house. The tour was followed by the directors' quarterly board meeting.



Luke Horsford and Jade Buchanan, with Talan, and Kaye Adriaansz (Golden Dawn).



Sandro and Bruno Franco, with Wally Gately



Tom and Margaret Day



Phil Bicknell, Mark Gough and David Tate



Michelle McKinlay, Brian Singh and Jim Pekin.



Max and Jeff Eggins, with Stephen Lowe



Stephen Spear, Mick Gentle, Ben Franklin and Lee Gentle



# FEAST OF THE SENSES

Another hot, hot day ensured the banana smoothies at the Australian Banana stall at Innisfail's Feast of the Senses market day were a huge hit this year.

As always, it was hard to miss the bright yellow merchandise at the centrally located stall. Local growers helped man the marquee giving out hundreds of Australian Bananas hats, drink bottles and shirts.

Held on March 31, the event was a true celebration of local produce – with bananas front and centre.

The Cassowary Coast BGA organised volunteers for the Australian Bananas stall to also hand out tasty banana smoothies, run a 'Guess the Bunch Weight' competition and supply that much-loved merch to punters.

A special shout out to Australian Bananas marquee organiser Josephine Borsato who ensured this year's event was another big success.

## EVENTS



Elise Nucifora and her daughter Gabriella with the Guess the Weight competition.



Josephine and Chris Borsato



Matt Abbott, Graheme Celledoni and Mark Nucifora were kept busy making smoothies.



Dean Sinton and Graheme Celledoni



Mark and Elise Nucifora with their son Teodoro.



Josephine Borsato and Australian Bananas marketing manager Tate Connolly.



CONGRESS ON THE COAST!



# MEET US AT CONGRESS 2019!

Join the celebration and  
laughter at this year's  
**Banana Ball**  
with special guest,  
***DAVE HUGHES!***



Friday May 24 2019  
1900-0145  
Royal Benowa Ballroom, RACV Royal Pines Resort

Hughesy joins an incredible lineup of speakers,  
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[bananacongress.org.au/registration](http://bananacongress.org.au/registration)