

Australian

Issue: 56 | AUGUST 2019

BANANAS

NSW TROPIC ADVENTURE

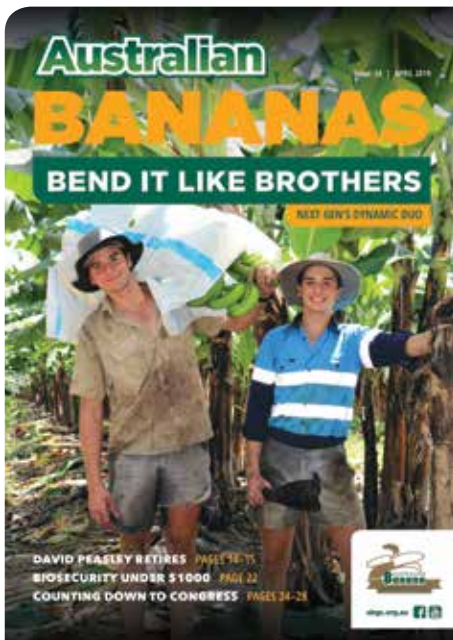
SUB-TROPIC NEXT GEN TOUR NORTH

TRACKING THE TR4 SPREAD PAGE 10
NEW BUNCHY TOP PROJECT PAGE 13
CONGRESS 2019 PAGES 22-28



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Pictured front page: NSW next gen growers on a recent tour of NQ (back L-R) Michael Singh, Daniel Molenaar and Colin Singh; (middle L-R) Brian Singh and Zac Mackeeve; (front L-R) Joshua Tate, Peter Grant (South Johnstone grower) and Banana Industry Development officer Matt Weinert.

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CEO COLUMN

Jim Pekin, CEO



Colombia TR4

At the time of writing this column (July 23), there were reports of a suspected case of Panama tropical race 4 (TR4), detected in Colombia.

If this is confirmed, it will be Latin America's first TR4 detection and a bitter blow for the Colombian industry, which is one of the largest banana exporters in the world.

It is always disappointing to hear that this devastating disease is spreading – but unfortunately, it is also inevitable.

A confirmed Colombian TR4 test result would be of major concern to the banana industries in South and Central America. We know all too well the impact Panama TR4 can have, and our thoughts are with our banana growing counterparts across the globe.

This latest news reaffirms the Australian industry's commitment to strong biosecurity and is a timely reminder of the relative success industry and government have had to date in containing the spread of this disease in North Queensland.

It also reaffirms our commitment to support the dedicated researchers working behind the scenes to find commercially viable alternatives.

Over coming months, representatives from both Colombia and their neighbours, Ecuador, are planning to visit North Queensland and talk with relevant Department of Agriculture and Fisheries experts. The Ecuadorian Growers' Association (AgroBan) are also planning to visit DAF and some NQ farms. Both Agroban and the Ecuadorian Government scientists have asked for ABGC's assistance to brief their delegations on how we have managed to contain and control TR4, to the extent that we have, in Queensland.

As we know, there are many challenges for managing TR4-infected farms. However, on a large scale, to have just three farms in North Queensland with confirmed detections in almost four-and-a-half years, is a relatively good result.

The quarantine and containment measures, early detection and rapid destruction of infested plants have slowed the spread significantly compared to other countries where ineffective control measures were put in place. For example, in China, the area of TR4 affected land increased from 14 ha to 14,000ha in the 4 years after TR4 was first detected.

However, everyone needs to factor in that TR4 has continued to spread, albeit slowly, in the Tully

Valley. A story on Page 10 of this magazine includes a graph of the increase in the total number of confirmed TR4 (VCG positive) plants over time. It is another reminder that our consistent efforts to manage and contain the spread of this disease should continue unabated and if all growers do their bit to protect their farms, our industry will be in good hands.

Bunchy Top

Another major disease of great concern to industry is Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV). It is the most destructive viral disease of bananas and is also spreading around the world.

The ABGC recently successfully tendered to deliver the new, three-year BBTV project for the banana industry, funded by Hort Innovation.

The ABGC Board approved the tender for it, after understanding the challenges of it, due to the importance of containing the spread of this high priority disease.

ABGC recently signed the contract for the project and has employed David Peasley as the Project Manager.

The objectives of this new project are to prevent Bunchy Top from spreading to the main growing areas and to reduce the infections on commercial banana farms within the existing incursion areas.

While we will continue the previous projects' surveillance and destruction activities on commercial farms, we will also train growers to do this themselves. We also aim to share the responsibility for the disease in abandoned plantations with the biosecurity authorities in NSW and Queensland.

Eco-science tour

Prior to the June board meeting in Brisbane, ABGC directors Stephen Lowe and Jade Buchanan, along with ABGC staff, were shown the Panama TR4 testing processes at the Eco Science Precinct in Brisbane.

We found the processes involved in the diagnosis extremely informative and applauded the work of the scientists who conduct the extensive molecular diagnostic procedures at the site, from receiving a sample through to results.



The TR4 Diagnostic Laboratory tour was led by Dr Juliane Henderson, Manager, Plant Biosecurity Laboratory and Elizabeth Czulowski, Senior Scientist, Panama TR4 Program (pictured left). Also pictured; ABGC directors Stephen Lowe (Chair) and Jade Buchanan.

CHAIR COLUMN

Stephen Lowe, ABGC Chair



Reef regs

Impractical and costly provisions within proposed new Reef Regulations continue to be a focus for ABGC and industry at large.

At the board meeting

on June 20, directors and senior ABGC staff met with three senior representatives from the Department of Environment and Science (DES) to discuss serious grower concerns over the proposed new regulations.

The board raised a number of issues including; nutrient and sediment provisions; restrictions on new developments; the inclusion of yield in the Nutrient Management Plan; leaf testing; and keeping invoices for fertiliser purchases for six years.

Since this meeting, negotiations with government have continued in earnest and there have been some positive steps towards designing a more practical and industry-acceptable proposal.

On page 11 of this magazine you can read a more comprehensive update on where these discussions were at, at the time of going to print.

We still have a fair way to go, however ABGC is determined to continue to demonstrate to government, areas within the proposal that are impractical and threaten to severely restrict economic growth. We are hopeful that these negotiations will continue to bring about positive outcomes until satisfactory resolutions are found.

I'd like to thank those growers who have assisted in this process by providing valuable feedback to ABGC and government representatives directly. We will continue to consult with growers as these negotiations continue and provide regular updates on any significant outcomes.

Feral pig eradication

Another important issue, updated on Page 7 of the magazine, is the ongoing feral pig eradication program in the Tully Valley.

This program has been running since July 2017 and in May of this year, the number of pigs culled from high risk TR4 zones surpassed 4000. On July 29, this number sat at 4388.

This is a massive effort and is a credit to ABGC deputy chair Leon Collins and professional shooter Trevor Williamson who co-ordinate this program.

While the majority of eradication is achieved through aerial shooting, growers are also playing a significant role in reducing pig numbers through on-farm actions, including ground shooting, baiting and trapping.

Congress

I think it's safe to say that the 2019 Banana Congress held on the Gold Coast in May was a huge success.

I'd like to thank all those growers who attended the event. Your attendance, coupled with a fantastic two-day grower-focussed program, helped to make it one of the best we've had.

It would be remiss of me not to also say a big thank you to all other delegates who came along to Congress, as well as our valued sponsors, who help make Congress possible.

Feedback post-Congress has been extremely positive and I hope the event will continue to grow and be even more successful next time around.



On 31 May, Australian Banana Growers' Council Deputy Chair Leon Collins (Pictured far right) along with Innisfail banana growers Matt Abbott (far left) and Dean Sinton (Chair of the Cassowary Coast Banana Growers' Association, second from left) met with visiting Shadow Minister for Agriculture Tony Perrett to discuss industry issues, including proposed new Reef Regulations and on-going funding needed to control feral pigs in the Tully Valley.



By Amy Spear

Ponchos and umbrellas were in high demand as growers from Coffs Harbour and the Northern Rivers gathered for an update on varieties at the Duranbah Trial Site.

Even heavy showers and gusty winds didn't deter their interest, as Industry Development Officer Matt Weinert and block manager Zac McKeever (NSW Department of Primary Industries) took the group of almost 20 through the site.

Moving from the Panama race 1 trial, through to the agronomy block and into the best bets, Mr Weinert explained the lengthy process of trialling new varieties - from import through to consumer testing.

"The site is there for the growers to see – and it's important that they do," he said. "On this trip, for example, there are at least ten varieties they wouldn't have seen before, but two were of particular interest, a dwarf Cavendish selection from the Canary Islands and a Panama disease resistant variety, a bit similar to Lady Finger, from Brazil."

The current 'best bet' varieties are bunching, making it an ideal time for growers to visit.

"You can get a real sense of how they're performing and what they might look like in the paddock."

Mr Weinert said they're currently in what is best described as the third phase of the selection process – namely ripening, handling and consumer testing.



The Duranbah trial is 1 of 3 variety screening trials being conducted by the National banana plant protection project BA16001, which is funded by Hort Innovation using the banana research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

"It really is an ongoing process," he explained. "The Hort Innovation project, BA16001, led by QDAF, is always looking overseas for new varieties, but it's not something that can be done quickly. It can sometimes take around 8-10 years before a grower will be able to access the variety and plant it on their farm."

While ducking the downpours, growers were given plenty of opportunity to ask questions and even taste test a few of the varieties.

"It's very interesting to see where things are up to," said grower Jeff Eggins, who travelled up with the group from Coffs Harbour.

The site tour took place on July 5 and Mr Weinert encouraged all growers – subtropical or otherwise – to plan a visit when they could.

"It's a great chance to see your levies at work – and potentially the future of your industry too."

GROWERS BENEFIT FROM EXOTIC FRUIT FLY CONTAINMENT

A fruit fly outbreak in Australia's major banana growing regions could be devastating for the \$600m industry.

The most damaging pest affecting horticulture more broadly, fruit flies have a wide variety of hosts, spread rapidly and have severe, ongoing impacts on both production and industry reputation.

In 1995, Oriental fruit fly established near Cairns, costing more than \$33 million and four years to eradicate successfully. Any new infestation would also require expensive quarantine and eradication measures – funded, at least in part, by industry.

As part of a National Management Group (NMG), the Australian Banana Growers' Council has agreed to a new Response Plan for Exotic Fruit Fly in the Torres Strait to reduce this risk.

Over the period from 2018-2021, it aims to eradicate the annual incursion of three fruit fly species from this area – *Zeugodacus cucurbita*, *Bactrocera dorsalis* and *B.trivialis*. The ABGC will invest \$50,000 over three years as part of a total cost-shared budget of more than \$1.6m. This is to ensure we do our part in protecting the national horticulture industry.

Experts have agreed it is both possible and cost beneficial to continue with the eradication process.

The new Response Plan builds on the approach in place since 1996.

TR4 REPORTS IN COLOMBIA

At the time of going to print, the Australian Banana Growers' Council was closely monitoring reports out of Colombia of a suspected case of Panama tropical race 4.

It is always disappointing to hear of new potential spread of this devastating disease.

We know all too well the impact TR4 can have, and our thoughts are with our banana growing counterparts in South America as they await for conclusive test results.

This latest news reaffirms the Australian industry's commitment to strong biosecurity and

is a timely reminder of the success industry and government have had to date in containing the spread of this disease in North Queensland.

It also reaffirms our commitment to support the dedicated researchers working behind the scenes to find alternatives.

NEW VARIETIES ON SHOW

More than 50 people got a taste – literally – of new varieties being trailed at the South Johnstone Research Station in June.

Participants in a field walk organised as part of the National Banana Development and Extension Program were intrigued by the variation in the plant crop bunches of the different varieties.

“Growers were interested in the origin, agronomic observations and also the disease resistance of the 32 varieties,” Principal Horticulturalist Jeff Daniells said.

A number of varieties were on offer for taste testing.

Growers also had the chance to view new nutrient rate trials, which aim to find the optimal range of nitrogen rates, taking into consideration agronomic and environmental factors.

For more information about the trials at South Johnstone Research Station, including the varieties, visit www.betterbananas.com.au or contact the

Better Bananas team –
betterbananas@daf.qld.gov.au

Keep an eye out for more opportunities to see the trials as they progress.



Principal Horticulturalist Jeff Daniells takes participants through the field walk, answering many questions including the origin, agronomic observations and disease resistance of varieties currently being trialled at the South Johnstone site.



Those attending the field walk at South Johnstone research station were able to taste test some of the 32 different varieties currently being trialled for disease resistance.



FERAL PIG CULL BREAKS 4000 MARK

By Sonia Campbell

The number of feral pigs culled from the Tully Valley in the past two years to help reduce the risk of spreading TR4 has surpassed 4300.

The major milestone was reached through a co-ordinated eradication program that began in July 2017, involving aerial shooting, as well ground shooting, baiting, exclusion fencing and trapping.

ABGC deputy chair Leon Collins and professional shooter Trevor Williamson continue to co-ordinate the program which involves regular aerial shoots across the Tully/Murray Valley catchment, supported by growers undertaking their own on-farm eradication measures.

“On one of the most recent aerial shoots we got 112 for the weekend and then the following weekend we got another 50 all in one morning, which is amazing,” Mr Collins reported.

“We are also moving into other areas, treating these areas and we are now baiting in hard to reach problem areas and getting good numbers. As of July 29, the total number of pigs taken out in high risk TR4 zones was 4388, since July 2017.”

In March, the Department of Defence also commenced a program of night shooting for feral pigs on their Tully training grounds, while the State Government have increased eradication activity in National Parks’ land.

More funding critical

The ABGC has committed significant funding towards the continued management strategy, while about 10 growers – both banana and cane – have personally-funded the on-going campaign to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars. Tully Cane Productivity Services have also funded part of the aerial shooting effort.

Mr Collins, who also heads the Feral Pig Management Working Group, said continuing to fund the program was now the biggest concern, with funding allocated by the State Government in 2017 to assist in the eradication fight quickly running dry.

“We are running out of funding. We’re rolling into year two now where we’ve got to start taking in the whole Murray/Tully catchment (as a condition of the government funding pledge) and next year we are supposed to roll out to Innisfail, but there is not enough money to do that,” he said.

“ABGC will continue to lobby government on behalf of industry to seek additional funds to continue the program, which is providing critical protection to our national banana industry, as feral pigs are a known vector of Panama TR4.

“If we cannot get additional financial assistance from the state or federal governments, we will not be able to roll the program out into year three.”

FERAL PIG FIGHT GETS FINALIST NOD



Professional shooter Trevor Williamson, who has helped lead the Australian Banana Growers’ Council’s feral pig fight in the Tully Valley was named a finalist in the prestigious Cassowary Awards in June.

Mr Williamson, who has been conducting a concentrated aerial shooting program in high-risk TR4 zones, was nominated in the Local Government and Industry Initiatives Category.

Hosted by the Wet Tropics Management Authority, the awards recognise outstanding contributions made towards the conservation and presentation of the World Heritage Area.

Mr Williamson’s efforts in culling thousands of feral pigs have reduced the risk of the pests spreading Panama Tropical Race 4 throughout the region’s main banana growing area.

On top of that, they have greatly reduced the pressure placed by feral pigs onto native animals and their habitats – including the iconic cassowary.

The ABGC congratulated Mr Williamson on this well-deserved recognition and thanked him for his ongoing efforts.

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)
Yuruga Laboratory and Nursery 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
Ramm Botanicals Pty Ltd. Laboratory	02 4351 2099	Ramm@ramm.com.au	Kangy Angy NSW 2258	Tissue cultured plants

BANANA LEVY RATE FROM 1 JULY 2019

The components of the Banana Industry Levy are currently as follows.

Levy Amount Purpose

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

Total = 2.19c /kg*

** This reduced from 2.94c/kg to 2.19c/kg from 1 July 2019.

From 1 July 2019 the total compulsory levy was reduced by 0.75c/kg due to the abolition of the specific Emergency Plant Pest Response levy for bananas. It is now 2.19c/kg (32.85c per 15kg carton).

The Banana PHA levy is paid by the Government to Plant Health Australia. It funds the containment of the first TR4 infested farm that the industry purchased and the remaining debt for the industry's share of the cost of the national Banana Freckle eradication program. It also funds the pre-existing commitments – Torres Straight Exotic Fruit Flies Eradication Response, PHA membership/meetings and Government levy collection.

The R&D and Marketing levies are paid to Horticulture Innovation Australia for banana projects. Formal advice on banana levies can be seen at this link: agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates/bananas

Further information: Jim Pekin, CEO, ABGC

Email - jim.pekin@abgc.org.au. Phone – 07 3278 4786

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- 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



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DOUBLE SCOOP!

Kennedy Valley banana grower Jeff Dickinson is no stranger to the winner's circle when it comes to exhibiting prize winning fruit. But, walking away with top honours at both the Innisfail and Tully Shows this year was especially rewarding.

Mr Dickinson took home the highest accolades at both banana exhibits, including Most Successful Exhibitor at the Tully and District Show after winning seven categories – Champion Plant, Heaviest Bunch Ratoon, Steward's Choice, Champion Hand, Heaviest Hand, Three clusters and Heaviest Single.

This came on the back of picking up the prize for Most Outstanding Exhibit and Most Successful Exhibition on Aggregate Points at the Innisfail Show two weeks prior.

Mr Dickinson said it was always good to receive recognition for the quality of his produce.

"Yes definitely. Quality is a big thing for me. I'm happy. It's good," he said. "It all comes down to the last minute of the judging I suppose, the judges' discretion, but you've got to be in it to win it."



Most Successful Exhibitor winner Jeff Dickinson

But, asked what his winning formula was? That's something he holds close to his chest.

"I can't let that one out," he says with a smile. "But it's about bagging, and being onto all your jobs all the time."

For a complete list of Banana Exhibit winners from the Tully, Innisfail and Coffs' Shows see Pages 40-42.

TONY PATTISON MARKS 25 YEARS WITH DAF



Tony Pattison (pictured left) received recognition of 25 years of service to DAF at this year's Australian Banana Industry Congress, presented with a plaque by Acting General Manager, Crop & Food Science, Agri-Science Queensland DAF Nick Macleod.

Principal Nematologist Tony Pattison has been recognised for 25 years of service to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Highly regarded both nationally and internationally in the soil health discipline, Mr Pattison has pioneered a range of innovative technologies that have greatly assisted the quantification of microorganisms within soil that are able to interact with horticultural crops. He is leading a program that has greatly furthered understanding of the Fusarium complex.

Constantly in demand to speak at conferences across the globe, Mr Pattison's significant milestone was appropriately marked with a presentation at the 2019 Banana Congress.

Mr Pattison's extensive career will feature in the next edition of Australian Bananas.

NUFFIELD AUSTRALIA'S FLAGSHIP EVENT IN BRISBANE

Three key pillars of 'Collaborate, Innovate and Cultivate' will be at the core of this year's Nuffield Australia National Conference.

To be held at Brisbane's Royal International Convention Centre, the conference will see more than 300 of the country's best and brightest in farming come together for a series of seminars, networking events, trade exhibitions and tours.

Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from returning Nuffield Scholars, covering topics including effective branding to attract premiums, soil health, business risk management in variable climates and more.

Other keynote speakers include former President of the Australian Rugby Union and National Farmers Federation, David Crombie AM, and Chairman of the Grains Research and Development Corporation, John Woods.

The 2019 Nuffield Australia National Conference will run from 17-19 September.

More details and registration at www.nuffield.com.au/2019-nuffield-australia-national-conference

CASTING-OFF COMPLACENCY - TR4 IS SPREADING SLOWLY BUT SURELY

By Dr Rosie Godwin

Since the initial detection of TR4 in the Tully Valley in March 2015, alerting growers and the community in general of any new farms with TR4 has been a priority of Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) and the ABGC.

As most would know, there have been three farms confirmed with the disease in almost four-and-a-half years.

Over this time, more infected plants have been tested and confirmed with TR4 on these already infested properties, however, these have not been publicly broadcast, most significantly because;

- Additional detections do not change the biosecurity situation on the property as the whole property is subject to biosecurity restrictions and,
- Protecting the privacy of growers affected by TR4.

However, the ABGC is aware that a level of complacency could naturally exist, if people are not aware of the continuing spread of TR4 on these infested properties (IPs) – the second IP confirmed July 2017 and third IP February 2018.

With the permission of the owners of these two IPs that continue to operate with TR4, this article aims to explain the extent of the spread of TR4 in the top of the Tully Valley and some of the reasons why it is not yet out of control.

1. Distance of spread

- TR4 has spread more than 12 Km since the first detection (March 2015) and it has spread both uphill and up-river.

2. Rate of spread

- The total number of plants over the infested farms that BQ have confirmed positive with TR4 since March 2015 is close to 60 (Figure 1).
- TR4 is spreading with time (Figure 1) but a range of actions - namely growers' on-farm biosecurity measures; the purchase of the first infested farm and destruction of all of its bananas; the quarantine and containment measures imposed by BQ; plus early detection and rapid destruction of infested plants - have slowed the spread significantly. This is even more evident when you compare Australia to other countries with TR4 where no or ineffective control measures were put in place.

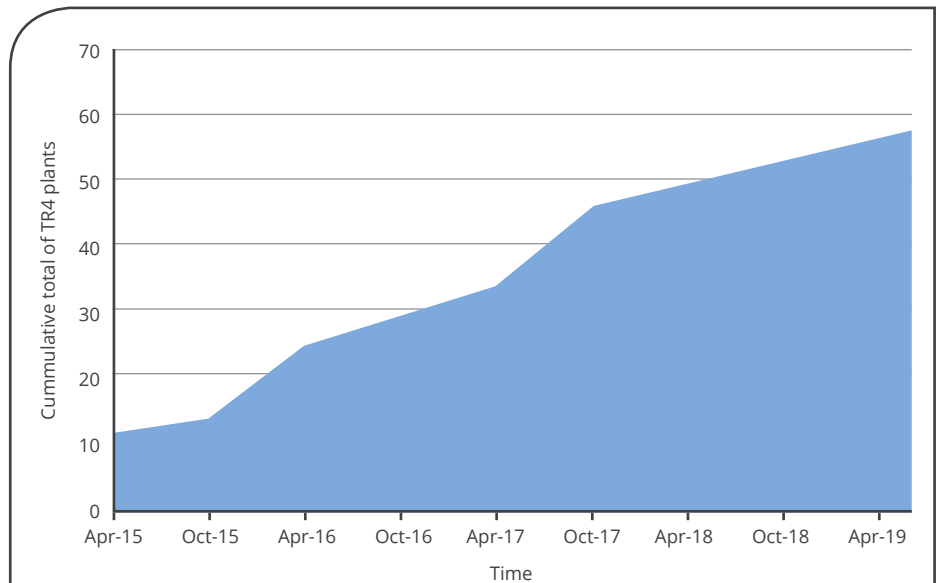


Figure 1: Increase in the cumulative total number of plants which have been confirmed positive with TR4 over time, aggregated 6 monthly.

- For instance after TR4 was detected in Mozambique, it was estimated to be spreading at the rate of 10,000 trees per week. In the four years after TR4 was first detected in China, the area of land affected by TR4, increased from 14 ha to 14,000 ha (the size of the Australian Industry). Over the last 15 years, it has spread to >100,000 ha in China. (See the last Australian Bananas Magazine for the full article on TR4 spread in China p34-35).
- At the moment, measures implemented at the three infested farms in the Tully Valley are protecting the industry, but growers need to protect their own farms so that TR4 doesn't become widespread.
- The current slow rate of spread is buying time for industry, but when the rate of TR4 spread becomes exponential it will be much more difficult to deal with.
- The number of positive plants at each detection site also varies. In the case of the first and second infested farms, the first detection sites had a cluster of approximately ten TR4-infested plants.
- Ongoing routine surveillance by BQ and actions by the farmer at each of the infested farms, has resulted in subsequent TR4 infestations being detected much earlier, in most cases as single trees.

Routine surveillance and early destruction of infested plants is slowing the spread and buildup of inoculum on IPs. Keeping inoculum levels low also helps to reduce the risk of TR4 spread by uncontrollable means such as floods or wildlife. This buys time for IP owners, assists them to retain profitability of their farming operation and helps sustain the whole industry.

All growers can do their bit to ensure we continue to contain the spread of this disease by protecting their own farms, continuing to uphold strict on-farm biosecurity protocols and reporting any suspicious plants to BQ. This disease is not going away, but we can continue to do our best as an industry to curb its spread.

WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS REMAIN IN SPOTLIGHT

By Michelle McKinlay

In the last edition of the magazine, growers were updated on proposed new Reef Protection regulations, designed to help improve reef water quality outcomes.

At the time, there had been good progress in designing sensible proposals, however there were two main sticking points – a cap on nitrogen and phosphorous application and enforcement of additional standards on land that had not been cropped for three out of the last ten years (with one of those years being in the last five years) – that is, if the land did not have a ‘cropping history’.

These proposed provisions were unacceptable to the industry and so the ABGC Board, staff and growers continued robust discussions and negotiations that have finally delivered a welcomed change in policy.

“The Queensland Government has agreed to remove the cap and offer some flexibility by allowing growers to have a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP),” ABGC Chair Stephen Lowe explained.

“A NMP plan will allow growers to apply more than the regulated nutrient rates if it is recommended by an agronomy professional and based on soil and leaf test results,” he said.

The current proposed nitrogen threshold that would trigger the need for a NMP in plant crops is 280kg/

ha/year and ratoon crops is 400kg/ha/year. The proposed threshold rate for phosphorous is 60kg/ha/year.

“At the time of going to print, discussions with departmental officers about the acceptable concentration level of nitrogen and phosphorous in leaf tests to allow growers to top up nutrients were continuing,” Mr Lowe said. “The ABGC is hopeful that a practical resolution can be found.”

However, the news is not all positive. The Queensland Government continues to require growers to have a licence and implement additional and expensive farming standards for land that does not have a ‘cropping history’.

“This policy is poorly informed and will restrict economic development,” Mr Lowe said.

“The current proposal has a blanket requirement that all ‘greenfield’ farming sites will require the same sediment mitigation measures regardless of the risk level of run off. The measures will apply equally and will not consider the proximity of the farm to waterways, amount of rainfall received, fertilising regime or steepness of blocks.

“Most disturbingly, the new conditions will apply retrospectively, to land (such as grazing land) that was owned prior to the commencement of the regulations, as well as land purchased after the commencement of the regulations.

“For example, if a grower already owns grazing land and plans to plant bananas, cane or other crops on it in the future, they will have to comply with a more complicated and expensive process and negotiate approvals with the government.”

A licence to farm on a ‘greenfield’ site will only be issued if the grower can demonstrate that the new farm will satisfy the additional standards and that there will be no net decline in water quality leaving the farm.

“The ABGC Board believes using legislation to introduce retrospective land use conditions raises serious ethical questions. This message has been communicated to the Queensland Environment and Agricultural Ministers, and the Premier,” Mr Lowe said.

“It has been a whole-of-industry effort to get this far but there is still some way to go. The ABGC Board will continue to negotiate with the Queensland Government about the proposals. Growers will continue to be consulted and are encouraged to provide feedback - they can raise concerns with ABGC Directors, staff or their parliamentary representative.”

Further information about the proposals including thresholds, ranges and NMPs can be found on the ABGC website. It is expected that the draft regulations will be debated and then become law in late August or September 2019.

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BANANAS STILL OUR FAVOURITE

By Andrew Wang, FMCG Insight Analyst

Bananas are still Australia's go-to fruit for a natural, healthy and quick way to 'make your body sing', according to latest Nielsen data.

On average, Australian households continue to 'Peel good. Feel good', spending an average of \$63 a year on bananas. Dollar sales for bananas increased by 9.7% over the past year driven by a 13.8% price rise.

Higher prices led to bananas taking out first place as the highest selling produce item in the current Nielsen-Produce Plus top 20 Fruit and Vegetable Report.

AUSSIES GO BANANAS FOR BANANAS

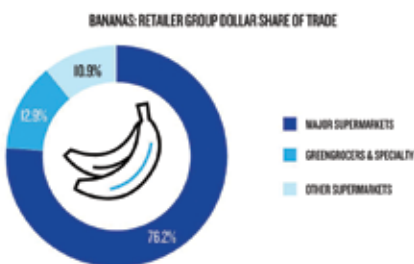


Source: Nielsen Homescan 52 weeks to 15/06/2019
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MAJOR RETAILERS CONTINUE TO DRIVE SALES

Major supermarkets continue to be an important channel for bananas. These retailers accounted for 76.2% dollar share of trade of total bananas and 73.2% volume share of trade. All retailer groups saw an increase in dollar sales, with major supermarkets growing the fastest at 10.8%, followed closely by other supermarkets with a 9.2% increase in the past year.

MAJOR CHAINS REPRESENT MORE THAN 3/4 OF TOTAL BANANA \$ SALES



Source: Nielsen Homescan 52 weeks to 15/06/2019
Major supermarkets are defined here as the sum of Woolworths, Coles and Aldi
Other supermarkets are defined here as all other full-service supermarkets
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Purchasing loose bananas continues to be the most popular format, contributing to over 90% of dollar sales across all retailers and the key driver of dollar growth. Pre-packed bananas, although relatively small, continue to grow: kids bananas leads the way in this segment growing in both volume and dollar sales.

SENIOR AND ESTABLISHED COUPLES DRIVING BANANA SALES

Over the past year, senior couples accounted for a quarter of the bananas sold in Australia, followed by established couples who accounted for one-fifth of banana dollar sales. Bustling families are also an important consumer group for bananas making up 15% of the dollar sales. Kids bananas, while only contributing 2.3% of banana dollar sales, had the highest rate of growth in both dollar and volume terms. These trends suggest that along with senior and established couples, bustling families are also enjoying the taste of bananas and increasingly reaching for them as their snack of choice.

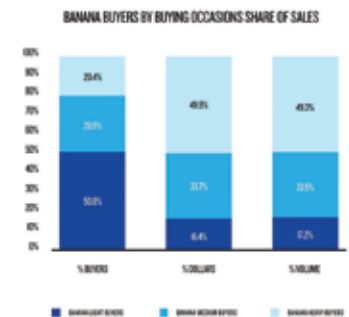
Banana buyers can be broken into three categories based on the number of buying occasions each year. Light buyers; buyers with up to 17 trips per year, accounted for half the total banana buyers in the past year, but this group contributed the least to total banana dollar and volume sales. Heavy buyers on the other hand, buyers with more than 35 trips per year, accounted for only one-fifth of the banana buyers but contributed to almost half of total banana dollar and volume sales.

One of the biggest opportunities for bananas would be to convert light buyers to medium buyers; if light buyers purchased bananas just one more time a year it would equate to \$30.2 million in dollar sales and 6,450 tonnes in volume sales.

Notes:

- Major supermarkets are defined here as the sum of Woolworths, Coles and Aldi
- Other supermarkets are defined here as all other full-service supermarkets
- Senior Couples are 2 or more adults (no children <=17 years), Head of HH 60+ years
- Established Couples are 2 or more adults (no children <=17 years), Head of HH 35-39 years

HEAVY BUYERS REPRESENT HALF OF ALL BANANA SALES



Source: Nielsen Homescan 52 weeks to 15/06/2019 Light buying is 1-17 trips per year, Medium buying is 18-35 trips per year, Heavy buying is more than 36 trips per year
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ETHNIC HOUSEHOLDS ENJOYING BANANAS

The banana category has seen an increase in dollar and volume growth from ethnic households. Ethnic households have continued to grow their average spend per household (+13.4%) and average volume per household (+0.4%) in the past year. Among these households, Cavendish bananas have been the most favoured however, the increase in ethnic households across Australia opens the door of opportunity to introduce new banana varieties.

OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

Despite a decline in volume sales, bananas were the highest selling produce category with the past year's performance propelled by a rise in average prices. Keeping bananas top-of-mind as a healthy energy snack, particularly for families and senior couples, is important to maintain and increase sales. Encouraging an increase in buying occasions of light buyers offers a significant opportunity, while expanding the varieties of bananas available in Australia may also broaden the current consumer base.

- Bustling Families are households with youngest child 12-17 years
- Ethnic households defined by non-English speaking households
- Non-ethnic households defined by English speaking households

Sources:

- Nielsen Homescan 52 weeks to 15/06/2019

NEW BANANA BUNCHY TOP PROJECT STARTS



The Australian Banana Growers' Council was recently awarded a Hort Innovation contract to manage the new three-year National Banana Bunchy Top Project.

By Amy Spear

Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) is the most devastating viral disease affecting bananas globally. Earlier this year, ABGC tendered for the new National BBTV project due to its serious nature and the importance to the national industry of keeping it contained.

The objective of this new project is to prevent BBTV from spreading outside the area where it currently occurs and reduce BBTV infections on commercial banana farms within these areas.

BBTV has been in Australia for a century, but successfully contained to southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales, from Cooroy in the north to Broadwater in the south. 97 per cent of the Australian industry remains free of BBTV, with the benefit of excluding the disease estimated at \$15.9-27.0 million in annual losses for the banana industry (Cook et al 2012).

The project will be achieved through a system of surveillance and control activities, as well as education and training programs for growers and support from both NSW and Queensland biosecurity agencies.

The ABGC has appointed David Peasley as the

Project Manager for this project. David has a career in horticulture, particularly in banana research and development, and led Phases 1 and 2 of the National Bunchy Top project.

"This is unfinished business for me. I hope to achieve more effective control of this devastating virus disease by working closely with growers in a joint effort with the detection team to help growers recognise symptoms of Bunchy Top in their plantation," Mr Peasley said.

"I have some practical aids to help growers both commercial and non-commercial identify the critical early stages of this disease, how to stop it spreading within the plantation and prevent Bunchy Top from spreading outside the infection zone."

The inspection strategy will be informed by levels of BBTV incidence, and focus on:

- Commercial plantations in the BBTV zone of northern NSW and southeast QLD
- Non-commercial banana plantings within 0.5km of an infected farm and along the northern line of the QLD BBTV zone
- The collection and management of surveillance data.

DAVID PEASLEY TAKES ON PROJECT MANAGER ROLE

It seems almost fifty years in the banana industry wasn't quite enough for David Peasley, who has recently been appointed Project Manager for the new National Banana Bunchy Top Virus Project.

The long-time industry advocate's passion for growers and a bright banana future is clear, electing to come out of retirement to apply for the role.

Of course, Mr Peasley has a long history with Bunchy Top, having led Phases 1 and 2 of the Project in previous years.

Mr Peasley was also instrumental in the banana industry's fight against Philippine banana imports, spent time in various roles including District Horticulturalist and has always been happy to share his knowledge – with growers, researchers and other industry representatives.

Mr Peasley was an ABGC Award of Honour recipient in 2015 "in recognition of outstanding dedication and service to the Australian banana industry."

For Bunchy Top inquiries, David Peasley can now be reached on E: peasleyhort@bigpond.com or david.peasley@abgc.org.au M: 0427126245

The surveillance data is now being analysed to inform project monitoring and evaluation, optimise surveillance practices and be retained for research purposes.

In addition to maintaining high standards for property inspections and destruction of infected plants, the project will focus on growers across the country – particularly in the control zone – to ensure greater awareness around BBTV management. Consultants, other collaborating parties and the wider community will also be part of this campaign, through targeted messaging and appearances at relevant events.

One of the key challenges is that the control area is home to many backyard and abandoned banana plants and plots. This includes land in the northern part of the Bunchy Top zone around Cooroy.

The new National Banana Bunchy Top Virus Project commenced in July 2019 and is funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

NT BANANA VARIETY TRIAL FOR RESISTANCE TO TROPICAL RACE 4 COMPLETE

By **Sharl Mintoff**^a, **Tuan Vu Nguyen**^b, **Sam Cullena**^a, **Chris Kelly**^a and **Lucy Tran-Nguyen**^a

^a Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Resources ^b Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

Planted in 2016 as part of the previous Banana Plant Protection Project (BA10020), the varietal screening trial at Coastal Plains Research Farm in the Northern Territory was completed in early 2018.

We collected data on the disease resistance of certain varieties to *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense* (Foc) Tropical race 4 (TR4), for the plant crop and a ratoon. The varieties comprised of several Cavendish lines (including Taiwanese GCTCV lines), FHIA hybrid and parental lines. We reported on the results from the plant crop in an earlier edition of Australian Bananas (April 2018). This article is an update on the performance of the first ratoon crop.

As a reminder, symptoms of Panama TR4 infected plants can include:

- Initial leaf yellowing of the oldest leaves, which leads to wilting and subsequent death of the leaves (Figure 1).
- Pseudostem splitting.
- A reddish-brown discolouration of the water-conducting tissues, evident when the pseudostem is cut through (Figure 1).

METHODS

The trial was planted in June 2016, with all plants artificially inoculated with TR4 colonised millet. Once external symptoms become apparent in the susceptible Williams control plants, we conducted assessments fortnightly, noting the appearance of external disease symptoms and internal symptoms at plant death or harvest. Four reference varieties acted as controls, as their reactions to TR4 are well known: Williams – Very Susceptible; Formosana – Intermediate; FHIA-01 Goldfinger – Resistant;

and FHIA-25 – Highly Resistant (deemed Highly Resistant in previous work).

As for the plant crop, we categorised the reactions to TR4 in this manner:

Resistant (R) – No disease symptoms were observed within the crop cycle.

Intermediate (I) – Majority of plants survived, with minimal plants showing symptoms or minor symptoms noted. With the appropriate crop, management or environment to lower the inoculum levels, these should be commercially viable.

Susceptible (S) – Majority of plants survived with more than 50% plants showing disease symptoms.

Very susceptible (VS) – Plants showed severe symptoms and more than >50% killed due to TR4 infection.

RESULTS

Resistant

Nine varieties remained resistant to TR4 in ratoon 1, with no external or internal symptoms observed. The FHIA hybrids and parental lines, including FHIA-01, FHIA-02, FHIA-25, SH-3142, SH-3748, SH-3362 and SH-3362 Auto-tetraploid, demonstrated strong resistance to TR4. Pisang Gajih Merah and the Cavendish GCTCV 215 also showed resistance.

Intermediate

The varieties SH-3641, SH-3217, FHIA-18 and CJ19, which did not display symptoms of TR4 in the plant crop, all showed a small incidence of disease in the

first ratoon crop, moving them into the Intermediate ranking. Whereas varieties GCTCV 247, SH-3436, Dwarf Nathan and FHIA-03 all retained their Intermediate rating in the first ratoon crop.

Very Susceptible

Eight varieties were deemed Very Susceptible. The Intermediate control Formosana, which falls into the Intermediate category on the plant crop, succumbed to the disease and was rated as Very Susceptible in the 1st ratoon. The variety Dwarf Ducasse, previously classified as Susceptible, was rated as Very Susceptible in ratoon 1. The varieties Williams, DPM 25, Dwarf Parfitt off type, FHIA-26, SH-3656 and GCTCV 106 all remained Very Susceptible.

CONCLUSION

About two thirds of the varieties screened in the trial were intermediate in reaction or better in both plant and ratoon crops, with one third of the varieties tested remaining resistant into ratoon 1, which was very encouraging. Three of those varieties – CJ19, GCTCV 215 and 247 (Figure 2) – will be progressed to a pre-commercialisation phase to assess their prospects on commercial properties. However, none of them yield as well over time compared to Williams grown in the absence of the TR4 pathogen. Additionally, some of these varieties were included for gamma irradiation as part of the mutagenesis program of the BA14014 project, in an attempt to improve their agronomic traits while maintaining TR4 resistance.



Figure 1: Top, external symptoms of TR4 in an infected Cavendish plant. Note the leaf yellowing and leaf death. Bottom, internal symptoms caused by TR4. Note the reddish brown discoloration of water-conducting tissues.



Figure 2: Cavendish varieties showing resistance to TR4. From top, ratoon plants of CJ19, GCTCV 247 and GCTCV 215 (plant crop picture provided by Jeff Daniels).


Variety	Description	Plant Crop	Ratoon 1
FHIA-25 (HR reference)	Cooking type	R	R
Goldfinger (R reference)	Lady Finger hybrid	R	R
GCTCV 215	Cavendish	R	R
FHIA-02	Dessert type	R	R
Pisang Gajih Merah	Saba cooking type	R	R
SH-3142	Elite diploid parent	R	R
SH-3748	Cooking type	R	R
SH-3362	Elite diploid parent	R	R
SH-3362 Auto-tetraploid	Ploidy modified parent	R*	R*
SH-3641	Lady Finger hybrid	R	I
CJ19	Cavendish	R	I
FHIA-18	Lady Finger hybrid	R	I
SH-3217	Elite diploid parent	R	I
GCTCV 247 ¹	Cavendish	I	I
Dwarf Nathan	Cavendish	I	I
SH-3436	Highgate hybrid	I	I
FHIA-03	Dessert/cooking type	I	I
Formosana (I reference)	Cavendish	I	VS
Dwarf Ducasse	Dessert/cooking type	S	VS
FHIA-26	Ducasse hybrid	VS	VS
SH-3656	Lady Finger hybrid	VS	VS
GCTCV 1062	Cavendish	VS	VS
Williams (VS reference)	Cavendish	VS	VS
DPM25	Cavendish	VS	VS
Dwarf Parfitt Off type	Cavendish	VS	VS

VS = Very Susceptible, S = Susceptible, I = Intermediate, R = Resistant

* No disease observed, no signs of bunching

¹ originally received in NT as GCTCV 217, but new information indicates it is GCTCV 247

² originally received in NT as GCTCV 105, but new information indicates it is GCTCV 106



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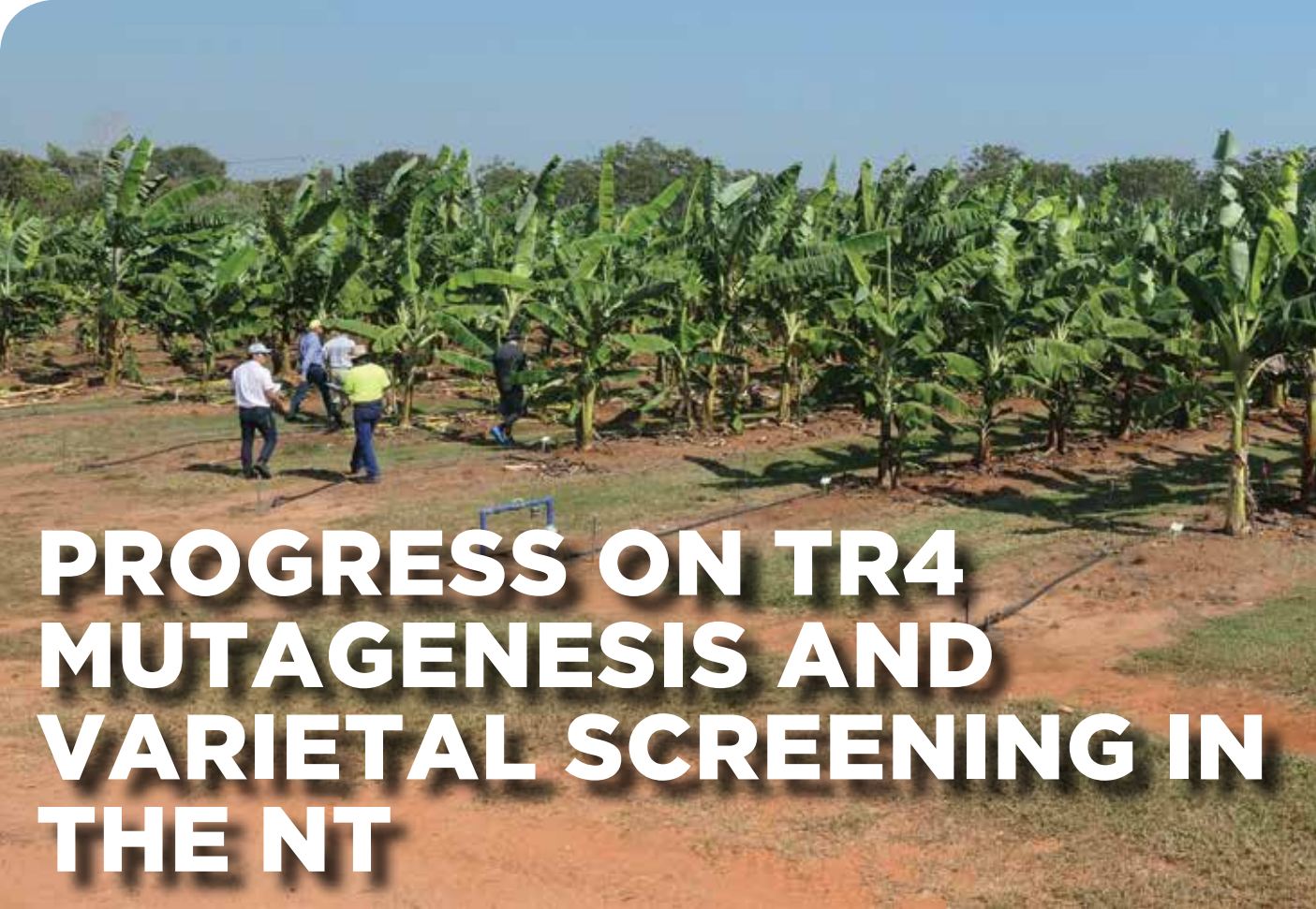
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PROGRESS ON TR4 MUTAGENESIS AND VARIETAL SCREENING IN THE NT

The TR4 varietal screening trial planted in December 2018 is evaluating the disease reaction of 32 varieties over a plant and ratoon crop.

By Sharl Mintoff, Maxine Piggott, Lucy Tran-Nguyen and Chris Kelly, NT DPIR, Jeff Daniells and Stewart Lindsay, Queensland DAF

TR4 screening trials are in full swing in the NT, with new trials established at Coastal Plains Research Farm over the past 10 months.

VARIETY TRIAL

In December 2018, 32 varieties were established to assess resistance to Fusarium wilt TR4 (Panama disease) as part of the banana plant protection project (BA16001). These will be evaluated over a plant and ratoon crop. The evaluation procedure is much the same as that reported for the previous varietal screening trial, with each planting site inoculated with a standard dose of the TR4 pathogen (see Australian Bananas Volumes 49 pp 14-15 & 52 pp 12-13). Varieties in the trial include those shown in Table 1 below. Emphasis is on determining the TR4 reaction of the new Cavendish selections from Taiwan (TBRI) and new novel hybrids from the French West Indies (CIRAD), as well as several parental lines from the CIRAD program.

The latter CIRAD parental lines are included as a sub-trial, with only about half as many plants per variety as the main trial. If this experiment with a different trial design works, it could open the way for improved efficiencies in field screening. Information on the disease reaction of the CIRAD

hybrids and parental lines will be invaluable to the CIRAD breeding program, as well as to other breeding program efforts. It could potentially promote the development of more TR4 resistant varieties for evaluation and potential commercial deployment.

There are three control (check/reference) varieties in the trial to compare against:

- The industry standard and very susceptible Williams.
- Formosana (GCTCV 218). This Cavendish selection from Taiwan probably represents the minimum level of genetic resistance necessary to build an integrated crop management system around, to continue production in the presence of TR4.
- Goldfinger (FHIA-01) resistant.

These controls are essential for putting the disease reaction of new varieties into context.

At about six months after planting, many of the Williams plants are already beginning to show TR4 symptoms, as well as occasional plants of some of

the other varieties.

MUTAGENESIS TRIALS

As part of the 'Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 Research Program' project (BA14014), the TR4 resistant Cavendish varieties GCTCV 119, GCTCV 215 and CJ19 have been irradiated and are undergoing field evaluation. We are seeking variants with improved agronomic characteristics while retaining TR4 resistance. Nineteen selections, possessing early bunch emergence and shorter stature, have been made from the stage 1 screening of irradiated GCTCV 119. Up to four plants of each of these were re-established in December 2018 for further screening alongside unirradiated controls.

About 650 irradiated CJ19 were planted in October 2018 for stage 1 screening. Bunching commenced in April. Several plants appear interesting in terms of agronomic features coupled with the absence of external disease symptoms, but it is still too early to say much beyond this. In February this year 244 irradiated GCTCV 215 plants were also planted for stage 1 screening.



Following the Australian Banana Industry Congress in May a few delegates, including some from overseas, visited the TR4 disease screening sites at Coastal Plains Research Farm, NT. They were impressed with trial progress, saying the 'world is watching' Australia's efforts to curb the effects of this global menace with interest. L-R: Marc Jackson (Fyffes, Costa Rica), Stewart Lindsay (Queensland DAF), Roberto Young (Dole, Honduras), Sharl Mintoff (NTDPIR), Bob Williams (consultant) and Yuji Habomoto (Fyffes, Costa Rica).

Table 1– Varieties being screened at Coastal Plains Research Farm, NT.

Variety	Description
Williams	Very susceptible TR4 reference
Formosana	Intermediate TR4 reference
Goldfinger	Resistant TR4 reference
GCTCV 105	Cavendish ex Taiwan
GCTCV 217	Cavendish ex Taiwan
CJ19 Selection	Cavendish ex N. Qld
CIRAD 03	Novel hybrid ex French West Indies
CIRAD 04	Novel hybrid ex French West Indies
CIRAD 05	Novel hybrid ex French West Indies
CIRAD 06	Novel hybrid ex French West Indies
High Noon	Lady Finger hybrid ex Honduras
PKZ	Highgate? hybrid ex South Africa ex Honduras
Hom Thong Mokho	Very sweet fruit; Gros Michel - like; ex Thailand
Pisang Ceylan	Lady Finger - like
Dwarf French Plantain	Cooking banana
Manang	CIRAD parental line
Pisang Oli	CIRAD parental line
Pisang Bangkahulu	CIRAD parental line
Heva	CIRAD parental line
Sinwobogi	CIRAD parental line
M53	CIRAD parental line
Inarnibal	CIRAD parental line
Pisang Madu	CIRAD parental line
Tjau Lagada	CIRAD parental line
Paka	CIRAD parental line
Pisang Sapon	CIRAD parental line
Pisang Pipit	CIRAD parental line
Nzumoheli	CIRAD parental line

Main Trial

Sub-trial



Severe stem splitting of Williams Cavendish due to TR4 in the varietal screening trial.



What appears to be a promising selection among the irradiated CJ19 Cavendish being screened.



At about six months after planting, many of the Williams plants are already showing TR4 symptoms.

NSW TROPIC ADVENTURE

SUB-TROPIC NEXT GEN TOUR THE NORTH

As part of BA16007, the subtropical development and extension project, a group of six subtropical Next Gen growers from New South Wales took part in a four-day study tour of North Queensland last month.

Co-ordinated by Banana Industry Development Officer Matt Weinert, the trip included tours of local banana farms, Mission Beach Tissue Culture propagation laboratory and nursery and South Johnstone research trial site, where they were shown the variety trial, innovation trial and nutrient rate trial. The group also caught up with more local growers attending the annual banana weigh-in at the Tully Show.

Mr Weinert said those involved in the tour had gained a great overview of the North Queensland industry.

"Everybody we visited was really welcoming. We've seen a big Lady Finger grower with Mick Inkester at Walkamin, we've seen a big Cavendish grower at Rock Ridge farming at Emerald Creek and we've seen the Grant's at South Johnstone who grow alternative varieties and there is a reasonable amount of interest in our group in growing alternative varieties.

"We also visited Mission Beach Tissue Culture and the young growers now have a better understanding

of the whole tissue culture process. So they understand why you have to order your tissue culture 18 months out at least. And, to come here to South Johnstone, they've been able to see all the trials, so they understand the variety trials they are doing here, and also the innovation trials and just looking at potential ways to do things differently on their properties.

"But, one of the best things about the trip was also hearing the young growers discussing their growing issues and sharing the ways that they had solved them

"When they've had a bit more time to reflect and a bit of time to think about it, it will be really interesting to see what they take back to their businesses."



Growers on one of three farms visited during the NQ tour.



Principal Horticulturalist Jeff Daniells takes growers for a tour of the South Johnstone Research Station.

We asked each grower, "What did you get out of your trip North?"

"The best thing for me has been visiting the trial site here at South Johnstone. Just to see the different management practices and things that I can take back to the trial block at Duranbah. There are a few different things I can do in terms of the bunch management, and the sucker management definitely might change as well. So yes, very handy."

Zac Mackeever, Tweed NSW, also manages Duranbah trial site.

"Seeing how bananas are grown up here. The trip's definitely been worthwhile. We've been lucky enough to see different operations, different set-ups with different varieties which is of interest to us because we grow different varieties where we are from, which fill niche markets, so it's been interesting to see how they grow them in their set-up."

Daniel Molenaar, Mullumbimby NSW

"It was good to see how the big guys do things, (especially) the biosecurity. I could probably (take back) some of the biosecurity (back home). Other things I probably couldn't do on my scale, but it was good to see. The growers were really accommodating and let us have a good look around."

Brian Singh, Coffs Harbour NSW



Twenty One Boot Tour – Biosecurity was a top priority for the NSW growers' tour of the North, wearing brand new shoes on each farm they visited.

"The most educational thing I pulled out of the trip was probably the different varieties, being avocados, paw paws and bananas, going to a selection of different growers who do different varieties. It was more to see how people grow. More to see the difference between different climates and different structures. How people do things differently, everyone thinks differently and operates different. There are a few things that I'd take back that will probably change (like) my biosecurity. We've got fences, we've got dip stations, but I'd like to secure it a bit more and make it more like, 'this is an operating farm and we need to keep it as stringent as possible'."

Joshua Tate, Coffs Harbour NSW

"From this trip I've learnt that I've got to be a bit more thorough. I guess back at home I've been overlooking a few things. Coming here you see it all working basically step-by-step, they break everything down and it makes more sense. I've probably been rushing a few jobs that I probably could take more time and a couple of jobs that I've just gone ahead and not really analysed the history of what I've done in past years, so it's just basically refreshed my memory. It's like pressing the reset button and think, hang on, I could do this better, I could tweak that, I could go home and maybe do this job more often and just trying to find that balance."

Michael Singh, Coffs Harbour NSW

"There's a lot to take back and tell the growers (of Tweed BGA) to let them know what they actually missed out on, because what we were shown wasn't just one thing, we saw everything, from Lady Fingers, to Cavendish, to tissue culture to here at the research at South Johnstone. It opens your eyes up to seeing things like the cost of production (of tissue culture). People say 'I'm not paying \$8 or something for a tissue culture plant because it is too expensive, but when you see the process of how it's all done you can work out why it is that expensive, for the time that goes into it. And when you go see a large packing shed, I call it a factory, the way it was cut, processed and how it all just keeps working."

"I'd like to thank Matt Weinert, Australian Banana Growers' Council and government for allowing us to have this opportunity to come up here and do this, because it wouldn't happen any other way. But, I guess mostly I've also got to thank those growers who allowed us to go on their farms. All the growers' farms we went onto they were warming, they allowed us to look at the plants, look at their packing sheds."

Colin Singh, Tweed NSW, also President of the Tweed BGA.



THE SURPRISING BENEFIT TO BOTTOM LINE IN FARMING WITH TR4

Tully grower Warwick Flegler (pictured right) receiving his Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA) Accreditation allowing him to certify his own fruit consignments. He is pictured with BQ Compliance Officer Jess Portsch and BQ Compliance Manager Paul Garland.

Panama disease tropical race 4 is a devastating disease, no grower would wish upon another. However, the owners of two infested properties in the Tully Valley have shed some positive light on continuing to operate with the disease - including some surprising economic outcomes.

By Sarah Flenley – Biosecurity Queensland

Gavin MacKay, who manages MacKay's Bolinda Estate (first detected with TR4 in July 2017) with his cousin Stephen MacKay, says that having the disease on their Tully Valley property meant they'd paid much closer attention to how they did things on farm, and there's been some surprising benefits.

"In the beginning, we thought it was going to be very onerous with Biosecurity Queensland (BQ). But the reality is, working with BQ meant we have become more quality-focused in the field," he said.

"We worked on a higher level of hygiene in the field which gave us a better product and out-turn. So for all the heartache you're going through at the time,

the nett benefit outweighs the imposition."

"Initially we used to have to throw away some bunches due to having leaf material present. It took three months for our quality processes to flow through, and now we don't lose any. That is benefitting our bottom line".

Warwick Flegler, is another grower farming with TR4 and he agrees with Gavin.

"When a farm has TR4, no soil or plant material can leave the property and I gotta tell you, I did not realise how much leaf material was in a bunch until you have to make sure none is there!" Warwick said.

Warwick also explained that his fruit quality had improved mainly because there were now less rats in his bunches.

"Our rat control program has improved which has meant less rats, so less leaf material and better quality fruit."

Initial detection

When a grower gets TR4, BQ assemble a dedicated team to work with the grower and their staff to understand what is needed to contain the disease and to keep trading. And, in the beginning, BQ and ABGC are pretty hands-on.



Gavin was asked what it was like initially, having BQ on their farm all the time. He said that BQ had been a great support, especially in the early days.

"We wanted to keep packing and sending out fruit so having BQ staff on-site to help educate our staff and troubleshoot issues really helped.

"We knew there were a set of rules to protect not only our farm but the rest of the banana farms across this region. So as long as the system was fair, which we've found it to be, we'd work within it.

"We worked collaboratively with BQ and ABGC and that made it a faster process for us to manage TR4 and implement systems on our farm," he said.

Warwick also found that working with BQ was a positive experience that ultimately benefited his farm, allowing him to continue trading in an industry he is heavily invested in.

"Jodie Bocking and her team at BQ were brilliant. They knew their stuff and were clear on what we could and could not do and helped us find solutions.

"BQ were really approachable and made the transition for us much easier. We were back trading within a few days," Warwick added.

The move to self-management

Panama TR4 Program's Operation Manager Donna Campagnolo said BQ worked with the grower to build a better understanding of how their farm operates so they can build in the legislative requirements into existing processes wherever possible.

"A good example of this is fruit inspection. When it came to BQ inspecting the fruit, we looked at what the grower was doing already, and managed our inspection process in cooperation with the growers to lessen the impact on their packing operations," Donna said.

Fees apply to inspecting and certifying fruit so the next step was getting growers to certify their own fruit consignments. BQ with ABGC and Biosecurity Solutions Australia developed a new Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA) Accreditation Operational Procedure – ICA-67 - which allowed growers to do just that.

Both infested farms are now ICA-67 accredited and certify their own fruit. This is a step in the

right direction towards growers self-managing TR4 whilst meeting their food safety and biosecurity obligations.

For growers to completely self-manage TR4, and for the industry to be assured that all is being done to limit the spread of disease, BQ builds a body of evidence that farm operations meet the requirements of a 'Notice of presence of Panama disease tropical race 4' (notice).

That is done in stages over time. Both farm owners worked with their staff and BQ to come up with innovative ways to move people, vehicles and fruit whilst working within the notice. Some examples include:

- Using foot wear exchanges between clean and dirty zones rather than undertaking the cleaning and decontamination processes required by the notice
- Using black plastic to cross public roads or establish clean access roads for trucks that need to enter farming zones
- Sealing trailer tops so there is less to disassemble and clean, making it easier to move fruit.

Once this body of evidence has been completed, BQ conduct scheduled compliance audits with the farm to ensure the legislative requirements are adhered to.

Both farms are now at the self-managing TR4 phase with compliance audits being undertaken and they are seeking support from BQ when needed.

"For the first few months BQ was on our farm a few times a week, but over time that lessened," Warwick explained.

"These days it's got to the stage where I call when I need to talk something through and BQ come over. That's in addition to the surveillance team that come out every six weeks to check for signs of the disease".

Both Gavin and Warwick offered their final words to share with industry.

"Some people have this idea that it is not TR4, but what if you are wrong?" Warwick said.

"I have never seen anything kill my banana plants so quick like that before. Why not protect your farm now? I tell you, it's much easier to do it now as it gets harder when you've got TR4."

He added; "It's worthwhile getting BQ to come out now. They know their stuff and can point out what would work with a notice of TR4 and what would not. You're going to want to send bananas off your farm as quick as you can so I'd book a visit, do the thinking, and if you're going to spend the money anyway - why not do it now with less hassle?"

Gavin agreed, adding, "Sitting back and waiting to see if/when you get TR4 is not a good game plan if you want to be in banana farming for the long-term."

ADAPTATIONS TO NOTICE OF PRESENCE OF TR4

A Notice of presence of Panama disease tropical race 4 (notice) is given to an owner/occupier of land confirmed or suspected of having Panama disease TR4.

The notice prescribes the requirements a grower must comply with in order to satisfy their regulatory obligations and discharge their general biosecurity obligation in relation to the disease as stated under the Biosecurity Act 2014 (Qld).

A notice outlines risk minimisation processes and procedures and can contain specific destruction practices for infected plants, as outlined in the Queensland biosecurity manual.

These procedures outlined in the notice were developed with agreement from industry

representatives. These were to provide advice to banana growers regarding best practice on-farm biosecurity to minimise the spread of Panama TR4.

The notice has adapted throughout the years to ensure that requirements are practical and reasonable, while still ensuring that the risk of disease spread is minimised.

Ongoing consultation with industry and infested properties will ensure the notice minimises the risk of disease spread while still allowing the properties to operate.

THAT'S A WRAP!

A GOLDEN LOCATION TO CELEBRATE THE NATION'S FAVOURITE GOLDEN FRUIT

After almost two years of planning, the Australian Banana Industry Congress was successfully held in May, marking three days of celebrations, knowledge-sharing, inspiration and more.



By Sonia Campbell

It was tipped to be one of the best and Congress 2019 certainly delivered.

Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast proved to be an ideal location for the industry's premier, biennial event.

More than 370 delegates – including 103 growers – converged on the five-star location enjoying a thought-provoking and insightful grower-focused program. A program aimed at giving all those involved in the industry a chance to consider ways to farm better, inject business growth through change and innovation, deal with adversity including threats of disease, tap into emerging markets, and deliver the best possible product for consumers into the future.

Farm safety ambassador and football great Shane Webcke kicked off the two-day plenary proceedings and was followed by an impressive line up of presenters, including well-known demographer and social commentator Bernard Salt who had

delegates captivated while presenting on future consumer demand trends expected over the next ten years.

Continuing to successfully market the nation's favourite fruit also took centre stage, along with emerging export opportunities and challenges. Australian and international experts offered insight into the future of R&D, with global trade trends, value-adding and embracing change offering additional retrospect and stimulus to the program.

Grower-focused panels generated some of the most positive feedback from Congress, including the 'Living and Farming with TR4' panel (featuring Mark Smith from Darwin Fruit Farms and Gavin and Stephen MacKay from MacKays Farming) along with an 'Innovation Panel' made up of four growers trialling innovative practices and technologies on farm.

Antarctic adventurer, author and leadership expert Rachael Robertson brought the plenary program to a compelling and entertaining end, before delegates headed to the Banana Ball and Awards



Shane Webcke

Ceremony, for a night of fine food, dancing and side-splitting entertainment by comedian Dave Hughes.

Congress Chair and ABGC director Paul Inderbitzin said the diverse and dynamic line-up of presenters at this year's Congress was tailored specifically towards growers, with the aim of bringing innovation, opportunity and new and emerging ideas back home.

"This year's program was aimed at giving growers the tools and motivation they need to take their banana businesses to the next level," Mr Inderbitzin said.

"Whether it be the latest R&D, an insight into marketing techniques or overcoming challenges posed by disease – ultimately it's all about delivering the best possible product into homes across the country."

He acknowledged that the dedicated committee tasked with developing the comprehensive Congress Program were determined to listen to feedback from past Congresses and build a program that met expectations.

"It was clear from surveys conducted by ABGC that delegates wanted a program that was very grower-focussed and actually put banana growers themselves centre stage," Mr Inderbitzin said.

"We set out to achieve this and we were very fortunate that so many growers were willing to take on the challenge of not only presenting at Congress, but were also willing and generous enough to impart valuable knowledge to industry at large."

"We had a 20 per cent increase in the number of banana growers attending Congress this year - compared to 2015 - and there was certainly a real 'buzz' after this year's event, and we hope this translates into even more growers attending Congress next time it rolls around."



Comedian Dave Hughes



Antarctic adventurer and author Rachael Robertson



Demographer and social commentator Bernard Salt.



Future of bananas and R&D panel.

Congress 2019 would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of both the Congress Management Committee and Program Committee.

Congress Management Committee

Paul Inderbitzin (Congress Chair & ABGC director)
Ben Franklin (ABGC director)
Leanne Erakovic

Amy Spear

Sonia Campbell (Congress Co-ordinator)
Jade Buchanan (ABGC director)
MCI Australia

Congress Program Committee

Paul Inderbitzin (Congress Chair & ABGC director)
Ben Franklin (ABGC director)
Leanne Erakovic
Matt Weinert
Matthew Abbott

Amy Spear
Jenny Crema
Shanara Veivers

Sonia Campbell (Congress Co-ordinator)
Jade Buchanan (ABGC director)
Rosie Godwin
Elisa King
James Howe



L-R Far North Queensland growers Mark Nucifora, Peter Inderbitzin, Rob Zahra and Matt Abbott during the Grower Innovation Panel.



L-R: Mark Smith (Darwin Fruit Farm), Gavin and Stephen MacKay (MacKays Farming) are quizzed by Congress Chair Paul Inderbitzin during the Living with TR4 panel.

KIWIFRUIT PSA SAGA HAS LESSONS FOR AUSTRALIAN BANANA INDUSTRY IN FIGHTING PANAMA TR4

By Ashley Walmsley

All that orchard hygiene does is buy you time to come up with other solutions.

So said plant disease expert, Dr Bruce Campbell at this year's Australian Banana Industry Congress.

Dr Campbell was the chief operating officer of plant and food research in New Zealand during the outbreak of *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *actinidiae*, (Psa) a disease which crippled the lucrative kiwifruit industry in 2010.

Dr Campbell led a team of more than 100 scientists who conducted an intensive screening program leading to the discovery of SunGold kiwifruit, a Psa tolerant variety.

Psa is a "tiny disease but it spreads very quickly", resulting in spotted leaves, cane dieback and liquid oozing from plants.

When the news broke of the disease's presence, Dr Campbell said there was a huge flurry of interest and concern for the industry, plus plenty of finger-pointing.

The company, Zespri, essentially acts as a single-desk marketer for New Zealand kiwifruit.

He said it was a wake-up call for its emergency

protocols as it had a response plan written for fruit fly, not Psa.

"They had a strategic plan but that went into the bin at the first board meeting," Dr Campbell said.

The New Zealand government established a \$50m fighting fund called Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH).

Dr Campbell said this enabled his team to pull together key scientists who were working on other things.

Like TR4, Psa spreads rapidly on things such as vehicles, which caused the team to quickly shift to a response phase as opposed to resistance.

A target was set at two to three years to come up with a solution.

Against the habits of many experienced scientists who worked on achieving a 95 per cent confidence level, the process of going from a trial variety to a commercial process was sped up even if that meant promising varieties were not completely resistant.

In about 2013, the decision was made to go with SunGold.

In 2016/17, 48 million trays of Zespri SunGold were sold with an estimated export value of \$686 million.



Dr Bruce Campbell – Dr Bruce Campbell led a team that discovered the SunGold kiwifruit, essentially saving the industry in New Zealand.

Dr Campbell's advice for the banana industry in the face of TR4 was:

- Be prepared and respond rapidly
- Underpin your industry with really strong science
- Buy time with orchard hygiene and controls
- Manage risk through genetic diversity
- Be united

LIFE WITH TR4 IS TOUGH, BUT POSSIBLE FOR BANANA GROWERS

By Ashley Walmsley

Banana growers have been told that it is possible to live with the crop disease, Panama Tropical Race 4, but it's hard work.

Delegates heard from Darwin Fruit Farms farm manager, Mark Smith.

Panama TR4 has been present in the Northern Territory officially since 1997 when a case was confirmed at a farm 50km away from where Mr Smith was working.

By 2006, there was only one (the Darwin Fruit Farms property) of the nine original commercial banana farms still operating in the NT.

"It's a heartbreaker just watching healthy trees die. You know why but it doesn't get any easier even after 20 years, it still hits you all the time," Mr Smith said.

The business currently has about 40 hectares (100 acres) of bananas, plus 30,000 Honey Gold mango trees and about 4 million pineapple plants.

Mr Smith said as the realisation took hold that Panama TR4 was spreading, the team adopted an attitude of dealing with it rather than running from it. Despite the quarantining of farms, the introduction of improved farm hygiene and stringent protocols, new infections kept being recorded and identified each week.

"We also had a lot of people saying they could cure it. We tried a lot of them and they were good products but did nothing to control Panama," he said.

He said strict biosecurity works but it only takes one breach, with animals only partly to blame.

"Pigs and buffalo are bad (at spreading the disease) but humans are the worst," he said.

"I can't see Panama not moving into other growing areas."

Darwin Fruit Farms now ploughs out and replants bananas every year into fallow ground where possible.



Mark Smith – Darwin Fruit Farms farm manager, Mark Smith, told Congress 2019 that his team has adopted an attitude of dealing with Panama TR4, rather than running from it.

Mark Smith encouraged growers to engage their staff, including pickers and packers, to be alert.

"If your staff don't find it - get new ones. They are looking at trees every day," he said.

"Moving plant material - you don't do it. That's the key."

Ashley Walmsley is the Editor of Good Fruit & Vegetables. You can read these stories, and more, in full at www.goodfruitandvegetables.com.au.



BANANA WOMEN'S NETWORK LUNCH



WELCOME DRINKS



BANANA BALL



AWARDS OF HONOUR

Five recipients took to the stage at the Banana Ball, recognised for their outstanding dedication and service to the banana industry.

The Awards of Honour were initiated by the Australian Banana Growers' Council to pay tribute to individuals who have made a significant contribution to the industry, often over many years. Nominations come from within industry and the ABGC Board reviews all nominations before awarding the honours list.

"The five people who received an Award of Honour at this year's Congress represented some of the best attributes of our industry – they're innovative, willing to share ideas and are passionate about what they do," said Congress Chair Paul Inderbitzin.

2019 Award of Honour recipients:

Peter Molenaar



Peter Molenaar has grown bananas in northern NSW for nearly 40 years. A genuine industry stalwart who has gone beyond the paddock to represent banana growing at both local and national levels, including serving on the ABGC Board for a decade. He has worked tirelessly on some of the industry's biggest issues including the National Banana levy, Plant Protection Program and national Banana Bunchy Top Virus. Peter is still involved in a number of crucial committees and is a current member of the Banana Marketing Strategic Industry Investment Advisory Panel and the Tweed Banana Growers' Association executive.

Stephen and Gavin Mackay



The Mackay name is synonymous with leadership, innovation and adaptation. Cousins Stephen and Gavin manage Mackay's Bolinda Estate farm in Tully. Together, they have selflessly and generously given their time to share with industry and stakeholders how they have innovated in the face of adversity and continued to farm with TR4. Part of the biggest banana growing family in Australia, Stephen and Gavin have always been willing to share knowledge that benefits industry as a whole and their contribution to industry goes well beyond their own farm gates. Their award is of particular recognition of the instrumental role they have played in supporting and educating growers in North Queensland in maintaining the continued fight against TR4. Their efforts have also enabled growers, extension officers, the ABGC and biosecurity authorities throughout Australia to better protect farms from getting and spreading TR4.

Ian Liddle

Liddles Aerial Spraying is Australia's first and only third generation aerial application business. Founded by Ian's father, Norm, it helped pioneer aerial services to rural Australia in the 1950s. Ian Liddle, a former banana grower himself, has continued his father's legacy and has been instrumental in developing aerial spraying of north Queensland bananas. Ian has always embraced new technology and has adapted it to the benefit of growers. He introduced the first rotary service to the banana area and was a leader in using larger turbine aircraft for aerial application. Ian is the longest serving operator in north Queensland leading the way with new aircraft technology and innovation.

Les Blennerhassett

Les is a founder and director of Blenners Transport in Tully, North Queensland. Blenners Transport have been getting fresh produce to market for three decades. Starting out as a banana farmer looking to solve produce transport issues, Les and wife Judy decided to truck their own bananas to market. With a reputation for reliability and efficiency, this forward thinking farmer's small fleet of vehicles steadily grew into the renowned transport solution it is today. Blenners Transport is now one of the largest family-owned road and rail operators, with a team of 350 employees and an impressive national fleet of 127 prime movers, 155 vans, 33 rigid trucks, 10 road trains and 20 rail containers. They transport North Queensland bananas to markets in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane.

Past Congress Awards of Honour recipients

ABGC Awards of Honour have been provided at every Banana Industry Congress since 1995.

Here is the list of recipients.

1995 (Inaugural Congress)

Jack McNish

Ray Kratz

Ray Everingham

Jim Dobson

Ron May

Les McGrath

1997

Ted Ovens

Ken Pegg

Robert Mackay

1999

Pat LaManna

Don Anderson

George Larsen

Trevor Miller

Howard Pilgrim

2001

Len Collins

Mal Bakon

Bill Nelson

(posthumously)

John Pascalis

Ron Peterson

John Robinson

Brian Sandercock

2003

Ron Gray

Georgette

Everingham

Ted Blanch

Mort Johnston

2005

Margaret Day, WA

Gary McCudden,

NSW

Ross Boyle

Dr Warren Hoey

2007

Len Collins – Life

Member

John Mackay, Qld

John Horsford, Qld

Bruce Munro, WA

Wayne McFie, NSW

2009

David Pike

Mark Spagnolo and

Judy Spagnolo

Patrick Leahy

Lou Lardi

Vicky Kippin-

O'Connor, Chair of

Freshcare

Peter Allen, General

Manager, Technical

Capability Visy

Packing

2011

Des Rackley (Qld)

Bob Brighton (")

Greg Vuleta (")

Ken Larsson (NSW)

Jim Voisey (")

Gerry Van den Broek (")

Tom Day (WA)

2013

Mark Nucifora

Tony Heidrich

(former ABGC CEO)

Senator Ron Boswell

2015

Cameron Mackay

David Peasley

Stewart Lindsay

Pat Leahy – Life

membership

2017

Doug Phillips

2019

Peter Molenaar

Stephen and Gavin

Mackay

Ian Liddle

Les Blennerhassett

FOODBANK WORKING WITH BANANA INDUSTRY



Pictured – Foodbank’s National Program Manager Jacqui Payne (far left) and GM National Supply Chain Michael Davidson (centre) met with Linda Davies, Paul Johnston and Paul’s son Billy from Merryport Bananas during a recent visit North.

Since featuring in the December issue of Australian Bananas, the Foodbank team has continued to work proactively with the banana supply chain to gain a better understanding of the on farm, distribution and ripening processes. You might have spotted the team at this year’s Banana Congress or during their visits to a number of growers and supply chain partners in the Mareeba, Innisfail and Tully regions in June.

With bananas being the high demand, nutritious and versatile fruit they are, Foodbank is keen to

understand and explore how they can work with industry to establish and source a regular and sustainable supply of bananas. The goal is to ensure this important fruit is available to vulnerable families and school children all over the country who would otherwise go without.

More than 40% of Foodbank’s total volume of food and groceries is distributed into rural and regional areas, so Foodbank is working hard to align all of the pieces at each touchpoint in the chain, including on farm, transport and ripening. This would allow

the not-for-profit to provide a regular supply of fresh, nutritious bananas to communities in every state. Foodbank gave a huge thanks to all growers and organisations that currently support their work and to those who were so welcoming and happy to answer questions at recent events and visits.

If you would like to find out more about the Foodbank National Banana Program and how you could get involved in any capacity please contact Jacqui Payne – supplychain@foodbank.org.au

GROWERS FEATURE IN PODCAST

Two Far North Queensland banana growers feature in Hort Innovation’s new podcast series ‘Growing Matters’.

The series aims to bring you tangible information to help improve your farming business – and you can listen anytime, anywhere through Hort Innovation’s website or your favourite podcast app.

Tune in to hear Mena Creek banana grower Matt Abbott speak about sustainable farming, or listen to Lakeland grower Paul Inderbitzin talk about the industry’s waste management practices.

Search for ‘Growing Matters’ in your podcast app or at www.horticulture.com.au.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: BANANA SKIPPER BUTTERFLY



A caterpillar in the roll of a banana leaf.
Photo: Jeff Daniells, Queensland DAF

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

What is Banana skipper butterfly?

Also known as the banana leaf roller, the banana skipper butterfly originates in South East Asia. Adult butterflies are brown with three yellow-white areas at the front of their wings. They get the name 'skipper' from their fast, darting movements and are attracted to light. The adult female will lay small yellow eggs in batches of 12-25 on lower leaf sides, from which caterpillars emerge. The caterpillars have black heads, narrow necks and pale green bodies. As they grow, they roll up leaf sections and eat the leaves, also exuding a fine white powdery material.

What are the symptoms?

- Distinctive rolled up leaves, that can extend up to 15cm in length
- Caterpillars and/or a white powdery substance in the rolled up leaves
- Caterpillars also consume the leaves and can quickly cause significant amounts of defoliation

How do they spread?

- Banana skipper butterfly can spread over long distances as eggs on infected banana planting material
- As undetected butterflies on boats, vehicles or aircraft or within a localised region

Where in the world is it found?

Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, USA (Hawaii), Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and Papua New Guinea.

Its proximity to Northern Australia is of concern to the Australian banana industry.

What are we doing to protect our industry?

- Working to maintain strict quarantine procedures at our borders.
- Promoting good biosecurity among industry stakeholders
- Working with relevant authorities to stay informed about the incidence of banana skipper butterfly overseas.

What can I do to protect my farm?

- Use only high-health clean planting material
- Check your farm frequently for new pests and unusual symptoms
- Maintain good biosecurity practices

Who can I call?

Exotic Pest Hotline – 1800 084 881



Rolled banana leaves are key indicators of the presence of banana skipper butterfly. Photo: Jeff Daniells, Queensland DAF



Leaf damage caused by the banana skipper butterfly. Photo: Jeff Daniells, Queensland DAF



Luna[®] PRIVILEGE



Tully banana grower embraces new chemistry to tackle disease.

When the first fungicide containing Group 7 chemistry was released in 2015, Cameron Flegler started using it on his Tully banana farms without hesitation.

The reason is Mr Flegler, who has 320 hectares of bananas in conjunction with his brother, knew from past experience how important it is to keep on top of disease in the banana business.

"When you grow bananas in Tully there are a few diseases that really have an impact on production if they're not in check, such as yellow Sigatoka, which is a banana leaf fungal disease and it is a constant problem, it never sleeps," he says.

"We do a lot of physical man hours de-leafing when yellow Sigatoka is bad, but you've got to do it regularly, which really costs a lot, so chemicals that stop the disease really give you an advantage – the chemical can be expensive but not as expensive as the labour.



"If you put on a really good chemical that can hold it at bay for longer, you do save a lot of labour and you can lift production because you simply have more leaves and bigger bananas, so that's why I embrace new chemicals for leaf diseases."

After the introduction of Luna[®] Privilege fungicide from Bayer Crop Science in 2015, Mr Flegler says the decision to use the new chemistry on all his bananas was an easy one.

"I use Luna Privilege regularly in my fungicide aerial spraying program and it's certainly been one of the major factors why my bananas have had very little leaf disease for the last two years," he says.

"I've had really good production - plenty of leaf cover, good bunches and I haven't been getting much sunburn, so investing in Luna Privilege to control disease, which results in healthier plants, makes financial sense.

"The last couple of banana seasons have been pretty tough, with low prices and not a great deal of demand for the fruit – while there have been some big quantities of fruit, generally people just aren't paying a lot for bananas.

"However, even though it's an expensive initial application, Luna Privilege is a lot

cheaper than the labour it takes to chop out leaf diseases by hand – in a tough year, you try to reduce costs and I've really found that Luna Privilege has lowered my biggest bill, which by far is manual labour."

Mr Flegler says a good relationship with his aerial spray contractor, Jason Rodda from Airborne Group Australia, means application of Luna Privilege is a smooth operation.

"We only apply Luna Privilege by air, as it's registered for aerial application, so in conjunction with Jason and the leaf disease independent monitor, we work out when's the best time in the Luna Privilege application window to spray and we apply it accordingly," Mr Flegler explains.

"In the future, Luna Privilege is definitely going to be included in our aerial spray program, I think it has been value for money.

"As long as the strong adherence to the application window is kept up, Luna Privilege is going to have longevity in the banana industry, it makes good financial sense, which is the bedrock of farming really."

To read about other experiences, visit lunaprivilege.com.au or talk to your local supplier to find out more.

lunaprivilege.com.au

Luna[®] Privilege is a Registered Trademark of the Bayer Group. Always consult the product label for detailed information. The information and recommendations set out in this brochure are based on tests and data believed to be reliable at the time of publication. Results may vary, as the use and application of the products is beyond our control and may be subject to climatic, geographical or biological variables, and/or developed resistance. Any product referred to must be used strictly as directed, and in accordance with all instructions appearing on the label for that product and in other applicable reference material. So far as it is lawfully able to do so, Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd accepts no liability or responsibility for loss or damage arising from failure to follow such directions and instructions. Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd ABN 87 000 226 022 Level 1, 8 Redfern Road, Hawthorn East, Victoria 3123. Technical enquiries: 1800 804 479 crop.bayer.com.au



REBATES UP TO \$1000 TO COVER PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

The Queensland Government is providing funding directly to banana growers to help them access professional and agronomic advice to assist them in meeting the minimum standards included in the proposed environmental protection legislation.

These standards will cover nitrogen and phosphorous application, erosion and sediment control, record keeping for both new and existing farms, and farm design standards for new cropping developments. A starting date for the new minimum standards will be dependent on the bill passing through parliament and at this stage there is no exact date for this to occur.

The new scheme will cover growers in the Great Barrier Reef catchments and will provide a rebate up to \$1000 for professional advice. The scheme will be administered by QRIDA who

will be seeking applications from Agricultural Professionals such as Agronomists and Soil Conservationists to apply to become Accredited Agriculture Advisors in August 2019.

Once established, growers will be able to select an advisor listed on the QRIDA website and seek their advice. They will need to pay the advisor upfront and then apply to QRIDA for a rebate of up to \$1000.

Keep an eye out for further information which will be provided when the scheme goes live.

SPRAYING PESTICIDES IN NSW

New South Wales growers: do you spray pesticides on other banana farms for a fee or reward?

Even if it's just your costs covered, the Environmental Protection Authority requires that you hold an appropriate license, available from their website.

While you do not need a license to spray on your own farm, or if you're an employee paid to do so, you do need one for 'ground application work' on other private land in the state.

Some other exemptions apply, including using pesticides on land belonging to a member of your family or undertaking bush care.

More information can be found at: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

TREE CROP MANAGEMENT GRANT TO ASSIST BANANA INDUSTRY

Hort Innovation has received a grant worth more than \$5 million to continue improving tree crop management - including bananas - through innovative mapping and monitoring.

The banana industry has entered this project with the aim of working with others to identify technologies and image processing techniques that will provide more effective and efficient surveillance tools of Panama tropical race 4.

The University of New England will be conducting the majority of the research into the new technologies, in collaboration with industry representatives and biosecurity agencies.

The grant, awarded under Round 4 of the Federal Government's Rural R&D for Profit program, will also fund work in the mango, macadamia, olive and citrus industries.

COSTS AND CARE OF WASTE

Cassowary Coast Regional Council has advised that it has increased disposal fees for banana bags, poly pipe and agricultural plastics, effective as of July 1.

The Council said they had previously charged for these products by weight, but they are light, problematic to compact, consolidate within landfill and use up considerable expensive airspace.

Disposal fees have increased to \$220 per m3.

In addition, and also as of July 1, the Queensland Government requires that Landfill Operators charge a levy on all waste going to landfill. That

levy is \$75.00 per tonne. Council as a Landfill Operator are required to provide payment to the state government for every tonne of material that is landfilled. This fee is in addition to the disposal costs.

In 2019/20, Council has estimated that Cassowary Coast banana growers will pay about \$506,000 to send their bunch bags to landfill.

HORT INNOVATION LAUNCHES NEW STRATEGY

Hort Innovation has outlined its focus, goals and key activities for the next four years in a new strategy launched on July 1.

The grower-owned research and development corporation received vital input from growers and other horticulture industry stakeholders via online feedback and a series of workshops across Australia.

Highlights of the Hort Innovation Strategy 2019-2023 include a new focus on extension and

adoption – getting practical investment outcomes, resources and knowledge directly to growers. Delivering consumer insights and improving understanding of domestic and international markets also feature strongly.

The new strategy can be viewed at www.horticulture.com.au/strategy-2019-2023/

VIVA LA BANANA BUSINESS



Peter's son Adam joined the business three years ago, marking the third generation of his family to do so.



Bananas and bike riding – a perfect combination for Peter Lahey.

By Amy Spear

Peter Lahey is 'bananas' for sailing, bike riding and, of course, his banana business.

The keen cyclist can often be found with a banana in hand after a long weekend ride – and sharing it across social media.

"Bananas fit well with my lifestyle so I always like to take a banana selfie in all the different locations I cycle to," he said, naming Springbrook's Best of All Lookout as one of his favourites.

Mr Lahey has worked in bananas since 1988, joining the family business established in 1975 by his father-in-law Errol White and Wayne Vievers - South Queensland Banana Ripeners.

"They started out with a very small facility and one Bedford truck, before moving up to a one thousand square metre warehouse and ripening facility."

Paul Vievers, Wayne Vievers' son, came on board shortly after Mr Lahey and both remain committed to the company to this day.

It's fair to say a lot has changed in their 30 plus years working together. In the late 1980s, a large part of their trade was direct supply into supermarkets and independent fruiterers from the south side of Brisbane through to the New South Wales border.

"In 2005, we built a new 2200 square metre state-of-the-art ripening facility to accommodate the greater expectations of our customers and the need for the latest ripening and storage technology," Mr Lahey explained.

"At about this time, the major chain stores were also moving into large, modern distribution centres and Paul and I could see that the way we had been

doing business with the chains would change."

Mr Lahey said he and Mr Vievers had been happy with the big supermarkets representing about 85 per cent of their business, but the position began to feel untenable with the introduction of dealing directly with growers.

"In 2007, we purchased a selling floor section in the Brisbane Markets and started Viva Produce with the view to substantially open up our customer base."

You'll still find the pair on the floor at Brisbane Markets more than 10 years later. "The central market is alive and well, and I encourage all growers to visit from time to time and see their product in a saleable state," he said.

By any standard, working closely with the same person for decades could be considered a challenge – but it's not the case for this partnership.

"Since taking over the business in the early 1990s, we've always managed a good relationship – even though we are quite different in personality and build!"

Mr Lahey recalled one instance on the way home from a suppliers meeting where a stop at a club for a 'couple of beers' turned into 'quite a few'.

"As anyone who knows us would agree, Paul is a lot bigger than me. When we left the club, we accidentally picked up each other's suit coats. A week later, I was told Paul's wife was having a blue with the dry cleaner for getting his coat mixed up."

Three years ago, Mr Lahey's son Adam joined the business – the third generation to do so.

And while the future is looking strong for the company and broader industry, it's not without its challenges.

"The cost of doing business is progressively squeezing margins," explained Peter. "Being in a supply and demand industry with occasional long periods of oversupply and low prices does not stack up against the rising costs of everything from electricity to insurance, wages and fuel."

"The one expense we should have a say in is regulator costs like food safety. I want our product to be safe for the consumer, but the bar seems to be continually lifted to unnecessary heights."

Despite this, it's a passion for the industry that keeps Peter and his team going day after day.

"After 31 years in the industry, people often ask what gets me out of bed every day. I love the challenges this industry throws at us. I'm very passionate about bananas and the people we deal with."



Paul Vievers (pictured) and Peter Lahey have worked in the business together for years.



SLASHING TIME AND IMPROVING GROUND COVER

Ben Abbott (pictured left) shows ABGC Extension Officer, Rob Mayers, his new slasher and points out the special feature of a 'plate' over the blades on the pivoting head. This stops the blades from 'digging in' if you hit a bumpy patch

Maintaining full ground cover is an important goal for organic banana farmers Matt and Ben Abbott.

A high quality ground cover is a crucial component in reducing both nutrient and sediment loss from their farms.

In 2017, the brothers were successful in securing a grant from the Reef Trust III program to purchase a pivoting-head slasher for use on their Wangan farm.

As organic growers, the Abbotts don't use herbicides to control ground cover or weeds within their inter-rows and beds, so slashing is their primary way of keeping on top of things.

It is clear to see that this new slasher has been very

successful. While their old slasher required two passes up each inter-row, a single pass is all that's needed with the new system. Using a combination of a central hinge and a pivoting head that tucks in when it senses a sucker, the slasher can reach right up to and around the stools without damaging them.

Whilst getting this technology to work in the unique environment of a banana paddock took some trial and error the results are clear to see. The Wangan farm has excellent ground cover that would be the envy of many banana farmers.

In fact, the slasher has been so successful that they are now looking to purchase a second one for their other farm in Mena Creek.



As well as creating high quality ground cover the Abbott's new slasher has halved their mowing time.

WET TROPICS REPORT CARD RELEASED

The Wet Tropics Waterways is comprised of over 50 organisations who are working together to advocate for improved waterway health. The ABGC is a member of this partnership.

The Wet Tropics Report Card is part of a system of report cards that are reporting on progress being made towards the Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan, Australia's overarching framework for protecting the Great Barrier Reef until 2050.

The latest Wet Tropics Report Card has been released and you can access it at www.wettropicswaterways.org.au



TRACKING WATER QUALITY IN THE JOHNSTONE AND TULLY



Water quality results being presented to growers at a shed meeting.

Tully and Johnstone growers have been working with the Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project (MIP) to sample their local waterways during the 2018-2019 wet season.

Data collected from 30 sampling sites has been communicated back to local growers, so that they can track how, when and where nutrients, sediments and pesticides are moving off farm.

Innisfail grower Rob Zahra said it's important to have a finger on the pulse.

"It's beneficial for the industry to monitor what is leaving our farms, as agriculture is increasingly under the spotlight when it comes to water quality," Mr Zahra said.

Prior to the MIP, landholders could only access data collected at the end of the river system, with

influence from lots of different land uses. Now monitoring happens at different spatial scales, and different sampling techniques and equipment are used depending on what we're trying to find out. This includes:

- Paddock monitoring (runoff monitoring and shallow groundwater monitoring) to help understand how different management practices affect water quality.
- Sub catchment monitoring (routine monitoring and event-based monitoring) to track how water quality changes as it moves down the creek system through different land uses and land types.
- End of catchment monitoring to track the long term trends in water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

The monitoring data takes about 6 – 8 weeks to analyse, and is reported back to growers at shed meetings. Twenty-one meetings were held to report on wet season sampling. Dry season sampling is continuing, and meetings will resume later in the year.

If you'd like to read more about the sampling techniques and equipment, visit www.terrain.org.au/mip/monitoring. To have a chat about anything to do with water monitoring (or the MIP), contact your local MIP extension officer.

Maria Ribbeck (Tully) – 0436 634 411

William Darveniza (Johnstone) – 0436 622 084

The Wet Tropics Major Integrated Project is funded by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.

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LABEL EXTENSION FOR SERENADE PRIME

Banana growers will soon have access to another option when it comes to treating Yellow Sigatoka.

Dr Denise Manker, Director of Biologics with Bayer Crop Science, visited Australia in July to explain how disease control works with Serenade Prime.

"It [Serenade Prime] has been used commercially in bananas for control in many other countries, banana export countries, for Black Sigatoka," Dr Manker explained.

"But we hadn't done the work in order to get labels and claims for banana growers in Australia – and now we have."

Dr Manker said Serenade Prime has direct contact activity on the pathogen.

"It's an alternative contact product to something like mancozeb or chorothalonil, which can be used in programs with systemic products to manage resistance and get good control of the pathogen as well."

She points out that there are always concerns the systemic products could develop resistance – or

have already, in some cases. By adding to the contact products available, with either tank mixes or rotations, these tools are available to growers for longer.

Dr Manker also noted some additional benefits of Serenade Prime, including that it can turn on the plant's own systemic defense system and that it is an environmentally friendly product.

"There's no non-target affects. In a world where consumers are demanding less chemicals and no residue in their produce, this is a product that doesn't have MRL (maximum residue limits) and has a very nice environmental profile."

Dr Manker said the Biologics division at Bayer had a focus on looking for tools that can help growers productively manage their crops in the face of many regulatory pressures.

"We usually don't have toxicology issues with these products. In Europe they've lost probably more than 50 per cent of their chemistry off the market because of toxicology issues. Australia is another country where they are very, very careful about what they'll register and what gets through. So



Dr Denise Manker, Director of Biologics with Bayer Crop Science, has been visiting growers in Australia.

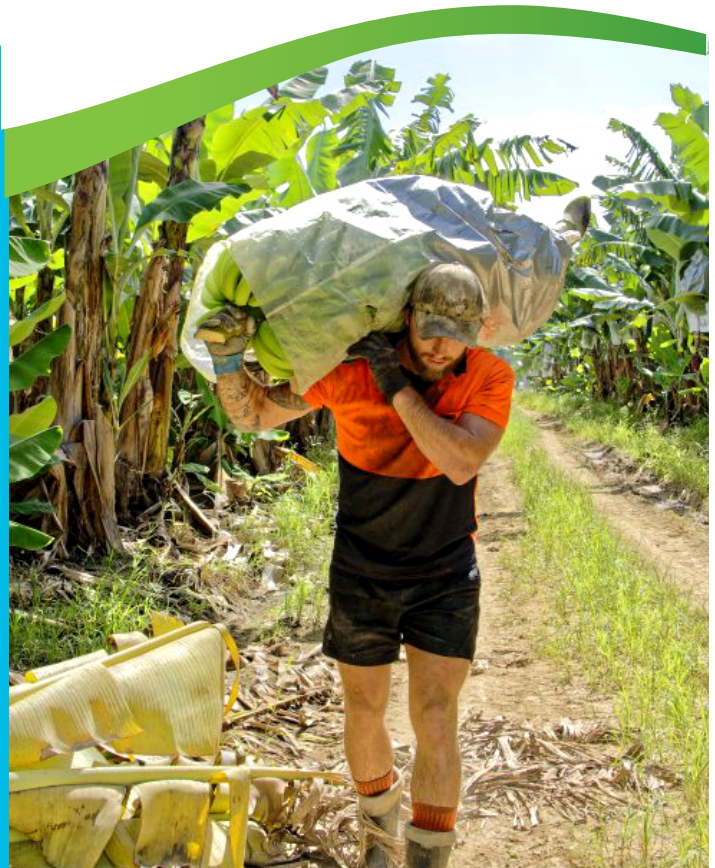
Biologics really offers an opportunity for some new modes of action and new products."

The label extension for Serenade Prime, which is for foliar application, is expected to come into effect later this year.



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ON MESSAGE: COMMS TEAM TAKE ON NEW PROJECT

It's a case of out with the old, in with the new for the Australian Banana Growers' Council Communications Project.

While one project wrapped up at the end of June this year (BA15005), the ABCG successfully tendered for its successor (BA18001) and will continue to deliver a range of valuable information and resources to the banana industry.

The new three-year project (BA18001) again will be funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government, and will continue to be led by Communication's Manager Sonia Campbell (based at South Johnstone) with the assistance of Senior Communications officer Amy Spear (based at ABGC's head office in Brisbane).



ABGC Communications Manager Sonia Campbell.



ABGC Senior Communications Officer Amy Spear.

The experienced team has a strong track record ensuring industry is kept up-to-date with new and existing R&D and other industry development activities through a variety of effective mediums.

"It's been such a busy three years, where we have bore witness to both industry ups and (sadly) downs," Communications Manager Sonia Campbell said.

"There are obvious challenges facing our industry, but it's such a vibrant sector that we are very excited to be tasked with continuing to deliver communications' activities to banana growers at large and other key industry stakeholders," she said.

As with the previous project, BA18001 will seek to facilitate the adoption and awareness of latest R&D, provide information & knowledge on industry events, updates and investments, and inform growers and others in the supply chain about critical issues relevant to the banana industry.

The program also aims to increase the adoption of industry's Best Management Practice (BMP), increase knowledge of emerging risks and opportunities, and foster an environment that promotes continued innovation, improvement and productivity.

"With today's technology, we can deliver timely and effective communications to growers on a daily, and even, minute-to-minute basis, including e-bulletins, social media updates, SMS alerts and constant updates to the ABGC website," Ms Campbell explained.

"As a team, we also produce the Australian Bananas magazine three times per year, prepare media releases, communicate directly with journalists addressing all media enquiries as they come to hand, compile mailouts and are continually updating all ABGC databases.

"In addition to these day-to-day roles, you'll find us regularly meeting with growers, assisting at workshops, conducting media training, producing video content and attending grower focused events.

"When all is done, we want to ensure everyone has access to the information they need to ensure a strong future for both their business and the industry more broadly."

Throughout the course of the project, the Communications Team has either met or greatly exceeded their project requirements and have constantly strived to improve even further.

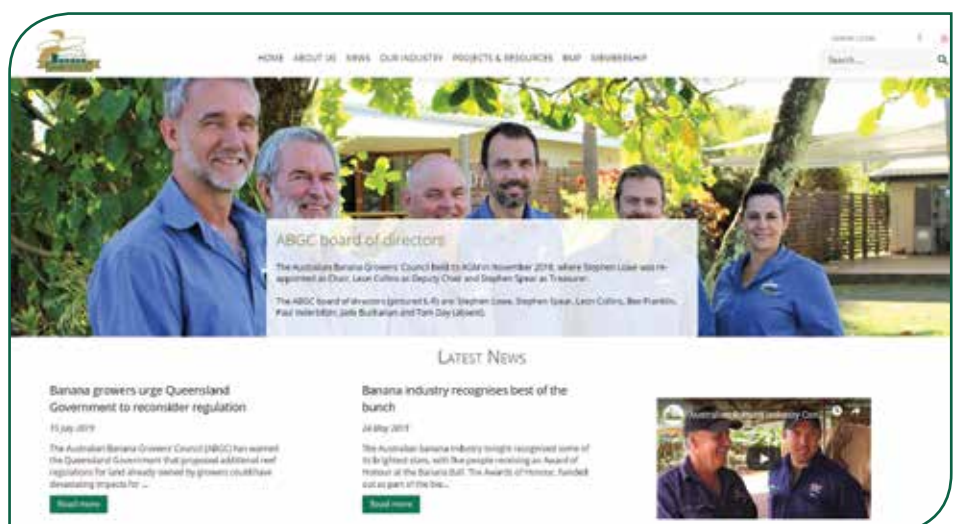
Highlights over the last period of the project have included Ms Campbell presenting media training to up-and-coming future horticulture leaders in Canberra, strong issues of the Australian Bananas magazine, assisting Biosecurity Queensland with TR4 awareness in high risk zones and, of course, work on Congress 2019 (BA17003).

The new project, which began at the start of July, will continue these core activities with a focus on supporting sustainability, profitable production and strong supply chains, which consistently deliver a valued and quality product to the consumer.

"Our Communications Officer, Amy Spear, and I are always keen to hear from growers about issues affecting them and how they can best access industry information.

"Please don't hesitate to pick up the phone and give either of us a call, message us on Facebook or sign up to our regular e-bulletins to stay in the loop and have your say.

"If you know of anyone in the banana industry who is not receiving this Australian Banana magazine, please ask them to contact us to go on the mailing list."



BANANA MARKETING WINS FROM LAST CAMPAIGN

With Australian Bananas kicking off its latest marketing campaign this month, Hort Innovation reports on the marketing successes that closed the 2018/19 financial year.

ABOVE THE LINE ACTIVITY

Television

TV plays a key role in driving mass awareness of campaign communications, ensuring key messages for Australian Bananas are established at scale. Australian Bananas' Summer marketing campaign which wrapped up on 9 March, successfully hit a goal in every market.

Australian Bananas appeared in eight out of the top 10 programs from January to March. During the course of the last campaign, we took advantage of the strong opening programming schedule of 2019 with programs such as the men's Australian Open Tennis Final, Married at First Sight which went from strength the strength in 2019, and also My Kitchen Rules and I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here.

This was bolstered by consistently rating news and current affairs programs. As a result, audiences saw the banana ad at least 2 times in all metro and regional markets.

Digital

Digital activity ran from 3 February to 4 May successfully hitting each of its KPIs of Viewability and Completion rate across all strategies which assisted in providing reach across our demographic.

Our 15 secs and 6 secs ads were used across key channels such as Catch Up Television (7Plus 10Play, 9Now), Youtube, Taste.com.au, Spotify, news.com.au and flybuys. Catch Up Television delivered the highest completion and viewability rate of 98% and 93% respectively, while the remaining channels



finished with results well above the campaign benchmark of 70%. Our FlyBuys strategy also reached the campaign impression target.

Out Of Home

In the last campaign, Australian Bananas featured across a number of outdoor formats to maximise how many consumers we were reaching and how often we were reaching them. This included transit panels (bus sides, large billboards), retail panels, and advertising in gyms. In total we reached over 2 million consumers in retail, over 1 million across gyms, and over 4 million consumers via transit formats.

SOCIAL

Facebook

In June, 1.17 million people were reached with Australian Banana's content on Facebook.

Instagram

The Australian Bananas Instagram page continues to have a steady follower growth from month to month. In June we saw an increase in total followers, with the page currently sitting at 5849 followers.

PR

We have continued our media outreach to health, lifestyle and news media with a range of new recipes. In June we reached out to lifestyle, food and health media with our winter recipe; 'Upside-down Banana Chocolate Cake.' We secured coverage with top tier consumer lifestyle publications, Australia's Best Recipes (371,220 total reach) and 9Honey Kitchen (118,000 total reach), and key consumer women's publication Girl.com.au (6,000 total reach).

The Australian Bananas ambassador, Susie Burrell, has also continued to post blog posts each month. In June, Susie developed and shared 'The Best Smoothie Recipes' content piece to her blog and Facebook page



Definition of some common digital terms are below.

Completion Rate - The percentage of all video ads that play through their entire duration to completion. Calculated as complete video plays divided by ads served.

Viewability - An online advertising metric that aims to track only impressions that can actually be seen by users. For example, if an ad is loaded at the bottom of a webpage but a user doesn't scroll down far enough to see it, that impression would not be deemed viewable.

Impression - An impression is the display of an ad to a user while viewing a web page. If a single web page contains multiple advertisements from one advertiser, one impression is counted for each ad displayed.

Events

Australian Bananas have also continued to support events nationwide. We provided 1,500 bananas to runners taking part in the Western Sydney Marathon on 1 June, and Australian Bananas branding was prominently displayed on the scoreboards around the marathon site.



EDENTIFY

The results for the latest Edentify consumer tracking are in (April – June 2019), with key highlights below.

- Bananas remain the clear number one snack, and continue to follow an upward trend: up year on year from 57% to 62%
- Bananas continue to be the top energy snack, up year on year from 71% to 75%
- The significant increase in bananas consumed for breakfast year on year seems to be holding well around the 60% mark, suggesting a positive behaviour shift.
- Both unprompted and prompted recall of the campaign is holding strongly after media activity. Additionally, spontaneous ad recall for bananas remains high, ahead of brands with bigger ad spend.
- The ads resonate across the broader audience, not just the target audiences
- TV and Out of Home marketing have been driving advertising awareness, and strategic online activity is clearly contributing to reaching incremental key young audiences
- Despite the slight seasonal drop, purchase frequency remains on an upward trend year on year

- Bananas are naturally associated with “healthy energy snack”
- The advertising campaign is also creating an emotional connection with the fruit, spontaneously associated with Happy and Fun
- Two indicators have been building up wave on wave in the past year:
 - the number of people using bananas for more than just snacking
 - the average number of occasions of consumption per day

UPCOMING ACTIVITY

Our next wave of media activity will commence in the beginning of August with our Transit, Retail and Digital strategies entering the market. Social and PR remain always on.

ABOVE THE LINE ACTIVITY

Television

We will continue to use television to drive mass awareness of the Bananas ad and our key messages in both metro and regional markets. Our audience is still watching TV 2.7 hours per day and the bananas advertisement is a strong audio visual asset. Look out for Australian Bananas on your TV between August and September 2019.

Out of Home

We will continue to use a number of outdoor formats to maximise reach and frequency in 2019/2020, including Transit panels (specifically bus sides), retail panels, and advertising in gyms.

Radio

We will partner with the Australian Radio Network to use pre-recorded radio and podcast spots with our jingle nationwide.

Cinema

Cinema is a key channel to provide reach above our other video channels and to drive awareness of our TV ad. It will effectively support both the TV and online activity through reaching new audiences, and will be key during school holiday period peaks between September and October 2019.

Bounty Bags

Australian Bananas will again take part in the New

Mother Bounty Bags campaign in 2020.

Bounty Bags are distributed in hospitals nationwide to approximately 230,000 new mums each year. Each bag includes an ‘Australian Bananas’ branded banana case and a leaflet explaining the benefits of bananas as both a ‘one handed snack’ for new mums, and as a baby’s first food.

Lady Finger Promotions

We will continue to educate consumers on the differences and versatility of Lady Finger bananas through in-store demonstrations and supported by informative brochures and social media posts

BILLY’S BACK!

In a major coup for the Australian Banana industry, Billy Slater has signed on to continue as an ambassador for Australian Bananas in 2020.

Billy has been supporting industry for the past 15 years, regularly trading his former footy jerseys for a bright yellow shirt and fronting numerous advertising campaigns, media events, public appearances, photo shoots and social media posts.

While the Innisfail football legend retired from rugby league at the end of last year, he’s still considered one of Australia’s most-loved athletes and Hort Innovation is excited to have him continue as one of the industry’s biggest supporters.



NATIONAL BANANA DAY 2020

National Banana Day was celebrated on May 1 and will return bigger and better in 2020.

The inaugural event involved a host of activities – both local and national - including nutrition-based segments on morning television shows, grower profiles, social media blasts and a day of celebration at the Big Banana in Coffs Harbour

supported by Australian Bananas ambassadors Billy Slater and Susie Burrell.

The 2020 event aims to generate even more mass media conversation centered around the health

benefits of ‘na-nas’ and the growers behind the produce, with the aim to drive consumers in-store to purchase a fresh bunch of their favourite Australian fruit.

2019 COFFS HARBOUR SHOW - BANANA EXHIBIT



All images supplied by Wally Gately and Jeff Egginis.



The Banana Exhibit at the 2019 Coffs Harbour Show was once again a great success, thanks to those who gave up time to man the stalls and the many growers who entered fruit.

The coveted Banana Cup was won by mother and son farming duo Monica and Jason Gentle, who also took home first place for their Cavendish fruit in the Marketable and Carton of Hands categories.

Lady Fingers were also well represented, with Clayton Hoy sweeping the field with his high-quality fruit.

BGA President Wally Gately said Ducasse was extremely popular with show-goers stopping by for a taste test, with many returning for more after sampling the variety in previous years.

"Even with the Lady Fingers there, it was Ducasse that got the most community reaction," he said.

Cavendish

First Place - Marketable
M & Ja Gentle

Heaviest
Lucas Spagnola 60kg

First Place - Ctn. Hands
M & Ja Gentle

First Place - Ctn. Cluster
J & M Egginis

Ladyfinger

First Place - Marketable
Clayton Hoy

Heaviest
Clayton Hoy 40kg

First Place - Ctn. Hands
Clayton Hoy

First Place - Ctn. Clusters
Clayton Hoy

Ducasse

First Place - Marketable
L & D Pilati

Heaviest
1st. G. Regan 48kg

First Place - Ctn. Hands
L & D Pilati

First Place - Ctn. Clusters
L & D Pilati

BANANA CUP

M & Ja Gentle

TULLY & DISTRICT SHOW JULY 26-27

Unfavourable weather and growing conditions did not greatly affect the quality of entries in this year's Tully Banana Exhibit, according to its seasoned judges.

Entry numbers were down slightly on previous years, however long-time judge Dennis Lindsay said the same could not be said for fruit quality.

"Very good, considering the weather conditions and the growing conditions this year. It's been a terrible growing year. Numbers were down, but quality was still good," Mr Lindsay said.

Fellow judge Greg Bradshaw agreed that despite tough growing conditions, quality in the exhibit remained high.

"A little bit down (on numbers) on last year, but the quality was fairly even, it was quite reasonably good actually, whereas the last couple of years we've had

a fair variation in the fruit," Mr Bradsaw said.

"I'm surprised actually. Since February of last year we've had a really disruptive weather pattern."

As mentioned on Page 9, Kennedy Valley banana grower Jeff Dickinson scooped the pool, winning Most Successful Exhibitor taking out seven categories including Champion Plant, Heaviest Bunch Ratoon (56.5kg), Champion Plant, Champion Hand and Heaviest Hand.

The Flegler Group had the next best showing, winning Champion Ratoon, Champion Plant Pair, Champion Bunch Tully District and Champion Pair of Hands.



Jane Rowe (left) and Naomi Brownrigg



Another bunch is officially weighed in.



Australian Banana Growers' Council Chair Stephen Lowe (pictured middle) with Clarke Cui (left) and Piet Fontyn from Mackays Marketing.



(L-R) Colin Singh, Cameron MacKay, Daniel Molenaar, Zac Mackeever, Matt Weinert and Joshua Tate.



Judges Greg Bradshaw and Dennis Lindsay



Entries in the Tully banana exhibit

RESULTS

Most Successful Exhibitor
JR & V Dickinson

Steward's Choice
JR & V Dickinson

Champion Ratoon
Flegler Group

Champion Plant
JR & V Dickinson

Champion Ratoon Pair
Franks Family

Champion Plant Pair
Flegler Group

Heaviest Bunch Ratoon
JR & V Dickinson
(56.5kg)

Heaviest Plant Bunch
Nucifora (41kg)

Heaviest Plant Bunch Open
Franks Family
(44.5kg)

Heaviest Ratoon Open
Costa Group (66kg)

Champion Lady Finger Bananas
Woopan Creek

Champion Hand
Carton
Dunne

Champion XL Cluster
13kg
Sellars Bananas

Champion L Cluster
13kg
Sellars Bananas

Champion 15kg Cluster
Mackays Mullins

Champion Lady Finger
Hull River

Champion Bunch Tully District
Flegler Group

Champion Hand
JR & V Dickinson
Champion Pair Hands
Flegler Group

Heaviest Hand
JR & V Dickinson

Three clusters
JR & V Dickinson

Heaviest Single
JR & V Dickinson

Heaviest Freak
Leahys Bananas

Best Carton Tully District
Sellars Bananas



Cameron Flegler with his multi-award winning bunch.

INNISFAIL SHOW 2019



An impressive looking line-up at the showgrounds.

Top-notch fruit and plenty of grower support were the hallmarks of this year's banana exhibit at the Innisfail Show, 11-12 July.

Most Outstanding Exhibit and Most Successful Exhibition on Aggregate Points went to JR & V Dickinson.

"I'm really happy with the support that growers have shown the show this year," said chief steward Rob Zahra. "The quality was very good and it goes without saying that the packing competition was excellent too."

Judges also remarked on the excellent quality fruit entered – no doubt making their task just a little more challenging!



The tough task of judging under way at the Innisfail Show.



Prize-winning bananas proved popular with punters, with many people stopping to take a look.



Graheme Celledoni and Rob Zahra (Chief Steward) in front of one of Graheme's winning entries.



Codie McCarthy, Shane O'Brien and Steven Bailey.



Rebecca Joseph, Manuel Terai and Gino Di Carlo



Luke Horsford with Talan and Josh, Bradley and Kirsty Dotti.



Martin Grudlingh and James Parry.



Rob Mayers, Graheme Celledoni and Rob Zahra.

Winners

Champion Ratoon Bunch
Di Carlo's Bananas
Champion Plant Bunch
Celledoni Farming
Heaviest Ratoon Bunch
Innisfail Banana Farming Company – 68.5 kg
Heaviest Plant Bunch
G & R Franco & Sons
P/L – 37.5 kg
Best Two Ratoon Bunches
Celledoni Farming
Best Two Plant Bunches
JR & V Dickinson
Champion Carton of Hands, Ex Large
Mengotti PTY LTD
Class 8: Champion Cluster Carton Extra Large 13kg in 6 per layer carton only
JR & V Dickinson
Champion Cluster Carton Large 13 kg in 6 per layer carton only
Mengotti PTY LTD
Champion International Cluster Carton 15kg carton only
Hampson Bros PTY LTD
Best three (3) Clusters
Hampson Bros PTY LTD
Champion Hand
MJ & ME Grima
Heaviest Hand
Franks Family – 8.8 kg

Champion Pair of Hands
Sellars Bananas
Heaviest Freak Banana (Any Variety)
Hampson Bros PTY LTD – 826 grams
Heaviest Single Banana
Hampson Bros PTY LTD
Best Six Singles
Sellars Bananas
Open Heaviest Ratoon Bunch
G & R Franco & Sons
P/L – 68.8 kg
Open Heaviest Plant Bunch
G & R Franco & Sons
P/L – 46 kg
CHAMPION LADY FINGER BUNCH
Woopan Creek Bananas
CHAMPION LADY FINGER CARTON HAND PACK
Woopan Creek Bananas
Organic Carton 13kg
Barama Investments
Most Successful Exhibition on Aggregate Points
JR & V Dickinson
Highly Commended Award
Hampson Bros PTY LTD
Most Outstanding Exhibit
JR & V Dickinson

NERVE WRACKER FOR PACKERS

The Australian Banana Packing Championship was back after a year's hiatus, putting professionals and willing backpackers to the test. Amy Spear was at the Innisfail Showgrounds to check out the action.

For many growers and farm workers, packing box-upon-box of quality bananas is part of the daily grind.

It's a source of pride and – ultimately – what the consumer gets to see, so it can be a high-pressure, high-skill task.

But add to that a timer, a grandstand filled with spectators and a few judges watching your every move – and that pressure can rise to a whole new level.

The 2019 Australian Banana Packing Championship was held in Innisfail over two days in July as part of the annual show.

Ten teams from Innisfail and Tully brought their best to the table – or shed, in this case – vying for prestige, thousands of dollars in prize money and the distinctive banana trophies.

"It's a bit of friendly fire between Tully and Innisfail," said organiser Naomi Travers. "It's a great way to get out there and show our industry for what it is – what we do to get that fruit into a carton and

out to the consumer."

The process will be familiar to many in the industry – teams of two must dehand a bunch and work through the sorting and clustering process before choosing fruit to go into a carton.

Of the ten teams, three make it to the final on Friday night, with first place taking home \$1000 each and second place \$500 each, thanks to Frank Lowe & Sons.

It was a team from Mackay Farms' Mullins Road property that took home the coveted banana trophies this year – Scott Solien and Billy Banu – and it's fair to say they were delighted.

"It was strange competing against my brother this time," Mr Solien, who has participated in past events, said. "But I chose a very good team mate!"

As anyone within earshot of the Innisfail Showgrounds could tell you, a particular highlight of the event is the backpackers competition, with four teams taking part this year.

"It's a great atmosphere – everyone comes in

to support it and it gets quite noisy!" Ms Travers explained. "It's just a great night."

Decked out in banana suits and with some very vocal support from their Backpacker Shack family, Rhiannon Owen and Elin Fagerlind ultimately impressed the judges and took home first prize.

Search for AustBananaGrowers on Facebook or visit www.abgc.org.au to check out a video of the 2019 event.

Winning team:

Mullins Road (Mackay Farms)
Scott Solien and Billy Banu

Second place:

One Last Shot
Graheme Celledoni and
Naomi Brownrigg

Backpacker comp winner:

Backpackers Shack
Rhiannon Owen and Elin Fagerlind



Scott Solien and Billy Banu, from Mullins Road, took home the coveted banana trophies this year.



Backpacker competitors gearing up for their heat, including eventual winners Rhiannon Owen and Elin Fagerlind (centre).



Nicola Mackay, Colin Rosteadt, Gary Fattore and Gillian Dotti.



Long-time volunteer Janette Dobson keeping track of the weigh-in.



Competitors are assessed on a range of different qualities including team work and how well they know the fruit.



Runners-up 'One Last Shot' - Graheme Celledoni and Naomi Brownrigg - receive their prize, donated by Frank Lowe & Sons.



The team from Di Carlo and Hardings enjoy the atmosphere at the weigh-in



Jon Mapplebeck, Brad Harvey, Lance Horsford and Kevin Harding.

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