

# Australian Bananas



Australian  
Banana  
Growers

ISSUE 71 | AUGUST 2024

## LOOKING AHEAD

### Spotlight on bunch spraying

**Ants in your plants**

**PAGE 27**

**Banana Congress 2025**

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**ON SHOW: Bananas a hit across regions**

**PAGES 43-47**





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Front page: Grower Mark McAvoy with Senior Development Horticulturalist Tegan Cavallaro (DAF) on Mark's farm.





# A NOTE FROM THE CEO

*Leanne Erakovic*

## As we welcome Minister Julie Collins to the federal Agriculture portfolio, I am reflecting on our valuable banana industry and its single consistent element.

One that has been with growers not only through changes of Government but all the ups and downs. That constant is your peak industry body, the Australian Banana Growers' Council founded in 1961. For over 63 years our advocacy efforts have kept growers' interest and needs at the forefront of Government.

We all know that decisions are best made with proper consideration of how it affects you – as growers – on the ground. And this is why I'm honoured to offer Julie Collins as the new Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, an invitation to meet with us and to visit a banana farm. To share Australia's most loved icon and to extend a hand in working with us on further protecting our \$600m Australian banana industry.

## More powerful, together

Further to that, the Cassowary Coast rates decision (page 12) serves as a powerful reminder of the critical role the ABGC plays in defending the interests of banana growers at a local level. Without the support and membership of growers, the ABGC would not have the resources or influence necessary to represent their interests.

Membership of the ABGC ensures that growers have a dedicated organisation working tirelessly to tackle their concerns and advocate for fair and equitable policies. The collective strength of the ABGC membership was instrumental in addressing the rates increase, demonstrating the tangible benefits of being part of this organisation and importance of a unified voice advocating for your interests.

To those members who have given ABGC their knowledge and advice, thank you. It goes a long way to strengthening our industry's case.

## Showing up

It was great to see many of you at the Innisfail Show weigh-in, not only from the local region but from Tully and the Tablelands too. It's the kind of event that reinforces why I feel so lucky to work in the banana industry. ABGC represents an industry filled with people who genuinely care about what they do and the communities they're part of. The kind of people who'll have a laugh with you, but are ready to knuckle down and get the job done even when it's a slog. Thank you for the opportunity to support you and play even a small role in that. Let's keep going from strength to strength.



**The ABGC thanks its Affiliate Members for their support of our industry.**



# CHECKING IN WITH THE CHAIR

*Leon Collins*

## It was a privilege to visit the Northern Territory in June to see some of the work under way to help safeguard our industry's future.

While we are fortunate to have a lot of great minds on the case, seeing TR4-resistant varieties in the ground brought a renewed sense of hope. They are still a way off commercialisation, of course, but having spoken about 'buying time' so often over the last 10 years, it's a good reminder that the time has been well spent.

A huge thank you to Richard Clayton (NQ Banana Research) for showing us the field performance of promising TR4 resistant germplasm, and also to Professor James Dale (Queensland University of Technology) for taking Dr Rosie Godwin (R&D Manager) and I around the QCAV-4 trial site. It is encouraging to see a range of promising material that may provide options to growers if the spread of TR4 accelerates.

On Panama TR4, I recently met with the rest of the ABGC board, senior staff, other growers and

Biosecurity Queensland to discuss the future of TR4 management in Queensland. The meeting was very useful, providing some much-needed clarity. Stay tuned.

## Heat and flooding rain

Extreme weather across our growing regions continues to hit home. In Western Australia, growers are still seeing the impacts of a heatwave earlier this year. The Sweeter Banana Co-Operative has let their customers know that supply might be slightly down, but growers are working hard to get production back to usual. In the south, temperatures have dropped to near-freezing recently and, though we've seen a bit more sunshine lately, rain has continued relentlessly in Far North Queensland. For those in my neck of the woods, it's timely to remember that the deadline for assistance following Tropical Cyclone Jasper has been extended until 20 December this year. The extension reflects the challenges posed by wet weather in completing repair work and the demand on relevant businesses to do so. You can visit the QRIDA website to find out more.

## Congress 2025

With the official launch now upon us, I hope you'll start making plans to join us on the Gold Coast for the 16th biennial Australian Banana Industry Congress. This Congress – to be held from 6-8 August at RACV Royal Pines Resort – will mark 30 years since our first event. And while some of the issues we'll tackle have been with us since the very first program, we're looking at bringing fresh ideas and formats to this next event. Congress needs to reflect the challenges, opportunities and realities that we face as growers, now more than ever. It's the only event of its kind, guided by banana growers and designed specifically for our industry.

I hope you'll get behind it and enjoy all it has to offer. We've also got some particularly exciting news for ABGC grower members – and for all growers – on the way, which will hopefully help ensure the event is more accessible for all those who want to attend.

## ANNUAL BANANA VOLUMES

The national banana levy collected by the Federal Department of Agriculture is compulsory for commercial banana growers. It is 2.19 cents per kilogram of bananas sold.

The dollars collected show an estimate of production for the previous financial year. Right is a table of the levy-based banana volumes. For non-industry participants, please note this is an approximation of production, but not all bananas grown are sold, i.e. some don't make the retailer-required specifications. Also, there is a lag factor, in that levies paid on June sales (at least) are paid in the following financial year.

① Most commercial banana growers in Australia pay the banana levy – but there are some exceptions. Essentially, a producer of bananas (the person who owns the bananas immediately after harvest) is liable to pay the levy. A producer will NOT be liable for levies if, in a financial year, the total quantity of bananas sold by retail sale amounts to less than \$100 of levy.

More detail on exemptions from paying the levy and other information can be found at [agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates/bananas](https://agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates/bananas)

Years ending 30th June  
(in '000 tonnes):

2013	341
2014	371
2015	371
2016	393
2017	414
2018	388
2019	372
2020	382
2021	403
2022	375
2023	371

## BANANA LEVY RATE

The make-up and purpose of the various components of the Banana Industry Levy are as follows.

### Levy Amount Purpose

0.50c /kg	Plant Health Australia (PHA) levy: The Department sends the funds to PHA, for the ongoing containment and management of Panama Tropical Race 4 disease, and to conduct activities that aim to improve biosecurity within the banana industry.
1.69c /kg	Hort Innovation (HIA) levy: The Department sends the funds to HIA for R&D and Marketing: 0.54 c/Kg is for Banana R&D, which is matched dollar for dollar by the Department and 1.15 c/kg for Banana Marketing
<b>Total = 2.19c /kg* (32.85c per 15kg carton).</b>	

The Banana PHA levy currently funds the containment of the first TR4 infested farm that the industry purchased and the industry's part of the cost-sharing deed with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for TR4 containment.

It also funds the pre-existing commitments – Torres Strait Exotic Fruit Flies Eradication Response, PHA membership/meetings and Government levy collection.

**Further information: Leanne Erakovic, [leanne@abgc.org.au](mailto:leanne@abgc.org.au)  
Phone – 07 3278 4786. More info on the levy rate:**

**<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates/bananas>**

# BOOST THE BIOSECURITY OF YOUR BANANA FARM WITH QRIDA

Queensland banana growers can implement robust biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of Panama disease with a Sustainability Loan from the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA).

QRIDA Regional Area Manager for Far North Sam Spina said the soil-borne fungal disease Panama tropical race 4 (TR4) continues to pose a serious threat to Queensland's valuable banana industry.

"This could include purchasing or upgrading washdown facilities, erecting exclusion fencing or installing decontamination stations," Sam said.

"When it comes to Panama TR4, don't slip on banana biosecurity. Make strict biosecurity measures a priority for your farm now to save yourself from the devastating impacts of this disease later."

Sam explained QRIDA's Sustainability Loans of up to \$1.3 million can help Queensland banana growers carry out a range of on-farm biosecurity improvements.

"QRIDA's Sustainability Loans can help Queensland banana growers improve the biosecurity of their farm through a range of measures including purchasing or upgrading washdown facilities, erecting exclusion fencing or installing decontamination stations," Sam said.

"Our concessional Sustainability Loans can also help banana growers improve the resilience of their farm by diversifying into new agricultural markets, expanding their operation, preparing for disasters and more."

Sam said he can meet with banana growers on-farm to discuss how QRIDA's financial assistance could help them secure the future of their individual operation.

"If you are interested in improving the biosecurity or sustainability of your banana farm, please get in touch with me and I would be happy to chat with you about your QRIDA financial assistance eligibility."

For more information about QRIDA's financial assistance for Queensland banana growers, contact Regional Area Manager for Far North, Sam Spina, on 1800 623 946 or visit [qrda.qld.gov.au](http://qrda.qld.gov.au)

*Submitted by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority*



Contact your Regional Area Manager for Far North, Sam Spina, to find out how you can implement best practices in banana farm biosecurity with a QRIDA Sustainability Loan.

# SURVEILLANCE AND EDUCATION IN FOCUS AT SYMPOSIUM

The banana industry's surveillance and grower education projects featured at the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative Symposium in May this year.

Dr Rosie Godwin, ABGC's Research and Development Manager, presented at the event in Cairns, sharing some of the success, strategy and challenges across a range of pests and diseases. In particular, she spoke about Panama TR4, Bunchy Top and leaf spot.

The presentation also highlighted future research needs including in-field diagnostics and innovation in extension.



# GET READY TO PEEL BACK THE LATEST RESEARCH AT THE 2024 BANANA ROADSHOWS!

Mark your calendars and make plans to attend the Banana Roadshows.

This is a prime opportunity to stay informed about the latest research and development. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or new to the industry, the knowledge and connections shared at these roadshows promise to be invaluable.

The roadshows will feature an array of topics across a broad spectrum of industry-funded research including recent findings from the integrated pest and disease management project, yellow Sigatoka research, new varieties and the pre-commercialisation trials, the new benchmarking project and more!

These highly anticipated events are scheduled to take place in:

Carnarvon WA	Thursday 8 August		
Tully, FNQ	Thursday 29 August	Senior Citizen Hall 19 Blackman St, Tully	Lunch from 11.45 am 12.30 pm to 4.30pm
Innisfail, FNQ	Friday 30 August	Innisfail Bowls Club 1 The Corso, Innisfail	9 am to 1:30 pm (lunch included)
Mareeba, FNQ	Friday 6 September	Mareeba Bowls Club 43 Anzac Ave, Mareeba	9 am to 1:30 pm (lunch included)

*New South Wales details to come ASAP*

Don't miss this opportunity. RSVP to secure your place:  
Tegan Cavallaro 0459 846 053, Ingrid Jenkins 0497 801 980



*The mini roadshow events are part of the National Banana Development and Extension Program (BA19004) which is funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana industry research and development levies and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture. The Queensland Government has also co-funded the project through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.*

# EFFORTS TO REDUCE BANANA WASTE RECOGNISED

End Food Waste Australia, the Australian Banana Growers' Council and Melons Australia were proud recipients of the Butler Market Gardens Environmental and Sustainability Award at Hort Connections 2024.

The award recognises valuable contributions to the sustainability of the horticulture industry and was awarded for the Horticulture Action Plan for Food Waste Reduction, as well as dedicated plans for the banana and melon industry.

"This is great recognition of the efforts of so many banana growers to reduce food waste on farm," Dr Rosie Godwin, ABGC's R&D Manager, said.

"Thank you to those who gave up their time to contribute to this project. I know no grower wants to see their fruit go to waste, and this action plan provides a clear way forward for the industry as a whole – on top of what many are already doing in this space.

"It's well deserved acknowledgement of the team at End Food Waste Australia, Melons Australia and the Food Waste CRC too. I'm looking forward to seeing where this project takes us."

A summary of the banana industry plan can be found at [endfoodwaste.com.au](http://endfoodwaste.com.au)



From left to right, Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Rick Butler, Butler Market Gardens, Melissa Smith, End Food Waste Australia, Jonathan Davey, Melons Australia, Doriana Mangili and Tayla Mackay, both directors with the Australian Banana Growers' Council.

**Dr Rosie Godwin and Melissa Smith (End Food Waste Australia) spoke about the Banana Industry Action Plan on the Food Waste Matters podcast. You can check it out by scanning the QR code.**



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# DIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

*Jen Crema, Tully grower and program participant*

**I feel very privileged to be one of 12 amazing women from a vast range of agricultural industries chosen to participate in the 2024 Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program (DiALP) hosted by the National Farmers Federation (NFF).**

The NFF's Roadmap, *Australian Agriculture's Plan for a \$100 Billion Industry*, includes the vision of doubling the number of women in agriculture leadership positions by 2030.

An incredible group of women from across Australia came together in Canberra to share their experiences and leadership goals of enacting positive change and progress their communities.

NFF House was abuzz as members of the 2024 DiALP gathered to learn more about wellbeing, personality profiling, personal branding, media training and professional networking. A must for any good program, especially in a place as cold as Canberra, is learning to knit a woollen blanket! We were in awe as we listened to the personal story of the amazingly resilient Samantha Longmore, 'a chick in a chair', who had us doing the macarena and shaking it off like Taylor Swift as she taught us to knit a blanket using our body!

The personal highlight of the retreat was meeting my mentor, Sarah Corcoran, Chief Executive Officer

at Plant Health Australia. Sarah, who began her career as an entomologist, is recognised as an ambassador for science and innovation and has received awards for her contribution to biosecurity. Sarah fully understands the challenges we face on farm and at an industry level around Panama TR4, and diseases that threaten the sugarcane industry. I am looking forward to the next four months which will see Sarah mentoring me to work towards my goals of empowering women in agriculture across the Cassowary Coast.

My leadership aspiration from the program is to reinvigorate the Banana Women's Network capitalising on the networking opportunities, industry experience and strengths that would come from expanding the member base of the group to include a diverse range of industry stakeholders. Further to this I would like to explore the idea of establishing a Women in Agriculture group within the Cassowary Coast region. I am also looking forward to using my leadership skills, teaching background and extensive community connections to raise the profile

of agriculture in the community, with a particular focus on our young people.

My personal thanks goes to NFF staff Rebecca (Bec) Wilde, Steffie Vaiphei and Stacey Davidson for organising a fabulous program that culminated with a visit to parliament house where our group heard amazing stories and leadership journeys from many of Australia's political leaders.

Following on from the three-day leadership retreat in Canberra is 4 months of mentoring with Sarah, with a focus on working together to help achieve leadership goals. The program will conclude with a Canberra based graduation ceremony in late October this year, that will be attended by National Farmers Federation staff, DiALP program partners and Alumni NFF. It will coincide with a meeting of the NFF Members Council.

A big thank you to Australian Banana Growers' Council CEO Leanne Erakovic and Senior Agronomist Anita Davina for their inspiration and encouragement with my DiALP application.



Sarah Corcoran (Plant Health Australia CEO) with Jen Crema in Canberra.



Members with Minister Michelle Rowland - Minister for Communications, at Parliament House.



Jen and Adrian Crema at the Tully Show banana weigh-in.



Program members with Mr David Littleproud - Leader of the Nationals, at Parliament House.



Jen at Parliament House with members of the DiALP program.



# HANGING BANANA DISPLAYS: INITIAL TRIAL A SUCCESS

Andrew Burns, ABGC Supply Chain Engagement Manager



## 2024 Metcash Expo

I had the opportunity to attend the 2024 Metcash Expo, held each year over a 3-day period in July,

at the Gold Coast Convention Centre. Metcash is Australia's leading wholesale distribution and marketing company providing products and services to a range of independent operators including, but not limited to, the grocery network of IGA and Foodland supermarkets. The QR code below will provide you with some insights to how this event is created and the width and breath of its reach, along with the content of support provided by a diverse and large number of suppliers.



My interest to attend was obviously around the banana industry and how an event such as this could be used to benefit not only the retailer but the

banana industry in general. I wanted to consider whether, in the future, there may be an opportunity to grow banana sales and increase household

penetration through the independent channel. Bananas were very much part of the Expo produce displays, however education on how to sell more bananas wasn't a focus. That could be something that's worth exploring for future events.

## Hanging display unit - trial results

A recent ABGC trial completed with the assistance of a number of IGA stores, saw the placement of a unique 'hang sell' display unit – away from the primary banana stand - to test whether it helped capture the convenience shopper and/or the light buyers who might not have had bananas on their shopping lists. The project was live for 12 weeks and at the end, the results were impressive. A 20 per cent increase in kilos sold was achieved along with a corresponding revenue gain. We increased kilo and dollar sales whilst increasing household penetration. The project was a success.

The exact display unit we placed during the trial is pictured below left. They were produced and provided by HL Displays Australia. It has the capacity to hold 100 hands of bananas and is on casters for easy movement around the retail shop floor. Additionally, it has a tray at the base, that

would allow the retailer to place single bananas (or similar) for those smaller impulse purchases. To take advantage of the recent project outcomes and with the support of Metcash, four units were placed on display at the expo, two within the produce department and two within HL Displays trade booth.

It was interesting to both see and hear the interaction with the stand by interested retailers, and the team at HL displays reported a high level of interest and relevant discussions at their trade booth.

What is apparent is the opportunity to display bananas via a hang sell format, taking advantage and utilising unused space above produce displays.

These are not the only display options available to retailers and one has to be careful that we are informing the retailers of the sales opportunities from displaying bananas on a secondary display versus their need to purchase and use the display unit we trialled. There are other options to be explored and presented to retail, to showcase the benefits associated with placing bananas on/in a secondary display/location.

My conversations with retailers around growth opportunities continue.





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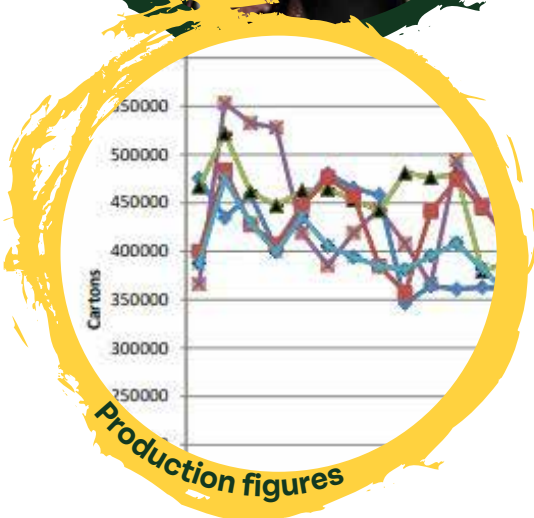
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**KATHRYN DRYDEN**

Stakeholder Engagement & Advocacy Manager  
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Membership fees are DIFFERENT to banana levies.



Updates on advocacy and membership are brought to you by the ABGC's Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy Manager, Kathryn Dryden.

# BACKPACKERS AND THE WORKFORCE CONUNDRUM

## The role of backpackers in the banana farming workforce is a critical area under legislative scrutiny.

Growers like Leon Collins have long relied on the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program to fill vital labour gaps and he is one of the many growers offering a positive working opportunity and experience to backpackers in Australia.

Recent legislative proposals threaten to impose restrictions that could disrupt the backpacker workforce supply. The Government has proposed the abolishment of the specified work component (88/176 days) of the Migration Review which means that all backpackers could be automatically entitled to a three-year stay without having to do farm/regional work.

"This will give growers a major headache, when access to a reliable workforce is already challenging enough," Leon said.

The ABGC has voiced strong opposition to any changes that could negatively impact the availability of backpacker labour, highlighting the indispensable role these workers play in the industry's sustainability.

More information and an opportunity to voice your opinion on access to labour can be found via the Members' Portal on the ABGC website, or email [members@abgc.org.au](mailto:members@abgc.org.au).



**ABGC is actively collecting positive stories of backpacker experiences working on banana farms, to help present a compelling case to the government, showcasing the tangible benefits and essential contributions of backpackers to the banana farming sector. ABGC members are encouraged to forward examples of positive backpacker experiences to ABGC's Kathryn Dryden via [members@abgc.org.au](mailto:members@abgc.org.au) or 0455 553 596.**

## LUCY IS A HAPPY BACKPACKER

**Lucy is a German backpacker who worked three months on Leon Collins' farm in Tully, Far North Queensland.**

She is now in Karratha, Western Australia working in hospitality and happens to be serving his fruit to clients associated with the mines.

Leon said, "When her time was up, Lucy didn't want to leave. She was operating machinery and working in the shed, now she's serving up the fruit she worked with, three-quarters of the way around the country."

Many backpackers, like Lucy, have much to gain by working on a farm while importantly providing growers with a reliable workforce.

When asked what she valued about her experience on the banana farm, Lucy said, "It was a positive experience for sure.

"I work bananas where I'm from (so I could already drive machinery), but I learnt so much here. I learnt that they have a whole different system and Collins' farm is really intelligent and doing really great things. For me I never worked in

a farm where they gave me so much responsibility because I was driving the tractor from the shed to the paddocks where the pickers are waiting for you to take a full trailer.

"I was carrying all the 'money' to the shed. The shed manager Hughy is the number one manager that I've had in my life which is awesome. He cares a lot about his workers which would give me the feeling of 'I'm in the right place' and 'everyone cares here'. I really like that.

"Outside, we had Carlo and he knows exactly what he's doing. We always felt safe in a scary environment (snakes, dangerous spiders). I would say that I learned a lot about smart thinking because they always knew how to improvise (when things didn't go to plan) which gave me the 'wow' with how they were responding to problems.

"We had Samoan community that worked the farms too. They are amazing workers and they were all saying they were really happy to be working on Collins' farm. It gave a small family feeling.

"I've been to Collins' farm twice. When I knew that I could work there again, I was really happy. I have only good things to say about my time there.

"They would always be really nice to you, especially as a backpacker being away from home. They would always have your back and accept you as you are and try to teach you better."

About Australia, Lucy said, "I love it. It has a nice system in terms of lifestyle, opportunities to do a lot of things. Everything you do here is the right thing. Workers are looked after. Bananas is a great job here. You enjoy it while you're doing it. It has everything you dream of, including respect."

This is Lucy's second year in Australia, and she hopes to get a sponsorship to stay longer.



# A TRIUMPH OF ADVOCACY AND COLLABORATION

## CASSOWARY COAST RATES INCREASE HALTED

**In a significant victory for the banana farming community, a proposed rates increase in the Cassowary Coast region has been halted, thanks to advocacy efforts led by the ABGC.**

This outcome underscores the power of industry action and the importance of growers having a seat at the table when critical decisions are made.

- **Growers on the Cassowary Coast were facing a proposed rate increase of 15.8%**
- **As a result of ABGC and grower advocacy, the increase was halted**
- **CCRC councillors and the CEO have met with the ABGC board**



ABGC's Kathryn Dryden and Cassowary Coast grower member Bernie Devaney outside the Council building in Innisfail, Qld.

## GROWER MEMBERS: KEY TO SUCCESS

**The ABGC champions the interests of banana growers, working hard to ensure their voices are heard in policy discussions.**

This recent success highlights the effectiveness of advocacy and collaboration with grower members. By drawing from growers' views and experiences, the ABGC was able to present a compelling case to the Cassowary Coast Regional Council (CCRC) elected members and staff against the proposed rates increase, emphasizing its significant impact on the banana farming industry, and the regional economy.

This collaborative effort would not have been possible without the active participation and support of ABGC members, whose insights and experiences were crucial in shaping ABGC's advocacy strategy. Special thanks go to Bernie Devaney, Dean Sinton, and Jade Buchanan for their contributions.

For banana growers in the Cassowary Coast region, Council's decision not to raise the rates comes as a welcome relief. The proposed hike of 15.8% would have hit pockets hard, placing additional financial strain on already burdened farmers. The ABGC's successful campaign not only prevents this immediate financial impact but also sets a precedent for future advocacy efforts.

The ABGC Board welcomed CCRC councillors and the CEO to a board meeting for a meet and greet, allowing time for discussion around the issues of rates and biosecurity. Council has been positive and forthcoming in taking opportunities to work with the industry around issues of mutual interest with ongoing dialogue.

**Members are encouraged to reach out to ABGC's Kathryn Dryden with any issues/ feedback. Contact her via [members@abgc.org.au](mailto:members@abgc.org.au) or 0455 553 596.**

## A VITAL LINK SHARED – ABGC & ITS MEMBERS

**The Cassowary Coast rates victory serves as a powerful reminder of the critical role the ABGC plays in defending the interests of banana growers. Without the support and membership of the growers, the ABGC would not have the resources or influence necessary to represent their interests.**

**Membership in the ABGC ensures that growers have a dedicated organisation working tirelessly to address their concerns and advocate for fair and equitable policies. The collective strength of the ABGC membership was instrumental in stopping the rates increase, demonstrating the tangible benefits of being part of this vital organisation.**

# ADVOCATING FOR INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC CHANGES

## BANANA SUBMISSION TO FRESHCARE STANDARDS REVIEW

**ABGC has made a significant submission to the Freshcare Food Safety & Environmental Standards review, addressing several key issues critical to the banana farming industry.**

This submission underscores the importance of targeted advocacy and the value of active member participation in shaping industry standards.

### Key Issues covered

The ABGC's submission highlighted several critical areas for improvement. Firstly, the issue of duplication was addressed, with growers frequently facing overlapping requirements from different regulatory bodies. This redundancy not only complicates compliance but also increases the administrative and cost burden on farmers.

The submission also questioned the relevance of certain standards to banana farming, urging for adjustments that better reflect the specific practices and risks associated with the crop.

Consistency across standards was another focal point, as growers need clear, uniform guidelines to effectively meet compliance requirements.

Additionally, the submission called for improved communication from Freshcare to ensure growers are well-informed about any changes and their implications.

"ABGC looks forward to working more with Freshcare on the issues and suggested improvements raised in our submission," ABGC CEO, Leanne Erakovic, said.

"Freshcare is an industry-owned standard, and it was essential that growers' voices were presented to ensure real-life impacts and experiences were addressed," she said.

### Grower members' voices critical to the submission

The process of making this submission was a collaborative effort, showcasing the strength of member engagement within the ABGC.

In December 2023, a workshop was facilitated by ABGC's Kathryn Dryden, where twelve members came together with the CEO and Strategy Manager to discuss compliance issues and share their insights. This workshop was instrumental in forming a comprehensive and representative submission to Freshcare.

CEO, Leanne Erakovic said, "The ABGC emphasises the importance of such submissions in advocating for industry-specific needs and ensuring that standards are practical and fair for banana growers.

"The active participation of members in this process is a testament to the value of having a seat at the table when important decisions are made."

### See the submission for yourself

One of the key benefits of ABGC membership is access to exclusive resources, such as the Members' Portal where ABGC's full submission to the Freshcare standards review can be found (go to [abgc.org.au/sign-in](http://abgc.org.au/sign-in) to access with your member credentials).

Leanne said, "By providing access to these critical documents, the ABGC ensures that growers are not only aware of the ongoing work we do, but also have the opportunity to engage and contribute their perspectives, which is most important."

**To become a member, contact ABGC's Kathryn Dryden via [members@abgc.org.au](mailto:members@abgc.org.au) or 0455 553 596.**



## Best Management Practice Team

**The ABGC's Best Management Practice (BMP) Team supports growers to make on-farm improvements that reduce the amount of nutrient, sediment and pesticides flowing to the Great Barrier Reef from banana farms.**

The BMP Team also works closely with government, industry and research groups so that they can better understand banana growing practices, and so that we can share new information with growers.

The Banana BMP project is delivered by the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) and funded under the Queensland Government's Reef Water Quality Program.



Amelia Foster  
BMP Coordinator



Molly Blake  
Extension Officer



Stephanie Ruiz  
Extension Officer



Eleanor Sibree  
Graduate Extension Officer



Sarah Williams, Ingrid Jenkins and Tegan Cavallaro from the National Banana Development and Extension team.

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO MANAGE BUNCH PESTS WITHOUT CHLORPYRIFOS

## BUNCH SPRAY FORUM

Over 60 growers and industry stakeholders attended a recent Bunch Spray Forum held at South Johnstone Research Facility in Far North Queensland. Information on managing bunch pests with a focus on bunch spraying created a lot of discussion amongst attendees. The forum delivered by the National Banana Development and Extension Program was aimed at supporting growers who are in the process of or will be transitioning from dusting to bunch spraying or bunch spraying with alternative chemistry, due to the possible deregistration of chlorpyrifos. For those that couldn't attend, here is a summary of what was covered.



## RECAP ON CHLORPYRIFOS REVIEW

Chlorpyrifos has been under review by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine's Authority (APVMA) for some time. Chlorpyrifos is widely used by growers in Far North Queensland and is applied by bunch spraying or dusting (PER14240). Production of the main product used for this application, wettable powder product Strike-Out® WP, has been halted. The manufacturer has reported that this is due to the APVMA review and the need for manufacturing plant upgrades.

December 2023	March 2024	May 2024	August 2024
APVMA published a proposed regulatory decision regarding bananas. The decision aimed to ban all uses, except impregnated bunch covers, which are currently not commercially available.	APVMA public consultation closed. ABGC made a submission regarding the use in bananas for APVMA to consider.	Dusting permit (PER14240) extended till 31 May 2025 (subject to APVMA final decision).	APVMA is expected to publish the final decision on chlorpyrifos.  Details of potential phase-out period released. <i>*current at time of going to print</i>

# INDUSTRY INVESTMENT

The following levy funded projects are involved in various aspects of bunch pest and disease management.



**Dr. Rosie Godwin,  
R&D Co-ordinator, ABGC**

Industry's R&D coordinator, Dr Rosie Godwin (ABGC), has been actively working with Hort Innovation and chemical companies to scope potential new chemical products that may be effective in managing bunch pests. Most recently, in collaboration with Hort Innovation, this has resulted in securing funding for efficacy testing of a chemical with a new active constituent for managing bunch pests (suitable for both bell injecting and bunch spraying). Trials are not expected to be completed before 2026. Registration depends on these results and the chemical company's decision to pursue further registration.

As part of APVMA's review, this project coordinated industry's submission outlining the impact of the possible cancellation of chlorpyrifos would have on the banana industry.



**Claud Warren  
Regulatory Affairs & Crop Protection Manager, Hort Innovation**

Hort Innovation manages current and new minor use permits, and engages with stakeholders to discuss pipeline technologies and new active ingredients suitable for potential minor use permit applications or label registrations.

The regulatory support and coordination project works across all Australian horticultural industries. This project provides key information to the banana industry on pesticide regulation.



**Ingrid Jenkins, Tegan Cavallaro,  
Sarah Williams and Stewart Lindsay  
(not pictured).**

### National Banana Development & Extension team

The National Banana Development & Extension team in FNQ has prioritised bunch pest management based on discussions with growers and the chlorpyrifos review. This quickly led the team to subsequently undertake a series of bunch pest and disease trials to help fill knowledge gaps.

The project has developed resources (web pages, factsheets, videos) on the topic and published them on the project's Better Bananas website and through ABGC communication channels. The team has also shared their findings at extension events such as the recent Bunch Spray Forum.



**Daniel Farrell, Richard Piper,  
Kathy Grice and David East**

### Integrated Pest and Disease Management Program

The team working in the Banana Integrated Pest and Disease Management Program are researching alternative options for managing bunch pests. This includes research into 'softer' approaches, such as biological control. Laboratory, pot and field trials are currently underway. Examples include the use of predatory insects, biopesticides, or entomopathogens. The latter involves applications of fungi solutions to infect, kill and reduce pest populations.

This project is also investigating the cause and control options for Sooty blotch and Fruit speckle, which have been identified as a major issue affecting fruit quality for certain production areas of FNQ.



Any information related or created from the projects above are coordinated through the industry's communications project. This is published through their established industry distribution channels including e-bulletins, Australian Bananas magazine, SMS and social media.

If you would like to receive these updates, please contact [amy@abgc.org.au](mailto:amy@abgc.org.au)

# WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVE CHEMICAL OPTIONS?

Growers should start planning how they will manage bunch pests without applying chlorpyrifos.

Chemical control particularly for banana rust thrips can be directed at the soil dwelling pupal stage, as well as the adults and larvae on the fruit and the plant. The alternative registered or permitted chemicals applied to the bell and/or bunch to manage the main bunch pests (banana rust thrips, banana flower thrips and banana scab moth) are summarised below:

## BELL INJECTION

Acephate (1B)

Bifenthrin (3A)  
Only SC formulations registered for bell injection

Spinetoram (5)  
PER87198



## BUNCH SPRAYING

Acephate (1B)

Spinetoram (5)

Spinosad (5)



Chemicals registered at the time of publication. Always check the registration status of products before use. Diazinon which is also registered but not widely used is currently under review and has been proposed to be removed from use in bananas and has not been included above. Chemical group modes of action are listed in brackets after the active ingredients and colour coded.

Chemical actives currently registered for the control of banana rust thrips can be applied by stem injection, stem spray and/or band application (always check label directions). They are as follows:

Chemical actives registered for controlling banana rust thrips using methods other than bunch treatment.

Active ingredient	Chemical group mode of action	Stem injection	Stool treatment (30cm radius around plant and up to a height of 30cm on the stem)	Stem spray (Directed at base of stem up to a height of 30cm)	Band application
Fipronil	2B		✓		✓
Bifenthrin	3A		✓		✓
Clothianidin	4A	✓		✓	
Imidacloprid	4A	✓			
Imidacloprid + Spirotetramat	4A + 23	✓			

### Things to consider:

- The rate for bell injecting with spinetoram (e.g. Success@Neo) listed in the minor use permit (PER87189) is 40mL/10L, which is different to that on the label for bunch spraying (e.g. Success@Neo – 20mL/10L).
- Good **bunch spray coverage** is important to get effective control.
- Consider **fruit fungal issues** when changing practices. Practices that increase air flow in bunch covers and the use of a registered fungicide may help minimise fungal diseases that affect fruit quality.
- Group 4A chemicals can lead to mite flares so limit use of these chemicals at times of the year when environmental conditions (e.g. hot, dry periods) are favourable.
- Consider the insect's lifecycle when timing applications. Ground sprays may take 6-7 weeks compared to stem injections/treatments (2-3 weeks) before any effects are observed on banana rust thrips.



### Workplace health and safety

You must comply with WH&S directions on labels and permits when applying chemicals, including wearing personal protective equipment. Incorrect use of agvet chemicals can lead to human health issues and harm, as well as adverse effects on livestock, pests, crops and the environment. The incorrect use of agvet chemicals is monitored and enforced by the police, Safe Work Australia and state government authorities. Furthermore, some of the approved safety and use directions on the label are legally binding – incorrect use can lead to fines, litigation and in some circumstances criminal prosecution.

#### Before the use of any chemical:

- Confirm the registration status by checking the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority website portal.apvma.gov.au
- Check product label and/or permit.

#### Resistance management

Pesticide resistance is when a pest can no longer be controlled with a pesticide that was previously effective. The banana industry has limited chemical options to control bunch pests, growers should be considering how best to manage the risk of pesticide resistance on their farms. Here are some key points to consider:

- Repeated use of chemicals with the **same mode of action** increases the risk of resistance developing (chemical groups with the same mode of action are colour coded above).
- Incorrect rates, especially lower rates than those specified on the label can provide sub-lethal doses and increase the risk of resistance – Remember the spinetoram permitted rate for bell injection is 40mL/10L, and bunch spraying as per the label (20mL/10L) are different.
- Mixing products with different modes of action is not recommended and limits options for rotation.
- Best practice is to use different chemical groups for bell injection, bunch spraying, stem and ground treatments.

#### Factors that affect how well a pesticide works

Getting effective control of pests is not just about the chemical. Things to keep in mind that can affect how well a pesticide works include:

- Environmental factors – e.g. temperature, moisture, bacteria, pH of mixing water.
- Application factors – rate, timing, volume, equipment, and application technique.

# FRUIT FUNGAL ISSUES

## Bananas are susceptible to various fungal diseases that can affect fruit quality.

Extended wet weather conditions over our latest summer and autumn period have seen an increase in fruit fungal issues. Growers who are currently dusting bunches may need to consider what practices may help reduce fungal issues developing on fruit when they transition to spraying.

There are significant knowledge gaps on fruit fungal issues and how best to manage them.

The Banana Integrated Pest and Disease Management project is looking at investigating some of these issues. There is an identification guide to the main fruit fungal issues on the Better Bananas website.



## Here is a snapshot of some of the learnings from the extension team's innovation trials.



### Fruit speckle

- Smooth reddish brown to black spots (0.5-1mm) with water-soaked margins. Occurs first on the fruit neck.
- Caused by multiple fungi including *Colletotrichum musae*, *Fusarium oxysporum* and *Fusarium semitectum*.
- Previously known as 'swamp spot', 'salt and pepper spot' and 'Deightoniella spot'.
- Products that contain mancozeb as the active are registered for fruit speckle.

#### Insights from trials so far

- Leaving a hole in the top of the bunch cover, commonly referred to as a 'flue' is thought to increase air flow through the bag. Trial work indicates that this does reduce fruit speckling, however the practice is not a treatment on its own.
- Tying the bag with a 'flue' did not increase Banana rust thrip damage.
- Paper bags appear to reduce fruit speckling, as there have been low levels of fruit speckle observed on fruit which has been bagged with paper bags.



### Sooty blotch

- Presents as water-soaked shadowing.
- Damages skin surface and can't be removed by rubbing.
- Research is underway to determine the cause/s of sooty blotch as part of the Integrated Pest and Disease Management Project.

#### Insights from trials so far

- It is quite challenging to draw conclusions from field trials due to the random nature of the incidence of the sooty blotch symptoms.
- There have been mixed results when using paper bags under different levels of disease pressure.



### Sooty mould

- Caused by the combination of sap-feeding insects (banana aphids and mealybugs) and fungi, namely the genus *Cladosporium*.
- The fungus grows on the honeydew secreted by aphids or mealybugs and the fungal infection is secondary.
- Black powdery growth occurs in dark layered sheets which can be peeled away or removed by rubbing (but the stain remains).
- Treatment involves spraying to lower ant populations – this allows beneficial insects to come in and eat the sap-feeding insects, reducing the source of food of the fungi.

# TRIALS USING ALTERNATIVE CHEMICAL OPTIONS & CULTURAL PRACTICES

The National Banana Development and Extension Program has undertaken a series of bunch pest management trials in anticipation of the possible removal of chlorpyrifos and feedback from growers. These trials have aimed to fill knowledge gaps for growers faced with managing bunch pests without chlorpyrifos and bunch spraying with the alternative registered actives.

The trials have focused on bell injection, bunch covers and bunch spraying.

## Early bagging reduces bird, bat, and rust thrips damage

One of the trials confirmed that bagging bunches 'early' compared to bagging at a more 'traditional' time at pruning (as shown in images below) significantly reduced animal scratching and rust thrip damage. In the trial:

- ✓ Less than 1% of hands had animal scratches when bagged 'early'.
- ✓ Early bagging reduced the number of fingers assessed with rust thrip damage by 17%.
- ✗ 57% of hands in bunches bagged at pruning had animal scratches.

Tying a bag and/or liner early provides a physical barrier, preventing Banana rust thrips moving down the stalk into the bunch.



## Bell injection – Timing and volume is important

In trials undertaken at South Johnstone:

- ✓ Injecting bells in the **upright position** with 60mL volume of either spinetoram or acephate provided good control of flower thrips and scab moth.
- ✓ For scab moth control, inject when bells are in the upright position to ensure coverage and effective control.
- ✗ Bell injection that occurred late (as pictured below) resulted in nearly 25% of hands with scab moth damage.

Remember - The rate for bell injecting with spinetoram listed in the minor use permit (PER87189) is 40mL/10L which is different to that on the label for bunch spraying (e.g. Success®Neo – 20mL/10L).



## Bunch spraying

Spinetoram was used for bunch spraying trials.

- ✓ Spinetoram label rate and volume (50-60mL) with a single application provided good control of Banana rust thrips in several trials.
- ✓ In these trials, bells were injected with 60mL of acephate in the upright position and bagged early with a liner followed by a perforated 40-micron plastic bunch cover.
- ✓ Different spray systems and techniques have been used in these trials, all provided good control of rust thrips.
- ✓ A trial compared the use of 3 hydraulic systems/techniques and 3 air assisted systems (pictured below). Rust thrip damage was assessed on all fingers (more than 12 000 fingers!) and found all the equipment trialed using 50-60mL of spinetoram provided good control of rust thrips with over 96% of fingers having no rust thrip damage compared to 47% of fingers in the water control bunches.
- ✓ Hydraulic and air systems both work well – there are pros & cons to each system and growers need to consider what will suit their farms.
- ✓ Coverage is important – There is no one size fits all to achieving good coverage, equipment and technique needs to be considered.



The spray ring was not easy to manoeuvre under the bunch cover and liner, this would not be viable in a commercial context.



Grower Mark McAvoy and Senior Development Horticulturalist Tegan Cavallaro discuss bunch spraying on Mark's farm.

## GROWER EXPERIENCES

Three growers, Naomi Brownrigg, Mark McAvoy and Matt Abbott, kindly agreed to share their experiences with bunch spraying which sparked lots of discussion.

The forum attendees commented on how beneficial it was having these growers talk about their individual experiences with bunch spraying and appreciated their willingness to share.

Naomi Brownrigg shared her experience of changing from bunch dusting to spraying on their family farm over 20 years ago. At the time they experienced a significant decline in fruit quality due to increased fungal issues. She shared how they changed the way they tie their bags to leave an air hole, which she calls a 'flue' to improve airflow through the bunch.



You can read more about this and watch a video on the Better Bananas website.

There was a lot of conversation around the pros and cons of different bunch spray systems, with discussion focussing on what systems were best for achieving good coverage in a time efficient manner and ease of application. Mark McAvoy shared the off-the-shelf air assist system he has been using for over 15 years. The spray gun, used for painting, ran off a compressor on the bagging machine that pressurises the spray tank and gun.

You can watch a video on Mark's spray gun set up by visiting the Better Bananas website: [betterbananas.com.au](http://betterbananas.com.au).

Matt Abbott and his family have farmed organic bananas for over 20 years. When it comes to bunch spraying, they have been using hydraulic systems with adjustable nozzles. Following the 2022 Roadshows and speaking with Mark McAvoy, Matt saw the potential for time saving efficiencies by using air assisted spray systems to bunch spray. This led him to trial an iteration of the spray gun system, using a custom built air assist system in collaboration with a local engineering firm.

The National Banana Development & Extension team along with the grower presenters emphasised that there was no one size fits all when it comes to managing bunch pests. What works for one farm may not be the best approach for another.

With cost of production increases and tighter margins, producing good quality fruit has never been more important to banana growers. Not just as individual businesses but as an industry, as competition with other fruits on the supermarket shelves increases due partly to a rise in cost of living. In addition, transitioning to spraying can be daunting for growers, therefore trialling things before product runs out and on a small scale is recommended to ensure that any changes don't negatively impact fruit quality.



### MORE INFO

For more information contact one of the National Banana Development & Extension team members:

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 or 0467956233

The ABGC's R&D Manager, Dr Rosie Godwin, can be contacted via [rosie@abgc.org.au](mailto:rosie@abgc.org.au)

For more information about the Chlorpyrifos chemical review visit the APVMA. You can also check out the ABGC's one-stop page ([abgc.org.au/chlorpyrifos-review](http://abgc.org.au/chlorpyrifos-review)).

# BANANA WEEVIL BORER MASS TRAPPING

## NOVEL DESIGN USING LONG-LASTING PHEROMONE LURES IN NSW

Steven Norman, Development Officer – Sub Tropical Horticulture, Wollongbar, NSW

**Banana weevil borer (BWB) (*Cosmopolites sordidus*) presents one of the main issues for the banana industry globally.**

When BWB reach high numbers in the field, they significantly affect productivity by creating a network of tunnels in the corm, reducing plant growth. This tunnelling weakens the plant, increasing the likelihood of plant blowdowns. BWB infestations affect nutrient uptake, contributing to slow growth, decreased bunch weights and overall poor plant health.

Among the sustainable ways to combat this challenge, mass trapping has been globally practiced as an efficient technique. Mass trapping reduces pest numbers by luring them, with an attractant, in large numbers to a trap that either kills them or prevents their exit (Figure 1). In this article, we discuss mass trapping systems, how to build them, their upkeep and cost.

### In practice

Mass trapping of BWB has been made possible by long-lasting (effective for 90 days) pheromone lures containing an aggregation pheromone (sordidin), which attracts both males and females. BWB pheromone lures are available online through most beneficial insect providers.<sup>1</sup> Using pitfall traps with pheromone lures at a density of 4 traps per hectare was 5–10 times more effective than using traps without pheromone lures (Alpizar et al. 2012). Compared with standard insecticide treatment programs, when using pitfall traps with a pheromone lure, corm damage was reduced by half to two-thirds after several months (from 20–30% corm tunnelling to 10% or less), which increased bunch weights of Dwarf Cavendish (*Musa acuminata* Colla) by approximately 20%. Given that trials in Australian growing regions with common varieties have yet to be conducted, caution is needed before assuming similar performance outcomes.



Figure 1. A 5-litre bucket trap with hundreds of banana weevil borers.



Figure 2. A 5-litre bucket trap.

<sup>1</sup> Important note that insecticides are not registered for use within pitfall trapping units, pheromone lures should only be used within pitfall traps. These pheromone lures are commercially available from beneficial insect stores, online or in-store.

### Building a pitfall trap

One method growers have developed is using a modified bucket (the ideal trap size is yet to be determined) to make large-volume pitfall traps.

The following steps are to help guide you to build your own trap.

1. Obtain a 5–10 litre bucket with a lid (Figure 2) or a piece of 100 mm PVC pipe.
2. The trap should be black, brown or grey, as this increases capture rates (Fu et al. 2019).
3. Drill 10 mm holes into the side of the trap, approximately in the middle of the bucket or where it will line up with the soil surface once it is in the ground (Figure 3 and Figure 4).
4. Insert a piece of wire into the lid or the sidewall of the trap to attach the pheromone lure (Figure 5 and Figure 6).



Figure 3. A 5-litre bucket pitfall trap positioned into the side of a hill.



Figure 4. The pitfall trap has holes on the side to allow the weevil to enter. Ensure that soil ramps are built to be level with the hole so the banana weevil borers can easily walk into the trap.

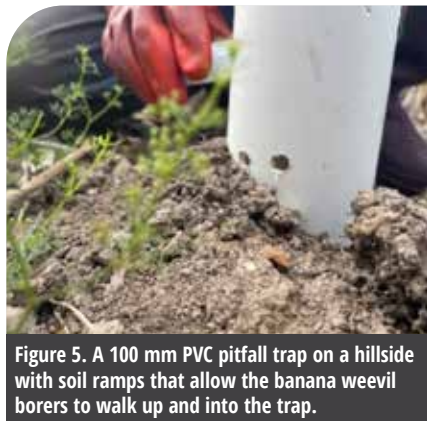


Figure 5. A 100 mm PVC pitfall trap on a hillside with soil ramps that allow the banana weevil borers to walk up and into the trap.



Figure 6. Inspecting a 100 mm PVC pitfall trap that has an easily removable lid.

### Setting the traps

1. Choose a location that is shaded and exposed to rain or water.
2. Dig the trap into the ground so the drilled holes are flush with the soil surface (Figure 2 to Figure 4).
3. Make a soil ramp up to the holes in the bucket so the BWB can enter the trap easily (Figure 4 and Figure 5).
4. To prevent the BWB from getting out of the trap, either place some soapy water in the bottom, or to limit by-catch of other insects, ensure the trap walls are clean and smooth so BWB cannot climb out.
5. Once the trap is in the ground, hang the pheromone bait from a piece of wire at the centre of the lid (Figure 5) or the side of the pipe (Figure 6).
6. Ensure there is banana mulch surrounding and over the trap (Figure 5).
7. Traps should be at least 20 meters away from each other (4 traps per hectare).

### Trap maintenance

Traps typically need to be checked once per month or after severe weather. How often the dead BWB need to be removed from the trap will vary with trap size, population numbers, and BWB seasonal movements. Common maintenance activities include:

- Removing dead BWB from the traps; an easy way to do this is to use a battery-powered wet and dry vacuum.
- Ensuring the soil ramps are maintained and not eroded from the trap entry holes.
- Maintaining coverage of banana mulch surrounding and covering the trap area.
- Replacing pheromone lures every 90 days.

### Cost

The commercially available BWB pheromone costs approximately \$11 per bait (tablet) and lasts 90 days. The current recommended density is 4 traps per hectare with one pheromone bait in each trap, totalling 16 pheromone baits per year. Therefore, in 2024, the approximate cost is \$176 per hectare per year. This does not include the material to make the pitfall traps or labour costs to install and maintain them, which need to be considered.

**If you are interested in more information about BWB mass trapping, contact Steven Norman on [steven.norman@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:steven.norman@dpi.nsw.gov.au)**

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# LADY FINGER-LIKE VARIETIES FROM BRAZIL UNDER TRIAL AT SOUTH JOHNSTONE

Jeff Daniells, Katie Robertson, Sharan Muthukumar and Carole Wright, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

Several Fusarium wilt Race 1 resistant Lady Finger-like varieties are being assessed for agronomic performance at the South Johnstone Research Facility. Those who attended the September 2023 field walk had an opportunity to see plant crop bunches on these Lady Finger-like varieties. A video field walk through the block, prepared for the 2023 Industry Roadshows in NSW at about that time, is available at [bit.ly/SJTrialTour](https://bit.ly/SJTrialTour)

## Background

According to the 'Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook 2022/23', the annual production of Lady Finger bananas in that year was 11,228 t compared to 363,023 t of Cavendish, so Lady Fingers represent only about 3% of overall banana production. However, the farm gate value of Lady Finger production can be estimated as worth about \$30 million which, because of the higher price paid for Lady Finger per kg of fruit, represents about 5% of the overall banana industry. Whatever way you want to look at it, the Lady Finger industry is an important industry in its own right. In New South Wales, the Lady Finger industry is proportionally much more important than it is overall for Australia.

In the April 2024 edition of *Australian Bananas* (pp 26-27), we drew attention to the constraint that Fusarium wilt Race 1 has placed on Lady Finger production in Australia. Varieties with resistance have been sought and evaluated over time, but while many have been identified with resistance, none have so far measured up as replacements

for the Race 1 susceptible Lady Finger in the marketplace. So where possible, affected growers have sought new ground not infested with the pathogen.

In 2019/20 some new Lady Finger selections, Lady Finger hybrids and Sugar hybrids were imported from banana breeding programs in Brazil to evaluate in Australia. As described in the April article in *Australian Bananas*, some of these are being screened against Race 1 on the Atherton Tablelands. Here in this article, we present results from the plant crop of their agronomic evaluation at South Johnstone. This evaluation is part of the project BA21002 - 'New varieties for Australian banana growers'.

## Trial results in plant crop

Tissue cultured plants of 3 Lady Finger selections, 4 Lady Finger hybrids and 2 Sugar (Silk) hybrids were field planted in December 2022 at South Johnstone DAF. Pacovan, SCS451 and the hybrids all came from Brazil. The 6 hybrids from the program of EMBRAPA (■ ■) are all reported

to be resistant to both Panama disease Race 1 and yellow Sigatoka. Japira and Pacoua are also reported to be resistant to black Sigatoka. SCS451 is from the program of EPAGRI and was purported to have tolerance to Panama disease Race 1. Bunch emergence commenced in May 2023, and harvest was completed in December 2023.

Unfortunately, all except one of the Lady Finger (Improved) control plants were tissue culture off types. Thus, there are serious limitations when wishing to compare the new selections with the industry standard, Lady Finger. Nevertheless, reliable comparisons can be made amongst the new varieties. The agronomic and yield results from the plant crop are presented in the table below. Relative comparisons from previous studies suggest that for the Lady Finger data included in the table, the pseudostem height is indicative, but the duration from planting to harvest would usually be a little slower resulting in bunch weight/12 months being more in line with that obtained for SCS451.

**Table: Selected yield and plant characteristics of varieties in the plant crop**

Variety	Weeks from planting to harvest	Bunch wt. (kg)	Bunch wt./12 months	Finger length 3rd top hand (cm)	Pseudostem height (m)
Pacovan	46.9	19.4	21.6	23.4	4.1
Pacovan Ken	47.5	17.8	19.4	22.5	3.7
SCS451	42.8	14.3	17.4	18.7	2.8
Platina	45.3	14.6	16.7	20.0	3.2
Pacoua	45.8	13.6	15.5	20.1	3.8
Japira	51.8	14.6	14.7	23.1	4.5
Princesa	48.7	12.2	12.9	15.9	3.8
Tropical	53.5	10.4	10.2	14.5	3.9
Lady Finger*	42.0	15.2	18.9	18.5	3.6

\* only this single plant was true-to-type  Lady Finger  Lady Finger hybrid  Sugar hybrid

## RESEARCH



Bunches of Pacovan and Pacovan Ken were more pendulous than Lady Finger.

### **A summary of the results and observations made are as follows:**

The highest yielding varieties (per unit of time) were Pacovan, Pacovan Ken and SCS451, which were all significantly higher yielding than Tropical, Princesa and Japira.

The tallest variety was Japira and the shortest in stature was SCS451. Several aspects of crop management are more difficult with the taller varieties.

Japira, Pacovan Ken and Pacovan had significantly longer fruit on the 3rd hand, while fruit of Tropical and Princesa was significantly shorter.

### **Where to from here?**

**The first ratoon harvest is already underway with harvest commencing in May 2024. The trial will be completed after the first ratoon harvest. Local taste panel results for varieties will be available then.**

**Results from Panama disease Race 1 screening available next year will help guide any future on-farm studies.**



Platina is shorter in stature than the other Lady Finger hybrids.

**Hort  
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**BANANA  
FUND**

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the banana research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)

# UNTOLD HISTORY OF BUNCHY TOP

A new, free-to-access paper details the huge impact banana bunchy top disease had on the Tweed Valley in NSW last century, both on plantations and the people who ran them.

Of all the plant diseases that occur in Australia, banana bunchy top disease would rank high on any list of those that have had the greatest impact on society.

Bunchy top first became a major problem in Australia during World War 1 in the Tweed Valley in New South Wales, close to the border of Queensland. The Soldier Settlement Scheme was initiated to provide a livelihood for returned soldiers, and the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales was chosen as the site for a new subtropical fruit industry. Physically and psychologically damaged men were encouraged to settle on the land to grow bananas, only to be left in ruins within two years because bunchy top had destroyed their plantations.

In a recently published paper, Andrew D. W. Geering describes the beginnings of the subtropical banana industry, the introduction of bunchy top disease, and efforts by the scientific and farming communities to find a preventative treatment or cure for the disease.

It's free to access and serves as a testament to the knowledge and work of Tweed Valley banana growers and industry scientists.

View the full article by Mr Geering here:



## FOCUS ON PESTS, DISEASES IN GLOBAL BANANA PRODUCTION

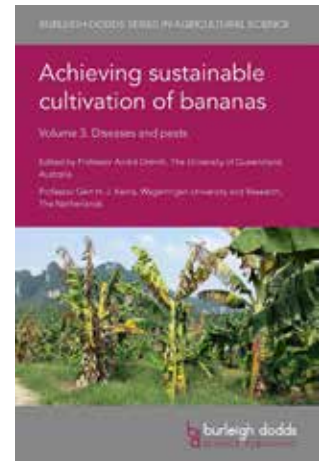
The third volume of *Achieving sustainable cultivation of bananas, focusing on diseases and pests*, has now been published.

The book, edited by Professor Andre Drenth (University of Queensland) and Professor Gert H. J. Kema (Wageningen University) looks at Tropical Race 4, black Sigatoka and banana streak virus and more.

It explores existing methods for pest/disease diagnosis and identification, current management strategies used to control and/or prevent outbreaks, as well as the development of disease-resistant cultivars and integrated pest and disease management programmes.

Volume 3 features articles from Professor Drenth, as well as a number of Australian and international researchers. Among them is Marc Jackson, a former FNQ banana grower and Banana Congress speaker.

You can purchase the entire volume, or selected chapters, online via Burleigh Dodds Science Publishing.



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# PROJECT UPDATE: INTEGRATED PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

**Kathy Grice, Principal Experimentalist, Horticulture and Forestry Science, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries**

**Over the past two years (the life of project BA21004), a range of management options have been assessed for the major bunch pests and different spray programs against yellow Sigatoka.**

In the insect space, alternative management strategies are being assessed to tackle the likes of rust thrips, flower thrips, and scab moth. This is critical at a time when the banana industry is about to lose access to chlorpyrifos. The strategies include the use of 'softer' or more environmentally friendly options including biological products, insect predators and parasites, parasitic nematodes, and fungal entomopathogens (organisms that can kill insects), in combination with cultural practices.

Recent trials were completed comparing commercially available biological products such as Velifer®, DiPel® and Natrasoap® which were applied to bunches as a spray or bell injection. Natrasoap® (potassium salt) showed efficacy against all three bunch pests, but not to the level of control achieved by the industry standard insecticide, Success® Neo. Preliminary results also suggest Velifer® (Figure 1) with further evaluation may be effective against flower thrips as a bell injection application. Future trials will assess a range of other products including neem oil, Prevam® (Orange oil), different formulations of DiPel®, and entomopathogenic nematodes.

Insect predator trials which included mites, predatory bugs and lacewings (Figure 2) were applied under paper bunch covers in combination with early bagging. The preliminary results suggest that several predators may provide adequate control of thrips pests. Additionally, a single high-release rate of predators (Figure 3) provided the same level of thrips pest control compared to two releases four weeks apart. Following the success of

this trial, predators will be examined in further trials with the inclusion of parasites and other biological products to develop a systems approach to bunch pest management.

Fungal entomopathogens (*Metarhizium spp.* and *Beauveria bassiana*) are also being assessed to determine if they can play a role in the control of rust thrips. This research is in its infancy, and modifications to the application method and a more reliable production of the entomopathogens is required before making it a viable option. A recent training workshop on fungal entomopathogens held at the South Johnstone Research Facility and delivered by Dr Diana Leemon (formerly DAF) and Steven Rice (DAF, Brisbane) has provided the research team with the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct ongoing research in this field of pest control.

Yellow Sigatoka research efforts have been shaped by the fact that some currently registered fungicides are also up for APVMA review. These include the main protectant fungicides with the actives mancozeb (Mancozeb 750 DF) and chlorothalonil (Cheers® 720 Weathershield), together with Group 3 systemics with the actives epoxiconazole (Soprano), propiconazole (Tilt), tebuconazole (Pacific Tebuconazole 430 SC). Mixtures that also include Group 3 fungicides such as Luna Experience are also included. This meant our yellow Sigatoka research needed to focus on spray programs to include fungicides registered, but not widely used in the industry such as copper fungicides or Scala (pyrimethanil) in addition to deleafing treatment.

These were compared to three controls – Bayer, mancozeb and chlorothalonil programs. Data from the year 1 trial showed that BioPest® Oil or Serenade® Prime, when used in a program with the products epoxiconazole and Routine®, was as effective at controlling yellow Sigatoka as the control programs listed above. The two programs containing the protectant product Cop-It™ (copper ammonium acetate) were not as effective as the industry control programs. Alterations to spray programs are in progress for the 2024 season to further explore seldom used registered fungicides, and to look at how the newly registered systemic products, Sercadis®, and Excalia® can be used to fortify the industries protectant programs.

Deleafing trials comparing DAF recommended practice (4-8 week intervals depending on weather conditions) versus grower practice on both a conventional and Ecoganic™ banana growing production systems have been undertaken. Conditions for leaf disease development have been consistent and favourable throughout the 2023 season and results showed that deleafing under Ecoganic™ conditions had a limited effect on disease incidence compared to conventional production. Although the DAF treatment at both sites had fewer leaves and a lower infection levels than the grower treatment, there appeared to be no yield penalty between the two treatments. This trial will continue to look at the effect of deleafing on yield at different times of the year and under changing weather conditions.



Figure 1. Velifer® application to be applied to tissue culture plants infected with banana rust thrips.



Figure 2. Lacewing predators to be applied under a paper bunch cover.



Figure 3. Left image: paper bag only treatment. Right image: paper bag with the addition of predatory mite (*Hypoaspis sp.*)

# BANANA BITES: WHAT'S BUGGING YOU?

## A growers' guide to ant related problems and their management

This is a new, regular feature from the Banana Integrated Pest and Disease Management program (IPDM) (BA21004) team at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland. Keep an eye on Australian Bananas magazine for useful information on a different pest in each edition.

Ants are commonly found in commercial and backyard plantings of bananas across Australia. Ants find suitable sites to nest including in the ground, behind old leaf sheaths, inside decaying pseudostems or on weeds and leaf trash surrounding the plants. Depending on the species, ants play a different role on the farm and have a different effect on production.

### Ants - Good and Bad

Different species of ants can co-exist in bananas, however, depending on management practices and the surrounding environment, only one or two species typically dominate at any given time. Ants can be broadly split into two groups, based on their food preferences, either **sugar feeders** or **protein feeders**.

**Protein feeders** including green tree ants, Argentine ants, and coastal brown ants can be useful biological control agents as they prey on pest insects including banana scab moth, cluster caterpillar, banana weevil borer and thrips.



Sugar ants farming a colony of banana aphids.

**Sugar feeders** on the other hand, can be detrimental as they aid the build-up of sap sucking insects such as aphids, scale insects and mealybugs, which they protect ('farm') in return for their sugary secretions known as honeydew. Many species are involved, and they are commonly referred to as sugar ants.



Exotic electric ants farming a mealybug on a banana leaf. (Credit: Hawaii Ant Lab.)

### Ant Problems

Ants generally aren't considered a major pest for bananas, however, **damage to fruit** associated with abdominal spray secretions, secondary infections and pests, or nest construction in the bunch can be an issue.

Several species of ants **spray formic acid** from their abdomens when disturbed, which can damage the fruit. This damage appears as dark brown to black sunken trails or marks on the fruit skin.



Formic acid spray damage by ants on fruit.

Ants protecting sap sucking insects in the bunches can lead to black fungal growth known as sooty mould developing on the fruit. **Sooty mould** is caused by a fungus growing on the honey dew produced by sap sucking insects, for example scale insects, mealybugs and aphids. This mould is superficial, but difficult to remove from fruit. If banana aphids are present, they may also transmit the virus that causes bunchy top disease.



Sooty mould growth on fruit associated with honeydew from sap sucking insects 'farmed' by ants.

During wet weather, ants can build nests by carrying soil and debris up into the bunch. This contamination can result in marking of the fruit when it is harvested and transported to the shed.

Ants also pose an occupational health and safety hazard to workers, with risks of biting, stinging or injury from formic acid sprays. Ants can also cause indirect problems such as damaging and blocking irrigation lines.

### Ant Management

Ants can be difficult to manage, however, they are generally suppressed with insecticide treatments used against other pests. Ground spray applications for banana weevil borer or banana rust thrips control will reduce populations and bunch protection applications will protect the fruit.

Invasive ant species (electric ants, fire ants and yellow crazy ants) are also present in Queensland. Contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 if you suspect you have exotic ants on your farm.

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# DATA: THE KEY TO A THRIVING FUTURE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN BANANA INDUSTRY

The Australian banana industry is navigating a pivotal period marked by evolving market dynamics, climate challenges, and increasing compliance requirements.

With this in mind, accurate and comprehensive data is crucial for informed decision-making and sustainable growth. Opttimo IQ, also known as Banana Industry Benchmarking project (BA22009), provides an innovative approach to data collection and analysis, offering valuable insights that can drive the industry's progress. As a grower, your participation is essential to harness these benefits and contribute to the industry's future. Here's why your involvement is critical.



## 1. Drive Grower Efficiency and Profitability

Project Opttimo IQ, funded through the Hort Innovation R&D levy, is designed to enhance efficiency and profitability. By leveraging advanced analytics, Opttimo IQ provides growers with actionable insights into your operations, allowing you to identify inefficiencies, optimise resource allocation, and implement best practices that enhance productivity. This data-driven approach enables informed decisions that reduce costs, maximize yields and improve overall financial performance, ensuring long-term success and sustainability in a competitive market.



## 2. Drive Industry-Wide Improvements

By contributing your data, you will help create a comprehensive industry database that reflects the true state of the Australian banana industry. This collective data is crucial for identifying trends, benchmarking performance, and uncovering areas for improvement. Accurate, real-time data supports informed decisions that enhance productivity and profitability across the industry.



## 3. Support an informed Horticulture Industry with Robust Data

Robust data is crucial for understanding and addressing the needs of the horticulture industry. Your participation in the project ensures that the industry has accurate and comprehensive information to navigate challenges and seize opportunities. By participating in Opttimo IQ, you help create a valuable resource for benchmarking and informed decision-making, benefiting the entire industry.



## 4. Compliance Burden: A True Cost Analysis

Project Opttimo IQ aims to understand the true cost of compliance, which extends beyond just financial outlays. Compliance tasks often come with hidden costs, including lost opportunities and valuable time spent away from core farming activities. By quantifying these true costs, the project highlights the substantial burden compliance places on growers, providing crucial information to drive changes that alleviate these pressures and create a more supportive environment for banana growers across Australia.



## 5. Reduce Waste and Improve Quality Control resulting in increased profitability

Waste management and quality control are two of challenges facing banana growers. Opttimo IQ addresses these issues by providing detailed analysis of waste and rejection rates. Understanding the root causes of waste and identifying areas for improvement allows growers to implement targeted strategies that enhance quality control, reduce losses, and increase overall profitability.



## 6. Save Time and Resources

One of the most significant barriers to data participation is the perceived time and effort required. Opttimo IQ has streamlined the data collection process to be as efficient and user-friendly as possible. You can provide your base farm information and production data along with your 2023 Profit and Loss statement or complete the data request sheet in full. Either way, the project team is committed to minimizing your workload while maximizing the value of your data.



## 7. Shape the Future of the Industry

Your participation in Opttimo IQ is not just about today's challenges; it's about helping to shape the future of the Australian banana industry. By contributing your data, you play a crucial role in building a more resilient, competitive, and sustainable industry. The insights gained from this project will inform best practices, drive innovation, and set new standards of excellence for years to come.



**Shifts** from industry ranking to personalised data, comparing individual changes to overall industry performance.



**Empowers** growers to pinpoint areas for improvement and innovation to enhance profitability.



**Recognises** the need for continuous improvement and innovation in a price-taking industry.



**Focuses** on improving profitability by positively impacting cost of goods sold, production volume, fruit quality, and compliance costs.



**Includes** a certified H-GAH modelling tool to address carbon rating compliance requirements.



The importance of your participation in Project Opttimo IQ cannot be overstated. Accurate, comprehensive data is essential for understanding and addressing the needs of the Australian banana industry.

By contributing to this project, you have the opportunity to transform the industry, improve profitability, and ensure long-term sustainability. Opttimo IQ provides the insights needed to navigate challenges and seize opportunities, ensuring a thriving future for the industry. Your participation is crucial for the success of this initiative.

To participate please contact Eric Schluter at Aglytica on 0400707 352 or email: [Eschluter@aglytica.com](mailto:Eschluter@aglytica.com).

You can also visit the project website at [www.opttimoiq.com.au](http://www.opttimoiq.com.au)

# DATA AND INSIGHTS FUEL GROWER RESILIENCE

*Andrew Francey, General Manager, Industry Service & Delivery, Hort Innovation*

**After 20 years working in the Australian fresh produce sector, both in commercial production and now at Hort Innovation, one thing that strikes me is the resilience of our growers.**

At the Hort Connections 2024 annual conference in Melbourne, cautious optimism was evident amongst the 4000 delegates, despite growers being tested by extreme weather patterns, surging input costs, consumers tightening their household budgets and more.

Yet, in spite of these factors, the Australian horticulture sector is growing.

In the past decade it has expanded by 81 per cent, from \$9 billion to \$16.3 billion in total value of production.

It is outpacing Australia's agriculture sectors, and by 2030 is projected to reach \$22 billion.

This extraordinary growth is built on the innovation of growers across Australia who are doing things differently. It is part of their DNA to ask 'how can I learn?' and 'how can I continue to innovate?'.

Hort Innovation's key priority, which is enshrined in legislation, is to provide growers with the best answers to those questions.



**Find out more here [www.horticulture.com.au/op-ed-andrew-francey/](http://www.horticulture.com.au/op-ed-andrew-francey/).**

# BANANA SKILLS SHARED IN MOVE TO MICKLEHAM

## POST-ENTRY QUARANTINE TRANSITION UPDATE

*Dr Kathy Crew, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries*

**Importation of new banana cultivars into Australia, including those with elevated resistance to Fusarium wilt TR4, must follow strict standards to protect the banana industry against known and emerging biosecurity threats.**

The process includes importation as tissue cultures to exclude fungal and most bacterial pathogens as well as glasshouse screening for viruses and phytoplasmas (which can be transmitted through tissue culture) during the quarantine period.

Under Hort Innovation project BA21002, post-entry quarantine (PEQ) services for general imported banana germplasm are being transitioned from dedicated to multi-commodity facilities. The first step in this transition has been the closure of the industry-funded chamber within the banana PEQ glasshouse at the Ecosciences Precinct in Brisbane, Queensland. Future general imports will be grown out at the federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) PEQ facility at Mickleham near Melbourne, in Victoria.

An important step in this transition is the upskilling of plant pathologists. In May 2024, DAFF plant pathologists and molecular biologists from the Mickleham PEQ facility led by Dr Candace Elliott visited principal plant pathologist Dr Kathy Crew, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF), at the Ecosciences Precinct to develop their skills in banana pathogen detection.

The training covered the science underlying the banana PEQ import pathway, banana pathogen symptoms, detection of exotic pathogens and variants, and endemic pathogens which may interfere with the detection of exotics. The team

undertook practical training in virus symptoms, as well as specialist laboratory techniques used for the multiplex immunocapture molecular assays for known banana viruses. Training also covered simple virus purification and immunosorbent electron microscopy techniques used for detection of exotic banana streak viruses and novel viruses. It also detailed the symptoms caused by the emerging high priority pathogen, the banana wilt-associated phytoplasma (BWAP,) and the challenges and research currently being conducted to improve BWAP detection.

The DAFF PEQ plant pathologists also visited the QDAF banana tissue culture laboratories at the Maroochy Research Facility run by Ms Sharon Hamill and Dr Emily Rames to gain a greater understanding of the processes undertaken during this component of the PEQ pathway. Ms Samantha Stringer, Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC), facilitated visits on the Sunshine Coast to both a commercial banana farm and a private grower with plants infected with banana bunchy top virus.

Dr Crew is also collaborating with the team from PEQ Mickleham to investigate the use of sRNA high throughput sequencing (HTS) for banana germplasm diagnostics, similar to that used for other commodities grown at their facility; these protocols were also discussed during the training.

In the future, the team at PEQ Mickleham is likely to host a reciprocal visit by Dr Crew for further training and troubleshooting in their facility, and to continue investigation of the HTS diagnostic protocol.



Plant pathologists grinding banana tissue for virus purification. L-R: Cassie McMaster (DAFF), Candace Elliott (DAFF), Kathy Crew (QDAF), Naima Tasnim (DAFF).



Learning about banana bunchy top virus symptoms in the field. L-R: Cassie McMaster (DAFF), Candace Elliott (DAFF), Kathy Crew (QDAF), Samantha Stringer (ABGC), Naima Tasnim (DAFF).



Dr Kathy Crew (second left) with DAFF molecular biologists at the Ecosciences Precinct, Brisbane. L-R: Stephanie Rosch (DAFF), Kathy Crew (QDAF), Candace Elliott (DAFF), Emma Mcfarlane (DAFF).



The QDAF PEQ leadership team with visiting DAFF plant pathologists at the Maroochy Research Facility banana quarantine laboratory. L-R: Emily Rames (QDAF), Cassie McMaster (DAFF), Candace Elliott (DAFF), Sharon Hamill (QDAF), Kathy Crew (QDAF), Naima Tasnim (DAFF).

*This training was supported by Hort Innovation projects BA21002 (QDAF-led) and BA21003 (ABGC-led) as well as DAFF professional development funds. Investigation of high throughput sequencing for banana indexing is being supported through Hort Innovation project BA21001 (UQ-led). Projects BA21001, BA21002 and BA21003 have been funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.*

# FINDING THE IDEAL NUTRIENT SWEET SPOT FOR BANANAS

**A colourful rainbow of fertigation cylinders perched on headland in a banana paddock gives the first clue as to what is going on in this banana trial at South Johnstone research station.**

The cylinders are testing different rates of nutrient fertigation on bananas.

The 'Banana Nutrient Rate Trial' is investigating using different rates of nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) and measuring their impact on banana productivity and profitability.

"As well as looking at the crop performance under differing rates, growers are interested in the effects on fruit quality like the banana finger length," said Development Horticulturist, Andrés Morera, from the Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF).

Andrés works in a team of 3 with Catherine Chung and Alex Lindsay (also from DAF) on the trial. Contract field staff are also employed collecting data and undertaking field work.

"I left Colombia in 2015 to learn English in Australia, and never left," Andrés said.

After completing a three-year Agriculture degree at Central Queensland University in Rockhampton, he interned with a professor who exposed him to the practicalities of the horticultural industry and using different technologies, such as satellite imaging and

crop forecasting for mangoes.

Andrés gained a wealth of knowledge and experience working in the Northern Territory as a horticulturist on a large mango farm – working in crop husbandry, farm management and dispatch management.

The lure of a lifestyle in the Wet Tropics led him to make the leap from working with mangoes in Katherine, to bananas in South Johnstone.

"It feels like home here, I grew up surrounded by coffee plantations and cattle and have always had a passion for working on the land."

"I like drawing on my analytical skills too and crunching the numbers."

"Giving growers meaningful information, that's underpinned by data we've captured in the project is a highlight for me."

The new trial at South Johnstone Research Facility was planted in October last year. The trial is made up of plots which receive one of four different rates of nitrogen in the first year, and four different rates after the first year, in a factorial design.

Regular quality control tests are conducted on the fertigation systems to ensure the rates are correct. A network of probes and lysimeters monitor the movement of water through the profile, and aid in scheduling irrigation.

Later this year, a new trial will be planted to investigate nutrient factors other than rate, such as timing, placement and form of fertiliser using a fully automated irrigation/fertigation system.

An added benefit of the trial is gaining understanding about soil biological communities under different fertiliser regimes and collecting data that can be used to inform economic analysis. The Australian and Queensland governments Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program (Paddock to Reef program) team is also involved in this trial, monitoring runoff and drainage below the soils surface from rows within the trial area. You can read more about their work on Pages 32-33.

*The Banana Nutrient Rate Trials project is delivered by DAF and funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program.*



Field staff checking the finger size of trial fruit.



Andrés Morera with colour coded fertigation vats used in the trial.



Four different rates of nitrogen are applied to the trial plots.

# NEW RESEARCH INTO WATER QUALITY

*Bronwyn Masters, Nikita Tahir and Laura McGillicuddy, Paddock to Reef Program*

**Water sampling has begun on two banana plots at the South Johnstone Research facility to assess how much sediment, nutrients and pesticides are running off these paddocks.**

The Queensland Government is expanding research into banana cropping. Researchers are working at South Johnstone to better understand the amounts of nutrients, pesticides and sediment that are lost to surface water runoff and leachate below the root zone from the rows and inter-rows on banana farms. The research is being undertaken as part of the Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program (Paddock to Reef program), a comprehensive research program that provides the science and framework to help track Australia's progress towards achieving the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan (Reef 2050 WQIP) targets for water quality and land management and catchment condition objectives for the Great Barrier Reef.

To date there has been limited research on the impacts of banana farming on water quality. The findings of this new work will help inform reef modelling and industry management practices. This research is being undertaken by the Queensland Government's Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI) directly alongside the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) Banana Nutrient Rate Trial (Project RP63a – more on page 31) located at the South Johnstone Research Facility.

The DAF trial is investigating how crop productivity and profitability is influenced by varying nitrogen and phosphorus rates. The two projects are being managed as one collaborative trial and are guided by a reference group of local banana growers. The

reference group works closely with the scientists to ensure the research reflects commercial practices so that the findings will have practical outcomes for growers.

The Paddock to Reef project will collect water quality information for at least three years. Precisely measured rates of fertiliser are applied by weekly fertigation in dry conditions and fortnightly surface granular application in wetter conditions. To help ensure consistency across the projects, the Paddock to Reef site applies the regulated rate of nitrogen, which is the same as one of the DAF trial rates, in the same timing and manner as the DAF trial.

Previous studies have indicated that deep drainage in bananas may be an important loss pathway for nitrogen and potentially other chemicals.



Surface water running through the flumes after cyclone Jasper (mid-December 2023). Samples are collected from this flume and stored in a refrigerated state in the monitoring shed until collection.

*This project is funded by the Australian and Queensland governments' Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program and the Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.*



## RESEARCH

Across both Paddock to Reef and DAF trials there are 80 drainage collection devices buried at one metre depths to collect leachate below the root zone for analysis of nutrients and pesticides. Automated samplers are installed on the two plots to collect and refrigerate runoff as it occurs. This is stored onsite ready for collection and analysis for nutrient, pesticide and sediment concentrations. Other equipment is collecting a range of data on rainfall, soil moisture, ground water levels, weather conditions and surface water flow.

DESI Scientist Bronwyn Masters said one of the first steps for the collaborative project was understanding the soil at the site.

"Prior to establishing the trial, we needed to clearly understand the types of soil and the soil characteristics, which meant collecting and analysing soil core samples across the whole project area. This detailed soil information as well as extensive consultation with the reference group of local farmers helped to form the project design," she said.

"The monitoring equipment was installed and operational just before Cyclone Jasper hit, bringing heavy rains with 630 mm over seven days, and half of that falling in a single day. Since then, we've had a prolonged wet season, collecting over 1,200 surface runoff and drainage samples. These samples are being analysed at the DESI Chemistry Centre (nutrient and sediment) and Queensland Health (pesticides) laboratories in Brisbane. We are excited to see and interpret the results, and initial results are expected to be shared with the reference group later in the year.

Our next activity, due to start in July, will be to undertake yield assessments of the plant crop as it is harvested, to understand crop productivity. We will also continue to measure runoff and deep drainage as the crop enters the ratoon phase."



Installing "DFMs" or drainage flux meters which collect drainage leachate that moves beyond the root zone (October 2023).



Banana plants established, and surface water monitoring equipment installed (mid-November 2023).



Collecting drainage leachate from the collection traps (mid-December 2023). Samples are analysed for nutrients and pesticides.



Assessing the soil type and characteristics prior to establishing the trial at the South Johnstone Research Facility.



**SIDEWINDER**  
Precision Banana Injectors

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# KEEPING ON TOP OF YOUR FERTILIZER RECORDS

As a banana grower, the demands on your time are never ending. However, an important aspect that sometimes gets overlooked is the necessity of keeping accurate fertiliser records. Not only is this a good farming practice, but it's also a legal requirement under the Queensland reef regulations.

The information you record must be done within three days of making each fertiliser application and include the block details, the product (with rates and application method), the weather and who made the application.

There are many sophisticated, digital ways to manage your records, including the ABGC Betterbunch app, cloud-based systems or via one of the many products on the market for apps and programs. But if these don't work for your farm, maintaining records doesn't have to be a complex task. There are simple ways to help you stay compliant and keep your farm running smoothly. Here are just a few ways that the BMP Team has seen being used out on banana farms.



## Traditional Diary:

A good old-fashioned diary can be an excellent tool for jotting down your fertiliser use. Keep it in your farm office or take it with you to the field. Simply make the entry on the day you apply the fertiliser, so you don't forget. Make sure you record the weather and what you've applied, including the method. Some growers then staple the fertiliser invoice to the matching page.



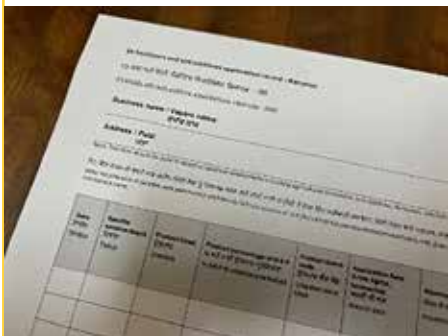
## Freshcare E5 Form:

Freshcare provides a standardised form (E5) specifically designed for this purpose. It's user-friendly and ensures you're meeting all regulatory requirements. Print out a pile of these and put them in a folder to keep them in the same place.

## DON'T FORGET!

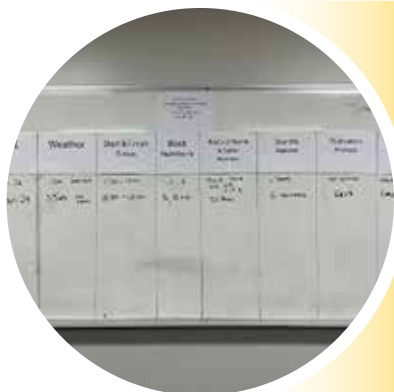
Make sure you keep the original evidence to show what fertiliser you've bought. Keeping the invoices from your suppliers in a folder or digital file is sufficient. But another way is to staple them directly to the relevant paper-based record.

If you have workers who would benefit from a translated version, simply add additional languages into the method you use.



## Spreadsheet:

For those who prefer a digital approach, a spreadsheet is an easy option. Programs like Microsoft Excel allow you to easily input data and generate reports to analyse your fertiliser usage over time. If you would like a basic spreadsheet that matches the Freshcare E5 form just contact the BMP team who can provide you one.



## Whiteboard on the shed wall:

If you prefer something visual, consider using a large whiteboard that all workers can access. Rule it up with permanent marker or tape and then use a whiteboard marker for the fertiliser applications. Then simply take a photo each month for your records and clean it off. There is no need to put this data into a spreadsheet as well. Just save the photo with a meaningful name and store it on your computer. This method is quick, easy, and ensures you always have up-to-date information at a glance where everyone can see it.

# BANANA BEST PRACTICE FUND

Delivered by the ABGC to support growers to achieve productivity & environmental stewardship

Funded by the Office of the Great Barrier Reef for improved water quality outcomes



The Banana Best Practice Fund supports projects that reduce nutrient, pesticide and sediment runoff from banana farms in Great Barrier Reef catchments. The Fund contributes up to 50% of the total project cost, to a maximum of \$30,000 (excl GST).

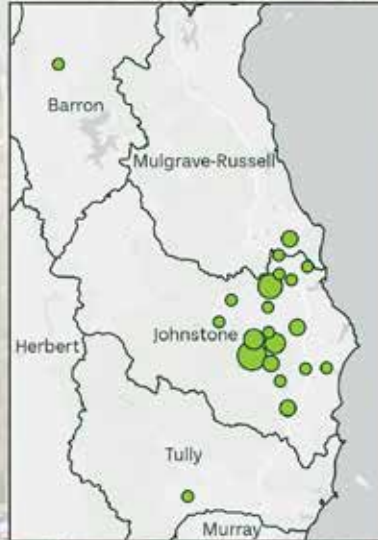
The ABGC BMP team has delivered 3 out of 6 grant rounds. The next round will open around September 2024. Contact the BMP team to talk about your goals on farm and find out if you are eligible for support from the Best Practice Fund.

[bmp@abgc.org.au](mailto:bmp@abgc.org.au)  
0457 924 518

34 growers



improving practices on  
**1742 hectares**  
of banana farms in Great  
Barrier Reef catchments



17 upgraded spreaders

12 erosion and sediment control projects

5 fertigation systems

8 side-throw slashers

2 equipment & machinery for permanent beds

1 trial to increase soil carbon

**\$1.52 million**  
invested on farm



**\$711,179**  
from the Fund



**\$809,587**  
from growers

The Banana BMP Best Practice Fund is funded under the Banana Best Management Practice (BMP) Project (2023-2026). The Banana BMP is funded through the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program and delivered by Australian Banana Growers' Council in partnership with growers.



Australian  
Banana  
Growers



Queensland  
Government

## CULTIVATING MY CAREER

**Catherine McLean, 3rd year BSc, July 2024**

**The Mort Johnston scholarship is supported through the Australian Banana Growers' Council and administered by James Cook University from a bequest from the Johnston family. The most recent recipient is Catherine McLean (3rd year BSc), who provided this report.**

In a significant milestone of my academic career, I was recently awarded the Mort Johnston Scholarship from the Australian Banana Growers' Council. This opportunity not only supports my studies at James Cook University (JCU) in Cairns, where I am pursuing a Bachelor of Science majoring in ecology, but also includes a vital placement component that enriches my practical experience.

For two weeks, I worked with ABGC's Best Management Practice (BMP) team in South Johnstone. This placement was an eye-opener, offering me invaluable insights into the intersection of science and community engagement. My academic background in ecology and earth sciences has always been complemented by a keen interest in agriculture, particularly in regenerative practices

that promote soil health and water quality. The BMP team provided a unique platform to explore these interests further.

One of the highlights of my placement was visiting a banana farm and participating in a contouring project. This hands-on experience was instrumental in understanding the practical applications of ecological principles in agriculture. Additionally, I attended the Reef Extension Think Tank in Townsville, where I engaged with extension practitioners from various industries. This event underscored the complex challenges facing agriculture in our region and highlighted the diverse career paths within the field of extension.

Working alongside scientists from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, who share office space with the BMP team, was another significant aspect of my placement. I honed my skills in identification, experimental design, and microscopy during a short banana thrips survey. The experience of getting out into the experimental fields for sample collection and processing was equally rewarding. It provided a practical understanding of the physical aspects of farm work, essential for effective collaboration between scientists and growers.

The diverse experiences and skills I gained during this placement have been immensely enriching. I am continuing my placement with the BMP team next semester, delving deeper into the fascinating world of banana cultivation and sustainable farming practices. It is a privilege to work in such a beautiful part of the world, surrounded by dedicated professionals and stunning landscapes.

Ultimately, I hope to contribute significantly to agricultural science in this region, a place that holds immense importance to me. The Mort Johnston Scholarship has been a pivotal step in this journey, and I am grateful for the opportunities it has afforded me to grow both academically and personally.



Catherine McLean was the 2024 Mort Johnston scholar and spent time working with the BMP and DAF teams at South Johnstone.

# TR4 CONTROL PROGRAM UPDATE

A successful TR4 workshop was held on 23 July at South Johnstone to explore options and plan a way forward for industry help safeguard the banana industry from TR4.

ABGC board members together with growers and stakeholders held the one-day event to reach consensus on key issues that will guide the analysis of different options, and to identify actions for progression.



ABGC board directors, growers and other stakeholders took part in the TR4 workshop on 23 July.

The workshop allowed attendees to assess the options with industry leaders and peers, and work collaboratively to help guide the ABGC policies and farmer support frameworks to continue to protect the industry from TR4, almost 10 years on from the initial detection in the Tully Valley.

## WELCOME GLENN AND ELISHA



Glenn Johns – TR4 Control Program Communications and Engagement Officer

**Glenn Johns brings forty years of media experience to the role of TR4 Communications and Engagement Officer.**

He's produced and presented content on-air, online and in print across many regional and metro areas of Australia, as well as internationally. Other roles have involved marketing, event management and developing high-level engagement strategies.

Glenn lives in Innisfail with his family and brings a genuine love of the region to the role. His time working as a presenter and journalist in North Queensland has given him valuable insight into just how important a strong banana industry is to the many communities it supports.

He's ready to hit the ground running, bringing his wealth of skills to the TR4 Program and communications team.

**Favourite banana recipe:** Banana cake!

**What are you most looking forward to working on?**

Putting members and growers at the centre of our communications and engagement strategies and presenting a united and informed industry to the community at large.



Elisha Farmer – Senior Policy and Planning Officer

**Elisha Farmer brings extensive experience in change management and project management to the role of Senior Policy and Planning Officer. She has previously worked with a large national company, as well as state government bodies and smaller business entities, working with cross functional teams in delivering multiple projects simultaneously.**

Elisha originally hails from WA but has been a Queenslander for 10 years now and has recently made the tree-change and moved to Innisfail with her family. Brisbane's loss is our gain. Her proven ability to rapidly acquire and apply knowledge in new areas will be valuable in assisting the ABGC TR4 Control Program in delivering for the banana industry.

**Favourite banana recipe:**

I love caramelising banana for a big Sunday morning breakfast cook-up.

**What are you most looking forward to working on?** I'm most looking forward to engaging with our growers and hearing first-hand how ABGC can support them to be successful.

## DESTRUCTION ZONE AMMENDMENT IN TR4 CODE OF PRACTICE

**Consultation for the Code of Practice amendment concluded on 11 June.**

The engagement of researchers and scientists in presenting the latest scientific and technical advice on Panama TR4, combined with practical advice from growers managing the disease led to a multi-faceted and broad level of engagement with growers.

Workshops were held in Tully, Innisfail and Mareeba and an online survey was available for growers to provide their feedback.

The destruction zone changes proposed in the Code amendment included:

- the destruction zone being reduced in size to include the infected plant plus others for distance of 5 metres along the row in both directions, for 10m total length,
- no destruction across the inter-row

The code amendment has been submitted for review, and an outcome is expected to be received soon.

While it was suggested that further research is needed on the implications of smaller destruction zones, this consultation confirmed that growers are willing to support the change. The consultation revealed the need for further exploration into other areas of disease management, including the need for further education in detection of disease symptoms and minimising the financial burden of a positive disease detection.

# 1IP FROM ABOVE



**For those not familiar with this acronym, 1IP is the first TR4 infested property in the Tully Valley.**

The property is owned and managed by ABGC. Tully local Darryl Henderson oversees maintenance on the ground, while compliance requirements are managed by Darryl and Grower Support Coordinator, Jess Portch. Bananas are no longer farmed on the property and requirements are maintained in accordance with Biosecurity Queensland's restricted places notice.

The recent purchase of a chopper roller has helped in controlling regrowth on the property.



Bird's eye view of 1IP.



Fabrication phase of the chopper roller.



## X-IT BANANA DE-HANDING KNIFE

Developed with banana farmers, for banana farmers

Safer - Incorporated guard, ergonomic handle

Bloody sharp - Serrated blade, no sharpening required

Food standard compliant - No filings in the shed



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# NEILSEN HOMESCAN DATA

**New Banana Data capturing the last 52 weeks up to 16 June 2024**

The banana industry receives three updates a year from Nielsen Homescan and is available to all growers.

## What is homescan?

Nielsen Homescan® is a continuous panel of 10,000 households who record all take-home packed and fresh grocery from all retail outlets. The sample is demographically and geographically representative of the Australian household population.

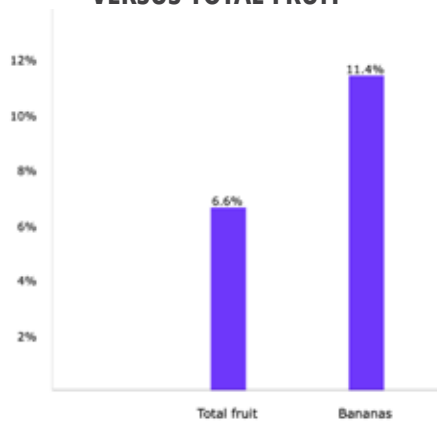
## What information and reports area available?

Graphs and related consumer and retailer based information are contained within the Banana reports just like the ones to the right that provide you with a summary and graphical information delivered in a easy to read format. Information is based on the latest 52 weeks of information versus the previous 52 weeks. The reports provide us with insights into how the banana category is performing along with demographic differences.

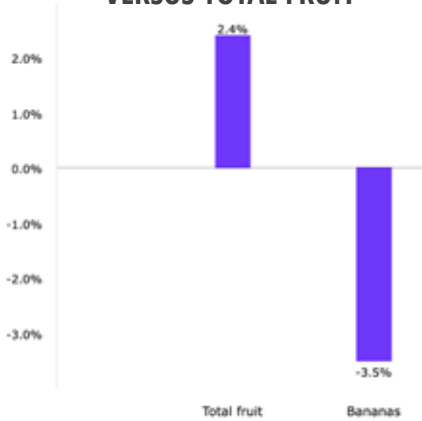
## Market Overview

Recent activity shows that bananas were rising fast, at 11.4% in terms of dollars (\$), while in decline (-3.5%) in terms of volume (kg). Buying household percentage fell from 90% to 88%. The average spend (\$) rose, from \$91.68 to \$103.65. The average weight purchased (kg) fell from 22.3kg to 21.9kg.

### DOLLAR SALES (\$) GROWTH VERSUS TOTAL FRUIT



### VOLUME (KG) GROWTH VERSUS TOTAL FRUIT



### HOUSEHOLD BUYING BEHAVIOUR



### Other interesting and current content within the reports:

- Retailer overview
- Key metrics by state: \$ Growth, KG Growth, % of buying households
- Annual household purchases and volume
- How households behave over the past year
- Who buys my fruit and the key metrics by demographic group
- Two year trends and % dollars sold on promotion versus average amount spent.

There are other reports that can be viewed in drop down selections.

These reports and summaries are ready and available upon the Harvest to Home website, and can be accessed 24/7. For the banana industry, they are updated three times a year.

For access to the reports follow the below [www.harvesttohome.net.au](http://www.harvesttohome.net.au)

Select the product type **“fruits, mushrooms nuts and oils”**

Select **“Bananas”**

Start at **“latest highlights”**

Source: NielsenIQ Homescan for the 52 weeks ending 16/06/2024 for the Australian market. Copyright © 2024

# BANANA BRAND PLAN – THE YEAR AHEAD

The Australian Bananas marketing program is funded by Hort Innovation, using grower levies.

An 18-month marketing plan has been developed in consultation with the banana marketing strategic investment panel (SIAP). Activities will be live in market from July 2024 until December 2025 and are outlined in further detail below.

## Marketing Objective:

The objective of the banana marketing plan is to get grocery buyers to purchase Australian Bananas to consume anywhere, particularly for mid-morning, breakfast and snacking occasions, by continuing to own energy in the face of ever-evolving energy needs and options.

Marketing activity will be split across two pillars.

## PILLAR 1: Communicating natural energy broadly and frequently to keep bananas top of mind

This includes:

- **Consumer media** to drive mass awareness and strengthen brand associations, positioning Australian Bananas as an iconic snack with fresh, natural energy. Media channels will include television, digital television (including YouTube and broadcast video on demand [catch up TV]), radio and digital radio (including streaming and podcasts), out of home advertising, retail media, and social media advertising.
- **Public Relations** to drive earned media and mass coverage of bananas key messages.
- **Community events and ambassadors:** including supporting key industry and community events, merchandise, and continued ambassador partnership with Billy Slater.
- **Kid's education:** including continued partnership with Life Education (Healthy Harold) and an additional kids education program to be developed.
- **Content:** including content across owned channels (Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok) and Australian Bananas website. The objective of this activity is to reach people likely to consider bananas as their fruit of choice in order to drive consideration and increase frequency of consumption.
- **Consumer insights and data:** including continued brand and campaign performance tracking and creative testing.

## PILLAR 2: Retail, Events, and Shoppers

This includes:

- **Retail and shopper communications:** including retail online media to drive purchase at the point of sale.
- **Supply Chain Engagement Manager:** continued support by Andrew Burns to develop activities which engage key retailers and supply chain stakeholders.
- **National Banana Day:** This year National Banana Day will be celebrated on 16 October. All major retailers and independents have been engaged to promote the day via advertising and instore activities.
- **Instore sampling:** In Woolworths and Coles, and shopping centre roaming sampling to target shoppers at Aldi and independents.
- **Fresh Markets Australia activity:** Fresh Markets Australia are a provider that can create presence in independent greengrocers. They will support with activity aligned to National Banana Day (2 occurrences in 18month program) and across the key back to school selling period.
- **Metcash:** point of sale activity aligned to the above National Banana Day and Back to School dates.
- **Sydney Easter Show:** Australian Bananas will have a presence at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in April 2025 to drive awareness and engage with consumers.

# THE COUNTDOWN IS OFFICIALLY ON!

## A note from the Congress chair Paul Inderbitzin, Lakeland grower

In 2025, the Australian Banana Industry Congress returns with a renewed sense of purpose. Particularly fitting, given next year will officially mark 30 years since our first event – at 30 you’ve got enough experience to get things right, and enough energy to deliver something fresh and exciting.

Congress has always been an event that brings people together, providing a chance to network, kick back and have some fun.

Now more than ever, we want it to be an event that injects positivity when it sometimes feels farming – and working along the supply chain – is more a game of red tape and ticking boxes, rather than getting good produce to consumers.

But most of all, we know it needs to be an event that delivers ideas you can implement now and outcomes that will guide industry through the next few years.

We’ve listened to your feedback. In 2025, Congress moves to August. Bananas are a year-round fruit and we all know there’s no real ‘downtime’, but August is traditionally a quieter month, hopefully freeing up more growers, families and industry stakeholders to take part in our premier event.

### Put it in your diary now: 6-8 August, 2025.

After two successful events in Far North Queensland, we’re heading to the Gold Coast. The destination offers the perfect venue in RACV Royal Pines Resort, which effectively becomes banana-central for the time we’re there. It features a range of recently refurbished accommodation options and plenty of on-site facilities, including golf, restaurants and a spa. Of course, it’s also the ideal place to extend your break – with or without the family in tow.

In 2025, you can expect a new, dynamic layout and new ways of tackling key issues. We’ll still have standout speakers and the much-loved Gala Ball and Banana Women’s Luncheon. Building on the success of previous years, the **Science Symposium** will be held the day prior to Congress. This is a huge drawcard for researchers, as well as science-minded growers and industry stakeholders.

At about the time you’re reading this edition of Australian Bananas, it’ll be 12 months until the 2025 event kicks off. You can trust we’ll be using that time to develop a cracker program and plenty of initiatives to help you get along. Among those are new ticket options, including a separate grower price, and significant discounts for ABGC members.

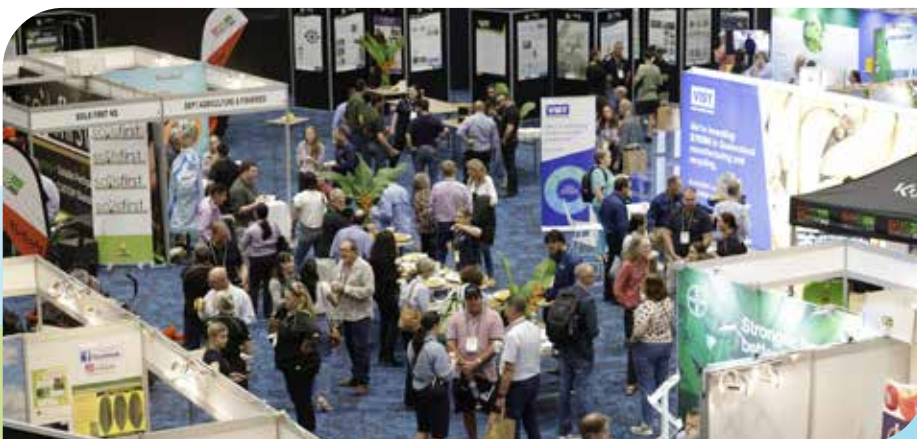
Needless to say you’ll be hearing more very soon.



## FRESH SCENT, FRESH IDEAS

The perfect way to remind yourself that Congress is on the way – a ‘save the date’ air freshener is attached to each August edition of Australian Bananas!

If you’re wondering, it’s ‘ocean breeze’, a classic coastal scent ideal for our 2025 Gold Coast destination. Sadly (or not), the smell of bananas was voted down in this instance but we hope you’ll be able to freshen up a car or small space, while getting excited for the industry’s premier event.



Congress Chair Paul Inderbitzin at the 2023 event in Cairns.





Australian  
**Banana**  
Industry  
Congress

# Save the Date

**6-8 AUGUST 2025**

RACV Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast

**Recharge | Reconnect | Regenerate**

## **The Coast is Calling**

RACV Royal Pines Resort will transform into banana-central for three days of latest research, inspiration, big issues and – of course – plenty of opportunities to catch-up and unwind. Kicking off with the Science Symposium on 6 August, this is your dedicated industry event and it's one you won't want to miss.



Find out more at  
**[bananacongress.org.au](https://bananacongress.org.au)**



# TULLY'S CENTENARY: A CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY



On 8 June, Tully came alive with a vibrant centenary celebration that united the town's rich history, industrious spirit, and close-knit community.

The streets were abuzz with excitement as residents and visitors gathered for a spectacular parade that honoured Tully's history and achievements.

Benny Banana and people from the Mackays Group Pacific Islander workforce captivated the crowd with their traditional attire, lively chants, and energetic dances.

The community spirit was palpable, and the celebration was graced with clear blue skies and sunshine, even in Australia's wettest town. Tully's commitment to the banana industry was proudly showcased throughout the day. The centenary event not only celebrated Tully's storied past but also affirmed its crucial role in the future of Australian bananas.



# COFFS HARBOUR SHOW

**Benny's been a busy banana this year.**

Before heading north to celebrate the Tully 100, the hardworking and much-loved mascot was spotted at the Coffs Harbour Show.

The show was held from 26-28 April and, as always, the banana display was a credit to the Coffs Harbour BGA members who contributed to and manned the stall. A competitive edge was reintroduced this year, with winners including Armo Khatkar (Ducasse, Lady Fingers) and Paul Shoker (Cavendish).

Australian Bananas merchandise from Hort Innovation ensured the event became a 'sea of yellow' and attendees were also given a chance to taste-test some varieties-under-trial thanks to NSW DPI's Steven Norman and growers involved in the trials.



# NSW GROWER FIELD DAY

## 28 MAY | TROPICAL FRUIT WORLD

**Growers from south of Nambucca Heads through to the Queensland border took part in a field day at Tropical Fruit World earlier this year.**

Held on 28 May, the event was a chance for 26 New South Wales growers to learn about soil health, view the latest drone tech, hear about pre-commercial variety consumer tasting results and – of course – view a huge variety of tropical fruit.

The 200+ acre property at Duranbah includes about 20 acres of bananas, with blue java, red dacca,

plantain, cavendish variants and Lady Fingers among those grown (and eaten) on site.

The event was organised by subtropical horticulture development officer Steven Norman (NSW Department of Primary Industries), and part of the National Banana Development and Extension Project.



# INNISFAIL SHOW 2024

## 10 JULY, BANANA WEIGH-IN

As the utes backed in and the beers were cracked, the sunset at the banana weigh-in garnered almost as many 'wows' as the impressive bunches being hung.

It was great to see entries from across the Cassowary Coast and the Tablelands on the night.

Banana and paw paw growers mingled and enjoyed pizza and finger food and a catch up with people who work in different sectors across the industries.

Congratulations to the category winners.



Most Successful Exhibition on Aggregate Points, Sellars Bananas



Category	Prize	Grower
Class 1: Champion Ratoon Bunch	1st	J.R & V Dickinson
	2nd	Sellars Bananas
Class 2: Champion Plant Bunch	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Sellars Bananas
Class 3: Heaviest Ratoon Bunch	1st	Reidys Bananas
	2nd	Reidys Bananas
Class 4: Heaviest Plant Bunch	1st	J.R & V Dickinson
	2nd	J.R & V Dickinson
Class 5: Best Two Ratoon Bunches	1st	Di Carlo Bananas
	2nd	Jarabend Bananas
Class 6: Best Two Plant Bunches	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Reidys Bananas
Class 7: Champion Carton of Hands, Ex Large	1st	MnB Zecchinati & Co
	2nd	MnB Zecchinati & Co
Encouragement Award		MnB Zecchinati & Co
Class 8: Champion Cluster Carton Extra Large 13kg in 6 per	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	J.R & V Dickinson
Encouragement Award		Superfood Farming
Class 9: Champion Cluster Carton Large 15 kg in 6 per layer carton only	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	MnB Zecchinati & Co
Encouragement Award		MnB Zecchinati & Co
Class 10: Best three (3) Clusters	1st	J.R & V Dickinson
	2nd	J.R & V Dickinson
Class 11: Champion Hand	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	MnB Zecchinati & Co
Class 12: Heaviest Hand	1st	Disqualified
	2nd	Disqualified
Class 13: Champion Pair of Hands	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	MnB Zecchinati & Co
Class 14: Heaviest Banana (Any Variety, can be Freak)	1st	J.R & V Dickinson
Class 15: Best Carton of Ex Large Hands - Any Other Variety	1st	Di Carlo Bananas
	2nd	Valley View Bananas
Class 16: Open Heaviest Ratoon Bunch	1st	Di Carlo Bananas
Class 17: Champion Lady Finger Bunch	1st	Valley View Bananas
	2nd	Di Carlo Bananas
Class 18: Most Successful Exhibition on Aggregate Points	1st	Sellars Bananas
Most Outstanding Exhibit	MnB Zecchinati & Co	

# BANANA PACKING COMPETITION 2024

## 11-12 JULY, INNISFAIL SHOW

The arena erupted with chants and cheers on the final night of the banana packing competition, where there was some fierce competition between two Mackays' teams – South Davidson Road and Lakeland.

Congratulations to 'Pacific Miracles' from South Davidson Road for taking out the golden banana trophy!



### EXPERIENCED COACH

The two final teams entered the arena with the backing of one of Mackays Group's fastest and most experienced packers, Jacquelin Till.

Jacquelin (above left) coached both teams and has won five packing competitions previously. She has worked for the Mackays Group for 24 years and loves working in the ag industry. Her current role involves training new staff and managing their South Davidson Road packing shed.



### Backpacker Competition -

**Winning Team:** Shack  
Katie Dobson & Jane-Ann Duffy

### Banana Packing Championship

**Winners:**  
1st Team Winners: Pacific Miracles  
Toia Milo & Ann Wate  
2nd Team Winners:  
Lakeland Islanders  
Opeta Keleti & Eseta Ponesi



# TULLY SHOW 2024

25 JULY - WEIGH-IN | 26 JULY - JUDGING

**A highlight of the Tully growers' calendar, this year's Tully Show commenced with a well-attended banana weigh-in on 25 July.**

Judges, stewards and volunteers arrived at the Stanley John Mackay Memorial Agricultural Pavilion at sunrise the following day, to evaluate the bunches, hands, individual fruits, and carton packs.

Despite adverse weather conditions earlier this year reducing the number of entries, the competition remained fierce, with high-calibre exhibits from Tully, Innisfail, and the Tablelands.

Thanks to industry volunteers and sponsors, fruit entered into the banana judging competition is packed, sent and sold at market, with profits being returned to the Tully Show Society and local community groups.

Naomi Brownrigg from Sellars Bananas was honoured with the Belinda Nissen Memorial Shield for the most successful exhibitor. Naomi's contributions to the banana industry in Far North Queensland are truly outstanding. This year marks the fourth consecutive win for Sellars Bananas, a testament to Naomi's unwavering dedication.

For those who have enjoyed her bananas, it's clear that her dedication to cultivating premium quality fruit shines through in every bite.



## BANANA EVENTS



Category	Prize	Grower
1. Champion Bunch	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Mackay's Sth Davidson
2. Champion Plant Bunch	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Collins Jarra creek
3. Heaviest Bunch	1st	Reidy's Bananas
	2nd	Serra Farming
	3rd	Jarra Bend
4. Heaviest Plant Bunch	1st	JR & V Dickinson
	2nd	Sellars Bananas
5. Champion Lady Finger Bunch	1st	Valley View Bananas
6. Champion Lady Finger Carton	1st	Valley View Bananas
	2nd	Valley View Bananas
7. Champion Pair of Ratoon Bunches	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Mackay's Sth Davidson
8. Champion Pair of Plant Bunches	1st	Mackay's Sth Davidson
	2nd	Sellars Bananas
9. Champion EXLarge Carton (Hands)	1st	M&G Dunne
10. Champion Large Cluster Carton	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	JR & V Dickinson
11. Champion Cluster Carton 13kg	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Mackay's Sth Davidson
12. Champion 15kg Cluster CartonHand	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Mackay's Sth Davidson
13. Champion Hand	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Jarra Bend
14. Champion Pair of Hands	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	JR & V Dickinson
15. Heaviest hand	1st	Serra Farming
	2nd	JR & V Dickinson
16. Best 6 Singles	1st	Mackay's Sth Davidson
17. Heaviest Single	1st	M & G Dunne
	2nd	JR & V Dickinson
18. Heaviest Freak	1st	Collins Bananas
	2nd	JR & V Dickinson
19. Best 3 Clusters	1st	Mackay's Sth Davidson
	2nd	Collins Bananas
20. Open Heaviest Bunch	1st	Reidy's Bananas
21. Open Heaviest Plant bunch	1st	JR & V Dickinson
22. Champion Carton (Tully District)	1st	Sellars Bananas Lg
	2nd	Sellars Bananas 15kg
	3rd	Sellars Bananas 13kg
23. Champion Bunch Tully District	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Mackay's Sth Davidson
24. Most Successful Exhibitor	1st	Sellars Bananas
	2nd	Mackay's Sth Davidson
	3rd	JR & V Dickinson
25. Stewards' Bunch	1st	Serra Farming



# Routine

## SWITCH ON YOUR PLANT'S *SELF-DEFENCE*



**Control yellow Sigatoka and common leaf speckle  
in bananas with Routine® fungicide**

- Routine works by activating the plant's natural defence system, helping the plant to protect itself
- Systemic Acquired Resistance is not washed away by rainfall and boosted with each application\*
- No known risk of resistance development
- Re-entry possible once spray has dried and withholding period not required when used as directed

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** visit [crop.bayer.com.au](http://crop.bayer.com.au) or talk to your local Bayer Crop Science representative.