

Australian Bananas

ISSUE 77 - AUGUST 2026



Heritage, Heart and the Horsford Family

FOUR GENERATIONS GROWING AUSTRALIA'S BANANA INDUSTRY

BANANA BROTHERS

Mark & David Nucifora forging ahead from the ground up

PG 30

IDEA TO INNOVATION

Concrete mats prove their worth

PG 22

RACE 1 FIELD TRIALS

Lady Finger-like varieties progress to pre-commercial trials

PG 32



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
or talk to your local
Bayer Crop Science representative.

Routine



*Maximum of 4 applications per year. Routine® is a Registered Trademark of the Bayer Group. Bayer CropScience Pty Ltd, Level 4, 109 Burwood Road, Hawthorn, VIC 3122. ABN 87 000 226 022. Enquiries 1800 636 001 aust.cs@bayer.com

YEARS ENDING 30TH JUNE. (IN '000 TONNES)

2015	371
2016	393
2017	414
2018	388
2019	372
2020	382
2021	403
2022	375
2023	371
2024	369
2025	369

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. Left 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.

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.

LEVY AMOUNT PURPOSE

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

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.

Total = 2.19c /kg* (32.85c per 15kg carton)

Banana levy rate

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: ceo@abgc.org.au](mailto:Leanne.Erakovic@abgc.org.au), Phone – 07 3278 4786.

More info on the levy rate: agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies/rates/bananas.

SIDEWINDER Precision Tree Injectors

Sidewinder's Banana injection unit , comes with a 600mm wand with a 75mm stainless steel anti-drip injection tip, 15ml dosing per stroke (adjustable)
*300 mm wand extensions are available.
*Custom Injection needle lengths made to order.

Sidewinder also stock a selection of Sprayers and Micronizers from VOLPI out of Italy



Tech Support 0424 577 033
Parts/Orders sales@treeinjectors.com
Web Site www.treeinjectors.com
Queensland 4129 Australia





Top: Back: Charlie and John Horsford. Front: Larni, Dallas, Taylah, Ella and Darci Horsford.



FEATURES

- 19 DR ROSIE GODWIN**
A career dedicated to growing knowledge
- 24 CELEBRATING STEWART LINDSAY**
A legacy of leadership and mentorship
- 27 HERITAGE, HEART AND THE HORSFORD FAMILY**
- 30 BANANA BROTHERS**
Forging ahead from the ground up

REGULARS

- 03 Levy Figures**
- 06 Chair Column**
- 07 CEO Column**
- 08 Meet the Contributors**
- 18 QBAN List**
- 52 Marketing: Latest from Australian Bananas**
- 55 Affiliate Member Spotlight: Blenners Transport**



INDUSTRY NEWS

- 09 The F Words: Fuel and Fertiliser Challenges Ongoing Food Security in the Spotlight**
- 10 Agrifutures Scholarship Winner**
- 10 Biosecurity:**
 - 10** Baiting Subsidies Boost TR4 Defence
 - 11** Industry Comes Together to Tackle TR4 Future
 - 12** Walking the Talk With Surveillance
 - 13** Collaboration Helps Hold the Line
 - 18** Paraquat and Diquat Decision
 - 18** Rodenticides: Check the Label Before Using Rat Bait
- 44 The Mort Johnston Scholarship**
Hear from Ben Krause, this year's recipient
- 46 New Chapter, New Opportunities**
Extension support for our banana industry
- 48 Membership:**
 - 48** From the Banana Farm to the Open Water
 - 49** Responding to Members, Strengthening Our Workforce
 - 49** Members Gain Imports Insights
 - 50** ABGC is Out and About!
 - 51** Growers Rewarded for Their Input
- 54 From Farm to Retail**
A fresh approach to supply chain engagement
- 55 Meet Hannah O'Kane**
Membership administration support officer

NO IMPORTS

- 14 Cheat Sheet: What's Happening & Why**
 - 15** BIRA Decision Timeline
 - 16** New Information From DAFF
 - 16** DAFF Trip Confirms Disease Prevalence in the Philippines
 - 17** Now or Never For All-In Industry Fight

BANANA BMP

- 22 From the Field**
Concrete mats prove their worth in the tropics
- 23 Three Dollars a Week**
Larry Grant: Fifty years making the industry better

RESEARCH

- 32 New Resistant Varieties**
Lady Finger-like varieties identified with resistance to Fusarium Wilt Race 1
- 35 New Breeding Technology**
Creating home grown solutions to global banana challenges
- 38 The Cutting Edge of Disease Management**
A multi-ratoon comparison of deleafing strategies
- 40 Drones and Beneficial Mites**
- 41 The Secret Life of Cavendish**

AUSTRALIAN BANANA GROWER MAGAZINE

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING

Amy Spear - 0439 005 946 - amy.spear@abgc.org.au
Skye Orsmond - skye.orsmond@abgc.org.au
Layout and design: Aquila Creative

Chief executive officer: Leanne Erakovic
Stakeholder engagement & advocacy: Kathryn Dryden
Industry strategy manager: Michelle Mckinlay
R&D manager: Dr Rosie Godwin
Communications manager: Amy Spear
Grower support (biosecurity): Sarah Rowan (acting)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair: Leon Collins
Deputy chair: Stephen Lowe
Finance, risk and audit chair: Andrew Serra

DIRECTORS

Stephen Spear, Chris Collins, Tayla Mackay, James Howe, Gary Fattore

ALL MAIL TO

PO box 309, Brisbane market, QLD 4106

PUBLISHER

Australian Banana Growers' Council Inc.
ABN: 60 381 740 734

AUSTRALIAN BANANAS

Australian Banana Growers' Council Inc. as manager of the banana industry communications project. This project is funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) using the banana levy and funds from the Australian Government.



COVER

B: Charlie, Mick, Taylah & Kris Horsford.
M: Darci, John & Ella Horsford
F: Larni, Lance & Dallas Horsford

DISCLAIMER

Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) and the ABCG make no representations and expressly disclaim all warranties (to the extent permitted by law) about the accuracy, completeness, or currency of information in this magazine. Users of this material should take independent action to confirm any information in this magazine before relying on it in any way. Reliance on any information provided by Hort Innovation and the ABCG is entirely at your own risk. Hort Innovation and the ABCG are not responsible for, and will not be liable for, any loss, damage, claim, expense, cost (including legal costs) or other liability arising in any way (including from Hort Innovation's and the ABCG's or any other person's negligence or otherwise) from your use or non-use of the magazine, or from reliance on information contained in the magazine or that Hort Innovation and the ABCG provide to you by any other means.

**Hort
Innovation** **BANANA
FUND**

✧ Checking in with the chair



WANT TO SPEND some time in this edition writing to you as a grower, rather than in my role as chair of the Australian Banana Growers' Council.

Earlier this year, Panama disease tropical race 4 was confirmed to be present on my family farm in Tully. It has been a very challenging time for myself, my family and those who work with me. My family has had bananas on this farm for more than 50 years and I've been a very part of that for longer than I care to admit.

Since TR4 was detected in Tully in 2015, I've known this was coming. But that couldn't prepare me for getting the confirmation that it had reached us. It also didn't prepare me for the rate at which this disease has spread throughout our plants, which has been devastating to witness.

I made the decision to speak about this more widely in the hope that it might prompt others to check their own biosecurity measures are still robust. Now, more than ever, it's important to walk the talk – we pride ourselves on being world class when it comes to biosecurity, and so we should. The fact that it hasn't left the Tully Valley over a decade sends a strong signal to the rest of the world: when it comes to protecting our farms, we mean business. The reality is this disease does spread and, despite the frankly impressive efforts of growers who have fought this thing before me, you can bet it won't respect any imaginary borders between Tully and other growing regions.

Let this be your warning and your wakeup call: control what you can, while you can. Just like our fight against imports and the diseases that might bring, we can't be asleep at the wheel on this one. Let's work to ensure we have a resilient, strong industry for many years to come.

Leon Collins

Thank you!
The ABGC thanks its Affiliate Members for their support of our industry.



✧ A note from the CEO



IT MUST FEEL, far too often, that the pressures associated with keeping your farm ahead are growing faster than anything you could put in the ground.

Rather than getting any relief or reset, the expectation seems to be that you simply adapt to a new normal. Then it all starts again.

I want to assure you that ABGC sees and hears what you're going through. We're taking your concerns directly to government and making sure decision-makers understand the reality facing banana growers. Because there's only so many 'new normals' any industry can absorb.

Since we last met in the pages of Australian Bananas, I've been on farms across Far North Queensland, taken part in workforce roundtables and continued representing the industry in national discussions about fuel, fertiliser and freight. Alongside our Chair, Leon Collins, and Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy Manager, Kathryn Dryden, I've also met with representatives from other horticultural industries and partners across the supply chain.

To our ABGC Members, your experiences shape our advocacy, so please keep talking to us. Whether it's a challenge you're facing or an opportunity you see, we want to hear it. We're here to reduce the pressure wherever we can.

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge my outgoing colleague, the industry's long-serving R&D Manager, Dr Rosie Godwin.

I've had the privilege of working just across the hall from Rosie for more than a decade, and I've certainly made the most of having her scientific expertise only a few steps away. I know many of you have come to know Rosie over the years. She has always been driven to find practical, innovative solutions that improve banana production and strengthen our industry. Her contribution has been immense, helping lead work on Panama TR4, Banana Bunchy Top, crop protection, the threat of imports and many other challenges.

Rosie is also one of the first to hit the dance floor at Banana Congress and one of the last to leave the office each day. Her passion, dedication and generosity have left a lasting mark on our industry. Thank you, Rosie, for everything you've given to Australian banana growers. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Finally, I'd like to welcome Dr Ben Callaghan as ABGC's new R&D Manager. Ben certainly has big shoes to fill, but we've found someone with the knowledge, enthusiasm and industry experience to build on the outstanding work that's come before him. Some of you might know Ben through his work in the banana industry, and I look forward to introducing him to even more growers, researchers and supply chain representatives over the coming months.

Leanne Erakovic

▼ **CEO Leanne Erakovic** and members of the ABGC Membership Team set up at The Depot in Innisfail earlier this year, allowing members to drop by for a coffee and chat.



Meet the contributors

In each edition of Australian Bananas, we'll introduce you to some of the people behind the stories.



SKYE ORSMOND

Senior Communications Officer, ABGC

Skye's role is all about keeping banana growers and industry stakeholders informed, connected, and up-to-date with the latest industry news, research, opportunities, and developments that impact their businesses. Skye comes from a fourth-generation farming family in Tully and is the second generation on her family-run exotic fruit farm. She brings hands-on farming experience and more than 20 years in strategic communications to the role.

You can find Skye's work throughout this magazine, but check out her Farming Families feature on page 27.



KATHY GRICE

Principal Experimentalist (Plant Pathology),
QLD Department of Primary Industries

Based at Mareeba, Kathy has over 30 years' experience in research and diagnostics on both foliar and fruit diseases of banana in the tropics. "The most exciting or rewarding part of any research is being able to provide growers or an industry with a solution to a particular problem or issue," she said. "I think I enjoy the variety in the work (a mix of laboratory and field work) and learning new ways of tackling research."

Kathy's contributed to a number of articles in this edition of Australian Bananas, including 'New Lady Finger-like varieties identified with resistance to Fusarium wilt Race 1' on page 32.



EMMA DAY

Senior Marketing Manager,
Hort Innovation (Australian Bananas)

Emma is a food marketer who loves to create, cook, and market nutritious food, with over 20 years' experience in marketing roles across fast moving consumer goods industries. As well as a marketer, Emma is a qualified nutritionist and chef and uses this skillset and her passion for encouraging consumers to eat better to help to drive banana category growth.

You can read the latest from Emma and Australian Bananas marketing on page 52.

A note from the Australian Bananas team

Welcome to a new look edition of Australian Bananas magazine!

We're always striving to make sure the information shared on the pages of our industry magazine is engaging and enjoyable to read.

This is the start of our next iteration – a fresh look to reflect our industry in 2026 and into the future. We're fortunate to have so many contributors who take the time to share important, innovative updates with growers and people across the supply chain. The magazine is also a place to delve into industry challenges and issues, bringing readers up-to-date and sharing important progress.

We genuinely love the chance to showcase the people, businesses and families who make the Australian banana industry something pretty remarkable – and hopefully that shows.

The changes you'll see in this and future editions of Australian Bananas are designed to reinforce this as your go-to publication, and also to ensure the content is accessible, easy-to-digest and ready to enjoy no matter where you are.

A huge thank you to everyone who has helped make this edition possible, and to our designer Katherine Molloy from Aquila.

We welcome your feedback, thoughts and ideas:
communications@abgc.org.au

The F words

Fuel and fertiliser challenges ongoing

ABGC is actively advocating on behalf of banana growers as fuel, fertiliser and supply chain pressures continue to evolve. Grower feedback has been provided directly to Government and through the National Farmers' Federation to ensure the impacts on banana farms are recognised in national discussions and decision-making.

To support this work, ABGC will be distributing short monthly 'pulse check' surveys to track industry impacts and emerging issues in real time. We encourage all ABGC Grower Members to participate each time a survey is released. Providing Government with timely, accurate and industry-wide information helps ensure decision-makers understand what is happening on farm and are better informed when considering responses and support measures. As conditions continue to evolve, grower input will play a critical role in helping secure the best possible outcomes for the Australian banana industry.



Get the latest info

There are a number of resources available to help you monitor input costs and market conditions.

fuelplan.gov.au

The Fuel Plan website provides a central source of information on fuel prices, trends, and policy settings. It is updated weekly and is designed to improve transparency and help businesses better understand and anticipate fuel cost movements.

agriculture.gov.au/abares/data/fertiliser-dashboard

This dashboard provides up-to-date data on fertiliser prices, supply, and global market trends. It is a valuable tool for tracking changes in fertiliser supplies, supporting more informed business and policy decisions.

agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/middle-east-conflict

Information relating to conflict in the Middle East and its impacts on Australian agriculture.

Food security in the spotlight

AUSTRALIA'S CONVERSATION about food security is evolving, with increasing recognition that producing enough food is only part of the equation.

In a recent article for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), food security specialist Andrew Henderson argues that all major government policy decisions should include a formal Food Security Impact Assessment to identify any unintended consequences for Australia's ability to produce, transport and supply food.

The proposal reflects a broader shift in thinking that treats food security as an issue of national resilience, alongside economic and national

security. Henderson suggests decisions relating to areas such as land use, water, migration, energy and regulation can all influence Australia's food production capacity, even when food isn't the primary focus of the policy.

For Australia's banana industry, the concept is particularly relevant. Growers are already navigating increasing biosecurity risks, changing chemical availability, labour shortages and rising production costs, while continuing to supply one of the nation's favourite fruits.

The idea also aligns with many of the themes raised in ASPI's recent National Food Security Preparedness Green Paper, which calls for greater recognition

of agriculture's role in Australia's long-term resilience.

As the Australian Government develops its National Food Security Strategy, new policy ideas are also emerging. One of these is Andrew Henderson's proposal that major government decisions be assessed for their potential impacts on Australia's food security before they are implemented. For industries such as bananas, the concept highlights the importance of considering how decisions well beyond agriculture can influence the nation's ability to continue producing fresh food. ■

Feral pigs cause huge damage and are a known vector of Panama TR4. ▶
▼ **Feral pig** damage on a banana farm.



Baiting subsidies boost TR4 defence

ELIGIBLE BANANA GROWERS in the Tully and Innisfail regions are encouraged to take advantage of a new subsidy program aimed at reducing feral pig numbers. Feral pigs remain one of the most significant biosecurity threats facing the North Queensland banana industry. In addition to causing extensive damage to crops, fences and the natural environment, they are a recognised vector of Panama TR4, capable of moving contaminated soil between properties as they travel, wallow and forage. Feral pig damage costs Australian agriculture more than \$100 million each year, highlighting the importance of coordinated control efforts and consistent management actions. The Australian Banana Growers’ Council (ABGC) has continued to invest in regional feral pig management, coordinating an industry-funded aerial shooting program in late 2025. Feedback following the aerial shoot highlighted that growers were keen to see additional support for baiting programs, recognising that no single control method is effective on its own.

ABGC is now offering subsidies to eligible banana growers in the Tully and Innisfail regions to assist with professional feral pig baiting services. Eligibility is based on proximity to known TR4 detections, with subsidies calculated on a scaled model. ABGC has partnered with experienced pest management provider Boar Busters to deliver the baiting program. ABGC recognises that effective long-term feral pig management requires an integrated approach combining aerial shooting, baiting and trapping. Working together across neighbouring properties and using multiple control methods provides the best opportunity to reduce pig numbers and protect banana farms from ongoing damage and biosecurity threats. Growers interested in participating should first contact ABGC to confirm their eligibility and the level of subsidy available. The team can then advise of next steps. Register your interest, visit abgcgrowersupport.com.au or contact growersupport@abgc.org.au for more information. ■



Cultivating Future Leaders

Growing up on her family’s banana and cane farm in Tully, Maeve Lowe has always been passionate about

agriculture. Now, that passion has been recognised with her selection as a 2026 AgriFutures Horizon Scholar, sponsored by Hort Innovation. Maeve, who is studying a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at the University of Queensland’s Gatton campus, is one of a select group of students from across Australia chosen for the prestigious scholarship program. The initiative supports the next generation of agricultural leaders through a \$5,000 annual bursary for the final two years of study, professional development, industry work placements and networking opportunities.

Maeve has a particular interest in genetic advancements across both animal and horticultural industries and hopes to use her career to help drive innovation in Australian agriculture. She is also passionate about advocating for the sector and inspiring more young people to pursue careers in agriculture. As part of the scholarship, Maeve will have the opportunity to connect with industry leaders and gain valuable hands-on experience, helping build the skills and networks to support a strong and sustainable future for Australian horticulture. Congratulations to Maeve and her fellow Horizon Scholars. ■

Industry comes together to tackle TR4 future

Growers help shape the next phase of biosecurity

BANANA GROWERS FROM across North Queensland helped inform the next stage of the industry’s response to Panama TR4 at a full day workshop focused on disease spread and practical steps to protect farms. Held on 10 June 2026, the workshop brought together 15 growers from the four north Queensland growing regions, Department of Primary Industries representatives, Australian Banana Growers’ Council board members and staff to discuss the current situation. Infested property owners shared that TR4 is spreading across their farms. There are now 11 properties with TR4, with eight of them still growing bananas. Some growers have removed entire blocks to reduce disease build up and slow the on-farm spread. Michelle McKinlay, ABGC’s Industry Strategy Manager, said the workshop was an important and constructive step for the industry.

“The success of the workshop was in the willingness of growers to come together, share their experiences openly and focus on practical solutions for the future,” she said. “There was a strong sense of goodwill in the room and a clear commitment to protecting the long-term future of the banana industry.”

A shared challenge for the whole industry

Participants explored three spread scenarios:

- 01. Rapid expansion within Tully Valley.
 - 02. An outbreak in another North Queensland production region.
 - 03. TR4 becoming widespread across banana farms in North Queensland.
- Discussions highlighted the need for practical, flexible approaches that support production while strengthening on-farm biosecurity.

Key priorities included:

- Other regulatory approaches in Tully.
- Improving understanding of TR4 spread across infested farms.
- Reviewing the long-term destruction zone management.
- Setting minimum biosecurity standards for all growers.
- Promoting integrated disease management.

Leon Collins, Chair of ABGC, said the message for industry was clear: understanding the spread of TR4 must now translate into actions on-farm. “TR4 does not respect farm boundaries, and every grower needs to understand it is spreading and what this might mean for their business,” he said. “The best time to strengthen on-farm biosecurity is before the disease arrives. Simple, consistent actions now can help keep TR4 off farms and protect the future of our industry.”

Next steps

Sarah Rowan, ABGC Acting Grower Support (Biosecurity) Manager, said practical support is available. “Installing biosecurity on your farm does not need to cost a lot,” Sarah said. “ABGC staff can provide practical advice tailored to each property, including simple changes and equipment options for under \$1,000 that provide a solid place to start. We also have free on-farm biosecurity signs available for growers to help reinforce good practices with staff, contractors and visitors.” ABGC will review the priorities identified by growers and develop an implementation plan with further industry engagement. Growers wanting to know more about the workshop, improving on-farm biosecurity or collecting signs can contact Sarah Rowan on 0458 777 929 or Michelle McKinlay on 0427 987 499. ABGC staff are keen to visit growers on farm and discuss cost-effective options. ■



Right - L-R: Stephen Lowe, ABGC Deputy Chair, Michael Reid, Chief Plant Health Officer (Biosecurity Queensland), Leanne Erakovic, ABGC CEO and Tony Pattison, Senior Principal Nematologist, QLD DPI. They’re pictured with Tony’s publication at the TR4 Workshop recently.

Left - Growers, industry stakeholders and Queensland Government representatives took part in the TR4 workshop.

WALKING
THE TALK WITH
SURVEILLANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BANANA Growers’ Council (ABGC) is committed to delivering value to Queensland’s banana industry by supporting growers through proactive surveillance, education and best-practice biosecurity.

ABGC’s surveillance team has successfully completed surveillance of 154 properties within a targeted 38km ‘buffer zone’, representing almost 67% of farms in this area. This achievement reflects the strong collaboration between growers and the industry, and demonstrates a shared commitment to protecting our banana-growing regions.

Every property visit is also an opportunity to reinforce the importance of on-farm biosecurity. One of the most critical components of effective biosecurity is decontamination. By consistently demonstrating best practice, ABGC Field Officers aim to minimise risk, but also to encourage confidence in practical biosecurity measures.

ABGC has a rigorous decontamination procedure that is followed at every property the surveillance team attends, without exception.



- This includes:**
- Parking company vehicles off-farm wherever possible, either in designated visitor parking areas or near the road, to avoid unnecessary vehicle movement onto properties.
 - Establishing a dedicated decontamination station adjacent to the vehicle before entering the property.
 - Thoroughly sterilising clean boots prior to entry and changing into site-specific PPE.
 - Upon exiting the property, changing clothing at the vehicle and sealing all worn clothing in plastic bags for laundering back at the office.
 - Carefully scrubbing and disinfecting boots to ensure all soil and organic debris is removed before leaving the site.
 - Photographing each stage of the entry and exit decontamination process, with time and date stamps, providing a complete record that is securely stored within the ABGC system.

These procedures are followed meticulously by every member of the surveillance team. Our Field Officers take great pride in maintaining the highest biosecurity standards because they understand that every visit carries a responsibility, not only to the individual grower, but to the entire banana industry.

Surveillance is more than searching for disease; it is a partnership with growers. It provides reassurance, strengthens preparedness, promotes best-practice biosecurity, and helps safeguard the future of Queensland’s banana industry. By working together and maintaining rigorous decontamination standards, we continue to protect farms, livelihoods and the long-term resilience of our industry. ■

Keen to find out more about surveillance?
Visit: abgcgrowersupport.com.au
Or reach out to: growersupport@abgc.org.au

By the numbers

ABGC Surveillance Progress

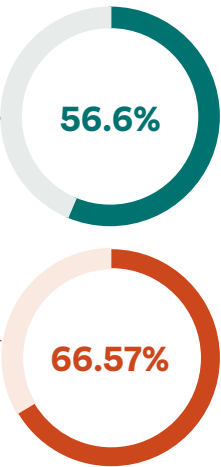
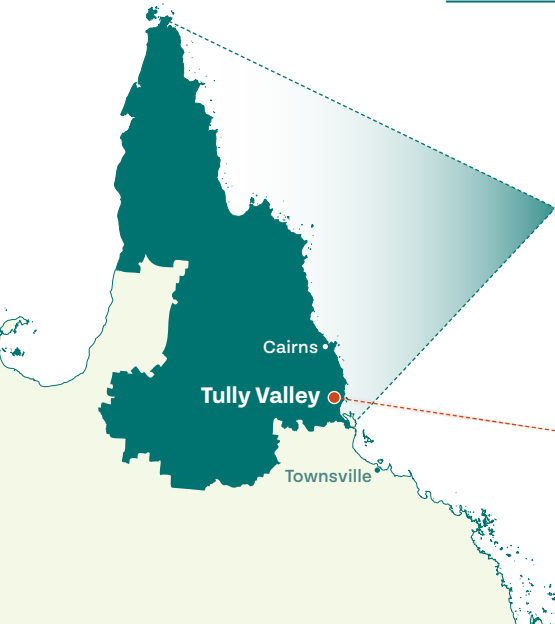
Overall

All farms in Far North Queensland: 56.6% complete.

Buffer zone

Within 38km buffer: 66.57% complete.

The 38km buffer refers to an area around known Panama TR4 detections in the Tully Valley, identified as high priority by experts as part of ABGC’s surveillance strategy.



Collaboration
helps hold the line

Looking for Bunchy Top on northern border
of the Southern Banana Biosecurity Zone

AN UPDATE FROM the Bunchy Top team

A JOINT EFFORT FROM the Australian Banana Growers’ Council (ABGC) and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has ensured an important line of defence against the spread of banana Bunchy Top remains strong.

ABGC inspector Samantha Stringer, as part of the Hort Innovation *Enhancing pest surveillance, grower engagement and banana biosecurity resilience* (BA24003) facilitated and joined with DPI inspectors, Michael Godfrey and Juliet Musgrave, to carry out targeted surveillance activities along the northern border of the Southern Banana Biosecurity Quarantine Zone.

The activities, which took place on 10 June, focused on monitoring for the presence of Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) in areas approaching this boundary. The northern edge of the Southern Quarantine Zone represents an important line of defence for the Australian banana industry. Any detection of BBTV in close proximity to this border would be of significant concern, with potential implications for commercial production in the Northern Banana Biosecurity Zone. Although this area does not include commercial banana properties, the spread of Bunchy Top through residential plantings along the coast poses a significant risk of spread.

Over the course of the surveillance activities, ABGC in collaboration with Biosecurity Queensland conducted systematic inspections of banana plants across several key locations and assessed them for visible symptoms of BBTV. Importantly, no BBTV was detected during these inspections at the targeted localities. While undertaking these activities, we also remained vigilant for signs of Banana Freckle, which was also not detected.

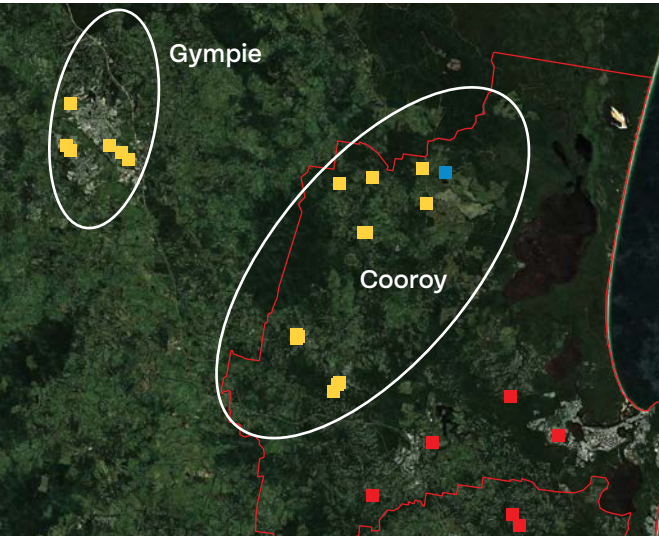
On 19 June, further targeted surveillance was undertaken in the Gympie region the inspectors. Located just outside the Southern Banana Biosecurity Quarantine Zone, Gympie represents the next population centre beyond the zone boundary and was therefore identified as a priority surveillance area. The region has experienced significant population growth and increased property turnover in recent years, largely driven by “tree-change” migration from urban and coastal areas, factors which can elevate the risk of pest and disease movement through the relocation of plant material.

Surveillance activities focused on residential plantings and high-risk corridors, with no detection of Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) recorded. These findings further reinforce confidence in the integrity of the Southern quarantine zone boundary and support the ongoing area freedom status of the Northern Banana Biosecurity Zone.



▲ **Samantha Stringer** (ABGC) and Michael Godfrey (Biosecurity Queensland) inspecting banana plants for biosecurity pests and diseases.

▼ **A map** showing key locations for the Southern Biosecurity Zone border inspections. Yellow and blue dots indicate no BBTV was detected. The red dots (further away from the border) show where it is present.



These on-ground inspections are a vital component of early detection, allowing for rapid response should any infection be identified. This initiative also contributes valuable supporting data to help assess the integrity of the quarantine zone boundary, which is an essential factor in maintaining industry confidence in containment and effective biosecurity management.

This work complements the broader Area Freedom Surveillance activities led by Biosecurity Queensland and forms a key component of the Hort Innovation *Enhancing pest surveillance, grower engagement and banana biosecurity resilience* BA24003 led by ABGC. Together, these efforts play an important role in ensuring that BBTV remains contained within the Southern Biosecurity Zone. ■

Make every banana count

Survey on cosmetic downgrades

Cosmetic specifications are an important part of horticulture, helping to maintain consistency for markets, retailers and consumers. However, these specifications can inadvertently lead to high-quality, edible produce being excluded from markets and losing premium value they could attract.

Growers and industry stakeholders are invited to share what cosmetic specifications are most impacting you and the crops you produce.

Your input will contribute to a research project led by End Food Waste Australia and Hort Innovation helping growers unlock value in every harvest.

Visit:

bit.ly/CosmeticDowngradesSurvey to complete the survey.



For more information on the project, visit: endfoodwaste.com.au

Cheat sheet:

What’s happening & why

THE REQUEST

The Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has announced a review of quarantine arrangements following a formal request from the Philippines to allow fresh banana imports into Australia.

The Australian Banana Growers’ Council (ABGC) strongly opposes this proposal. Imports are unnecessary and pose unacceptable risks to our growers, our industry, and our communities.

WHY WOULD DAFF EVEN CONSIDER THIS REQUEST?

DAFF states it must consider the Philippines’ request for alternative measures. This is due to Australia’s international obligations as members of the World Trade Organisation. Where possible, DAFF must develop import conditions that:

- Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP).
- Are scientifically justified.
- Do not unreasonably restrict trade.

WHAT EXACTLY IS BEING LOOKED AT HERE?

The assessment will involve:

- An assessment of biosecurity risks including the 3 pathogens of concern. These are Moko, black Sigatoka and banana freckle.
- Consideration of alternative risk management measures where required
- A review of the 2008 import risk analysis to:
 - Ensure the assessments of other pests are still appropriate.
 - Determine whether any new biosecurity risks have emerged since 2008.
- Consideration of 2 additional requests from the Philippines. These were not assessed in the 2008 import risk analysis:
 - An additional cultivar known as GCTCV-218 or Formosana.
 - An additional export province, Davao de Oro in the Davao Region or Region 11.

AFTER THE ASSESSMENT

If DAFF’s assessment finds that there are measures that can reduce the biosecurity risk to achieve Australia’s appropriate level of protection (ALOP), DAFF must complete several further steps before trade could start.

These steps include:

- Verifying that the Philippines can meet any recommended risk management measures;
- Developing import conditions; and
- Publishing import conditions in our Biosecurity Import Conditions system (BICON).

If imports commence, the feasibility of trade ultimately depends on Australian consumers.

ON THE CLOCK WITH BIRA DECISION

A BIOSECURITY IMPORTS RISK Analysis (BIRA) brings in additional, regulated requirements to the standard import risk analysis process, including the appointment of the Scientific Advisory Group to examine and provide comment on any aspect of the BIRA. It also requires DAFF to publish a provisional report before releasing the final report and gives the option for stakeholders to request the Inspector-General of Biosecurity (IGB) to review the process for conducting the analysis.

Importantly, the BIRA must be completed within 30 months of notification, which occurred on 16 June, noting that some activities pause the ‘clock’ temporarily. These steps are prescribed under the Biosecurity Act 2015 and the Biosecurity Regulations 2016.

WHERE WE’RE UP TO

1995	The Philippines seeks access for Cavendish bananas.
1999	The Philippines prioritise the request.
2000	The Import Risk Analysis (IRA) formally commences.
2003	WTO dispute lodged (remains dormant).
2008	The IRA report is completed.
2009	Federal Government makes a policy determination.
2018	The Philippines request Australia consider alternative measures.
SEP 2025	Public notification of assessment.
OCT-NOV 2025	ABGC and DAFF meetings on the assessment.
1 JAN 2026	The Banana Imports Fighting Fund re-opens for voluntary contributions.
23-27 MAR 2026	DAFF conducts technical visit to the Philippines.

16 JUN 2026

We are here

Issues paper + trip report released. Notice of BIRA.

EARLY 2027*	Draft report released. 60 days min consultation.
TIMING TBC	DAFF considers all comments and prepares provisional report.
TIMING TBC	Publish provisional report. Option to request review of the BIRA process.
TIMING TBC	DAFF publishes final report.



In the Media

“We are a \$1.3 billion industry. The place would look a lot different if we weren’t here doing what we do - farming and producing food for fellow Aussies.”

PAULINDERBITZIN, Banana Imports Committee chair, on ABC Radio in Far North Queensland

“The risk of bringing in diseases that we don’t have... is significant. It’s actually catastrophic.”

LEANNE GENTLE, Coffs Harbour BGA, on ABC Radio in New South Wales.

NEW INFORMATION

Same concerns and questions

THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry released new information relating to their ongoing assessment into importing fresh Cavendish bananas from the Philippines.

THE RELEASE, IN MID-JUNE, INCLUDED:

- A high-level trip report on their technical visit to five farms in Davao del Norte, Bukidnon and Davao de Oro.
- An Issues Paper, outlining the assessment process in more detail and any issues that need to be considered, as well as more information regarding the request from the Philippines.
- The decision to move to a regulated Biosecurity Imports Risk Analysis (BIRA).

Chair of the Banana Imports Committee, Paul Inderbitzin, noted that the Banana Imports Committee would closely consider these documents and encouraged the rest of industry to do the same.

At the time of writing, this analysis – in consultation with key experts – was ongoing.

Mr Inderbitzin said that the trip report revealed very little.

“We understand the detail will come with the draft Import Risk Assessment, but what I can say is there was nothing in the report that gave any indication that our current biosecurity standards should change, or that the Philippines could meet our appropriate level of protection (ALOP).

“The diseases present at every one of the farms they visited, could virtually wipe-out the Australian banana industry.

“On top of that, what chemical programs are they using to control these? How rigorous is the fruit quality inspection process? How can we guarantee all packing houses will follow protocol to remove possible pest and disease transmission? The questions go on, and I can’t foresee any answers that would be satisfactory to any Australian grower.

Mr Inderbitzin welcomed the decision to move to a Biosecurity Imports Risk Analysis.

“This provides some additional checks and balances, which seems only fitting given the gravity of any decision that is made.”

The draft report on the import risk analysis is still expected early in 2027, which will be open to consultation for a minimum of 60 calendar days. This report will include the biosecurity risk assessment and details of any proposed risk management measures. It will also discuss how the information from this technical visit was considered.

The Banana Imports Committee will continue to lead the industry response, focussing on political strategy and raising widespread support.

The Issues Paper and Trip Report, along with other key imports information, are available at abgc.org.au. ■

Images : Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Tanks for washing banana fruit, Valencia City.

**BANANA
IMPORTS
FIGHTING
FUND**

**NO
BANANA
IMPORTS**

No new pests and diseases
for Australia
abgc.org.au

TRIP CONFIRMS DISEASE PREVALENCE

In late March (23 - 27), DAFF representatives travelled to the Philippines, where they viewed five farms in Davao del Norte, Bukidnon and Davao de Oro. The trip report is additional information provided by DAFF, on top of their standard communication processes.

All the farms DAFF toured currently export bananas and have their own packing facilities. They are run by four different companies and are varying in size.

Moko, black Sigatoka, banana freckle and Panama disease Tropical Race 4 were present at all farms visited. DAFF reports that the diseases were managed through high intensity monitoring and control programs, as well as the use of tolerant cultivars.



▲ Cavendish banana farm in Valencia City.



▲ Cavendish banana farm in New Corella.

Now or never for all-in industry fight

THE THREAT OF banana imports has been in the back of the banana industry’s collective mind since 2009, when the issue was put to bed – albeit temporarily – with

a policy decision that allowed banana imports but made it nigh-on impossible. But if there’s one thing you take from the last few months of the No Imports campaign, let it be this: the threat is back, and the consequences of losing this fight are real.

The risk assessment process is moving. We’ve now shifted to the limited timeframe of a Biosecurity Imports Risk Analysis (which must

conclude within 30 months) and a draft report is still expected early next year. If you’ve been considering supporting the Banana Imports Fighting Fund, but haven’t yet been able to commit, now is the time.

Thank you to those who have already offered their support. Please visit abgc.org.au to find out more about how you can get on board, or contact: noimports@abgc.org.au.

Paraquat and diquat decision

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has recently completed its review of the agrichemicals paraquat and diquat used for weed management.

As at 23 June 2026, changes will apply to labels of all paraquat and diquat products manufactured after this date. Over a two-year transition period, existing stock of these products will be phased out, allowing for a changeover period for industries to implement new weed management strategies. Whilst paraquat and diquat products have not been completely banned, the changes as a result of the review of these products have severely restricted use in horticultural crops, including the complete removal of use within banana plantations.

Growers can still use existing products with old labels until 22 June 2028. Growers must only use the products in accordance with the labels on the product they have. Once new products and labels arrive, the new label instructions must be followed. Always check the label of the product you have and follow those instructions before use.

For more, visit abgc.org.au ■



Check the label before using rat bait

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has approved new label requirements for some second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) following a 12-month suspension of their registration and approved labels due to safety concerns.

The updated labels include new requirements for bait station placement, revised instructions for placing bait near burrows, and restrictions limiting the purchase and use of some products to licensed or authorised users.

If you are purchasing or using rat bait, be sure to read the label carefully before use, as directions may have changed. For more information about the updated requirements, visit the APVMA website.



Dr Rosie Godwin has been ABGC’s R&D Manager for more than a decade.

A career dedicated to growing knowledge

AFTER MORE THAN a decade helping shape the future of Australia’s banana industry, Dr Rosie Godwin is preparing to embark on a new adventure.

As Research and Development (R&D) Manager with the Australian Banana Growers’ Council (ABGC), Rosie has quietly become one of the industry’s most respected and trusted figures, helping steer research investments, champion innovation and ensure growers’ priorities remain at the centre of research and development.

While retirement will mean more time with family and “some epic adventures”, Rosie’s influence on the industry will continue long after she steps away.

“Rosie has been involved in tackling just about every challenge that’s come our way over the last 10 years or so,” said ABGC Chair and Tully grower, Leon Collins.

“Her wealth of experience, and her willingness to share and foster knowledge, has been invaluable – as has her ability to tell it like it is.

“You may not realise it, but I guarantee Rosie’s efforts, often behind the scenes, have made a difference to your business. Whether it’s in disease management, finding trial sites and support for various projects, or raising the industry’s reputation for tackling farm waste, she’s been a huge asset to us all.”

The pull of plants

When Rosie joined ABGC, she was looking for an opportunity to return to her roots.

Although trained as a plant scientist, her later career work had gradually shifted into animal research. When the ABGC R&D Manager role became available, it offered the chance to reconnect with both plant science and the rural industries she had always been passionate about.

“I’d had such a diverse career, working from the intricacies of DNA up to full scale field trials and I felt I could bring that into the role,” she said. “I was concerned about leaving the stimulation of research, but the R&D Manager role has been broader and more interesting than could have I ever imagined,” Rosie reflected.

For someone driven by curiosity, the role proved to be the perfect fit. “I’ve always been passionate about research, and I love learning new things,” she said.

“Being able to work across the whole production system, from what’s happening on farm right through to fundamental research, and to engage with such a diverse range of people has been incredibly rewarding.”

Over the years Rosie has helped guide countless research projects and industry initiatives. Some delivered immediate benefits for growers, while others laid the groundwork for future innovation. ▶

QBAN scheme facilities



Mission Beach Tissue Culture Laboratory & Nursery	07 4068 8553	sdavis4@bigpond.com	Lindsay Road (PO Box 326), Mission Beach QLD 4852
Lowes TC Pty Ltd Laboratory & Nursery	02 4389 8750	Greg@lowestc.com.au Patricia@lowestc.com.au Natasha@lowestc.com.au	202 Tumbi Rd, Tumbi Umbi NSW 2261
Sival Farming Tissue Culture Nursery	07 4068 8559	sdavis4@bigpond.com	Dati Road, Walkamin QLD 4872
Yuruga Laboratory & Nursery	07 4093 3826	nursery@yuruga.com.au	5970 Kennedy Highway, Walkamin QLD 4872
Ausplant Nursery	07 4662 4934	brady@ausplantnursery.com.au	72 Winton St (PO Box 766), Dalby QLD 4405

AMONG THE ACHIEVEMENTS she is most proud of are helping establish an industry-run tissue culture system (QBAN), progressing initiatives to reduce farm waste, and supporting pilot projects that continue to build the industry's knowledge base.

She also points to the success of the Science Symposium at Banana Congress as a personal highlight.

"Just seeing the interest in banana research really made me feel excited for the industry," she said.

Rosie has worked with chemical companies to amend re-entry periods on labels for certain biopesticide oils, advocated strongly to find new chemical solutions, new varieties and assisted the industry manage biosecurity threats such as TR4, Freckle, Banana Bunchy top disease, and leaf spot. She has consistently pushed for practical research that would make a difference on farm.

"Sometimes projects need someone to keep supporting them," she said.

Industry in good hands

Protecting Australia's banana industry from devastating pests and diseases has remained a constant focus, and while those challenges continue, Rosie believes the industry is well placed for the future. "This is an industry that knows how to unite when it matters, and one that has a track record for embracing best practice," she said.

She is equally optimistic about the next generation of banana researchers, with a number of peers heading into retirement this year. "Those stepping into senior roles have been understudies for a fair while," she said. "They've got the ability. Now they've got a chance to go out there and make a difference."

On top of that, she's confident she's handing the R&D Manager reigns to someone who can guide industry into its next chapter in Dr Ben Callaghan.

Adaptability the defining quality for years ahead

While the fundamentals of banana growing remain unchanged, growers continue to face mounting pressures, from disease risks and chemical withdrawals to global events, rising costs and an uncertain climate. "The world is changing," she said, "You can't keep doing the same old thing." Instead, she hopes the industry continues embracing innovation, new technologies and fresh ways of thinking.

"There are really good people out there trying to solve banana problems, both in Australia and globally," she said.

"As long as we remain willing to be innovative, be open to new ideas and to try new things, that's what will keep us adaptable."

Despite her scientific background, Rosie says the people have always been the best part of the job. She speaks warmly of the growers who generously shared their time, experience and knowledge throughout her career. "I'm always blown away when you go onto someone's property," she said. "They're so generous with their knowledge and their time. They're great growers, and incredibly busy, but have realized the importance of sharing. For that I am very grateful"

Those conversations, she says, have been invaluable in ensuring research remains grounded in the realities of commercial banana production. Rosie is equally proud of the people she has worked alongside within ABGC. "They're passionate about the industry, they've got the industry's goals at heart, and they're doing everything they can to help the industry achieve those goals."

It is perhaps fitting that even when reflecting on nearly two decades of service, Rosie is reluctant to focus on herself.

Instead, she speaks about growers, researchers, colleagues and the industry's future. For someone whose career has been built on connecting people, ideas and science, that seems entirely appropriate.

BRINGING EXPERIENCE TO THE BUNCH

After a highly competitive selection process, Dr Ben Callaghan has been appointed as the industry's new R&D Manager.

Ben joins ABGC with extensive experience in horticultural R&D, industry innovation and stakeholder engagement. Over the past four years, he served as R&D Manager in the Hort Innovation Production Team, overseeing the Breeding and Biotechnology portfolio including the banana varieties project. Prior to this, he spent seven years at Horticulture Australia Ltd managing the Plant Health, Chemicals and Minor Use portfolios, including support for major initiatives such as the Banana Plant Protection Program.

With a research background at the University of Queensland and QLD DPI in biosecurity diagnostics and plant biotechnology, Ben brings broad technical expertise to the role and an ability to translate research to a wide range of audiences. ■



▲ **Rosie** has been instrumental in developing the popular Banana Scientific Symposium into what it is today. The 2025 event (pictured) took place as part of Banana Congress in Cairns and attracted over 180 delegates.

▼ **Rosie's** time in the industry has taken her to banana growing regions across Australia including Carnarvon in Western Australia.



Rosie, second from left, helped initiate the banana dehandler project which is now at prototype phase.



▼ **Rosie's** commitment to industry was recognised at the 2025 Banana Ball, as part of Banana Congress.



Rosie has chaired the Science Speed Talks section of Banana Congress over a number of years. ▶

Image: Nathan McNeil, Set In Stone Photography



From the field

Concrete mats prove their worth in the tropics

WHEN BMP EXTENSION Officer, Stephanie Ruiz, first spotted concrete erosion mats at the Rotary FNQ Field Days in Mareeba, she saw something the banana industry hadn't tried before, a product well-proven in civil construction, never tested on tropical banana farms.

That observation sparked a trial documented across multiple Banana Best Practice Fund grant projects. This wet season delivered the first real verdict, and the results are promising.

Will Darveniza of Darveniza's Tropical Fruit farm in South Johnstone was one of three growers who saw an opportunity to be involved in the trial. Darveniza's Tropical Fruit grows papayas, bananas, passionfruit and sugarcane alongside a cattle enterprise, and is recognised for its regenerative approach using the certified Ecoganic system to reduce chemical reliance and protect the Great Barrier Reef's natural waterways.

For Will, the mats solved two persistent problems: a low-lying picking route where soft ground caused vehicles to drift off the road and into drains, worsening erosion; and a drainage crossing where water was sheeting down the main gravel road during heavy rain. Concrete mats were installed to harden the roadway and build a causeway, concentrating flow to one controlled point.

"We have been growing bananas up here for about 20 years and this part of the farm has always been one of the wettest and most trafficked parts. It is a low spot that sits right in the middle of the farm and has a main picking route through it."

"I would reform the headlands and drains in the dry season and during the wet season vehicles would end up driving in

the drains to stay out of the ruts." said Will. "The concrete mats changed that. Here we are in June and the road is completely fine - that wouldn't have been the case in previous wet seasons.

"It's definitely been a worthwhile investment. Better than spending \$10,000 on rock and having it wash away in a year or two."

After more than 2,500 mm of rain across the Johnstone Catchment this wet season, the mats held firm.

BMP Coordinator Amelia Foster says the innovation story matters as much as the results.

"Stephanie saw something at a field day and asked whether it could work for banana growers. That cross-industry thinking is exactly how we find new tools, and now we have real tropical evidence that it works."

Concrete mats are still being trialled across multiple farms, with growers testing different applications and conditions - including how the mats perform under high flow events. The BMP team will continue sharing results as they come in.

Follow us on Facebook for updates. ■

BY ZOE HOLMES, for ABGC's BMP team



Queensland Government

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



◀ **Installing concrete mats** at Tropicana's Kalbo farm. Picture courtesy of Gavin Eilers.



▼ **Will Darveniza** at Darveniza's Tropical Fruit farm in South Johnstone.



Three dollars a week

Larry Grant's first wage in the banana industry was three dollars for a week's work. Fifty years later, he's still showing up, and still making the industry better.

LARRY GRANT WAS fifteen years old when his uncle Bob handed him three dollars for a week's work on a banana farm in Coffs Harbour. It wasn't much, but it started something that never really stopped.

Growing up, Larry watched his father Jack modify Land Rover four-wheel-drives to carry more bananas on the steep Coffs Harbour hills, pulling off the cabin, moving the seat and controls forward of the front wheels. Practical, unconventional, and effective. The apple didn't fall far from the tree.

After completing apprenticeships as a diesel fitter and boilermaker, in 1987 Larry followed his family north to Innisfail, which had just been hit by Cyclone Winifred and had destroyed his family's new crop. He set up a mechanical and engineering business and got to work creating everything from hydraulic gantries to lifting trailers. In 1992, working alongside another local business, he developed the first hydraulic four-wheel-drive banana bagging machine - a design so good it has barely changed in over 30 years.

The GMW fertiliser spreader followed the same philosophy. Growers were struggling with Italian-made pendulum spreaders that broke down, rusted out, and couldn't put fertiliser where it needed to go. In 2013, Larry's brother Peter asked to be the guinea pig for something better. Six months later the prototype was running. It's still running today.

Built from stainless steel, hydraulically driven, with a digital readout and the ability to carry a full tonne, the machine does everything the pendulum spreader couldn't. Larry has since built more than 50 of them across the Innisfail and Tully regions.

Away from the workshop, Larry has spent years teaching automotive, diesel, and metal fabrication to apprentices and high school students at TAFE. He's direct about the challenges, too many students, too little genuine interest, an industry that doesn't always sell itself well. But he keeps showing up.

"Farming is more than a job," he says. "It's a career that plays a vital role in feeding and supporting local communities. I feel I have a duty to pass



Larry Grant calibrating the machine.

Top - The spreader is built from stainless steel, hydraulically driven, with a digital readout and the ability to carry a full tonne.

◀ **Larry has built** more than 50 spreaders across the Tully and Innisfail regions.

on my years of experience. I like the aha moments when people get it."

That same belief is behind his recent work with the ABGC BMP team where he has worked with them to develop a dedicated resource to help growers calibrate their spreaders correctly every time. Getting it wrong means over-applying and wasting money, or under-applying and losing yield. The resource includes step-by-step guides and an interactive calculator that does the maths automatically.

For a man who started at three dollars a week, helping growers save money feels like the right place to end up. For more information visit abgc.org.au/bmp. ■

BY ZOE HOLMES, for ABGC's BMP team



Queensland Government

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

CELEBRATING STEWART LINDSAY

Honouring a career of leadership and mentorship

INGRID JENKINS, Department of Primary Industries

FOR MORE THAN three decades, Stewart Lindsay has been a passionate and prominent figure in the Australian banana industry. As Principal Horticulturist and an extension specialist, Stewart has been much more than a scientist – he’s been a mentor, problem-solver, and trusted advisor to growers. His career, spanning 37 years with the Department of Primary Industries – 33 of which have been dedicated to bananas – reflects a deep commitment to the industry and its people.

A RURAL UPBRINGING

Stewart’s journey in the banana industry began long before his professional career. Growing up on his family’s banana farm near Wamuran, a small rural town in South East Queensland, he gained firsthand experience of the challenges and rewards of farming life. It was during these formative years that his passion for agriculture took hold.

After completing his degree at Gatton, Stewart began his career as an extension horticulturist at Applethorpe in Queensland’s Granite belt region, focusing on deciduous fruit and vegetable production. Within just 12 months, his supervisor retired, and Stewart stepped into the role of the main extension officer for the Granite Belt and Southern Downs region.

It was during this time that he met his partner, Leanne. In the summer of December 1993, together, they embraced a new adventure, moving to Innisfail in Far North Queensland. The tropics were a stark contrast to Applethorpe’s chilly climate, but it was here that Stewart’s passion for bananas truly began.

A LEGACY OF CONTRIBUTION

Stewart’s career has been defined by his ability to bridge the gap between scientific research and practical farming solutions. His down-to-earth and collaborative approach has fostered trust among growers, researchers, and industry stakeholders, enabling him to lead initiatives that address complex challenges with practical, evidence-based strategies.

One of his most significant achievements was helping to lead the research, development, and extension (RD&E) response to the incursion of Fusarium wilt tropical race 4 (TR4) in Far North Queensland. As the project leader for TR4 biosecurity and sustainable solutions, Stewart developed RD&E programs that became the foundation of the industry’s biosecurity response.

These initiatives equipped growers with the tools and knowledge to protect their farms and livelihoods, ensuring the long-term sustainability of banana production in Australia.

Stewart’s contributions extended far beyond Australia. As Australia’s representative to the Banana Asia-Pacific Network (BAPNet) and a leader in ACIAR projects on Fusarium wilt management in Africa and the Philippines, he fostered international collaboration and knowledge-sharing. His connections with international breeding programs have also played a pivotal role in importing banana germplasm into Australia for agronomic, pest, and disease screening, contributing to the search for TR4-resistant varieties.

In addition, Stewart has been at the forefront of developing improved banana varieties through mutagenesis. His team’s work has been instrumental in the search for TR4-resistant varieties suitable for Australian growing conditions. They also enhanced the eating quality of the Goldfinger variety while maintaining its disease resistance, laying the groundwork for providing non-Cavendish growers with more resilient options.

Beyond Fusarium wilt and biosecurity, Stewart has championed environmental sustainability. He led the horticultural component of a National Heritage Trust project focused on improving nutrient, sediment, and pesticide management to enhance water quality in the Great Barrier Reef catchment area. This work laid the foundation for the industry’s Environmental Best Management Practice guidelines, helping growers adopt environmentally friendly practices that also improve farm productivity.

Stewart’s extension activities for managing burrowing nematodes in bananas, conducted in collaboration with the research conducted by Dr Tony Pattison, has had a lasting impact. Together, they promoted the use of non-host fallow rotations, helping growers improve pest management while reducing reliance on chemical treatments. For his contributions to sustainable farming, Stewart was recognised with the 2003 Queensland Premier’s Award for Excellence in Public Sector Management: Highly Commended in the Sustainable Environment category.

LEADING THROUGH CRISIS

Stewart’s leadership has been particularly critical during times of crisis. After tropical cyclones Larry and Yasi devastated FNQ banana-growing regions, he led recovery and mitigation efforts that helped growers rebuild. He developed post-cyclone production guidelines and undertook research trials that secured the permit for using ethephon for nurse-suckering, a plant growth regulator, enabling growers to manage crop timing and minimise economic losses.



1 - Stewart with NextGen growers’ group as part of the National Banana Development and Extension Program.



2 - Stewart with ACIAR African project team working on biosecurity and Fusarium wilt with smallholder farmers.



3 - Stewart was a key contributor to the Banana Roadshow events, pictured here with Gavin Mackay.

STEWART’S CALM AND solutions-focused approach during these challenging times inspired confidence and fostered a sense of community among growers and industry stakeholders. His leadership in the Cyclone Larry recovery effort earned him the 2006 Queensland Government Certificate of Special Commendation.

A LASTING IMPACT

In 2015, Stewart was honoured with the ABGC Award of Honour, recognising his outstanding dedication and service to the Australian banana industry. This accolade reflected the respect and regard he earned throughout his career.

At a recent farewell function at South Johnstone DPI, Stewart was celebrated by his team and colleagues for his exceptional leadership, his ability to see the big picture, and his skill in providing strategic direction. He was also widely recognised for his extensive knowledge—not just of bananas, but also of the weather and many other worldly topics. Perhaps his greatest legacy, however, is the mentorship he provided to countless colleagues, who gathered to express their heartfelt gratitude. ▶



4 - Former ABGC Chairman Doug Phillips, presenting Stewart with the 2015 ABGC Award of Honour in of his recognition of outstanding dedication and service to the Australian Banana industry.

Reflecting on the most rewarding aspects of his career, Stewart said:

HAVE BEEN A bit overwhelmed by the kind words and comments offered during my recent farewell, so I want to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you in writing to the people that have made the past 37 years a truly enjoyable journey. I have had the privilege of working with and learning from some of the best growers, industry representatives, researchers and extension workers one could hope for. There isn't enough time and words to do justice to all the people that have given me their trust and friendship during that time, but I must mention some that have been a critical foundation to any success that I may have had.

There are many growers over the years that made it a pleasure to go to work. John Horsford, Garth Gleeson and Bruce Dobson were very supportive in the early years in the Innisfail district, as were the Mackay family members, Pat and Ellen Leahy, Gerard and Carmel Dore, Lou Lardi, the late Mort Johnson and family, the late Allan Sellars and family and others in the Tully/Murray Upper districts. It meant a lot to a young, 25 year old extension officer that successful growers were willing to share their experiences with me and give me the chance to work with them to find practical solutions to industry problems. Since then, the industry has expanded to the Tablelands and Lakeland Downs, and I have been fortunate to meet and work with growers in those regions too.

People over the years said to me that they couldn't believe I stayed in the one job for my working life. My response was always that I never did the same job across those years because no 2 days were ever the same, and the opportunity to learn from and with growers is very rewarding. I was very fortunate in my career that I had the opportunity to work across a broad range of issues as that certainly helped my appreciation of the workings of the broader banana industry. With regard to the DPI, the late Bob Williams was involved in my move from Applethorpe to

Innisfail in the early 1990's and was my boss, a mentor and ultimately a friend who provided some of the best examples I know of the value of a strong working relationship with the banana industry, especially during crises. I also want to thank my DPI banana team, my 'work family', for their support and counsel over the last 33 years. I used to joke about having a DPI 'family' but upon reflection it is a good metaphor – I spent at least 5 days a week with them for the last 33 years, in the end some were young enough to be my children, they laughed at my 'dad' jokes even when they weren't funny and I will miss them immensely now they are not around every day.

I want to make a special mention of Tegan Cavallaro and Ingrid Jenkins, who have shared an office with me for most of the last 11 years. I apologise for the random thoughts and interruptions over the years. Both of you are exceptional extension officers and great human beings, and I don't think I can appreciate yet how much I will miss your company each day. Your efforts in arranging my farewell were sneaky and amazing, and I hope you can forgive any reticence I had about making a big deal about it.

I also want to say thank you to my partner Leanne. In 1993 when I was told that I would be transferred to Innisfail, she left behind her friends and family to join me in far north Queensland. I could not have done the job without her love and support. North Queensland became our home and we raised our family here. While I have been fortunate to have received some awards and recognition during my career, perhaps the one act that meant the most to us was the day the late Vicki Kippin-O'Connor delivered some flowers to our house from ABGC after the birth of our twins. After that day I truly felt like a part of this banana industry.

Bob Williams said to me that his idea of retirement was doing what you want to do rather than what you have to do. Sounds like more good advice and a good place to start the next chapter.

For decades, Stewart has been a vital part of the team, and the wider banana industry. His expertise, leadership, and friendship will be deeply missed by colleagues, growers, and friends alike. Now enjoying some well-earned long-service leave, Stewart will officially retire next year. Together with Leanne, he is looking forward to embarking on their next adventure, with plans to travel, spend time fishing, and enjoy a well-deserved break together. ■



◀ Stewart at 2025 ABIC with DPI extension colleagues Shanara Veivers, Tegan Cavallaro, Ingrid Jenkins and partner Leanne Wright.



Front: John, Larni, Taylah and Lance Horsford. Back: Ella, Charlie, Dallas and Darci Horsford.

HERITAGE, HEART AND THE HORSFORD FAMILY

Four generations growing Australia's banana industry.

By Skye Orsmond

"I've got three grandsons farming bananas."

JOHNS HORSFORD DOESN'T HESITATE when asked what makes him proud. The words come with a smile, but they also capture more than 60 years of hard work, resilience and family commitment. What began with six acres of bananas planted at Mena Creek in 1966 has grown into a multi-generational farming enterprise, with John, his son Lance and grandsons Mick, Kris and Luke all helping shape the Australian banana industry.

For the Horsfords, succession has never been about simply handing over a farm. It has been about passing on knowledge, values and a love of the land.

BUILDING A LEGACY

John's story began long before the first banana was planted.

During World War II, his family moved throughout Queensland as his father, Maurice, took on whatever work he could find. John later boarded at Gatton Agricultural College, but at just 14 years of age returned home following the death of his mother to help support the family.

Those early hardships forged the resilience and work ethic that would define his life.

John married Betty in 1959 and together they raised five children while building a banana business from the ground up.

On 5 October 1965, they purchased a 177-acre property at Mena Creek. The following year, six acres of bananas were planted, marking the beginning of the Horsford family's farming journey.

The early years demanded determination and community support. A neighbour ploughed the first paddock in exchange for John cutting cane. Betty cashed in her nursing superannuation to help secure finance, John's uncle provided an interest-free loan, and local grocer Ontai extended credit until the farm produced an income.

Their first tractor was a small TE20 Ferguson and bananas were packed in a converted dairy shed using handmade timber cases.

Like many farming families, the Horsfords faced disease, transport disruptions and unpredictable seasons. When railway strikes stopped bananas reaching market, John was forced to feed fruit to the cattle rather than let it spoil.

Instead of giving up, the family adapted. Improved machinery, innovation and hard work steadily transformed the business.

Throughout it all, Betty remained at John's side. Along with raising five children, she worked in the paddocks, packed bananas, drove children to sport and somehow still managed to provide meals and baked treats for workers.

Together they built far more than a farm, they built a family culture centred on hard work, generosity and resilience. ▶



▲ L-R: Mick, Kris, John and Lance Horsford.
◀ L-R: Betty, Talan, Luke, Brayden and John Horsford.



▲ Darci, Ella and Charlie Horsford.
◀ Team Banana Bunch.
▼ John Horsford in Etty Bay SLSC.

PASSING ON THE TRADITION

Growing up on the farm, Lance Horsford never imagined another career. Like his siblings, he spent school holidays harvesting bananas, packing fruit and assembling wooden banana cases around the family table. “I remember making boxes at night and working alongside Mum, Dad and the family,” Lance recalls. “We all had a job.” After attending Burdekin Agricultural College, Lance returned home to continue the family business alongside his parents.

When he married Julie, she embraced farm life just as Betty had before her, becoming an indispensable part of the operation by packing bananas, driving tractors and helping wherever she was needed. Together they expanded the business while raising the fourth generation.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Lance encouraged both of his sons, Mick and Kris, to complete carpentry apprenticeships before returning to farming, believing they should always have another trade to rely on. Both eventually came home.

Today, Mick farms around 250 acres of Cavendish bananas with Lance across Camp Creek and Utchee Creek under the Nugi Creek Bananas trading name. “My brother and I were born into it,” Mick says. “We always wanted to come back.”

One of his greatest memories is working alongside three generations of his family. “We were fortunate enough to work with Grandad, Dad and my brother together. Not many people get that opportunity.”

Now a father himself, Mick and his wife Emma enjoy watching their children, Charlie, Ella and Darci grow up on the farm, continuing a family tradition that now spans five generations. Kris spent ten years working in the building industry before deciding farming was where he belonged. “I always imagined myself becoming a farmer,” he says. Today he farms 85 acres of Cavendish bananas at Pin Gin Hill with his wife Tamhara and their children, Dallas, Larni and Taylah.

Kris enjoys the challenge of running a farm, particularly soil health and agronomy, and contributes to industry research through the Department of Primary Industries’ Nutrient Rate Trial Project Reference Group.

John’s third farming grandson, Luke, followed another path. After completing a diesel fitting apprenticeship and running his own mechanical business, Luke returned to farming. Today, he and his partner, Jade, farm around 500 acres of Cavendish bananas near Mirriwinni and Nerada through their businesses, Seabreeze Farming and Nourish. He has two sons, Brayden and Talan, who might also follow a similar path into farming, as generations of the family have before them.

One lesson from his grandfather has stayed with him. At 14, Luke grew an acre of pawpaws on the family farm before deciding he wanted to give up. “Grandad put his boots on and said that wasn’t an option,” Luke recalls.

Together they harvested the crop, and the following week prices climbed to \$38 a carton. “He taught me work ethic, and I’m grateful I had the chance to learn alongside him.”

Although each grandson has built his own business, they share the same concerns for the future of Australian banana farming, with Tropical Race 4 (TR4), rising production costs and import pressures topping the list.

GIVING BACK: BEYOND THE BANANA FARM

Shooting goals for community

THE HORSFORD FARMING Group proudly sponsor three Innisfail Junior Netball teams - Banana Bunch, Girls Gone Bananas and Ninjas.

John is a life member of both the Innisfail Southern Suburbs Football Club and the Etty Bay Surf Life Saving Club. Alongside family friend John Murdoch, he helped establish the Nippers program at Etty Bay, then the northernmost surf lifesaving club in Australia to offer the junior development program.

John also served for many years as a delegate and local chairman of the Australian Banana Growers’ Council.

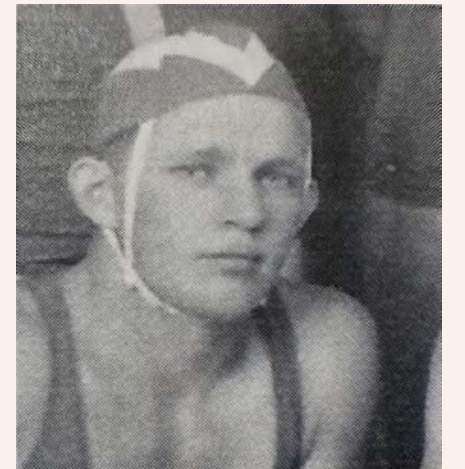
Department of Primary Industries Team Leader Stewart Lindsay remembers John and Betty as “honest, salt-of-the-earth people” whose integrity, generosity and willingness to share their knowledge left a lasting impression on the industry.

Piet Fontyn from Australian Produce Partners has worked with the Horsford family for more than 30 years, and said he’s proud of their great business relationship and personal friendship.

“Any family business that survives across multiple generations demonstrates an exceptional work ethic, strong family support, and the ability to continually adapt.” The Horsford family have always loved growing bananas.

Over the years, the evolution of the banana industry has brought new challenges, including increasing compliance requirements, rising customer expectations, and evolving biosecurity concerns. Each of these adding pressures onto a family business. Throughout it all, the Horsford family has consistently shown resilience and determination to rise above these challenges. They have always strived to be among the industry’s best banana growers, committed to producing a quality product.

“Seeing the boys, Michael and Kris continue the family legacy to become fantastic farmers and wonderful people over the past 30 years has been inspiring. We are all looking forward to seeing what they, and perhaps the next generation of Horsford’s will accomplish in the years ahead,” Piet said.



A HERITAGE THAT CONTINUES

Today, more than 60 years after John planted his first bananas, the Horsford heritage continues to grow.

Across multiple farms, Lance, Mick, Kris and Luke continue producing premium Australian bananas while carrying forward the values John and Betty instilled, hard work, resilience, innovation and family.

Those values remain the family’s greatest harvest.

As another generation grows up among the banana rows, the Horsford family’s story is far from finished. ■



Mark and David Nucifora.



◀ They transitioned to paper bag covers a few years ago.

▼ Soil health is a top priority on the farm.



Beautiful outlook from their farm at Nerada.



Banana Brothers: Forging ahead from the ground up

Mark & David Nucifora – building a thriving banana farm through resilience, hard work and family.

MARK AND DAVID Nucifora weren't handed a thriving banana farm. Like many family farms, theirs had faced its share of difficult years. Alongside their mum, Maria, the brothers have spent the past decade rebuilding the business, proving what resilience, determination and teamwork can achieve.

Their story is one of perseverance.

The Nucifora family's connection to the land stretches back four generations. Their great-grandparents were among the pioneers of the district, establishing the 110-acre property where tea and bananas were originally grown. Today, around 80 acres are planted with Cavendish bananas.

Growing up on the farm, Mark and David experienced challenging years, both in agriculture and as a family. Twelve years ago, they made the decision to take the reins of the family property and commit to rebuilding the business. They saw the farm's potential and were determined to restore it.

Today, the family operates with a small but highly efficient team of five employees. Maria, Mark and David are all hands-on, regularly packing fruit themselves and producing around 30 premium pallets each week for markets across Australia.

Before committing to the family business full-time, David completed a diesel fitting apprenticeship with Honeycombes,

bringing valuable mechanical skills back to the farm.

Looking back, Mark admits the journey hasn't always been easy.

"I used to feel lost some days, but it was character building. Those challenges made us more resilient. They've made us who we are today."

Their hard work was recognised early, taking Champion Plant Bunch along with first and second place at the 2016 Innisfail Show, only a short time after taking over the farm. More recently, they won the Heaviest Plant Bunch category at last year's Innisfail Show.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Rather than chasing scale, the brothers have focused on producing consistently high-quality fruit, they won the Heaviest Plant Bunch category in 2025 and Most Outstanding Exhibit at this year's Innisfail Show.

"We don't cut corners," David said. "We're keen to stay small and focus on quality."

Their location, nestled between the coast and the Atherton Tablelands, provides ideal banana-growing conditions. Rich volcanic soils and gently sloping country offer excellent natural drainage, meaning the farm relies largely on rainfall and rarely requires irrigation.

The striped stars of the farm ▶

The farm isn't just home to bananas.

As we toured the property, a wallaby bounded through the rows before the conversation turned to one of the farm's most iconic native inhabitants, the black-and-white striped possum.

Found only in Cape York Peninsula and the Wet Tropics of North Queensland, these elusive rainforest marsupials are rarely seen. Yet at their property, they're regular visitors. "We often spot them in the bunches, and rainforest surrounding the paddocks."

The striking possum has become something of a mascot for the business, proudly featured on the family's banana cartons.



CARING FOR THE LAND

Looking after the soil is a key part of the way the Nucifora brothers farm.

"We've got good soil structure and balanced trace elements," David explained. "A lot of people think they need to keep pumping on fertiliser, but I think they're cooking the soil."

"Fertiliser should be an aid, the soil should be doing the hard work."

The farm uses seaweed-based biofertilisers and applies fertiliser below recommended industry limits while still achieving excellent yields. Rust thrips are managed with a carefully targeted spray program, typically requiring treatment only once every six months.

Early bunch bagging and bell injection also contribute to premium fruit quality while allowing chemical use to be kept to a minimum.

Over the years, the family has received three Best Management Practice grants to improve drainage and irrigation infrastructure, and they are gradually transitioning to inter-row micro-sprinklers for fertigation.

Three years ago they also replaced plastic bunch bags with paper alternatives. "Yes, they're a little more expensive, but we see it as doing our part, and they work well."

BUILT ON FAMILY

Mark and David describe themselves as "level-headed" - a steady approach that has served them well through the highs and lows of farming. Their achievements are also a reflection of their courage, determination and commitment to doing things well. ■



▲ **Figure 1.** Rating 3 greater than 66% infection.

AT TWO TRIAL SITES located near Mareeba researchers have assessed eight Lady Finger-like banana varieties for their resistance to Fusarium wilt Race 1 (Foc R1), comparing them against four reference varieties across both the plant crop and first ratoon cycle. The new varieties assessed were two Silk hybrids (Princesa and Tropical), one Lady Finger hybrid (Pacovan Ken) and a semi-dwarf Lady Finger (SCS451 ‘Catarina’), all from Brazil, plus the four best tasting Goldfinger selections from Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI)’s mutagenesis program (GMS 144, GMS 521, GMS 544 and GMS 903). Previous articles about the varieties were published in Australian Bananas August 2021 pp 18-19 and December 2025 pp 20-21, and the background to these Race 1 trials in April 2024 pp 26-27, which should be referred to for further information.

Initial plant crop findings were presented to industry delegates at last year’s 2025 Australian Banana Industry Congress. To recap, only three of the new varieties had Fusarium wilt symptoms at that time. They were SCS451 with 58% of plants affected, Tropical with 20% and Pacovan Ken with 5%. Of the reference varieties, 100% of Dwarf Ducasse plants were affected and 70% of Lady Finger.

In addition to the disease incidence noted above, the internal disease symptoms were assessed at harvest by examining pseudostem vascular discoloration. Severity was rated using a 0–3 scale: 0 = No disease; 1 = less than 30% of leaf sheaths infected; 2 = 31–65% infection and 3 = greater than 66% infection (Figure 1).

New Lady Finger-like varieties identified with resistance to Fusarium wilt Race 1

AUTHORS: Kathy Grice, Jeff Daniells, Sharan Muthukumar, Massimo Bianco, Carole Wright and Katelyn Robertson, Queensland DPI.

Eight Lady Finger-like varieties have been screened against Fusarium wilt Race 1 on cooperating growers’ properties on the Atherton Tablelands over two crop cycles. Six of these showed high levels of disease resistance and the best of these have advanced through pre-commercialisation trials.

VARIETY PERFORMANCE

By March 2026, all first ratoon plants at both trial sites had reached harvest and disease assessments were completed. The results of disease incidence (Figure 2) is an average across both trial sites (20 plants in total of each variety) in the plant crop and first ratoon cycle. These results provide valuable insight into the field performance of the Lady Finger-like bananas grown under Atherton Tableland conditions.

Several varieties emerged as clear standouts throughout the trial. These included the four Goldfinger selections which had no disease symptoms, neither external nor internal, across both crop cycles. The mutagenesis approach used by DPI for crop improvement has not degraded the Fusarium wilt resistance of the Goldfinger parent while improving its’ eating quality which is very encouraging. Princesa was also without disease for the two crop cycles. It has good tasting fruit, which combines sweetness and a pleasantly distinctive flavour (more resembling its Silk/Sugar parentage). So, together with its disease resistance, this makes it a suitable candidate for further industry evaluation. These findings are encouraging for ongoing breeding and selection programs aimed at delivering improved Lady Finger-like bananas with disease resistance and acceptable commercial characteristics for Australian growers (Figure 3).

The semi-dwarf SCS451 which tastes like Lady Finger, if not better, was imported to Australia because of its purported resistance to Fusarium wilt Race 1 in Brazil. In these trials it

has exhibited slightly less symptoms of R1 disease than the industry standard, Lady Finger. The proportion of diseased plants across both the plant crop and first ratoon cycles ranged between 35-40% compared to Lady Finger which averaged 70% in both crop cycles. The performance was not as good as was hoped for, but perhaps the prospects for SCS451 may improve if combined with appropriate fallows and other crop management strategies which minimise disease severity.

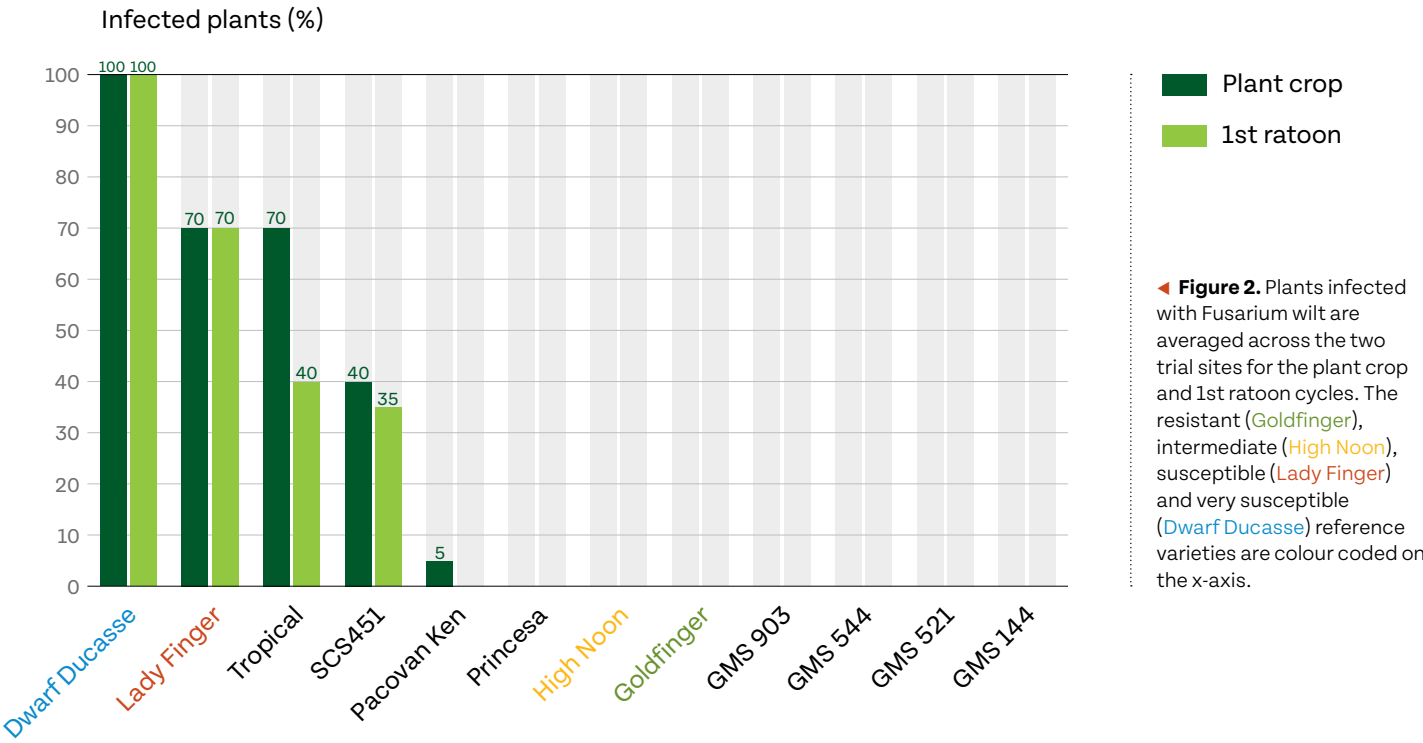
Pacovan Ken was disease-free except for one plant, however, it does not have market prospects because of its inferior taste compared to Lady Finger.

Why include reference varieties?

These are included to provide a range of known levels of disease reaction and are key to the correct interpretation of results. It is not so much the absolute level of severity of disease present in the new varieties but how their level of disease severity compares with that of the reference varieties. We have included Dwarf Ducasse (very susceptible), Lady Finger (susceptible), High Noon (intermediate) and Goldfinger (resistant).



▲ **Figure3.** Goldfinger mutant GMS 544 (left), Dwarf Ducasse (centre), and Goldfinger (right).



▲ **Figure 2.** Plants infected with Fusarium wilt are averaged across the two trial sites for the plant crop and 1st ratoon cycles. The resistant (Goldfinger), intermediate (High Noon), susceptible (Lady Finger) and very susceptible (Dwarf Ducasse) reference varieties are colour coded on the x-axis.

What Next?

THE BEST TASTING varieties of those identified with Race 1 resistance are in pre-commercialisation trials in north Queensland and New South Wales. Pre-commercialisation trials help obtain grower opinions and perspectives of the performance of new varieties under commercial production conditions (see April 2026 Australian Bananas pp 24-25 for more information). In our trials these varieties have demonstrated resistance to Fusarium wilt Race 1

on the Atherton Tablelands, but the colder winters experienced in NSW may compromise some of this resistance. Additionally, subtropical Race 4 (SR4) is present in some parts of the NSW industry and the resistance of the varieties to SR4 has not been determined. So, growers evaluating the varieties need to be aware of these possible limitations. The better tasting Goldfinger selections are now being screened for resistance to tropical Race 4 (TR4) in the Northern Territory. ■



▼ Gene edited Williams.



Anthony James, Jean-Yves Paul, Jacinta Watkins and Jen Kleidon in the plant tissue culture growth room.▶



▼ Darwin field site.



New breeding technologies creating home grown solutions to global banana challenges

AUTHORS: Dr Jean-Yves Paul, Dr Jacinta Watkins and Dr Anthony James. Centre for Agriculture and the Bioeconomy, Queensland University of Technology.

NEW BREEDING TECHNOLOGIES (NBTs) use our growing understanding of plant genetics and biotechnology to develop the next generation of improved crop varieties. Historically, crop improvement has relied on conventional breeding and, more recently, genetic modification (transgenesis). Conventional breeding has delivered many successful crop varieties, but it is often slow, costly and relatively untargeted, particularly in crops such as banana where breeding is challenging. Genetic modification, which involves introducing DNA from an unrelated organism into a plant’s genome, provides a faster and more targeted way to introduce desirable traits. However, despite a strong scientific safety record, the technology has often faced public concern and regulatory challenges.

NBTS OFFER additional approaches for crop improvement that combine some of the advantages of both systems. These technologies include cisgenesis and gene editing. Cisgenesis involves introducing genes from sexually compatible plants, allowing desirable traits to be transferred in a more direct and targeted manner than conventional breeding. Gene editing goes a step further by making precise changes to a plant’s own DNA, enabling specific traits to be improved without introducing novel genetic material.

THE REGULATORY status of plants developed using NBTs depends on the nature of the genetic change. In cases where new DNA sequences are added to the plant, the resulting variety may be classified as genetically modified (GM) and require labelling when sold commercially. However, where the genetic changes are similar to those that could occur naturally or through conventional breeding, the resulting varieties may not be considered GM and may be exempt from GM labelling requirements under current regulations in Australia and a number of other countries.

IMPORTANTLY, BOTH gene editing and cisgenesis can enable targeted trait improvement in established cultivars without affecting other important characteristics such as flavour, productivity and disease resistance. The technology also enables multiple traits to be improved simultaneously, avoiding many of the trade-offs and lengthy selection processes associated with conventional breeding.

RECOGNISING THE potential of NBTs, Hort Innovation Frontiers has invested in a dedicated research program at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) aimed at developing the next generation of improved non- GM bananas. One of the most significant outcomes of this investment has been QUT’s development of an efficient gene editing platform for banana, enabling the rapid development of improved varieties. In addition to developing the technology for gene editing in bananas, our work is using two approaches to deliver a great tasting, TR4 resistant and productive banana:

- 01.** Develop non-GM Cavendish bananas with improved resistance to TR4 by disabling genes that contribute to disease susceptibility.
- 02.** Develop non-GM Goldfinger bananas with improved flavour and texture while retaining key productivity traits and resistance to major diseases.

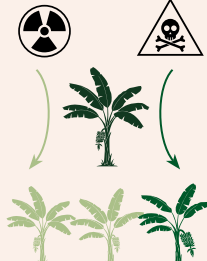
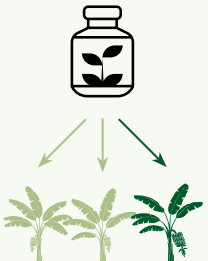
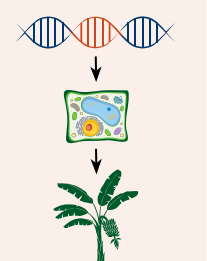
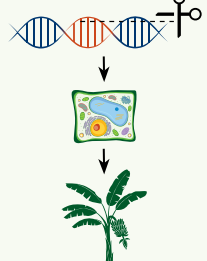
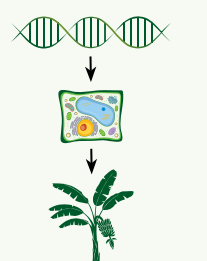
DEVELOPING NON-GM TR4 RESISTANT CAVENDISH Gene editing efforts have focused on plant genes that influence the susceptibility of bananas to TR4 infection. These genes are called susceptibility (S) genes, and to identify them, QUT researchers compared gene activity in resistant and susceptible bananas. By reducing the activity of these S genes through gene editing, Cavendish can be made more resistant to TR4 infection while retaining its desirable characteristics. ▶



A bunch from one of QUT’s gene edited Williams banana lines currently undergoing assessment at the TR4 screening site in the Northern Territory.

Technologies to improve banana

Different technologies, different approaches, same goal: better bananas

	1	2	3	4	5	
	Conventional breeding	Mutation breeding	Somaclonal selection	Genetic modification (GM/transgenic)	New Breeding technologies (NBTs)	
	Crossing & selecting within sexually compatible bananas	Random mutations induced by radiation or chemicals	Natural genetic variations arise in tissue culture and superior plants are selected	A gene from an unrelated species is inserted	5a GENE EDITING	5b CISGENICS
HOW IT WORKS						
CHALLENGES	Time consuming	Undesirable mutation	Unpredictable, can revert in tissue culture	Consumer acceptance	Loss of function only	Gain of function only, limited by own regulatory elements
AUSTRALIAN REGULATION	Not GMO Not regulated as GMO	Not GMO Not regulated as GMO	Not GMO Not regulated as GMO	GMO Regulated in Australia (OGTR & FSANZ)	Not GMO* Not regulated as GMO under current framework (outcome-based)	
EXAMPLE	Goldfinger (FHIA-01) Resistant to TR4 and black Sigatoka	DPM25 STR4 resistant	Formosana GCTCV-218 TR4 tolerant Cavendish selected from somaclonal variation in tissue culture	QCAV-4 GM Cavendish banana with resistance to TR4 (approved for cultivation in Australia)	TR4-resistant Cavendish (in development) Multiple gene-edited lines in field trials	Cisgenic QCAV-4 Cavendish (in development) TR4 resistance gene from wild banana

MORE THAN 30 S genes have been identified and, to date, 33 non-GM gene edited Cavendish lines have been developed. Each line carries a different genetic change designed to reduce susceptibility to TR4. These lines are now being evaluated under commercial growing conditions in the Northern Territory (NT), where natural TR4 disease pressure is high. By August 2026, a total of 990 plants representing these 33 lines will have been established in the field. These trials are the first field evaluation of gene edited bananas in Australia.

While the research is still at an early stage, the results are highly encouraging with one line showing only 20% disease incidence after almost two years in a heavily TR4 infested field. In comparison, most of the other lines under evaluation have shown disease incidence ranging from 60 to 93%. Further monitoring is underway to determine whether this resistance is maintained over successive crop cycles. While more field evaluation is required, these early observations demonstrate that gene editing has the potential to contribute to improved resistance against TR4.



◀ A composite photo of gene edited bananas from the Darwin field trial site showing both an infected plant (upper panels) and non-infected plant (lower panels) from our gene edited plant lines.

▼ Anthony James and Jean-Yves Paul in the plant growth room with gene edited bananas.



IMPROVING GOLDFINGER

Goldfinger is well known for its strong resistance to several important diseases, including TR4 and black Sigatoka. However, despite these advantages, consumer acceptance has remained a challenge due to flavour and texture characteristics that differ from Cavendish.

To retain the excellent disease resistance of Goldfinger while improving its fruit quality, QUT researchers have successfully identified key genes associated with flavour and texture and used gene editing to generate a collection of improved edited Goldfinger lines.

Twenty-two improved Goldfinger lines that are non-GM have now been produced and are ready for field evaluation and assessment of fruit sugar content, organic acids and texture. Consumer sensory assessments will also be required to determine whether the improvements are meaningful to consumers. If successful, this work could unlock the commercial potential of Goldfinger by combining outstanding disease resistance with improved eating quality.

LOOKING AHEAD

The outcomes achieved so far extend well beyond a single variety or trait. While we continue to address TR4 resistance in Cavendish and flavour in Goldfinger, we have also built the platform to address future disease incursions, work on additional varieties such as Lady Finger, and address emerging needs for the Australian banana industry. With further development, these advances could also support other horticultural crops. While significant work remains ahead, the foundations are now firmly in place for the next generation of Australian banana varieties. What began as an effort to address TR4 has evolved into a versatile platform capable of delivering multiple benefits to Australian banana growers, supporting the long-term sustainability, productivity and competitiveness of the industry. ■

The cutting edge of disease management

A multi-ratoon comparison of deleafing strategies

AUTHORS: Kathy Grice, David East, Daniel Farrell and Carole Wright - Department of Primary Industries.



Deleafing at the coastal farm.



Harvested bunches on the Atherton Tablelands.

MOST BANANA GROWERS are familiar with the chemical strategies and cultural practices required to keep yellow Sigatoka in check. However, prolonged wet conditions and warmer winters on the Wet Tropical Coast and Tablelands in the last few years have sustained disease levels year-round.

Trials conducted by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) from November 2022 to March 2025 compared deleafing intervals on a conventional farm on the Atherton Tablelands and a low input production system on the coastal wet tropics. The DPI’s recommended deleafing regime was evaluated against grower practice. Disease assessments and harvest data

were collected in three successive ratoons which were harvested at different times of the year. The results collected over the 28 month period are summarised in the table below.

Across three successive ratoons and two contrasting production systems, the DPI deleafing practice consistently reduced leaf spot. In the coastal low-input system, more

frequent deleafing alone delivered substantial disease reductions without compromising yield. In the Tablelands conventional system, the benefits were strongest when frequent deleafing was paired with strategic use of protectant and systemic fungicides, and grower adoption of improved practices during the trial further enhanced outcomes. Importantly, increased deleafing did

not negatively affect bunch weight, demonstrating that the DPI approach is an effective, yield-neutral strategy for improving leaf spot management across different production environments.

Grower co-operator Andrew Serra was supportive of the trial work and made some significant changes to their leaf spot management. “Having the DPI team onsite on a regular basis allowed

us to have frequent discussions and made us think more about our disease management practices. We conduct a minimum of 6 deleafing rounds per year, but this can vary depending on weather conditions and disease levels. Changing to the mancozeb program has also allowed us to increase the rate of oil, making the systemic fungicides more effective”.

	COASTAL FARM (LOW INPUT)		TABLELANDS FARM (CONVENTIONAL)	
	GROWER PRACTICE	DPI PRACTICE	GROWER PRACTICE	DPI PRACTICE
DE-LEAFING TREATMENT	6 rounds per year	8-11 rounds per year, removing all visible leaf spot.	6 rounds per year. Grower changed practices during the trial.	8-11 rounds per year, removing all visible leaf spot
DISEASE IMPACT	Youngest leaf spotted – 1 to 2 additional clean leaves per plant in the DPI practice. Leaf spot was reduced by up to 47% in the DPI practice.		Youngest leaf spotted – at least one additional clean leaf per plant in the DPI practice at the first time point. 27% less leaf spot in DPI practice at the first time point.	
LEAVES REMAINING AT HARVEST*	Lowest (7.4) Highest (9.8)	Lowest (4.5) Highest (9.4)	Lowest (10.8) Highest (16)	Lowest (8.7) Highest (15.7)
BUNCH WEIGHT (KG)*	Lowest (28.1) Highest (31.4)	Lowest (27.7) Highest (32.3)	Lowest (39.8) Highest (40.5)	Lowest (36.7) Highest (42.3)
SUMMARY	The increased deleafing in the DPI practice reduced disease levels with no negative impact on yield in a low input production system.		The DPI practice initially outperformed the grower practice. The grower adopted improved practices, narrowing the gap.	

* The lowest and highest mean across three assessment time points in 3 consecutive years.



Queensland
Government



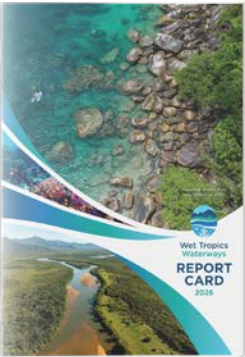
Hort
Innovation



BANANA
FUND

This update has been produced by: Banana Integrated Pest and Disease Management Program (BA21004)

These projects are funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana research and development levy, co-investment from the Department of Primary Industries and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.



Wet Tropics Waterways Report Card now live



The latest Wet Tropics Waterways Report Card is now available, providing a valuable snapshot of waterway health across the region.

Produced annually by a partnership of more than 20 organisations, the report card assesses waterway health from freshwater rivers through to the offshore Great Barrier Reef, drawing on data from July 2024 to June 2025.

We’ll take a closer look at the results and explore what they mean for banana growers, including the practical actions that can make a difference, in the next edition of the magazine.

Read the full report card at:
wettropicswaterways.org.au/wet-tropics-report-card/

DRONES AND BENEFICIAL MITES

Trialling new options for spider mite control

DPI researchers have recently been exploring a new approach to managing spider mites by using drones to release beneficial predatory mites directly and efficiently into banana production systems.

SPIDER MITES CAN build rapidly in bananas during hot, dry conditions, causing leaf bronzing and reduced plant performance. Management can also be challenging where repeated chemical use increases the risk of resistance, prompting interest in alternative approaches. With growers increasingly looking toward integrated pest and disease management (IPDM), this trial investigated whether aerial releases of the predatory mite *Neoseiulus californicus* (Californicus) could provide a practical new tool for banana production systems.

The idea is simple: instead of relying solely on ground-based applications of chemicals, drones can distribute beneficial insects quickly and evenly across a block, potentially improving coverage while reducing labour requirements and crop disturbance.

Conditions leading into the trial were favourable for spider mite development; however, rainfall increased significantly

following predator release. This rise in rainfall suppressed spider mite populations across the site, meaning predator performance could not be fully assessed under outbreak conditions. The combination of predators and rain contributed to a ~60% reduction in the abundance of spider mite eggs and nymphs, and 40% reduction of adults. Despite this, the drone releases proved efficient and well-suited to banana production systems, providing valuable operational insights into aerial deployment within a commercial system.

Encouragingly, the trial demonstrated that drone delivery is a feasible way to introduce beneficial mites into bananas, opening the door for future biological control programs within IPDM systems. As technology continues to develop, aerial release may become a practical option for large-scale deployment, particularly where access is difficult or rapid response is needed.

Additional trials are planned to better understand how predatory mites establish and suppress populations in commercial banana systems. Although still in the early days, this work highlights ongoing efforts to investigate new tools that support sustainable pest management and provide growers with more options in the future.

Thanks to Cassowary Coast Drones, for providing drone application services and Bugs for Bugs® for supplying predatory mites for this trial. ■



Cassowary Coast Drones – operational setup outside farm biosecurity zone.



▲ Predatory mite carrier media (vermiculite, sawdust) deposits on foliage.



▲ Drone releasing predatory mites (Californicus) in a banana production system.

CAVENDISH

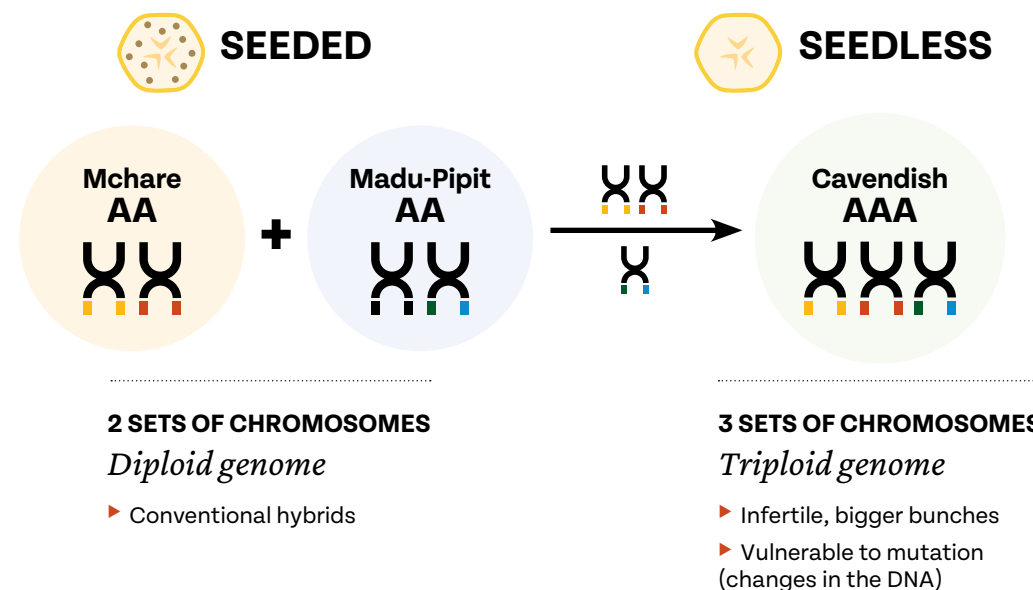
Originated in Asia/China from a single clonal source

Spread to other parts of the world by early settlers

Mutation in field plants + variation induced by environment

Cavendish cultivars and selections with different characteristics

New variants produced using tissue culture and mutation breeding



Understanding DNA variation in different Cavendish types



Develop improved varieties faster



THE SECRET LIFE OF CAVENDISH

BY Dr Emily Rames (Department of Primary Industries, DPI QLD) on behalf of Project **BA21002** (led by Jeff Daniells, DPI) and Project **AS21006** (led by Professor Rajeev Varshney, Murdoch University).

WHAT CAV DO YOU HAVE?

FOR MOST AUSTRALIAN banana growers the answer is Williams Cavendish, the most widely grown banana variety in the nation. Researchers are discovering there is more diversity within Cavendish than meets the eye, with important differences hidden beneath the peel, in their DNA. Plant DNA influences important traits (or characteristics) such as plant height, bunch and fruit size, crop cycle length and TR4 resistance. Changes in the DNA have accumulated over Cavendish's lifetime

and global journey through many growing environments (Figure 1). Understanding this variation in DNA, known as genetic diversity, provides a foundation to support and accelerate future crop improvement efforts.

Alternative breeding approaches, including mutation breeding and tissue culture variation, can create new genetic diversity within Cavendish (Figure 2). These technologies have been used internationally to develop TR4-resistant Cavendish selections, and in one case yellow Sigatoka resistant Williams. The successful deployment of TR4-resistant Cavendish remains challenging because local growing conditions can strongly influence plant performance, and considerable variability exists in the characteristics (phenotype) of Cavendish selections from across the world.

“The large number of Cavendish cultivar variants and the marked environmental effects on plant phenotype provide a virtual continuum of variation for some characteristics.”

– Daniells, 1990 Musalit ID Number: IN900020

An important question for future research is whether TR4-resistant Cavendish selections can be identified or developed without compromising yield (in the absence of TR4) or other important characteristics under Australian growing conditions. Several selections of Cavendish CJ19, a TR4-resistant variety from Indonesia, showed promising growth in Northern Territory (NT) trials. These selections were generated through mutation breeding and evaluated in earlier DPI research in projects BA14014 and BA16001.▶

ALTHOUGH THESE SELECTIONS were later lost due to NT quarantine restrictions, the work provided valuable insights and highlighted the potential to generate improved material, as well as the benefits of developing and screening new variants under Australian conditions. Experiences from Goldfinger mutation breeding also demonstrated the potential of mutation breeding to improve yellow Sigatoka resistance.

Australian researchers continue to build knowledge and tools to better understand Cavendish diversity and performance through projects **BA21002** and **AS21006**.

EVALUATION OF TR4-RESISTANT CAVENDISH - BA21002

Building on earlier mutation breeding work, project **BA21002** evaluated 16 promising Cavendish variants under North Queensland growing conditions. The mutation breeding focused on enhancing the growth and yield of Cavendish selections that demonstrated TR4 resistance in previous Northern Territory field trials (BA16001), including GCTCV-215 (Taiwan) and CJ19 (Indonesia). Two of these selections, along with the reported TR4-resistant Cavendish MA13 from CIRAD, are now being assessed in the Northern Territory to confirm their resistance to TR4. Several TR4-resistant Giant Cavendish tissue culture variants (GCTCVs) from Taiwan have also been evaluated in Australia through projects including BA16001 and BA21002. These selections have generally yielded less than Williams in the absence of TR4. One of the most promising, Asia Pacific #3, is currently undergoing pre-commercialisation trials, highlighting that identifying TR4-resistant selections that more closely match the performance of Williams remains an important goal.

▼ Figure 2. Improving Cavendish using alternative breeding approaches.

Across the world, researchers have generated new Cavendish variants using mutation breeding and modified tissue culture methods – creating new genetic diversity in Cavendish.

GENERATE VARIANTS

- A population of plant variants (e.g. 1000-5000 plants) is generated using mutation breeding or modified tissue culture conditions.
- This results in mutations (changes in the plant DNA).

SCREEN VARIANTS

- The variants are screened for the desired traits, such as TR4 resistance, yellow Sigatoka resistance or improved yield.
- Rapid testing reduces the number of variants for field screening, E.g. in vitro bioassays (grow plants in tissue culture with TR4) and/or rapid genetic testing (DNA markers linked to TR4 resistance).

NEW CAVENDISH

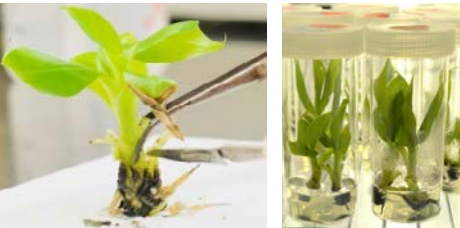
- Examples of TR4 resistant Cavendish from overseas: Giant Cavendish from Taiwan (GCTCVs, Asia Pacific No. 3), Grande Naine from Brazil (EMBRAPA) and R-Gal from Israel.
- Yellow Sigatoka resistance has also shown to be possible.

- Requires less resources compared to conventional breeding.
- Generating/screening the variants locally could identify TR4 resistant Cavendish that also have high yield in Australian growing conditions. Or will all TR4 resistant Cavendish have a yield penalty?

THE AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION OF CAVENDISH - BA21002

Diverse Cavendish varieties, including a range of TR4-resistant selections, are maintained in Australia’s banana varieties collection through project **BA21002**. The collection includes varieties imported from overseas, Australian tissue culture variants and long-established local selections. Many have been grown in Australia for decades, and some for more than a century, making this collection a unique and valuable genetic resource.

One particularly interesting selection is **Short Fruit Williams**, which showed intermediate TR4 resistance in Northern Territory field trials. It was discovered in a commercial planting established from tissue-culture in North Queensland, suggesting that TR4 resistance can arise in the absence of disease pressure and go unnoticed. Genomics technologies can now begin to unravel these hidden genetic secrets, highlighting the potential value of better understanding the Cavendish diversity already present in Australia.



▲ Yellow Sigatoka resistance in Williams (CIEN BTA3 Venezuela)



▼ Asia Pacific No.3 betterbananas.com.au

GENOMICS TECHNOLOGIES - AS21006

Project **AS21006** is exploring the genetic diversity of Cavendish bananas in the Australian collection (Figure 3) by sequencing the **plant genome** (the complete set of plant DNA).

Using advanced sequencing technologies, the project has produced a high-quality Williams Cavendish **reference genome**, a detailed, ordered map of the plant’s DNA. This provides an important foundation for understanding genetic differences among Cavendish selections and developing **DNA markers** linked to key traits (plant characteristics) such as disease resistance.

Genome sequencing, DNA marker discovery, genetic diversity analysis and high-throughput screening are collectively known as **genomics tools and technologies**.

The overall goal of this research is to develop genomics tools that enable faster, more cost-effective improvement of Cavendish bananas for Australian growing conditions. Applications include identifying promising variants generated through tissue culture and mutation breeding, as well as selecting high-potential international varieties using DNA-based tools.

OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

While Project **AS21006** is establishing important genomics foundations, further investment to validate DNA markers for plant growth, yield and TR4 resistance under Australian conditions would strengthen their application. Genomics resources tailored to the Australian banana industry may help accelerate variety improvement and support a more resilient, productive and innovation-driven future.

Looking ahead, developing a flexible system to generate and select improved Cavendish varieties through mutation breeding and/or tissue culture could provide a valuable opportunity for the Australian industry. Local development and screening may offer advantages, given the strong influence of environment and management on plant performance.

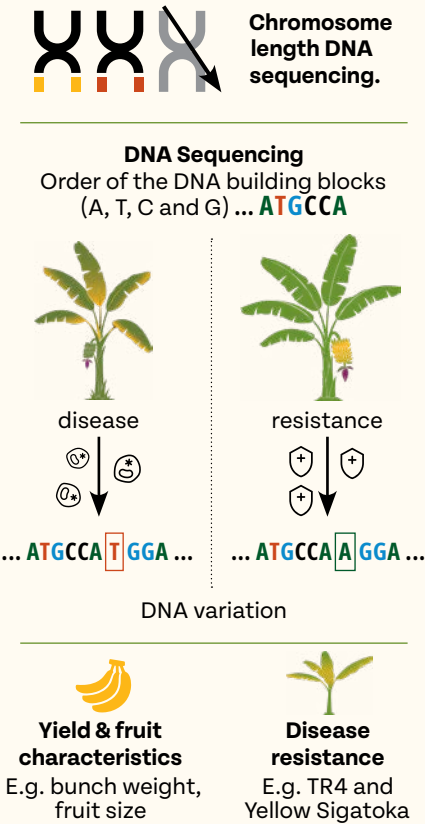
Rapid screening methods, including TR4 resistance testing in tissue culture or glasshouse conditions and DNA marker-based selection, could improve the efficiency of identifying promising plants while reducing the time and cost of field evaluation, though it comes with its own challenges.

Genomics and alternative breeding approaches are powerful tools that are increasingly being adopted worldwide to address challenges such as Panama TR4 and yellow Sigatoka. Continued investment in these technologies offers a potential pathway to improve productivity, build resilience and assist the Australian banana industry to keep pace with international advances in variety improvement. ■

The “What Cav do you have” study

Australian growers can play an important role in proposed research to better understand the genetic diversity of Williams Cavendish across Australia’s banana-growing regions. Growers interested in participating are encouraged to submit an expression of interest by emailing: bananaTC@dpi.qld.gov.au

▼ Figure 3. AS21006 Building an Advanced Genomics Platform for Australian Horticulture.



AS21006

Genomics tools for accelerating Cavendish improvement.

Aiming to develop tools and resources for rapid and cost-effective development of new Cavendish variants and selection of overseas variants that perform well in Australian growing conditions

The Williams Cavendish reference genome.

Provides the order of the DNA sequence along the entire length of each chromosome. The most complete Cavendish reference genome to date, built by leading scientists Professor Robert Henry, Dr Muhammad Abdullah and colleagues.

Genetic diversity among Cavendish variants.

Whole genome sequencing for Cavendish variants from the Australian Banana Germplasm Collection, including TR4 resistant variants. Genetic differences between variants are currently being assessed



Funding acknowledgement.BA21002 “New varieties for Australian banana growers” is funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana industry research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government and the Queensland Government (Department of Primary Industries).

AS21006 “Building an Advanced Genomics Platform for Australian Horticulture” is funded through Hort Innovation Frontiers with co-investment from Murdoch University, QLD Department Primary Industries, UQ/ QAAFI and Griffith University and contributions from the Australian Government.

THE MORT JOHNSTON SCHOLARSHIP

The Mort Johnston Professional Development Scholarship was established by the Australian Banana Growers' Council to honour the legacy of Mort Johnston, whose vision, leadership and commitment helped shape the Australian banana industry. The scholarship supports outstanding third-year agricultural science students

with a \$5,000 bursary and valuable on-farm industry experience, encouraging the next generation of professionals to build rewarding careers in the banana industry. Mort Johnston, who passed away in 2006, was widely regarded as a great innovator and a strong advocate for growers working together to better the



Mort Johnston

banana industry. He gave up his time to serve on a number of committees, as well as the Tully Co-Op. The scholarship was established in 2016 and is maintained by an annual donation from the ABGC.

▼ *Hear from Ben Krause, this year's Mort Johnston Scholarship recipient...*

Seeing the Industry from the Inside

What a week with the ABGC BMP team taught me about people, pests, and the future of banana farming.

BY BEN KRAUSE, Environmental Science and Management, JCU

GREW UP ON the Atherton Tablelands and spent years working on farms before going back to university. During that time, I regularly saw things that didn't look right – soil washing off hillsides, fertiliser going where it shouldn't, farmers working hard without always getting the outcomes they deserved. I didn't understand the reasons, and I didn't have the tools to help. That's why I went back to study.

Through my degree I'd already been working on a JCU enhanced rock weathering trial on commercial banana farms, which led to a feature in the ABGC magazine last December. That work got me close to the industry, but I wanted to understand the other side: how do you actually support farmers to change practices? A placement with the ABGC Best Management Practice team at South Johnstone answered that question in more ways than I expected.

ON FARM

The first thing that struck me about the BMP team was how much of their work happens in the paddock, not at a desk. I joined farm visits focused on collecting soil samples to assess remediation progress and support growers with nutrient management planning.



In field with the Grower Support team.

The technical side – sample collection, site setup, biosecurity protocols between properties – was familiar territory for me. What was new was watching how BMP staff engage with growers while doing it. The conversations were honest, practical, and built on genuine trust developed over years.

I was able to spend some time with the Grower Support field team. This gave me an understanding of their role, what they're looking for and just much rides on those relationships between the surveillance team and growers. Biosecurity at that scale requires both technical rigour and real trust, and the team has both.

"There's a lot of good information out there that people have forgotten about. We just need someone to remind us."

That comment came from a grower at a nutrient management workshop I attended, run by the BMP team alongside a specialist agronomist. It's about the most concise summary of what extension services do that I've ever heard. The room had farmers and agronomists side by side, working through fertiliser efficiency and fertigation technology. The BMP team didn't deliver the session like a lecture – it felt more like a facilitated conversation between people who all had skin in the game.▶



Andres and I fixing sensor cables, photo by Alex Lindsay.

Setting up one of three trial methods to collect thrips, photo by Richard Piper. ▶

▼ **Banana rust thrips** are difficult to capture images of due to their size, we were working to improve the images available.



▼ **Looking at** a live adult rust thrips in the centre of screen through the microscope mounted camera, photo by Richard Piper



Nutrient management workshop, photo by Laura MacGillycuddy.

AT THE STATION

I also spent time at the South Johnstone research station, working with DPI scientist Alex Lindsay and farm manager Andres Morera on the experimental trial farm – collecting samples, recording data, and maintaining and repairing environmental monitoring sensors. Field sensor upkeep is something I know from my own research role, and it was useful to see how a different team approaches the same challenges.

The most technically absorbing part of the placement was working with lead entomologist Richard Piper. Richard is researching banana rust thrips, and I helped set up collection trials and used a compound microscope to locate and photograph live specimens across all life stages. It requires patience and a steady hand, and it gave me a real appreciation for the depth of specialist expertise that exists within the industry.

I also attended a Wet Tropics Waterways Report Card partners meeting – a cross-sector gathering of government, NRM bodies, industry, and researchers reviewing catchment water quality outcomes. It was a useful reminder that decisions made on individual farms add up at a regional scale, and that the BMP program's soil and nutrient work contribute directly to measurable environmental outcomes beyond the farm gate.

"There's a lot of good information out there that people have forgotten about. We just need someone to remind us."

WHAT I CAME AWAY WITH

Before this placement, my picture of careers in the banana industry was narrow. After two weeks at South Johnstone, it's not. The range of roles – entomologists, agronomists, extension officers, data scientists, surveyors, farm managers – is broader than most people realise, and the problems they're working on are genuinely hard and genuinely interesting. For graduates coming from environmental science, the intersection of agricultural productivity and ecosystem management is rich with opportunity.

A small example of the industry's adaptability: BMP staff identified concrete access mats being used successfully in another agricultural sector, recognised their potential on banana farms to reduce soil loss, and supported growers to trial them through grant funding. Early results are promising. That kind of cross-sector thinking – actively looking for ideas rather than waiting for them – is what a sustainable industry looks like. The Australian banana industry faces real pressures: pest and disease risk, input costs, climate variability, and the need to demonstrate environmental responsibility in sensitive catchments. But it has the people and the culture to meet them. My week with the BMP team at South Johnstone left me with no doubt about that. ■

AUTHORS: Tegan Cavallaro & Ingrid Jenkins,
Department of Primary Industries

New Chapter, New Opportunities: Extension support for our banana industry

*Helping transform research into
real-world solutions for banana growers*

BANANA GROWERS ACROSS Australia are set to benefit from an exciting new initiative designed to strengthen the industry and tackle on-farm challenges. The five-year National Banana Development and Extension Program (BA25001) has commenced, representing a significant investment in the future of the Australian banana industry. Through the delivery of the latest research, promotion of innovation, and collaboration with industry stakeholders, it aims to provide practical solutions and valuable opportunities for growers.

Led and delivered by an experienced team from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the program builds on the success of previous initiatives and introduces new activities to meet the evolving needs of growers. Contributions and feedback from growers and stakeholders across all production regions will shape the program's activities, ensuring practical and regionally relevant outcomes. A Program Reference Group (PRG), comprising growers and industry stakeholders, will guide the program to keep it aligned with industry priorities. Annual work plans will ensure the program remains responsive and effective.

This comprehensive program is aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Australian banana industry, focussing on sharing knowledge, fostering innovation and building capacity.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

The program offers a wide range of activities and resources to help you stay informed and connected.

One-on-one extension services: The program team will provide personalised support to growers through farm visits, phone calls, and emails. They will work with you to understand your specific challenges and provide tailored advice and solutions.

Development and demonstration trials: Trials on commercial farms will provide hands-on opportunities to showcase and test new and improved practices. These trials encourage grower input and help build industry knowledge and capability.

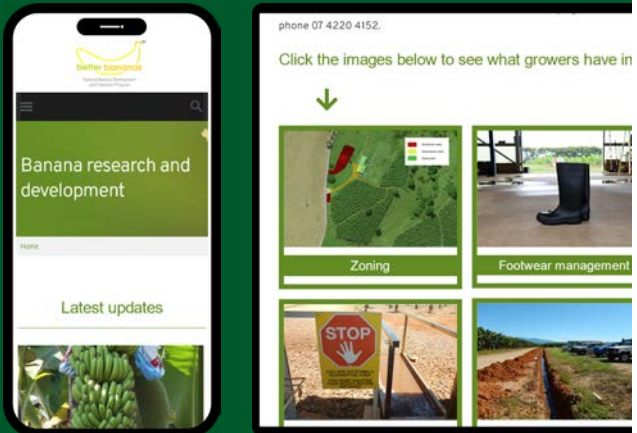


▲ **Tegan Cavallaro** & Ingrid Jenkins are the project contacts in FNQ. They will continue to organise activities with FNQ growers and are also keen to connect with WA growers to organise tailored activities.

▼ **Extension events** will be part of the National Banana Development and Extension Program.



The Better Bananas website is a central hub of information.



PROJECT TEAM IN NSW

The project team was expected in NSW in the week beginning 17 August. This was an opportunity to meet Shanara and provide input to shape the program activities in NSW.

▲ Shanara Veivers (above), your dedicated contact for NSW banana growers. Shanara will be working closely with NSW growers to develop tailored activities and events.

EXTENSION EVENTS: The program will deliver a variety of events to share the latest RD&E findings and provide networking opportunities:

- **National Banana Roadshows:** Fast-paced presentations and networking opportunities with series held three times in FNQ, twice in NSW and once in WA over the 5-year program.
- **Field days and workshops:** Demonstration of research and new practices, showcasing practical solutions.
- **Banana Science Social - 60 seconds to shine:** A new initiative to increase awareness of RD&E in a relaxed and social setting.

Digital resources: The [Better Bananas website](#) will continue to serve as a central hub for RD&E information, providing on-demand access to resources, videos, and problem-solving tools. Regular updates will ensure you have the latest information at your fingertips. The program will also contribute articles into the Australian Bananas Magazine and regular e-bulletins.

Banana Agribusiness Managers (BAGMan) Network: Twice-yearly meetings with the agronomists, resellers will focus on banana agronomy, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Supporting the Banana Women's Network: The program will support the Banana Women's Network, helping to provide learning opportunities and capacity-building activities tailored to women and their roles in banana businesses.

Future Bananas Initiative: This new initiative, open to all growers, will focus on fostering innovation and addressing future challenges. Activities may include exploring new technologies, cross-industry learning, and building resilience in banana production systems.

Major industry events: The program will support the Australian Banana Industry Congress (ABIC) and the Banana Scientific Symposium, ensuring banana RD&E remains central to these important events.

This is your program!

This industry program is funded through your R&D levy, with additional support from the Queensland Government. Its success depends on growers and stakeholders actively participating and making use of the services it offers. We understand how busy growers are, but your involvement is crucial to shaping the program and ensuring it delivers real value. As Peter Drucker famously said, 'The best way to predict the future is to create it.' This is your program, and together, we can contribute to building a resilient and sustainable future for the Australian banana industry. ■



Queensland
Government



Hort
Innovation

BANANA
FUND

The National Banana Development and Extension Program (BA25001). This program is funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana industry research and development levies, co-investment from the Department of Primary Industries and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.



From the banana farm to the open water

How outrigger canoeing is building community through the PALM Scheme

BY EMILY HOANG ABGC Stakeholder
Engagement Coordinator

WHEN GROWER AND ABGC member Matt Abbott isn't tending to his organic banana farm in Far North Queensland, you'll likely find him on the water, paddle in hand, competing in some of Australia's most iconic outrigger canoeing events.

But it is not just the farm that Matt has invested his time and energy into. Since 2015, the Abbott family has hosted seasonal workers through the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, helping to build a skilled and reliable workforce. Matt has had a long-term interest in outrigger paddling and has used this to engage his workers in healthy

and happy activity, while supporting their connection with home.

In 2020, a worker from Papua New Guinea (PNG) arrived on the farm and happened to be a passionate outrigger canoeist. Across PNG and many Pacific Island nations, outrigger canoeing is more than just a sport, it comes from the sense of cultural tradition, originally developed as a primary mode of ocean transportation. Word spread through the PALM network, and today between 10 to 15 PALM workers from PNG are active competitors in the sport.

The outrigger canoeing season runs from March through to November, with events held across Queensland and beyond. Local competitions see clubs race from Port Douglas through to Gladstone,

while also competing in larger national and international events.

This year, Matt and his crew are setting their sights on international competition in the Cook Islands.

The impact on the club, and the workplace, has been something Matt speaks about with genuine enthusiasm.

“When they’re not at training, you can feel it. The energy is reflected in the workplace, and that’s why outrigger canoeing is such a benefit, not just for my business, but for my community of employees.”

For the PALM workers, it offers something equally valuable: something meaningful to look forward to during the week and on weekends, a sense of purpose and community that extends well beyond Matt's farm.

Just as banana farming takes patience, care, and a community to flourish, so too does looking after the people who make it all happen. Matt's story is a wonderful example of what's possible when a workplace goes the extra mile for its workforce. ■



◀ **Far North**
Queensland grower
Matt Abbott and
some of his outrigger
canoeing teammates.



Responding to members, strengthening our workforce

THE AUSTRALIAN BANANA Growers' Council (ABGC) continues to respond directly to member feedback by bringing together growers and key government agencies to address the practical workforce issues affecting banana businesses.

Following a Far North Queensland workforce roundtable earlier in the year, members identified a strong interest in understanding how agencies are working to support worker welfare, maintain confidence in the PALM scheme and ensure a fair operating environment for all employers. Members were invited to suggest potential solutions, which ABGC is now exploring with key stakeholders to assess their feasibility. In addition, ABGC hosted an exclusive online member session with Australian Border Force (ABF) Inspector Damon Patmore.

The session provided members with the opportunity to ask questions directly, gain greater clarity around agency roles and responsibilities, and better understand the support available when workforce issues arise.

Discussions highlighted the importance of worker wellbeing, effective induction processes and ensuring workers understand their rights, responsibilities and the support available to them. Members also explored practical ways to strengthen workforce retention while protecting the integrity of Australia's employment frameworks.

Inspector Patmore outlined how the Australian Border Force works alongside the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and other agencies to address unlawful

activity and support compliance across regional Australia. Members welcomed greater insight into these collaborative efforts and the opportunity to better understand how concerns can be reported and addressed.

The session reinforced ABGC's ongoing commitment to advocating for practical solutions that support both growers and workers. By listening to members, facilitating constructive conversations and connecting industry with government, ABGC is helping build a workforce that is sustainable, supported and underpinned by high employment standards.

Inspector Patmore encouraged growers to report suspected unlawful activity, noting that information provided by industry is essential in helping authorities identify emerging issues, prioritise resources and respond where intervention is needed.

Australian Border Force – Border Watch:

Report suspected immigration breaches, unlawful workers or visa non-compliance through the Border Watch online reporting system. Anonymous reports can be made, or phone 131 881 between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm (AEST), Monday to Friday.

DEWR PALM Scheme

For PALM worker disengagement, welfare concerns, grievances or Approved Employer compliance matters, contact the PALM Scheme Support Line on 1800 515 131 or email palm@dewr.gov.au. Approved Employers should also lodge an Incident Report through the PALM Employer Portal when a worker disengages. ■

Members gain imports insights

FOLLOWING THE RELEASE of the Issues Paper in June, Australian Banana Growers' Council members were offered an exclusive opportunity to meet with Banana Imports Committee Chair Paul Inderbitzin. Paul (standing, third from left) provided an update on the No Imports campaign, outlined the BIRA process and took questions from the room. Thank you to the ABGC members who took time to come along and share their thoughts and ideas.





Guided by Members: Growers rewarded for their input

AS A MEMBER, your feedback helps shape ABGC's priorities and ensures our advocacy, services and industry initiatives continue to reflect the issues that matter most to growers. Earlier this year, ABGC commenced work on developing its advocacy priorities for the next five years, with results from a recent member-only survey playing an important role in guiding that work.

Two ABGC members have been selected as winners of our \$250 giveaway as a result of completing the survey. Mark McAvoy from Far North Queensland and Les Ball from Western Australia have been awarded gift cards to acknowledge appreciation for them raising their feedback and opinions to help ABGC continually improve its services and direction on behalf of its members.

Mark McAvoy believed it was important to have his voice heard through the survey, noting that "it's difficult to achieve progress and improvement without effective communication." Not yet a member?

Joining ABGC means having a voice in the future of Australia's banana industry. From shaping advocacy priorities and influencing government decision-making to accessing exclusive member services and opportunities to contribute, membership ensures your business is represented where it matters most. To find out more or join, visit www.abgc.org.au/membership or contact the ABGC member support team via members@abgc.org.au.



ABGC is out and about!

Leadership: CEO Meets with Members

ABGC has been actively working on the ground to ensure members' voices are heard at every level. In April, ABGC's CEO Leanne Erakovic visited Far North Queensland to meet growers, discuss challenges, and gather insights, particularly on current industry issues such as rising fuel, fertiliser and plastics costs. The intelligence gathered direct from growers is used to support ABGC's messaging to Ministers and key decision makers. The visit also included a workforce workshop with key stakeholders, providing an opportunity for members to contribute issues and solutions on labour issues for ABGC Members. Read more about the workshop on Page 49.

CONNECTIONS: BUILDING NETWORKS TO BENEFIT GROWERS

In June, the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) attended Hort Connections in Adelaide, with CEO Leanne Erakovic joined by Chair Leon Collins and Advocacy Manager

A key priority for ABGC is ensuring growers' voices are heard at all levels of government. Feedback gathered during the visits is helping inform advocacy efforts and government roundtable discussions, ensuring real on-ground experiences are represented in conversations around industry support and relief measures.

Kathryn Dryden. As Australia's largest horticulture conference and trade show, Hort Connections provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen relationships across the horticulture industry, connect with supply chain partners and food safety organisations, and explore new service opportunities that could benefit banana growers.

Over the three-day event, the ABGC team engaged with a wide range of industry stakeholders, including category managers from Coles and Woolworths, project delivery partners, wholesalers, fellow horticulture peak industry bodies, the Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), Home Affairs, and more!

These targeted conversations help to strengthen collaboration across the supply chain and support improved outcomes for the Australian banana industry. Building and maintaining these relationships is an important part of ABGC's work, ensuring growers' interests are represented in industry discussions and emerging opportunities and challenges are identified early.

Through direct engagement, industry events, and advocacy, ABGC continues to represent growers' interests and support the long-term strength of the banana industry.



Congratulations to
Mark McAvoy (pictured
with ABGC's Kathryn
Dryden) and Les Ball.

The latest from the Australian Bananas marketing program

EMMA DAY, Hort Innovation

THE AUSTRALIAN BANANAS marketing program is funded by Hort Innovation, using the banana marketing levy. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture. There has been a full program of activities promoting Australian Bananas this year. Here are the key year-to-date highlights.



Bananas at the Sydney Royal Easter Show

Australian Bananas returned to the Sydney Royal Easter Show with its high-impact yellow stand. More than 800,000 people attended the show from 2 to 13 April.

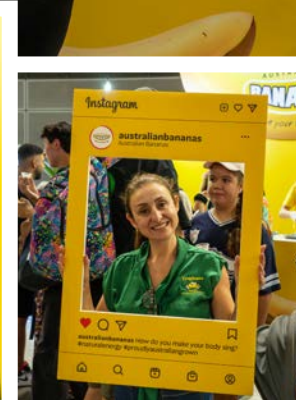
Growers kindly supported the stand, by handing out samples and speaking with showgoers about how bananas are grown, reinforcing that all fresh bananas are grown in Australia.

Rosa Arcella-Downie and Patrick Arcella from Tropicana Bananas, and Cathy McNamara and Maeve Lowe from Lowe and Sons, returned for a second year and were popular with visitors.

Thank you to the Arcella family for donating all bananas for the show. The team distributed 72,500 samples over 12 days, including banana pieces, smoothies and yoghurt-and-banana spoons.

Benny Banana was also a crowd favourite and helped draw visitors to the stand.

The stand will next appear at the Melbourne Royal Show from 24 September to 4 October. Growers interested in joining can contact Emma Day at emma.day@horticulture.com.au. Travel, accommodation and show tickets are covered.



Back to school and work with Banana Swim Pass

With swimming being one of the highest participation sports in Australia behind walking and running, and after the success of 'gym pass', we created 'swim pass'. The concept instills the behaviour and ritual of Australians adding a banana to their swimming bag when visiting the water, to fuel pre or post swim.

The mechanic was aligned to the back to school/ work period, where on 17 January 2026, families could use a banana to gain entry to participating local swimming pools. The campaign ran across film, radio, out of home and social media, with recently retired Olympic swimmer Ariarne Titmus supporting activity through The Morning Show and social content.

Results were strong, generating 515 pieces of media coverage and 52.4 million opportunities to see the Australian Banana key messages. Banana Gym Pass will return for a third year to support National Banana Day on 7 October.



Banana in-store sampling

In-store sampling continues in Coles and Woolworths to drive consumption, inspire snack occasions and convert shoppers at shelf. The first burst ran nationally from 12 January to 23 March across 127 stores, featuring mini banana cream cheese wraps for lunchboxes. In total, 12,507 samples were consumed and an estimated 18,268 shoppers were exposed to the product. Results were strong: 70% of engaged shoppers tried a sample and 40% of samplers purchased bananas. A second burst began in May, trialling mini banana pikelets for cooler weather, with positive feedback to date.



Make Your Body Sing Campaign

The Make Your Body Sing TV and video assets were refreshed with a distinctive yellow end frame and the Australian Grown logo, creating a consistent look across channels from 1 February.

Advertising ran across TV, catch-up TV, YouTube, radio and digital audio in focused bursts through February, May and June. Transit, social, out of home and retail online activity provided more continuous reach, helping connect with consumers efficiently.



Life Education Partnership

The partnership with Life Education continues, with Healthy Harold sharing banana love through school-event sampling, teacher resources and regional health events.

More than 2,000 bananas were handed out at the School Spectacular dance performance event in December, reaching over 7,500 students. In June, the team sampled bananas at the Healthy Harold Parkes Festival of Health, a Life Ed community event that brings families together to promote health and wellbeing. Regional events remain part of the sampling mix, with Australian Bananas supporting Life Ed's community health events across regional Australia, helping families Make Their Bodies Sing. ■



From farm to retail

A fresh approach to supply chain engagement

THIS YEAR THE industry has initiated a fresh approach to supply chain engagement with the support of the Banana Marketing Strategic Investment Advisory Panel (SIAP).

The Supply Chain Engagement Manager role has also been refreshed to ensure it continues to act as the frontline point of contact for supply chain stakeholders, while supporting and communicating the marketing plan.

Working with delivery partner, Bespoken, a Brisbane-based marketing, communications and engagement agency, the role will look to deliver key activities connecting production through to retail.

Angela (Ange) Williams will lead the activity and will be working closely with the team from Hort Innovation and a dedicated PRG (project reference group) to:

- Communicate and help optimise the impact of the current marketing plan with a focus on retailers, agents and wholesale markets across the broader banana supply chain.
- Enhance the flow of information and communication across key business activities between ABGC, retailers and Hort Innovation's marketing team.
- Coordinate the provision and updating of resources to improve retail merchandising standards and improve the consumer banana experience.
- Support and optimise the impact of retail activations.

Ange will be providing regular supply chain engagement updates via the ABGC e-bulletins and contributing more detailed overviews in each issue of Australian Bananas magazine.

Please welcome Ange to the role and she welcomes any feedback. ■

Get in touch:

Angela Williams - M: 0427217077,

E: bananas@bespokenagency.com.au

ABGC celebrates at Pasifika 2026

The Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) was proud to be part of the Pasifika Celebration in Innisfail, joining thousands of people in celebrating the vibrant Pacific Island communities that make such an important contribution to the Australian banana industry.

Held at Warrina Lakes, the event attracted a record crowd of around 3,500 people, showcasing the rich cultures, traditions and talents of Pacific Island communities from across the region. ABGC's Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy Manager, Kathryn Dryden, attended the event, engaging with workers, families and community members.

Visitors to the ABGC stand picked up banana merchandise and information about the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme.

ABGC was pleased to support an event that celebrated cultural diversity, strengthened community connections and recognised the people who contribute so much to the success of the banana industry.



Affiliate Member
Spotlight

BLENNERS TRANSPORT

Blenners Transport is proud to back Australian banana growers

GROWERS AND PRIMARY producers are the backbone of this country, and in the current economic climate, they need businesses in their corner. For Blenners Transport, supporting the Australian banana industry isn't just good business, it's something we genuinely care about.

Our partnership with the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) is one we value. What the ABGC does well is bring every corner of the industry together, including growers, suppliers, transporters, and industry stakeholders, so that when challenges arise, the sector can face them as one. That kind of unity matters when there are already enough external pressures to deal with.

Our role in that is straightforward: get the fruit there on time and in good condition. The quality of what arrives at the retailer or distribution centre directly influences what consumers pay

and what growers earn. We take pride in providing a reliable logistics service that gives Australian bananas the best possible chance on shelf, because when the product arrives fresh and in good shape, it builds consumer confidence and puts more money back in growers' pockets.

Looking ahead, there are two things we'd like to see prioritised. A firm stance against banana imports, as we know Australian growers produce quality fruit, under strict biosecurity and quality standards, and that shouldn't be undercut by cheaper imports that don't meet the same bar. And, a supply chain that genuinely supports growers at every step. Every business that touches a bunch of bananas has a responsibility to the people who grew them.

Blenners Transport is proud to be one of those businesses. ■

Meet Hannah O'Kane, Membership Administration Support Officer

The Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) is pleased to welcome Hannah O'Kane to the team as our new Member Administrator Support Officer.

Hannah joins ABGC with a strong passion for supporting people and building positive relationships. In her role, she works closely with growers and industry stakeholders, helping to ensure members receive timely support, information and assistance across a range of ABGC activities. Since joining the team, Hannah has already begun working across several key areas, assisting with member communications, administration and industry engagement activities.

Her friendly approach, attention to detail and commitment to supporting growers make her a valuable addition to the organisation.

ABGC Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy Manager, Kathryn Dryden, said Hannah's appointment reflects the organisation's ongoing commitment to delivering value to members.

"Our growers are at the heart of everything we do and having dedicated staff who can support members and help them access the information and resources they need is incredibly important. We're delighted to welcome Hannah to the team and look forward to the contribution she will make."

Hannah is excited to learn more about the banana industry and connect with growers from across the country.





BUNNINGS POWERPASS

The more members who use the ABGC members' account, the bigger the discounts.



AUSTRALIA WIDE FIRST AID

All ABGC members receive a 10% discount on all courses.



CELSIUS PRO

Have created an insurance solution called 'Cyclone Rapid Recovery Insurance' that specifically targets banana farmers' needs. Celsius Pro are offering ABGC members 10% off.



CHOICE ENERGY

Free energy assessment and discounted service for ABGC members.



Your member benefits

ABGC membership delivers more than industry representation. It gives growers a stronger collective voice on the issues that matter, supports the coordination of industry research and development, and provides access to exclusive events, timely information and practical resources to support their businesses.

Members also benefit from a range of commercial offers through trusted industry partners, including discounted training and business services, energy cost reviews, tailored insurance solutions and exclusive trade pricing programs.

ABGC continues to deliver value to members while helping build a profitable, resilient, and sustainable future for Australia's banana industry.

Become a member today
and don't miss out on this opportunity!

 **Go to**
abgc.org.au/membership

 **Or contact**
members@abgc.org.au
For information and to apply.



WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

We're passionate about creating a sustainable future for everyone in the Australian banana industry.

When you become an ABGC member, you become part of our team. We value hearing from you on any issue affecting your business. Whether you're a solo small farmer or managing a large banana enterprise, we are here to make a difference for you. If we can't provide an