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THE AUSTRALIAN AGRONOMIST MAGAZINE

BREAKTHROUGH IN WILD BARLEY GENOMICS PAVES THE WAY FOR CLIMATE-RESILIENT CROPS

DNA BREAKTHROUGH A GAME-CHANGER FOR COMBATING INVASIVE PLANT SPREAD

RESEARCH INTO INDUSTRY'S BEST GRASS HERBICIDE STRATEGIES A BOON FOR GROWERS

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THE AUSTRALIAN AGRONOMIST

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RESEARCH BREAKTHROUGH OFFERS HOPE FOR CANOLA GROWERS

RESEARCHERS FROM THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DPIRD) HAVE OPENED THE DOOR TO ENHANCING CANOLA PRODUCTION IN CHALLENGING GROWING ENVIRONMENTS, AFTER IDENTIFYING A KEY GENE THAT HELPS PROTECT PLANTS FROM MANGANESE TOXICITY IN ACIDIC SOILS.

Soil acidity is a significant challenge for crop production in Australia, and crops like canola are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of acidic soils which can limit growth and reduce yields.

Dr Harsh Raman, Senior Principal Research Scientist at NSW DPIRD, said the discovery is the result of five years of dedicated research by an international team of scientists, with NSW DPIRD leading the effort.

"Soil acidity is a global issue, severely limiting crop production and affecting a huge 13.7 million hectares in NSW alone," Dr Raman said.

> ***"After conducting a range of experiments in controlled field conditions, NSW DPIRD has successfully cloned the specific gene responsible for manganese tolerance in acidic soils."***

"We have also uncovered new insights into the genetic networks that influence this trait, which will enable the research team to develop practical methods for selecting canola plants with manganese tolerance based on morphological traits and molecular markers."

According to Dr Raman, the discovery could lead to higher productivity and improved profitability for Canola growers.

"By understanding how canola plants cope with excessive manganese in acidic soils, researchers and crop breeding companies can now work towards developing new crop varieties that are more resilient to thestresses of manganese toxicity. ," Dr Raman said.

While manganese is an essential nutrient for plant growth, excessive amounts in acidic soils (pH <5) can lead to severe toxicity which can stunt plant growth and reduce crop yields. This is most common in waterlogged soils or those with poor drainage, particularly under high-temperature conditions.

Dr. Raman said that while researchers still recommend a regular application of lime to manage high-acidity soils, manganese tolerance is a valuable enhancement trait for canola varieties by allowing growers to get about their business without having to wait for the lime to ameliorate into the soil.

"Thanks to this research, canola farmers will no longer exclusively need to invest significant time and money into lime applications and wait for amelioration to proceed before they can grow high yield crops.

Now, by unlocking the secret to cultivating varieties that are tolerant to acidic soils, growers can grow high yielding canola whilst applying lime to improve their soils long term PH, increasing productivity and profitability."

"As farmers face increasing challenges such as soil degradation, this research provides a promising new tool to enhance crop resilience and secure long-term food production," Dr Raman said.

The project was supported by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Grains Research and Development Cooperation, Oil Crops Research Institute China, Monash University, ARC Training Centre for Future Crops Development at Australian National University and Wagga Wagga, and INRA France.

MORE INFORMATION

The research findings were recently published in Plant Cell and Environment, available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/pce.15433

Vision pack available at: https://tinyurl.com/5n7f56ca

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AUSTRALIAN MADE

A NEW CROPPING SYSTEMS RESEARCH REPORT DATABASE IS NOW AVAILABLE ON THE NSW DPIRD WEBSITE

THE NSW GOVERNMENT HAS LAUNCHED A NEW SEARCHABLE DATABASE TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY TO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH REPORTS, PROVIDING FARMERS, AGRONOMISTS, AND OTHER AGRICULTURAL STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS NEW SOUTH WALES WITH EASY ACCESS TO VALUABLE INFORMATION.

Since 2012, research papers from the northern and southern grains regions in New South Wales have been published in books, both in hard copy and on the NSW DPIRD website.

NSW DPIRD Development Officer, Information Delivery Carey Martin said that these important resources are even more accessible as the database allows users to find research reports individually.

"The database includes over 900 keywords that have been added to 734 research reports, enabling users to easily search for research relevant to specific topics such as crop types, districts, diseases, pests, and more," Ms Martin said.

This initiative is the result of a collaboration between staff from NSW DPIRD's Agriculture Plant Systems unit and the e–Communications group.

> ***"This project reflects a long-held goal of making these reports available in a searchable format, empowering farmers, agronomists, and advisers to quickly find specific research relevant to their needs."***

Ms Martin said the new database displays the research papers in alphabetical order by title, with all associated keywords clearly shown. Each paper title is linked to a PDF version of the report, stored in the department's document library, ensuring the integrity and future availability of the research.

"NSW DPIRD staff have received positive feedback about the database's user-friendly design, with positive comments on its speed and the ease of identifying the stakeholders needs," Ms Martin said.

"This new resource is a valuable tool for those in the agricultural industry, offering a streamlined way to access important research that can inform farming practices and decision-making."

ACCESS THE DATABASE

Visit: https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/broadacre-crops/research-papers

ALMOND CROP REVISED DOWN

THE AUSTRALIAN ALMOND CROP FOR 2025-26 LOOKS SET TO BE DOWN BY AT LEAST 10-20% ON THE INDUSTRY'S EXPECTATIONS.

The Almond Board of Australia has received consistent reports from processors that hot dry conditions throughout the growing season and post-bloom frosts in September have contributed to a downgraded crop outlook.

Harvest was completed before Easter for the first time in many years, but the high value Nonpareil variety, which makes up nearly 50% of industry plantings, has been returning lower than expected kernel weights during primary processing. Low kernel moistures due to the excessive heat is being cited as a key factor.

An actual crop size will be confirmed in September-October once hulling and shelling is completed, but early out-turn results have provided sufficient evidence to notify the market that the 2025-26 crop will fall short of expectations. The industry tonnage timeline that calculates yield against age of orchards indicated that 2025-26 had the potential to yield almost 172,000 tonnes, but a pre-season update tempered these expectations to 155,531 tonnes.

Marketers are experiencing strong demand for Australian almonds given the tariffs being imposed in China and potentially other export markets. This uncertainty has many first time buyers turning their attention to Australia as an alternate source.

Pricing has climbed significantly since the March 1 season opening and combined with the weak Australian dollar, grower returns look set to be among the best in a decade.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://almondboard.org.au/

COTTON CRUSH INVESTMENT CREATES VALUE ACROSS THE VALUE CHAIN

COTTON HARVEST IS OVER IN NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES, BUT CARGILL'S UPGRADED COTTON CRUSH FACILITY AT NARRABRI IS JUST GEARING UP TO MEET THE LOCAL DEMAND. ACCORDING TO DAN MORGAN, CARGILL DIRECTOR OILSEED CRUSH COMMERCIAL, COTTON IS MORE THAN THE SHIRT ON YOUR BACK – THE SEED HAS A MUCH BIGGER STORY TO TELL. IN FACT, ABOUT FIFTY PER CENT OF WHAT IS HARVESTED FROM THE FIELD IS THE COTTON SEED, WHICH IS HIGHLY REGARDED AS A VALUABLE FOOD AND FEED SOURCE.

Cargill has invested AUD $100 million of new infrastructure and working capital to upgrade its crush facilities & oilseed refinery in Australia, including the canola crush facilities at Newcastle in New South Wales and Footscray in Victoria and the cotton crush facility in Narrabri, central New South Wales. It is a welcome investment in Australian agriculture

The Narrabri facility separates the outer shell (called the hull) of the cottonseed from the 'meat' which is in the middle portion of the seed. The meat is then sent to the Newcastle facility where it is further processed into human grade cooking oil and a high protein meal The oil is a high-quality frying oil that is commonly used across Australia's favourite pubs, clubs and restaurants due to the lightness of its taste, texture and frying capabilities. Cottonseed oil remains stable at high temperatures in a frying situation, creating a long-lasting oil that gives food a very crunchy texture (for example fish and chips) that we all love.

Cottonseed meal is a high protein meal that is used within cattle and chicken production and is an alternative to imported commodities such as copra (coconut) meal and soybean meal. For cattle, it is used extensively in grazing situations where tall, dry feed is hard for cattle to digest and often missing vital nutrients that cattle require to be in their best possible condition. Cottonseed meal is an ingredient to supplement products (such as lick blocks and loose licks) that help cattle make the best use of the dry feed and convert that to energy while providing other vital nutrients that might be deficient in the feed.

For livestock, cotton seed hulls are a great source of fibre, and is proving popular in the feedlot industry as a substitute for straw, especially in the north of Australia. One of the major benefits of the investment in the Narrabri crush facility, is that it ensures local customers, are getting local products, produced by local farmers and supporting local communities. Where once the cotton seed was exported to be processed and then reimported to Australia, now the onshore processing is generating new opportunities and supporting the local economy.

"The cotton products, the hull, the oil and the protein meal are highly sought after by customers. The domestic manufacture of these products is providing an alternative to imported products, delivering benefits for the local and national economy." Dan Morgan said. "Customers are rightly excited for us to be back processing cotton seed." The facility is well received by the local Narrabri community and local farming sector, producing demand for their products and providing local jobs.

The success of the facility further generates the case to invest in the agriculture sector.

One of Cargill's strength is our work with customers right across the value chain, from farmers, to processes to end consumers, providing a highly nutritious food and feed product. The cotton sector touches so many, and Cargill is proud to be part of the end-to-end supply chain and creating value."

ABOUT CARGILL

Cargill is committed to providing food, ingredients, agricultural solutions, and industrial products to nourish the world in a safe, responsible, and sustainable way. Sitting at the heart of the supply chain, we partner with farmers and customers to source, make and deliver products that are vital for living.

Our approximately 160,000 employees innovate with purpose, providing customers with life's essentials so businesses can grow, communities prosper, and consumers live well. With 160 years of experience as a family company, we look ahead while remaining true to our values. We put people first. We reach higher. We do the right thing—today and for generations to come. For more information, visit **Cargill.com**.

BREAKTHROUGH IN WILD BARLEY GENOMICS PAVES THE WAY FOR CLIMATE-RESILIENT CROPS

AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM OF SCIENTISTS FROM AUSTRALIA AND CHINA HAS UNVEILED THE FIRST CHROMOSOME-SCALE GENOME OF A WILD BARLEY SPECIES.

Their findings offer direct implications for more sustainable agriculture and significant yield improvements for Australian grain production.

Led by researchers from Murdoch University and the Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences (BAAFS), the groundbreaking study of the wild barley species Hordeum brevisubulatum - renowned for its exceptional tolerance to alkaline and saline soils – is a significant leap forward in harnessing crop wild relatives (CWRs) to combat soil degradation and the increasing prevalence of extreme weather events.

The study, published in Nature Plants, identified critical genetic adaptations, including the duplication of stress-response genes that enable efficient nutrient intake under alkaline stress. When overexpressed, these genes doubled in biomass and offered improved yields in harsh conditions.

The team also discovered that a fungal-derived gene previously known for disease resistance was found to reduce oxidative stress in saline-alkaline environments.

Following these findings, the team developed a new hexaploid crop, Tritordeum (AABBII), by replacing wheat's 'D' subgenome with H. brevisubulatum's I genome. This new crop has exhibited a remarkable 48% increase in nitrate uptake and a 28% increase in grain yield under stress compared to conventional wheat.

Speaking on the findings, Prof Chengdao Li, Director of the Western Crop Genetics Alliance and Corresponding Author of the study, said:

"Our findings offer transformative potential for Australia's agricultural sector, particularly in regions like Western Australia and South Australia where there is significant dryland soil salinity. By breeding salinity-resistant grain crops, we can safeguard yields in drought-prone areas, reduce our costly reliance on fertilisers whilst maintaining productivity, and make a tangible step towards Australia's 2030 sustainability targets."

"Additionally, the extraordinary resilience of H. brevisubulatum's I genome equips us with genetic tools to future-proof staple crops against climate extremes, ensuring the competitiveness of our grains sector.

Murdoch University Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of the Food Futures Institute, Professor Peter Davies, added that:

"This landmark study not only advances global understanding of plant stress adaptation, it also positions Australia at the forefront of climate-smart crop innovation. By accelerating the integration of wild barley's genetic traits into breeding programs, researchers will be able to deliver new varieties within the next decade and offer timely solutions for farmers battling rising temperatures and soil degradation.

> ***"We're immensely proud of the significant contribution that Murdoch University researchers have played in this collaborative study. Congratulations to Prof Li, Co-first author Dr Yong Jia, Prof Rajeev Varshney, Dr Tianhua He, Dr Brett Chapman and Dr Vanika Garg for their respective contributions – their work underscores the urgency of conserving genetic resources and investing in genomic technologies to secure food production in a warming world," he said.***

This study is the result of a joint effort between scientists from Murdoch University's Western Crop Genetics Alliance, Murdoch University's Centre for Crop & Food Innovation, BAAFS, and other international institutions. The team assembled the high-quality genome of H. brevisubulatum, a perennial wild barley species native to saline-alkaline regions and re-sequenced 38 accessions across seven related species.

Full details of this study and its implications can be found visit: *https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-024-08277-0*

MORE INFORMATION

Find out more about the work of
Murdoch University's Food Futures Institute.
Visit: https://www.murdoch.edu.au/research/ffi

EARLY BIRD TICKETS ON SALE FOR AGXCHANGE AUSTRALIA

TICKETS ARE NOW ON SALE FOR AGXCHANGE AUSTRALIA 2025 – THE NATIONAL FARMERS' FEDERATION'S REIMAGINED NATIONAL CONFERENCE BRINGING TOGETHER THE FULL BREADTH OF AUSTRALIA'S AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAIN.

Taking place on the Gold Coast over 23-25 September 2025, AgXchange will unite farmers, agribusinesses, policymakers, researchers and industry leaders to tackle the biggest issues facing agriculture.

"This isn't just a talkfest. It's where practical ideas meet big-picture thinking to shape the future of Australian food and fibre production and distribution," NFF President David Jochinke said.

"Whether you're working on the land, on the tools, in the lab, or at the policy table – AgXchange is your space to connect, collaborate and drive change."

AgXchange is built around five core themes:

- **Innovation** – from on-farm tech to productivity breakthroughs
- **Sustainability** – including carbon, water and circular economy challenges
- **Risk** – tackling drought, biosecurity, succession and trade volatility
- **Farming Communities** – covering workforce, safety and social license
- **Supply Chain** – from gate to global markets

Over three days, attendees will hear from keynote speakers, take part in solution-focused panels, and get hands-on in interactive sessions tailored for every part of the supply chain.

Early bird tickets available now

- Early bird pricing is now live, with a range of flexible options:
- Discounted rates for farmers and NFF members
- One-day passes for busy schedules
- Special pricing for emerging leaders under 35

Mr Jochinke urged those across the ag sector to get in early. "Don't wait for change to happen to you. Be part of the conversation and help drive it. This is your seat at the table."

MORE INFORMATION

Tickets and more info available at: https://agxchange.com.au/

DNA BREAKTHROUGH A GAME-CHANGER FOR COMBATING INVASIVE PLANT SPREAD

A BREAKTHROUGH METHOD FOR ANALYSING THE DNA OF CENTURIES-OLD PLANT SAMPLES HAS GIVEN SCIENTISTS AN EDGE IN COMBATING THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE PLANTS.

Researchers from Monash University and the University of Melbourne found the rapid adaptation of invasive plants is driven by their ability to gain and lose genes, a phenomenon known as 'copy number variation'.

The discovery came while studying the invasive, noxious weed ragweed, which originated in North America before being transported to Europe and Australia.

Ragweed is highly invasive, significantly impacting agriculture and a major producer of hay fever-inducing pollen.

The research analysed DNA samples from plant samples collected as early as 1830, revealing strikingly similar patterns of adaptation across both native and invasive populations.

Lead researcher Jonathan Wilson said the findings suggested the same genetic mechanisms are reused to tackle comparable environmental challenges when they invade a new area.

Dr Wilson undertook the research while completing his PhD at Monash University, and is now a research fellow at the University of Melbourne.

"We developed a new method to detect large gains and losses of DNA, even in old and degraded DNA from museum specimens," Dr Wilson said.

"This allowed us to track the evolution of these large genetic changes during the invasion and uncover evidence that natural selection likely contributed to their spread."

The research also identified the gain or loss of the gene targeted by the herbicide glyphosate, which may provide critical insights into the evolution of herbicide resistance, paving the way for more effective weed management strategies.

"This knowledge could be instrumental in developing better strategies to mitigate the spread of invasive weeds," Dr Wilson said.

> *"This will have a huge impact on our farmers who are constantly dealing with the threat of invasive plants.*

"In the case of ragweed in particular, it is already a major contributor to hay fever in Europe, and we hope this research will help control the weed before it becomes a big problem in Australia."

Senior researcher, Monash University Associate Professor Kathryn Hodgins, said the findings provide rare insights into how ragweed has rapidly evolved, further illustrating the important role of gene gain and loss in facilitating adaptation.

"Gains and losses of genes, or copy number variants, are a key driver of adaptation, yet they are often overlooked in many studies of diverse species due to technical challenges," Associate Professor Hodgins said.

"Our study demonstrates that we can leverage existing datasets to detect these variants, opening the door to important new insights that have largely gone unexplored."

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.monash.edu/

Read the full research paper in PNAS online at doi.org/10.1101/2024.07.03.601998

TURNING SCIENCE TO FINANCE: NEW TOOL TO HELP FARMERS TACKLE THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

'PATHFINDER' IS A PRACTICAL AND EVIDENCE-BASED RESOURCE THAT WILL HELP FARMERS REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, WHILE MAINTAINING PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS.

Australian farmers are set to tackle emissions from the ground up, with a free guide to develop and implement sustainable practices on farms.

The ***Towards Net Zero Agriculture Pathfinder*** (Pathfinder), a joint initiative by the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and CSIRO, is a practical guide to help farmers reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining productivity and competitiveness.

Farmers, managers, and advisers can use the tool to explore and adopt sustainable practices suited to their business mix and farm management goals.

CEFC Head of Natural Capital, Heechung Sung, highlighted the innovative approach, saying, "Pathfinder exemplifies the power of science and finance working hand-in-hand to help Australian farmers address climate challenges. It empowers farmers with the tools and knowledge to make informed decisions tailored to their operations, whether optimising fertiliser use or adopting methane-reducing pasture species. Including CEFC-backed discounted finance-eligible activities, such as feed supplements, fertiliser optimisation, and carbon-sequestering plantings, also aims to bridge a critical gap for farmers keen to invest in sustainable practices," Ms Sung said.

CSIRO Towards Net Zero lead Dr Michael Battaglia said: "Agriculture contributes billions to Australia's GDP, but to stay competitive and meet climate targets, we need new ways to enable our farmers to act - both on farms and in markets.

"We must create pathways to help farmers deliver their low-emissions commodities into sustainability-focused supply chains.

"This needs to be a team game. By integrating environmental sustainability with financial viability, this collaboration helps to create a pathway for a prosperous, net zero agriculture sector."

Pathfinder also equips farmers with the knowledge to establish an emissions baseline, a key step in sustainability reporting.

Ms Sung emphasised that: "Producers who can demonstrate their emissions reductions will have greater access to premium markets and competitive financing. As global supply chains demand higher transparency, these baselines will maintain market access and secure new opportunities."

Potential borrowers are encouraged to use Pathfinder for information on investments that might be eligible for CEFC-backed discounted finance.

ABOUT PATHFINDER:

Pathfinder is a practical, evidence-based resource detailing both known and emerging methods to reduce on-farm emissions across broadacre and livestock. It equips farmers with support and strategies to adopt lower-emissions options, and adjust activities that are essential to on-farm practice, including:

Variable rate (VR) technologies: optimising fertiliser and lime application by combining paddock spatial variability with GPS technology and VR input controllers to improve yield, soil quality and reduce costs

Pasture rejuvenation: using certain legume and herb species, which can help reduce livestock methane emissions, and fertility as well as improve forage quality, feed efficiency and soil condition

Permanent plantings: sequestering carbon while providing windbreaks, shade and shelter for livestock, and habitat for native animals and birds

Feed supplements: Incorporating methane-reducing feed additives, such as asparagopsis seaweed, to lower livestock methane emissions while maintaining animal health and productivity.

Pathfinder also addresses land-use changes like reforestation, supporting carbon sequestration and broader environmental benefits.

Additional guidance on 'technology stacking' demonstrates how combining selected emission reduction strategies can deliver additional sustainability benefits.

ESTABLISHING AN EMISSIONS BASELINE:

Pathfinder includes practical guidance about why and how to establish an emissions baseline, including information on readily available online tools. Simplified calculations explain how to estimate avoided emissions. Emissions baselines are of increasing importance to consumers, producers, and investors as they shift their focus to sustainability and the risks of climate change.

Farmers who can demonstrate how they are reducing emissions are more likely to maintain access to existing and new markets as well as finance from banks and investors.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.csiro.au/ or https://www.cefc.com.au/

SMART SPRAYS AND COLD PLASMA TO OPTIMISE CROP PRODUCTIVITY

TWO MURDOCH UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROJECTS HAVE RECEIVED INVESTMENT FROM THE GRAINS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (GRDC) TO IMPROVE PROFITABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR AUSTRALIAN GRAIN GROWERS.

The projects include the development of novel biodegradable smart sprays for broadacre cropping, and treating wheat and canola with cold plasma for enhanced plant growth, vigour and yield.

The smart sprays project is a three-year, $8.1 million investment led by Murdoch University. It aims to develop and test two new biopolymer products: a soil spray to facilitate water harvesting, and a sticky spray for foliar (leaf) application.

Across production environments, only 20 – 40 percent of rainfall is typically transpired by dryland crops, with up to 60 percent of rainfall lost to evaporation, and 5 – 20 percent lost in runoff and deep drainage.

Professor Daniel Murphy, Director of the CSIRO Murdoch Bioplastic Innovation Hub, said the soil spray would facilitate rainfall runoff into the furrow and reduce soil evaporation, increasing the water available for transpiration and plant water use efficiency.

“The sticky spray would be applied to crops to potentially deliver chemicals, nutrients or antifreeze proteins from bacteria,” Dr Murphy said.

Antifreeze proteins protect against potential crop damage due to frost and provide growers with an opportunity for in-season management of frost events.

GRDC Manager Sustainable Cropping Systems Dr Uys Lourens said these different approaches to smart spray production will diversify GRDC investment in this area, and offers growers different potential price points, scalability and effectiveness.

The second project is a three-year, $5.1 million project led by Murdoch University with partners the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) in WA, the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), a division of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia, and Neymyrup Economics.

It aims to investigate and quantify the agronomic and economic value of applying cold plasma or plasma activated water to wheat and canola seeds and plants.

Cold plasma is formed through the ionisation of a gas (including air) using an electric current, radio frequency or microwave energy. It can be fed through water to create plasma activated water, enabling liquid application.

The use of cold plasma technology in crop production offers a sustainable technology for seed treatment and application during plant growth which could improve grain yield.

Associate Professor Kirsty Bayliss, from Murdoch University’s Harry Butler Institute, said previous research has shown great promise at increasing the rate of germination.

“We will now also be testing plasma activated water to increase nutrients and manage disease levels,” Associate Professor Bayliss said.

“We are excited to test this technology at a large scale in field trials across Australia.”

GRDC Manager Sustainable Cropping Systems Dr Uys Lourens said the two projects signalled an appetite from GRDC for innovative, exploratory research to reach new frontiers for Australian grain growers.

“These new projects aim to develop and trial novel treatments to optimise productivity of crops, and if successful, lead to commercial application pathways for these technologies in broadacre agriculture,” Dr Lourens said.

“This investment will trial and evaluate the application of cold plasma and plasma activated water to both canola and wheat seeds and developing plants.”

“Through rigorous economic analysis, it aims to provide a definitive answer as to whether this technology should be implemented by growers. This includes a potential adoption pathway if implementation is economically sound.”

The research projects conclude in 2028, whereby results and recommendations will be available to growers.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.murdoch.edu.au

Top: Associate Professor Kirsty Bayliss, Murdoch University, Dr Uys Lourens, GRDC and Professor Daniel Murphy, Murdoch University. Photo credit: GRDC

A FINE BLEND OF SCIENCE **WITH HERITAGE GRAPEVINES TO FUTURE PROOF AUSTRALIAN WINES**

Sue Hodder of Wynne and Paul Boss of CSIRO at CSIRO Waite campus in Adelaide.

NEW CLIMATE-RESILIENT AND MILDEW-RESISTANT GRAPEVINES HAVE BEEN PLANTED IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA TO HELP PROTECT AUSTRALIA'S $45 BILLION INDUSTRY.

New mildew-resistant and drought-resilient grapevines have been planted in South Australia's Coonawarra wine region to help safeguard the future of Australia's wine industry against a changing climate and disease threats.

Australia's national science agency, CSIRO, and Treasury Wine Estates (TWE) partnered to future-proof some of the most collected wines in the region from old vines, with the first vines of the new progeny recently planted at Wynns Coonawarra Estate.

The new grapevines blend genetics from TWE's heritage vines in Coonawarra and Barossa Valley, which have enhanced climate resilience, with mildew-resistant traits developed through years of selective breeding by CSIRO, with funding from Wine Australia.

Powdery and downy mildew costs the Australian wine sector an estimated $160 million in management expenses and production losses annually.

CSIRO Research Scientist and project lead, Dr Paul Boss (pictured left), said breeding mildew resistance into elite vines gives future grapevines a genetic advantage to withstand these disease-causing pathogens.

"Using traditional breeding methods, we introduced two distinct genes to the Wynns heritage vines, which give resistance to downy mildew and powdery mildew," Dr Boss said.

"These are from CSIRO-developed breeding lines that confer robust disease resistance and other quality traits onto their progeny.

"Having resistance genes for both powdery and downy mildew makes these plants more robust as it is unlikely the pathogens can break both sources of resistance with a single mutation."

Through many decades of exposure to climate extremes of hot, cold, wet and dry, the heritage vines from the Wynns and Penfolds vineyards have developed a natural resilience to drought, making them prime candidates for further development to enhance their tolerance to climate extremes.

Chief Supply & Sustainability Officer at Treasury Wine Estates, Mr Kerrin Petty, said the global wine industry faced significant challenges managing grapevine disease pressure sustainably while managing the increasingly variable growing conditions created by the changing climate.

"In partnering with CSIRO for this important project, we're combining the genetics of heritage Australian vines from our renowned Wynns Coonawarra Estate and Penfolds brands with scientific research and innovation," said Mr Petty.

"Creating mildew resistant vines that are also able to withstand climatic variation means we're setting up our vineyards to continue producing world-famous wine for generations to come."

The resulting superior cultivars are expected to require fewer inputs, such as the application of fungicide sprays, which will likely lead to additional sustainability benefits including lower carbon emissions from less frequent use of diesel-powered tractors in vineyards.

The project demonstrates how science innovation can be used to bolster adaptation to a changing climate and manage disease pressure, providing knowledge that benefits the wider Australian wine sector to become more sustainable into the future.

The mildew-resistant grapevine breeding lines used in this project were partly funded by Australia's grape growers and winemakers through their investment body Wine Australia with matching funding from the Australian Federal Government.

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST INDUSTRY-LED COLLECTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM bagMUSTER®, STARTS ROUNDING UP AGRICULTURE'S SOFT PLASTIC BAGS

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST INDUSTRY-LED COLLECTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM FOR SOFT PLASTIC AGRICULTURAL INPUT BAGS HAS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED IN BALLARAT. COLLECTION SITES ARE NOW OPENING ACROSS VICTORIA AS PHASE 1 OF A NATIONAL ROLL-OUT.

Left: Matthew Cossey – CEO of CropLife Australia

Right: From the left: Alicia Garden – General Manager of Agsafe, Matthew Cossey – CEO of CropLife Australia, Kathrine Delbridge – CEO of the Australian Seed Federation, Tim Marsh

bagMUSTER® is a new initiative of CropLife Australia in partnership with the Australian Seed Federation. The program will be delivered and managed by CropLife's wholly owned not-for-profit stewardship services provider, Agsafe, providing farmers with a free collection and recycling solution for plastic pesticide, seed, and other agricultural product bags.

"At full scale bagMUSTER will divert up to 45,000 tonnes of single-use soft plastic from landfills each year. This is a significant milestone for the agriculture industry and for national circular economy targets and a further demonstration of CropLife Australia's members commitment to world leading stewardship," said Mr Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife

Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector.

"Plastic bags have become an indispensable part of agriculture, keeping farm inputs like chemicals and seeds safe and ready to use. This new program will further assist the nation's farming sector to be world leaders in sustainability, the circular economy and maintain clean farms," added Mr Cossey.

"AS bagMUSTER enters Phase 1 of its national rollout, beginning in rural Victoria," said Alicia Garden, General Manager of Agsafe.

"We've taken the best of drumMUSTER® and are elevating the existing infrastructure and relationships we've developed over 25 years of delivering CropLife's existing stewardship programs.

> ***"As the program rolls out nationally over the coming years, bagMUSTER has the potential to provide farmers and growers with hundreds of accessible collection points throughout regional and rural Australia. This will ensure that bags, no matter where they are, don't further burden our landfills, waterways and ecosystems.***

> ***"Instead, what was once a waste stream, will be processed to manufacture new products right here in Australia with Australian companies, reducing the amount of virgin plastic in circulation," said Ms Garden.***

"The great power of bagMUSTER is that it has been created by industry, for industry. It's another example of Australian agriculture taking the lead, investing significant resources and driving meaningful change. But we cannot do it alone, " said Mr Cossey.

"Our strategic partnership with the Australia Seed Federation and utilisation of Agsafe's three decades of experience and success has developed a fit-for-purpose industry-funded model enabled through collaboration with agriculture retail stores, bag suppliers, brand owners, farming associations and local governments. It is the strength of these partnerships that will make bagMUSTER a success.

"However, specific credit must go to CropLife members who have provided a significant mobilisation of resources to make this program a reality, demonstrating genuine thought leadership in this space.

"While all the start-up funding to date has been provided by CropLife Australia and Agsafe, what we would like to see next is a genuine funding commitment from state and federal governments to get behind the first national program of its kind so that national rollout can be fast tracked and deliver even greater environmental and recycling benefits. Targeted Government investment would help address the logistical challenges of reach in rural communities, it would accelerate the pace and scope of the rollout and support the Government's commitment to a circular economy by 2030, " concluded Mr Cossey.

"The Australian Seed Federation and its members are deeply committed to making a positive environmental impact. We know farmers and growers want to increase the ability to dispose of these plastic bags in an environmentally friendly and safe manner, but it takes genuine collaboration with rural communities and governments to make these programs accessible," said Katherine Delbridge, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Seed Federation.

"Now is the time for the industry to get behind bagMUSTER. Seed and input companies, bag importers, farmers, and rural supply stores all have a role to play. bagMUSTER needs the support of the whole industry to ensure the best possible program is delivered nationwide.

"It's time to bundle up your bags, bring them in, and spread the word—we look forward to making this work, together," concluded Ms Delbridge. bagMUSTER is part of CropLife's StewardshipFirst® suite of industry-led product stewardship initiatives.

Farmers in Western Victoria can now participate in bagMUSTER by visiting participating retailers, purchasing eligible bags, and dropping them off at designated collection sites. For those outside the initial program area the follow-on phases will see expansion nationally over the next few years.

ABOUT CROPLIFE AUSTRALIA

CropLife Australia is the national peak industry organisation representing the plant science sector in Australia. CropLife's members are the world-leading innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry, worth more than $31.6 billion a year to Australian agricultural production, provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies key to the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability and sustainability. CropLife is a part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about bagMUSTER, find collection sites, or explore participating retailers, visit the bagMUSTER website.
www.bagmuster.org.au/

AUSTRALIAN BANANA GROWERS TR4 SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM RESTARTS

THE AUSTRALIAN BANANA GROWERS' COUNCIL (ABGC) HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM – DELIVERED BY ABGC GROWER SUPPORT (BIOSECURITY) – HAS OFFICIALLY RESUMED TODAY (7 APRIL 2025) TO CONTINUE PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S BANANA INDUSTRY FROM THE DEVASTATING IMPACTS OF PANAMA DISEASE TROPICAL RACE 4 (TR4).

This essential industry-led program, supported by both the government and industry stakeholders, is designed to detect potential outbreaks of TR4 early, enabling growers to take swift action and limit the spread of the disease that could threaten Australia's banana crops. Early detection is vital in minimising the impact on banana plantations and safeguarding the livelihoods of the thousands of Australians dependent on the industry.

"TR4 represents one of the most serious biosecurity threats to Australian banana production," said Leon Collins, Chair of ABGC. "The surveillance program is an integral part of managing this threat and protecting both the banana industry and the broader agricultural sector. We appreciate the ongoing support of our growers, stakeholders, and government partners in this critical effort."

The surveillance program is a collaborative initiative involving all segments of the banana industry led by the ABGC and supported by Biosecurity Queensland. Michael Reid, Chief Plant Health Manager for Queensland said: "For surveillance to work effectively, every grower needs to be participating. Our team will be working with ABGC to ensure everyone is taking reasonable and practical steps to manage their biosecurity risks."

Growers, farm workers, suppliers, and other industry stakeholders will work together to fulfill their General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO). This includes implementing strong biosecurity practices, participating in inspections, and promptly reporting any suspected TR4 cases. The ABGC will continue to provide on-the-ground guidance and support to ensure growers meet their GBO effectively.

In addition to inspections, the program will involve sampling of plants and monitoring of potential risk areas. The ABGC remains dedicated to ensuring the smooth execution of the program and is ready to assist growers with any challenges they may face.

"We are committed to supporting the industry in every possible way," Mr. Collins added. "ABGC will continue to offer resources, expert advice, and practical assistance to help growers implement best-practice biosecurity measures. By working together, we can protect the future of the Australian banana industry."

For more information or to direct any queries, please contact the ABGC at growersupport@abgc.org.au. Growers and industry members can also find further resources and details about Panama Tropical Race 4 surveillance and control measures by visiting the ABGC website or the dedicated Panama TR4 Protect website: **www.panamatr4protect.com.au**

ABOUT ABGC

The Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) is the peak industry body representing banana growers across Australia. The ABGC is dedicated to supporting growers with resources, advocacy, and initiatives that ensure the ongoing growth and success of the Australian banana industry.

MORE INFORMATION

Australian Banana Growers' Council
Email: growersupport@abgc.org.au
Web: www.abgc.org.au
Web: www.panamatr4protect.com

MAINLAND AUSTRALIAN APPLES GAIN MARKET ACCESS TO CHINA

THE AUSTRALIAN APPLE INDUSTRY HAS ACHIEVED A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE WITH THE SIGNING OF A NEW BIOSECURITY PROTOCOL ALLOWING MAINLAND APPLES TO BE EXPORTED TO CHINA, COMMENCING IN THE 2026 SEASON.

The Australian apple industry has achieved a significant milestone with the signing of a new biosecurity protocol allowing mainland apples to be exported to China, commencing in the 2026 season.

This landmark agreement, signed by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the General Administration of Customs, China, marks a pivotal step forward for Australian apple growers seeking to expand their international export footprint.

This new market access presents an opportunity to tap into China's strong demand for premium, high-quality imported fresh fruit and builds on the foundations established by Tasmania, where growers have been successfully exporting to China since 2010.

The signing of this protocol was supported by Hort Innovation and the Apple and Pear research and development levy projects: Apple and Pear Trade Development and Market Access Program (AP23003) and Apple & Pear Market Access & Trade Development Project (AP21001).

Both projects have been focused on expanding market access, increasing engagement and understanding of trade, educating international markets about Australian apples and pears, export capability, competitiveness education for growers, as well as ensuring the industry is ready to act swiftly if new markets open.

The signing of this protocol is an important step forward, enhancing the industry's competitiveness both internationally and domestically.

While apple growers have already been exporting more than 2,500 tonnes of apples to international markets, this new agreement has the potential to open up a large opportunity. Chinese consumers have a well-established preference for branded, high-quality fruit with exceptional freshness and flavor, to which this deal will support.

This milestone is a testament to the collaborative efforts of the Australian apple industry and its stakeholders, paving the way for a brighter future for Australian apples and pears.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.horticulture.com.au

AUSTRALIAN SOILS POSTERS NOW AVAILABLE!

AUSTRALIAN SOILS POSTERS ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE FROM SOIL SCIENCE AUSTRALIA'S ONLINE SHOP.

The Australian Soils poster offers a visual representation of the 15 Soil Orders outlined in the Australian Soil Classification (ASC) system.

The ASC provides a structured framework for categorising soils based on their distinct characteristics, helping facilitate effective communication among scientists and land managers. This system is particularly valuable in land resource surveys, environmental studies, and educational settings.

This A1-sized poster features soil profile photographs and a map indicating the predominant regions for each soil type across Australia.

Such a resource serves as both an educational tool and a decorative piece, enhancing understanding of soil diversity and distribution.

Featuring detailed soil profile photographs and a map, the Australian Soils poster is a must-have for scientists, educators, and soil lovers alike. Order yours today and bring the fascinating world of Australian soils into your home, office, or classroom!

PRODUCT OPTIONS:

A1 poster folded to A4: $19.95 (members) | $25.95 (non-members)

A1 poster in a cylinder: $29.95 (members) | $35.95 (non-members)

Prices include GST and postage to one location in Australia.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.soilscienceaustralia.org.au/shop/

AUSVEG RESPONSE TO **ACCC SUPERMARKETS REPORT**

AUSVEG ACKNOWLEDGES THE RELEASE OF THE FINAL REPORT OF AUSTRALIAN COMPETITION AND CONSUMER COMMISSION'S (ACCC) SUPERMARKETS INQUIRY, AS WELL AS THE GOVERNMENT'S IN PRINCIPLE SUPPORT OF ITS RECOMMENDATIONS.

The report has a strong focus on the fresh produce category and contains a range of recommendations aimed at securing a fairer go for suppliers. These validate the experiences of vegetable grower-suppliers to the big supermarkets, who have continued to express concerns about the power imbalance leading to them shouldering disproportionate risk, uncertainty and financial burden that is threatening their viability. AUSVEG has continued to advocate on these issues during the many recent inquiries into the supermarkets.

The ACCC's support for measures that provide growers with greater certainty, clarity and transparency are welcome, as too is the call to harmonise and streamline the various auditing and compliance schemes retailers require suppliers to comply with.

AUSVEG further supports the ACCC's recommendation to curtail retailers' ability to override provisions in the Food and Grocery Code.

AUSVEG commends the Government which in its response to the ACCC report has committed $2.9 million in funding to go to fresh produce industry associations to deliver targeted education programs.

These will upskill suppliers on retail negotiation, and to understand and enforce their rights under the new Food and Grocery Code. This was a key commitment sought by AUSVEG in its 2025 Federal Election Priorities.

AUSVEG CEO Michael Coote said the ACCC report was further acknowledgment of the concerns raised by grower-suppliers to the supermarkets during many recent inquiries into the sector.

"While a range of measures recommended by the ACCC have the potential to provide growers with greater certainty and transparency, and improve their bargaining position, more detail still needs to be fleshed out about how these will work in practice. As always, whether or not these recommendations will improve business conditions for grower-suppliers to the retailers will be seen in their implementation, which also must include consideration of avoiding additional red tape and compliance consequences.

"Throughout our regular engagements with the many inquiries into the supermarkets during the past 18 months, AUSVEG has continued to emphasise the fundamental point – growers need to be paid fair and sustainable prices that allow them to stay viable, and continue supplying Australian consumers with fresh, healthy and affordable vegetables."

"The ACCC's recommendations have the potential to support this objective, and contribute to a more level playing field for growers, but this needs to translate into positive, real-world improvements, for growers and the entire supply chain."

ABOUT AUSVEG

AUSVEG is the peak industry body for the Australian vegetable, potato and onion sectors, representing over 3,600 growing businesses that employ tens of thousands of workers and produce over 3.8 million tonnes of produce, with a farmgate value of $5.7 billion.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://ausveg.com.au

$55 MILLION IN NEW FUNDING SUPPORT FOR DROUGHT AFFECTED FARMERS ACROSS SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Murray River in South Australia showing the effects of the prolonged drought.

THE MALINAUSKAS STATE GOVERNMENT HAS TODAY ANNOUNCED A FURTHER $55 MILLION PACKAGE OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT DROUGHT AFFECTED FARMERS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

The package builds upon the $18 million in initial assistance announced by the State Government in November 2024, taking the total drought assistance available to $73 million.

The package has been designed in direct consultation with primary producers, including a roundtable with farmers and key industry bodies hosted by the Premier last week.

Most of South Australia is experiencing drought conditions, including some regions with their lowest rainfall on record.

Even if the drought were to break, its impacts will continue for many months or years.

New assistance measures in the package include:

- A further $13 million for On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants for rebates that assist with projects to manage drought conditions and strengthen drought preparedness
- An additional $4 million to assist charities with freight costs to transport donated fodder to assist farmers with feeding livestock
- Immediate financial relief by providing rebates for Emergency Services Levy and commercial vehicle registration fees for primary producers receiving the Commonwealth's Farm Household Allowance
- $2.5 million for an immediate and comprehensive strategy to boost mental health and resilience in drought affected areas
- $1 million for Rural Financial Counselling Support
- $3.5 million in additional supports for rural small businesses
- $3.1 million to assist with culling pests and manage kangaroo populations
- $4.5 million to support producers with the implementation of electronic identification (eID) for sheep and farmed goats
- $1.4 million to co-invest with councils in the upgrade of regional standpipes
- $1.1 million to support the provision of standpipes for critical water needs in the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu
- $500,000 to make bulk water available from Bundaleer and Beetaloo Reservoirs
- $2 million to assist sport and recreation clubs in drought affected areas through the Active Club Program
- $400,000 to develop and encourage new regional events in drought affected areas through the Regional Event Fund
- $250,000 to provide financial support for country students affected by drought to attend camps and excursions
- A further $250,000 for grants of up to $5,000 for the Connecting Communities Events Program, for groups to host events that foster social connections and provide support
- $17.4 million for Future Drought Fund Preparedness and Resilience programs.

These measures build upon the $18 million in support measures outlined in November 2024, which included an initial round of On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Grants, donated fodder transport assistance, health and wellbeing support, grants for the Connecting Communities Events Program, mentoring and counselling.

The package has been carefully designed to complement existing Commonwealth assistance which includes the Farm Household Allowance, concessional loans, resilience planning, the Farm Management Deposit Scheme and taxation measures.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: **https://pir.sa.gov.au/emergencies_and_recovery/drought**

EARLY BROADLEAF WEED OPTION EMERGES FOR CEREAL CROPS

A GOOD OUTCOME FROM EARLY USE OF BROADLEAF HERBICIDES IN OATS DESPITE CONCERNS OVER POTENTIAL CROP IMPACT IS ENCOURAGING FUTURE APPLICATIONS FOR A SOUTHERN WA FARMING ENTERPRISE.

Wellstead Farming is situated in the Broomehill-Tambellup shire in the State's Great Southern region. In addition to oats, it grows barley and wheat and rotates the cereal phase every year with herbicide-tolerant canola to help control grass and broadleaf weeds.

Cropping Manager Duncan Burt, who has worked in the region for 15 years, said the main broadleaf weeds targeted in the cereal phase included capeweed, wild radish and volunteer canola. Reduced effectiveness of Group 2 (formerly Group B) herbicides over time has had them searching for new options against the weeds.

He said they also faced a situation in their Bannister oats last season, when early weeds became a problem, particularly high levels of volunteer canola in-furrow, due to no opportunity for knockdown herbicide applications before a late April planting.

"We typically have a double knock. Weed pressure is a lot smaller and we apply MCPA LVE at 4 to 8-leaf, but we didn't have the option to wait that long last year – the numbers were too high," Duncan said.

"The volunteer canola was shadowing the oats and becoming a big problem. We trialled a light application of some older chemistry, but we were concerned about crop effects, so we talked to our consultant and agronomists, including Tim Trezise (Frankland Rural), and we were put on to Infinity® Ultra as a soft option."

Developed by Bayer, Infinity Ultra comprises a complementary co-formulation of Groups 27 and 12 (formerly Groups H and F) herbicides, pyrasulfotole and diflufenican, and it can be applied from the two-leaf stage in cereals.

"We used Infinity Ultra as pretty much the only option for broadleaf control at 2-leaf plus, and it can be applied up to stem elongation, so it's a great window for application. It gives the option of going early and late," Duncan said.

"There are other options from about 4-leaf, but many have crop effects and we don't like to hurt early vigour or knock the crop at a later stage.

"Crop safety is paramount to high yielding crops and avoiding knocking the vigour of oat plants is important. We have seen before, when adding Flexi-N (liquid nitrogen) and trace elements, that it can do a lot of damage, so by minimising crop effect, you are giving the crop all of the potential for the highest yield possible. By making the most of all rainfall, it gives you confidence that the plant is not held back and is providing as much seed as possible."

Infinity Ultra was applied in a tank mix with MCPA and Hasten adjuvant, and with a high water rate of 100 L/ha. It was applied through one of Wellstead Farming's John Deere sprayers featuring ExactApply™ technology, and using 400 kpa pressure and a coarse droplet size.

"The tank mix went really well, the conditions were sunny and perfect, and we observed things carefully because it was new to us and we were having to come in with a broadleaf control early," Duncan said.

"After that one application, we didn't have to return with another broadleaf spray. The oats weren't knocked around, the vigour was still strong and the crowding was brilliant. Normally we have to come back with the odd radish plant or escape of Roundup Ready® canola, so we were very happy not having to go over the paddock again."

"We were also concerned about Roundup Ready being difficult to control and eliminate, but we were really happy with the Infinity Ultra taking those numbers right out of the picture. There were no survivors in the crop.

"Keeping the crop clean and not having competition for moisture made it clear to us that the oats were growing to their full potential."

He said Infinity Ultra would definitely add to the rotation of chemical groups used at Wellstead Farming in the future.

"We haven't used a lot of Group H (now Group 27) in the past and we think it can add to the toolbox for our different

cereal crops."

"Infinity Ultra will have a good place for dry-sowing of cereals, so we can control weeds and volunteers early."

Duncan said the early application and favourable re-cropping profile with Infinity Ultra also meant there were no plant-back concerns for following seasons.

"We had rainfall of 350-400 mm, which is fine for plant-back, and we have no concerns for the following canola crop. Anyone growing lupins or faba beans would also have no concerns," he said.

Application for registration for control of volunteer canola with Infinity Ultra has been made. At time of publication, Infinity Ultra is not registered for control of volunteer canola.

Infinity® and Roundup Ready® are Registered Trademarks of the Bayer Group.

ABOUT BAYER

Bayer is a global enterprise with core competencies in the life science fields of health care and nutrition. In line with its mission, "Health for all, Hunger for none," the company's products and services are designed to help people and the planet thrive by supporting efforts to master the major challenges presented by a growing and aging global population.

Bayer has had a presence in Australia since 1897 and has a long-term commitment to the health and nutrition of all Australians. Locally, Bayer employs around 600 people across Australia and New Zealand and is dedicated to servicing the needs of rural and remote communities. Bayer embraces and encourages its employees' unique identities and advances a culture of inclusion and diversity.

For further information visit **www.bayer.com.au**

Forward-Looking Statements
This article may contain forward-looking statements based on current assumptions and forecasts made by Bayer management. Various known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors could lead to material differences between the actual future results, financial situation, development or performance of the company and the estimates given here. These factors include those discussed in Bayer's public reports which are available on the Bayer website at www.bayer.com. The company assumes no liability whatsoever to update these forward-looking statements or to conform them to future events or developments.

Above left: *Duncan Burt, Cropping Manager at Wellstead Farming in the Broomehill-Tambellup shire in WA, says Infinity Ultra herbicide was applied without crop effect from the two-leaf crop stage in oats last season and no further broadleaf spray was required.*

AUSVEG SIGNS UP AS WORLD POTATO CONGRESS PLATINUM SUSTAINING PARTNER

AUSVEG HAS SIGNED ON AS A PLATINUM SUSTAINING PARTNER OF THE WORLD POTATO CONGRESS, AS PART OF ITS ONGOING COMMITMENT AND DUTY TO REPRESENT AUSTRALIA'S POTATO INDUSTRY AND GROWERS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.

AUSVEG is the prescribed Peak Industry Body for Australia's potato, onion and vegetable industry. Our core mission includes representing the interests of potato, vegetable and onion growers through advocacy to the highest levels of government, and by fostering adoption of productivity-enhancing innovation that promotes a vibrant and sustainable industry. AUSVEG is the only national body representing the interests of Australian potato growers that is owned by growers, for growers – and the only Australian peak body representative to have signed on as a Platinum Sustaining Partner of the World Potato Congress.

AUSVEG delivers high-quality services to growers in areas such as R&D extension, communications, international trade development and biosecurity preparedness.

Ahead of the 13th World Potato Congress 2026 in Kenya, the partnership with the World Potato Congress affirms AUSVEG's ongoing commitment to leading local and global collaboration, and productivity enhancements in the potato industry, through sharing of knowledge and innovation – while ensuring Australia's potato growers are represented in international and domestic forums at the highest levels.

AUSVEG CEO Michael Coote said, "A key part of our role as the prescribed Peak Industry Body representing the Australian potato industry is ensuring growers are aware of and have opportunities to access the latest innovations, breakthroughs and research – both from within Australia, and internationally. We are proud to join with the World Potato Congress as a Platinum Partner as we lead the way in ensuring Australian growers benefit from the wealth of knowledge and innovation that exists in the global potato industry, and that the potato sector internationally can, in-turn, gain insights and inspiration from the world-class practices employed in Australia."

In a press release welcoming AUSVEG as a Platinum Sustaining Partner, World Potato Congress President Peter VanderZaag said: "Having AUSVEG join as a Platinum Sustaining Partner of the World Potato Congress is an important development. This links the potato growers they represent to the international potato community. The Platinum Partnership is a unique partnership which includes, in part, support for delegates from Global South Countries to attend the biennial Congress event. These delegates represent regions for which potatoes are key to food security and development and we applaud AUSVEG in recognizing the needs of the global potato community in choosing this level of Partnership."

Over 3,600 Australian vegetable, potato and onion producers account for 3.8 million tonnes of vegetable production worth $5.7 billion in farmgate value annually. This includes 1.5 million tonnes of annual potato production, worth more than $1.1 billion – making potatoes the single largest crop produced in the Australian vegetable industry by volume and value. AUSVEG also partners with the International Fresh Produce Association Australia-New Zealand (IFPA-ANZ) to host Hort Connections, the largest horticulture conference in the Southern Hemisphere.

AUSVEG looks forward to continuing to strengthen ties and collaboration with the World Potato Congress, as we advance our shared objectives of promoting a thriving and vibrant potato sector, both in Australia and internationally.

Right: Michael Molloy says that their mixed-species fodder crops provide multiple benefits to their farming system, including highly palatable and nutritious fodder for their cross-bred lambs, soil fertility and structure rejuvenation and strategic grass weed control. (Photo: WeedSmart)

Far Right: With a wide range of the WeedSmart Big 6 strategies in place, the Molloy family is farming in a low-weed environment and minimising the risk of herbicide resistance. (Photo: WeedSmart)

POWER OF PASTURES AND FODDER CROPS TO LOWER WEED NUMBERS

A ROBUST CROP AND PASTURE ROTATION AND STRONG CROP COMPETITION ARE VERY EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES IN MIXED FARMING OPERATIONS TO KEEP WEED NUMBERS LOW IN GRAIN CROPS. THE FLOW-ON EFFECT OF THE LOW WEED NUMBERS IS THAT THERE IS LESS SELECTION PRESSURE ON HERBICIDES.

Michael and Leanne Molloy and their sons Josh and Matt run a fully integrated mixed farming enterprise on properties south of Wagga Wagga, NSW, where mixed species brown manure crops and legume pastures provide fodder for the sheep, boost soil fertility and control grass weeds.

The 1900-ha aggregation of farms in the Yerong, The Rock and Henty districts centres on a winter cropping program that includes 1100 ha of wheat, canola and barley harvested for grain, 550 ha sown to perennial legume pasture and 100 ha of vetch-mix fodder. The vetch-mix fodder crop is brown-manured, and the perennial legume pasture phase runs for 4 to 6 years, providing multiple benefits to the Molloy's farming system.

The remaining 150 ha is less arable and more frost-prone, so these paddocks are cropped less frequently, staying in a perennial pasture phase of lucerne, tall fescue, Phalaris, and clover for about ten years.

The Molloys run 3200 merino ewes and a flock of merino wethers, which they use as a relief valve to lighten the stocking rate if conditions dry off. The sheep are an integral part of the cropping system, grazing on short-term perennial pastures, vetch-mix fodder crops and crop stubble to make the best use of the 520 mm average annual rainfall.

Annual ryegrass is the main weed on the Molloy's farms, along with some broadleaf weeds, but overall, their farming system keeps weed numbers very low. In 2017, the Molloys purchased a new farm near The Rock, which had been cropped continuously for many years. Michael says it took a few years to bring the weed numbers down using their system, but the black oats and ryegrass seed banks have now been reduced to very low levels.

Effective strategies in mixed farming operations such as crop and pasture rotation keep weed numbers low in grain crops.

Using the WeedSmart Big 6 tactics keeps weed numbers low and reduces the risk of herbicide resistance in the Molloy's mixed farming enterprise.

The Molloys use a short-to-medium crop rotation that includes a brown manure cover crop and a pasture phase. Generally, the crop sequence is canola, wheat, canola, wheat and barley, then a mixed-species fodder crop, followed by canola and wheat, then a 4- to 6-year legume pasture phase before returning to grain production.

The mixed-species fodder crop is usually vetch-based with other species such as buster radish, purple top brassica and arrowleaf clover to provide soil nutrition and structure benefits, and a cereal, such as Illabo wheat, to provide early biomass. This highly palatable and nutritious fodder is used mainly to finish the cross-bred lambs.

Michael sprays out the grass weeds and cereals from the vetch-mix in late August, then brown manures the paddock in late October, providing strategic control of annual ryegrass. Canola is sown the following season, serving as a double break for grass weed control. They can then plant wheat into a very low weed seed bank environment.

The legume pasture mix includes barley, lucerne, subclover and arrowleaf/balansa clovers. Two years prior to termination of the pasture phase, the annual grass weeds are spray-topped then the pasture is spray-fallowed (brown-manured) the following spring, leading into the crop phase.

There is less selection pressure on herbicides during the pasture phase than during the cropping phase – a valuable strategy to keep key herbicides working in the Molloy's farming system long into the future.

The Molloys plant their crops on 250 mm row spacing using a tined planter with presswheels. They have a partial controlled traffic farming system where they sow with a 9 m wide bar and spray and spread on 27 m widths, but their harvester is not aligned with these wheeltracks.

They have conducted electromagnetic (EM) surveys combined with a comprehensive soil testing program to map areas of sodic and acidic soils across the farms. Using segmented soil testing for pH and sodicity, they identified three variable rate zones for gypsum and lime.

Canola is a vital crop in their weed management program. To maximise crop competition, they grow hybrid Clearfield canola varieties, ensure good soil health, fertilise to yield potential, establish an even stand at optimal plant density and sow their crops early. Michael has adopted recommendations from Rohan Brill's research in the region, which clearly showed the yield and weed control benefits that flow from sowing hybrid canola early to increase early crop vigour.

Over summer, the sheep graze in all their cropping paddocks, utilising the stubble, sprayed weeds and volunteer crop plants. This grazing pressure on stubbles complements the summer weed control program.

For more information about mixed farming weed management, visit the WeedSmart website: **www.weedsmart.org.au**

Attribution:
Cindy Benjamin, WeedSmart

NEW PANGENOME ANALYSIS UNCOVERS GENETIC KEY TO LARGER PEANUT YIELDS

RESEARCHERS FROM AUSTRALIA AND CHINA HAVE IDENTIFIED CRUCIAL STRUCTURAL VARIATIONS THAT DETERMINE SEED SIZE AND WEIGHT IN PEANUTS, PAVING THE WAY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER-YIELDING CROP VARIETIES.

Comprised of researchers from Murdoch University, Henan Agricultural University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the Shandong Academy of Agricultural Sciences, the team of scientists have assembled a pangenome of peanut that will serve as a fundamental resource for the genetic enhancement of legume crops.

The study, published in Nature Genetics, assessed the genome-wide diversity of 269 peanut accessions, including wild species, landraces and improved species. The researchers found significant genomic variations and highlighted trait-related variations that affect seed size and weight, two of the most critical traits that affect peanut yield.

The study traced back the evolution of domesticated peanut varieties from their wild relatives, discovering that the gene likely responsible for regulating cell division – and therefore yield size – was absent in all 61 wild species analysed.

> ***In a groundbreaking first, the researchers also discovered that the gene Aharf2-2 negatively regulates seed size, and that the deletion of this gene makes seeds bigger.***

Speaking on the findings, Prof Rajeev Varshney, Director of the Centre for Crop and Food Innovation at Murdoch University and Corresponding Author of the study, (pictured above) said:

"Despite the global importance of peanuts, our understanding of the molecular mechanisms and evolutionary factors that influence peanut pod size and weight has been very limited, until now. This study offers the most comprehensive genomic variation resource of peanuts to date and will be an invaluable tool for peanut breeding and crop breeding efforts going forward."

Murdoch University Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of the Food Futures Institute, Professor Peter Davies, added that:

"This research is a remarkable achievement that offers extensive insights into the structural variations and molecular mechanisms that are responsible for seed size and weight. What makes this especially exciting is that it offers new information that can be applied to numerous crops of economic importance, such as cotton and rapeseed. Congratulations to all the contributing authors for this essential contribution to crop improvement efforts. Special recognition goes to Prof Varshney for his role in conceiving and designing the study: this paper marks his 29th inclusion in the Nature portfolio and demonstrates the impact he continues to make in the fields of crop improvement and molecular breeding."

This study is the result of a joint effort between scientists from Murdoch University's Centre for Crop & Food Innovation; the College of Agronomy, Henan Agricultural University, China; the School of Life Sciences and Biotechnology, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China; and the Institute of Crop Germplasm Resources, Shandong Academy of Agricultural Sciences, China.

The team generated a comprehensive pangenome for both wild and cultivated peanuts, encompassing two diploid wild species, two tetraploid wild species and four tetraploid cultivated species. They assessed the genome-wide diversity of 269 peanut accessions, including wild species, landraces and improved species, and conducted structural variation-genome wide association studies to investigate agronomic traits related to yield.

Full details of this study and its implications can be found in **Nature Genetics.**

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FOOD SECURITY IS NATIONAL SECURITY: **CROPLIFE AUSTRALIA WELCOMES GREEN PAPER**

CROPLIFE AUSTRALIA WELCOMES TODAY'S RELEASE OF THE NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY PREPAREDNESS GREEN PAPER, WHICH CALLS FOR FOOD SECURITY PREPAREDNESS TO BE ELEVATED TO THE SAME LEVEL AS NATIONAL DEFENCE.

CropLife has been proud to partner with The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) since the inception of this critical work. The report recognises the imperative to ensure that threats and risks are managed through preparedness, rather than simply reacting to crises, and that must become the standard operating principle of government.

"We are on the brink of a major agricultural policy crisis that will occur in less than a decade if action is not taken," said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry body for the plant science sector. "If we continue to treat food security as a downstream issue rather than a national security pillar, we risk our economic wellbeing, sovereignty and regional influence."

"Australia's food system is currently vulnerable - reliant on 'just-in-time' supply chains and exposed to global shocks, climate change, and rising inequality. More than 30 per cent of Australian households' face food insecurity. This is not just a social issue - it's a national interest priority," said Mr Cossey.

The Green Paper highlights the essential role of modern crop protection tools, such as glyphosate, and agricultural biotechnology in safeguarding Australia's agricultural production against growing environmental, biosecurity, and geopolitical challenges. As climate change intensifies and global trade becomes more volatile, ensuring that farmers retain access to the essential tools they need to sustainably manage crop production is paramount. The Paper also notes the increasing regulatory risk that could impact farmers ability to access essential agricultural products.

"We cannot keep removing crop protection tools from the market without providing viable, innovative alternatives," said Mr Cossey. "The European Commission's own Vision for Agriculture and Food paper released last month acknowledges that Europe will struggle to feed itself if it keeps taking tools away from its farmers without having an innovation pipeline for farmers. We must not import this problem into Australia."

"While Australia's agriculture and plant science sector has already demonstrated world-leading resilience through diversified and de-risked supply chains, there remains a clear role for government to assist further improvement. Supporting trade agreements with new suppliers, accessing global innovation, incentivising domestic manufacturing and ensuring streamlined, science-based regulation will strengthen Australia's self-sufficiency and protect its farmers against global shocks.

"The Green Paper highlights it's time for the Department of Agriculture to stand up and demonstrate its ability to lead a food security preparedness agenda. This paper lays out the threats and the path forward. The Government must now respond with a clear, coordinated policy agenda that supports farmers and secures our nation's food future," concluded Mr Cossey.

CITRUS SOUTH AUSTRALIA NEWS ROUND UP

BY KERRIE ROBERTSON | WWW.CITRUSSA.COM.AU

CITRUS GROWER PEST DAY – LOXTON RESEARCH CENTRE

About 20 growers gathered at the Loxton Research Centre on April 3 for a Citrus Pest Management Workshop. The session was led by New South Wales DPI's Stephen Falivene, Andrew Creek, and Andrew Jessop. The workshop covered six key citrus pests, including Red Scale, Mealybugs, and Queensland Fruit Fly (Q fly). Discussions focused on crop monitoring techniques, spray thresholds, and effective treatment options. Andrew Jessop delivered a detailed presentation on Q fly, highlighting its behaviour, lifecycle, and management strategies. The day was well received by attendees, with newer growers gaining valuable insights and more experienced growers benefiting from a timely refresher.

UPCOMING SEASON LAUNCH

The 2025 citrus growing season will be officially launched at the Adelaide Central Markets on May 30. Orchestrated by Penny Reidy and her team at the South Australian Produce Market, the event will include some local South Australian personalities. Visit: **www.citrussa.com.au**

RIVERLAND INDICATIVE FRUIT SIZING TO MARCH 14

The latest indicative fruit size estimates have been released by Craig Swanbury from Fruit Doctors. See table below.

RIVERLAND - INDICATIVE FRUIT SIZE 2025

Variety	Benchmark	Regional Results (week ending 14th March 2025		
	Diameter Target (mm) for 14th March	Average Diameter (mm)	Average Diameter Range (mm)	Current Growth)mm per week)
Early-Season Navel	76+	76.9	70.5-84.3	1.7-2.3
Mid-season Navel	72+	73.7	68.5-79.4	1.9-2.4
Late-Season Navel	70+	71.4	68.0-74.6	1.7-1.9
Valencia	63+	63.7	61.2-67.7	1.7-1.9
Afourer	48+	49.0	46.5-52.5	1.9-2.3
Imperial	46+	46.1	44.7-47.5	1.7-2.0

(Source https://www.citrussa.com.au/news/April-2025)

USEFUL HARVEST RESOURCES

As the 2025 citrus harvest starts to kick into gear, there are several resources on Citrus SA's website which may be useful to growers. These include a labour hire template, the Australian Citrus Harvesting Handbook in both English and Punjabi, information of the movement of fruit bins as well as PIRSA's requirements for the movement of fruit between outbreak and suspension areas. Visit: **www.citrussa.com.au**

CITRUS SA FEEDBACK TO HORT INNOVATION'S SHIFT PROCESS AND CITRUS SIP

Citrus SA recently provided detailed feedback on Hort Innovation's SHIFt process and the Citrus Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). Their core message? Make it simpler, clearer, and more grower-focused. Growers feel the current SIP is overly complex, with bureaucratic language that's hard to follow. The document lacks clear connections between strategies, outcomes, and the tangible benefits for levy payers. CSA is calling for plain-English summaries, straightforward KPIs, and transparent reporting on how and where funds are spent.

CSA also recommends reducing the SIP's planning horizon from five years to three. This reflects the need for more agile responses to global economic shifts and biosecurity threats. Longer-term projects should be milestone-driven, with robust grower oversight and regular reviews to justify continued investment. CSA is advocating for stronger grower involvement in shaping strategic priorities, ensuring projects genuinely reflect on-the-ground needs. They want clear investment reports that include forecast vs actual spend, return on investment, and benefits realisation — all in formats growers can understand. Importantly, they say delivery partners should be rewarded for outcomes, not just for spending to budget.

They're also pushing for a more representative and regionally elected Citrus SIAP (Strategic Investment Advisory Panel), not one dominated by national bodies. This includes reviving a model of regional grower group representation and bringing in observers to boost knowledge diversity. CSA's message is clear: levy payers must be at the centre of all decisions. Transparency, accountability, and timely communication are vital. Growers want their voices heard — not only through consultation but through structured, inclusive governance that values their knowledge and investment.

For more details on SHIFt, visit: **horticulture.com.au/hort-innovation/funding-consultation-and-investing/shift**

NSW DPI PEST FACT SHEETS

The Integrated Pest Management (IPDM) extension program for the Citrus Industry has a range of fact sheets of interest to growers, for example the Huanglongbing. The Huanglongbing (HLB) is the most devastating citrus disease in the world. More than one Liberibacter species has been reported to cause HLB, but in Asia, North and South America and Oceania, the main responsible pathogen-vector relationship is 'Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus' and the Asian citrus psyllid,which is currently exotic to Australia*. For more information and the fact sheet visit: **https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1564179/Huanglongbing.pdf**

**All advice is general in nature and growers should always consult their agronomist or packing shed for individual recommendations.*

PROGRAM LAUNCHED TO UNLOCK GROWER SOLUTIONS FOR AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST HORTICULTURE CHALLENGES

MENTORING TO TRANSFORM IDEAS INTO REAL SOLUTIONS IS ONE OF THE KEY OFFERINGS OF A NEW PROGRAM LAUNCHED TODAY BY HORT FRONTIERS. THE NEW PROGRAM – AUSTRALIAN-GROWN INNOVATION, DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH STARTUPBOOTCAMP AND CLUSTER CONNECT - IS DESIGNED TO DRIVE INNOVATION THAT WILL TACKLE THE MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES IN HORTICULTURE.

Matt Mansfiel and Symone Brown at Mansfields Nursery

Over the next five years, the program, which is for Australian growers and those across the horticulture supply chain, will accelerate grower-led innovation through three stages of mentorship. The aim is to turn great ideas into commercially viable products and services that make a real difference on the ground.

Its objective will be to unlock transformative opportunities and deliver practical solutions to real industry challenges such as: climate resilience strategies, value-added product innovation, technology-driven solutions harnessing AI, and supply chain improvements to increase productivity.

All solutions created will deliver on solving these challenges through a requirement to meet one of the five overarching Frontiers themes: healthy living, adaptation and resilience, market access, disruptive technologies and capability building.

Brett Fifield, CEO of Hort Innovation said about the program: "Australian growers are the country's most innovative entrepreneurs. They're on the frontline of horticulture and know better than anyone the problems that need solving. "This program has been designed to tap into this knowledge and the entrepreneurial spirit of Australian growers to try and solve problems together for our horticulture sector.

"Our recent Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook showed that the horticulture sector has now reached a total production value of $17 billion, with more growers being given the tools to bring farm changing ideas to life we know that we will see this number continue to grow."

Australian nursery growers, Matt Mansfield and Symone Brown, General Managers from Mansfield's Nursery and Tissue Culture Australia have experienced their own innovation journey and shared the potential they see in a program like Australian-Grown Innovation. "We found the innovation journey was a bit of a rollercoaster full of ups and downs. It felt like we were renovating a house at times—setting out to solve one problem, only to uncover more along the way, and seeing the costs escalate beyond what we had planned."

"A program like Australian-Grown Innovation would have helped us explore the ideas more thoroughly and figure out our end goal faster. We can see how it would have benefited our program creation, and we are sure it will help lots of other growers just like us to create their own innovations."

Anna Barlow, Food and Agriculture Innovation Partner at Startupbootcamp said: "Australian-Grown Innovation is for growers, producers, entrepreneurs and businesses across the horticulture supply chain who want to develop new ideas and turn them into real-world products or services.

"Helping new businesses in the food and agriculture space has been a big part of what Startupbootcamp has been focused on and we are thrilled to be able to work with Frontiers to bring this program to life to continue doing so."

This program has been co-funded by the Hort Frontiers program and Startupbootcamp to solve real world horticulture challenges and give growers the tools to innovate more homegrown technology.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more or register for the program head to www.frontiers.au/agi

FARMERS READY TO WORK WITH RE-ELECTED LABOR GOVERNMENT

THE NATIONAL FARMERS' FEDERATION CONGRATULATES ANTHONY ALBANESE AND THE ALP ON THEIR RE-ELECTION.

NFF President David Jochinke said the agricultural sector stands ready to work constructively with the Government.

"We look forward to continuing our engagement with Prime Minister Albanese and the Ministry team on the issues that matter to farmers and the rural communities they support," Mr Jochinke said.

"When agriculture thrives, so do regional communities and the Australian economy. Not only do Australian farmers feed and clothe Australians, the sector employs over 255,000 people and production is forecast to reach $91 billion this year.

"Industry and Government have backed the NFF's Roadmap for agriculture to become a $100 billion industry by 2030, by working together this goal is within reach.

"The NFF and our members want to focus back in on that $100 billion target and work together on a positive plan to grow the industry."

Mr Jochinke said the election campaign had brought important commitments from Labor, many of which reflected priorities put forward by the NFF and its members.

"They've backed things like moving on a right to repair, and investing in farm safety, connectivity, and our trade relationships. The job for us now is to partner on getting those things done.

"Importantly, they've embraced the idea of a National Food Security Strategy. We're hoping we can use this to drive some really positive collaboration between industry and government. That piece of work has been a long time coming and with the uncertain state of the world it's never been more critical."

Mr Jochinke also acknowledged the Coalition, notably Opposition Leader Peter Dutton and Shadow Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud, for supporting many of the NFF's election priorities during the election campaign. Mr Jochinke said the NFF also recognised the independents and minor parties elected to the Parliament, and will work with these key parliamentary stakeholders over this term.

"Agricultural advocacy isn't just about working with the major parties. We've appreciated independents and minor parties who've opened their door to the NFF in recent years.

"We want to build on those relationships and embrace new ones because delivering for farmers depends on having champions right across the Parliament."

CROPSCANAG DEVELOPS NIR ON-COMBINE GRAIN ANALYSER FOR NEXT-GENERATION COMBINES

CROPSCANAG, A GLOBAL LEADER IN NEAR-INFRARED (NIR) GRAIN ANALYSIS TECHNOLOGY, IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADVANCED NIR ON-COMBINE GRAIN ANALYSER FOR CASE IH AND NEW HOLLAND'S NEXT-GENERATION COMBINES.

Through close collaboration with Case IH and New Holland engineers, CropScanAg has successfully integrated its CropScan 4000VT

Software with Case IH and New Holland's cutting-edge dual 12-inch monitors, enhancing real-time grain quality analysis and harvest efficiency.

The CropScan 4000VT is a proven on combine grain analyser that measures protein, moisture, oil, and starch in grains as they are harvested. This seamless integration with Case IH and New Holland

Dual 1200 monitors provides farmers with instant insights into grain quality, empowering them to make informed harvesting, storage, and fertiliser decisions for the next season.

The integration of CropScan 4000VT software with Case IH and New Holland next-generation combines represents a technological leap in smart harvesting, offering key benefits such as:

- Maximized Nitrogen Efficiency – Applying Nitrogen Fertiliser in the right place at the right rate
- Grain Inventory Management & Marketing – Maximising profits and making informed selling decisions
- Profitability and Sustainability – Reducing fertilise waste while maintaining or improving yields

By embedding NIR analysis within the Case IH and New Holland's combine interface, CropScanAg continues to lead the way in precision farming solutions, helping farmers worldwide to harvest smarter, not harder.

Josh White, Precision Farming Regional Manager, McIntosh and Sons, Geraldton, WA, commented, "It's great to offer this technology to our next gen combine customers, allowing them to continue to gather their protein data, gain deeper insights and improve their farm efficiencies. We noticed that during the New Holland CR11 2025 harvest demo program, the integration of the Cr4000VT into the 12-inch consoles really simplified the experience as well."

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.cropscanag.com, or contact sales@cropscanag.com

QUEENSLAND ON THE PULSE WITH MUNGBEAN BREAKTHROUGH

Stakeholders at the launch of two new varieties of mungbeans.

QUEENSLAND'S MUNGBEAN INDUSTRY IS SET FOR A MAJOR BOOST WITH THE LAUNCH OF TWO NEW HIGH-YIELD VARIETIES – BROLGA AND KOOKABURRA.

The varieties were developed through the National Mungbean Improvement Program (NMIP) a co-investment between the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), and were developed to provide growers with improved grain quality and disease resistance.

The varieties were officially launched today at the Hermitage Research Facility in Warwick, with co-funders DPI and GRDC and commercial partner Australian Mungbean Association (AMA).

The launch highlighted DPI's scientific contributions to the industry and brought growers and stakeholders into the field to inspect and compare the new lines against existing varieties.

The joint $8.3 million GRDC-DPI National Mungbean Improvement Program has been running since 2022 and is a modern and efficient breeding initiative focused on developing varieties that will support consistent production, underpinning enduring profitability for growers.

Mungbean is a vital export crop for Queensland, with the industry generating over $113 million in export revenue in 2023/24.

The introduction of these superior varieties is expected to further cement Queensland's position as the leading supplier of premium mungbean to international markets.

"These new varieties will help Australia meet its production target of 100,000 tonnes per year," DPI principal plant breeder Dr Merrill Ryan said.

"With higher yields, larger seed size, and resistance to halo blight, tan spot, and powdery mildew, Brolga and Kookaburra will deliver immediate and lasting benefits to growers, processors, and exporters.

"These new lines will enhance the stability of supply, ensuring Queensland continues to meet the growing global demand for high-quality pulses."

Seed for these new varieties will be available for growers to purchase later this year for the summer 2026 growing season.

JAMES HUNT, PRESIDENT, AUSTRALIAN MUNGBEAN ASSOCIATION

"Brolga and Kookaburra have the potential to improve grower returns while also enhancing Australia's strong reputation as a premium supplier of high-quality, large seeded, green shiny mungbeans into high-value international markets," Australian Mungbean Association President James Hunt said.

"The AMA is pleased to be the commercialising partner and looks forward to making these varieties available to growers in the 2025/2026 season through our member network."

DR TEMITOPE JEKAYINOLUWA, GENETIC TECHNOLOGIES OFFICER, GRAINS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

GRDC Genetic Technologies Officer Dr Temitope Jekayinoluwa said the National Mungbean Improvement Program is opening up new avenues for growers to boost their productivity and profitability.

"This is the fifth iteration of the NMIP, building on the achievements of previous investments in this field," Dr Jekayinoluwa said.

"The initiative aims to develop and release varieties that have shown superior performance in regional yield trials and disease nurseries across the Northern Grains Region.

"It targets higher yields, consistency, adaptability, and disease resistance, while also ensuring grain quality that meets premium international market standards.

"This latest launch is a prime example of the significant advancements this project continues to make for the industry."

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/

CRT PROVIDES A $50,000 BOOST FOR COUNTRY PRIMARY SCHOOLS

THE 2025 CRT PRIMARY SCHOOLS PROGRAM IS DELIVERING A $50,000 BOOST TO 25 PRIMARY SCHOOLS ACROSS RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA, SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS EDUCATION INITIATIVES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

The program attracted 88 applications from schools eager to enhance learning experiences through Parents and Friends Associations (P&Fs). Each of the 25 successful schools will receive $2,000 in funding to support a wide range of student-focused projects.

Rebecca Gay, Head of Independents at CRT, said the continued demand for the program reflects the vital role schools play in rural communities.

"We were thrilled with the quality and variety of applications this year. It's clear these schools, and their P&F groups, are passionate about delivering opportunities for their students," said Ms Gay.

> *"CRT stores are part of these local communities, and we see the incredible work schools do every day. Supporting initiatives that grow confident, capable young people is something we're proud to be part of."*

Funding in 2025 will support a broad mix of projects, including:

- Establishing or expanding veggie gardens
- Purchasing science and education resources
- Upgrading sporting equipment
- Buying new library books and learning tools
- Assisting with costs for school camps and excursions

These diverse initiatives reflect the unique needs of each school, with many aiming to give students hands-on, practical experiences that support both curriculum learning and wellbeing.

For a full list of 2025 recipients, see below or visit: **www.crt.com.au/primary-schools-program**

SCHOOL NAME	STATE	CRT STORE NAME
Blayney Public School	NSW	Hill & Crofts, Blayney
Ellerston Public School	NSW	Scone Rural Supplies, Scone
Orange Public School	NSW	The Rural Centre, Orange
Tinonee Public School	NSW	Taree & Wingham Produce, Taree
Amamoor State School	QLD	Tom Grady Rural Merchandise, Gympie
Peak Crossing State School	QLD	Farmcraft Rural, Kalbar
Burnett Heads State School	QLD	Northside Produce, Bundaberg
Moonie State School	QLD	Tara Rural Supplies, Tara
Mount Kilcoy State School	QLD	Kilcoy Rural, Kilcoy
Mundulla Primary School	SA	D & M Rural, Bordertown
Penola Primary School	SA	Castec Rural Supplies, Penola
Lameroo Regional Community School	SA	Walter Agencies, Lameroo
Manoora Primary School	SA	NTS Rural, Kapunda
Port Elliot Primary School	SA	FPAG, Victor Harbor
Koolunga Primary School	SA	Koolunga Garage Farm Supplies, Koolunga
Campbells Creek Primary School	VIC	Crameri's, Maryborough
Fish Creek and District Primary School	VIC	Browns Stockfeeds, Leongatha
Miners Rest Primary School	VIC	Davies Rural & Hardware, Creswick
St. Laurence O'Toole Primary School	VIC	Browns Stockfeeds, Leongatha
Meeniyan Primary School	VIC	Browns Stockfeeds, Leongatha
St Mary's Primary School	VIC	WG & SF Mcpherson, Brim
Inverleigh Primary School	VIC	Hewitt and Whitty, Inverleigh
Coorow Primary School	WA	Watheroo Rural Traders, Watheroo
Frankland River Primary School	WA	Frankland Rural, Frankland River
Munglinup Primary School	WA	Clarke & Stokes Agriservices, Esperance

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.crt.com.au

Above: *Ladysmith Public School, recipient of a CRT grant in 2023*
Below: *Yolla District School, recipient of a CRT grant in 2023*

RESEARCH INTO INDUSTRY'S BEST GRASS HERBICIDE STRATEGIES A BOON FOR GROWERS

INDEPENDENT, "SHOWPIECE" TRIALS INVESTIGATING THE BEST UPFRONT HERBICIDE STRATEGIES PUT FORWARD BY CROP PROTECTION COMPANIES AGAINST ANNUAL RYEGRASS ARE PROVING HIGHLY VALUABLE FOR GROWERS' WEED MANAGEMENT PLANNING.

Growers need to keep track of changes in chemical availability and pricing to assist with optimal decision-making. However, being aware of industry research results remains a key consideration to ensure they maximise weed control in their cropping programs.

Showpiece trials comparing the best pre-emergent and early post-emergent herbicide strategies against annual ryegrass will continue this year by specialist private research and extension group, SLR. They have been conducted in Western Australia for the past three seasons.

The herbicide treatments are evaluated in a similar way to GRDC National Variety Trials™ (NVT) research, with last year's trials being conducted at Dalwallinu, Goomalling and Kellerberrin in the State's wheatbelt region.

The trials compared a wide range of popular standard herbicides, including trifluralin, pyroxasulfone, Terrain® Flow, Callisto®, Boxer Gold®, Overwatch®, Mateno® Complete, Luximax® and Voraxor® applied in a variety of combinations pre-emergent and early post-emergent.

Farm consultancy group, Synergy Consulting, has kept a close eye on the research over the past three years and has hosted several groups of growers at the sites. The trials have also been visited by numerous other growers during field walk events.

Principal consultant David Pfeiffer said the SLR showpiece trials program was a relatively new concept and the research into the best herbicide strategies against annual ryegrass was "a powerful tool for growers".

"It's great that there will continue to be opportunities for growers, and grower groups, to look over these trials," David said.

Last year's trials once again showed the clear benefits of achieving strong weed control from effective early post-emergent herbicide applications.

In early August at Dalwallinu, standard incorporated-by-sowing (IBS) treatments including pyroxasulfone resulted in 78-85% control of annual ryegrass, whereas following a pre-emergent application of trifluralin with pyroxasulfone in the form of Mateno Complete at the early post emergent stage increased the control to almost 92%.

Mateno Complete also contains aclonifen and diflufenican and has been targeted for early post-emergent application by more and more growers in recent times to help achieve longer control, particularly of annual ryegrass, across the entire soil surface compared with IBS herbicides.

Mateno Complete also proved more powerful when compared to an early-post emergent application of Boxer Gold following pyroxasulfone IBS at Dalwallinu, improving the control from 85% to 92%.

In November at Kellerberrin, the early post-emergent application of Mateno Complete following IBS application of trifluralin showed 99% control, an increase of nearly 13 percentage points compared with pre-emergent application of pyroxasulfone, trifluralin and Callisto. This resulted in a 600 kilograms per hectare yield advantage at harvest. Control from Mateno Complete following Terrain Flow was also about 10 percentage points higher than the pre-emergent application of Terrain Flow with pyroxasulfone.

Earlier in July, all of the early post-emergent Mateno Complete applications demonstrated 98-99% annual ryegrass control, compared with all pre-emergent pyroxasulfone applications showing 88-92% control.

It was a similar story at Goomalling, with annual ryegrass plant counts taken in June, July and September consistently showing the lowest counts per square metre in the Mateno Complete treatments.

At all sites, there was also an early post-emergent application of Mateno Complete following pre-emergent use of Boxer Gold, compared to pre-emergent application of pyroxasulfone followed by post-emergent use of Boxer Gold, and there was up to a 9-percentage point annual ryegrass control benefit where the Mateno Complete was applied.

David said last year's showpiece trials were "pretty conclusive" in showing that an early post-emergence application of Mateno Complete was the best

"The post-emergent strategy is a no-brainer – Mateno Complete is much more robust for these applications and it consistently wins every time.

strategy to achieve optimum annual ryegrass control, and the evidence in the previous trials was similar.

He said the challenge for growers, particularly with large-scale operations, was effectively managing their spraying logistics to target weeds before they became too big, and prior to weather events, to ensure they maximised control from applications of the herbicide.

"The post-emergent strategy is a no-brainer – Mateno Complete is much more robust for these applications and it consistently wins every time. You get a weed kill over the whole surface, you don't have to load as much (pre-emergent herbicide) upfront, which is also better for crop safety because there will be less likelihood of damage if there's a heavy downpour, and it pushes the weed control later into the season."

"If there are broadleaf weeds present, it will also sufficiently control both those weeds and the ryegrass."

This was also demonstrated in last year's trials, with the Mateno Complete applications largely being the only treatments to almost completely control volunteer canola.

David said growers needed to have the spraying capacity to undertake post-emergent applications of Mateno Complete.

"Having sufficient capacity can be difficult, so it can be best to nominate a percentage of your program, covering the bad grass areas, for these applications."

David said the research was showing growers largely had two options for their early annual ryegrass control – apply pyroxasulfone in a tank mix pre-emergent to achieve near 90% control, or apply Mateno Complete early post-emergent for 95% plus control after upfront application of herbicides like trifluralin or Boxer Gold.

He said prosulfocarb and diflufenican were other suitable herbicide options for early post-emergent applications; however, their weed control performance was not as consistently good as that seen with Mateno Complete.

Mateno® Complete is a Registered Trademark of the Bayer Group.

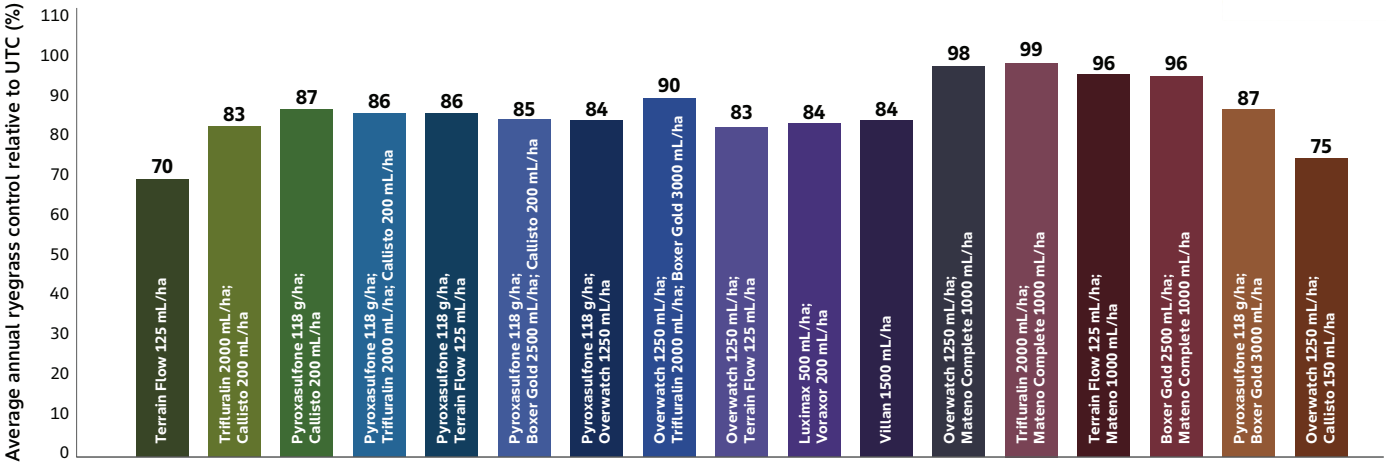
FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information visit **www.bayer.com.au**

Forward-Looking Statements
This article may contain forward-looking statements based on current assumptions and forecasts made by Bayer management. Various known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors could lead to material differences between the actual future results, financial situation, development or performance of the company and the estimates given here. These factors include those discussed in Bayer's public reports which are available on the Bayer website at www.bayer.com. The company assumes no liability whatsoever to update these forward-looking statements or to conform them to future events or developments.

Above left: *Growers pictured inspecting one of the "showpiece" trials conducted by specialist private research and extension group, SLR, at Goomalling in Western Australia last season. The trials compared the best pre-emergent and early post-emergent herbicide strategies against annual ryegrass and will continue this year.*

SLR KELLERBERIN, WA TRIAL – ANNUAL RYEGRASS CONTROL (%) - NOV, 2024



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IN THE EVER-EVOLVING WORLD OF CROP PROTECTION, VERTENTO® INSECTICIDE EMERGES AS A GROUNDBREAKING SOLUTION FOR TREE CROP GROWERS. THIS INNOVATIVE PRODUCT, POWERED BY PLINAZOLIN® TECHNOLOGY, OFFERS A UNIQUE MODE OF ACTION THAT PROMISES TO REVOLUTIONISE PEST MANAGEMENT IN ALMONDS, AVOCADOS, CITRUS, MACADAMIAS, MANGOES AND PAPAYAS.

A NOVEL APPROACH TO PEST CONTROL

VERTENTO® is classified as a Group 30 insecticide, making it the first of its kind registered for use in tree crops in Australia. This new mode of action is crucial for managing insecticide resistance, a growing concern in modern agriculture. The active ingredient, isocycloseram, works by targeting the insect's nervous system at a completely new site, ensuring effectiveness against pests that may have developed resistance to other chemistries.

POWERFUL PROTECTION WITH LOW USE RATES

With 400 g/L of isocycloseram, VERTENTO® insecticide boasts a remarkably low use rate of just 5 mL/100 L. This concentrated formulation not only reduces the amount of product needed but also minimises environmental impact with less packs to transport, recycle and takes up less room in the chemical shed.

Despite its low use rate, VERTENTO® insecticide delivers robust efficacy against key pests such as spotting bugs and macadamia seed weevil.

Right: Syngneta Portfolio Lead Scott Mathew and growers inspecting tree crop applications at a dye night in Bundaberg Qld, 2024.

Top Far Right: The Syngneta team talking with growers about VERTENTO® insecticide at the 2025 Australian Citrus Congress in Griffith, NSW.

Bottom Far Right:
1. Untreated - 100 nuts from untreated almond tress

2. Treated with VERTENTO®- 100 nuts from treated almond tress

RAPID ACTION

VERTENTO® insecticide acts through both contact and ingestion, stopping pest feeding within hours of application. While it effectively paralyses insect pests immediately, it may take a couple of days for them to die and fall from the trees.

OPTIMISED FOR AUSTRALIAN CONDITIONS

The VERTENTO® insecticide formulation has been specifically designed to withstand the harsh Australian climate. Its excellent sunlight stability and rainfast properties ensure consistent protection for your crop, even in challenging weather conditions.

VERSATILITY ACROSS TREE CROPS AND PESTS

With registrations in almonds, citrus, avocados, mangoes, macadamias and papayas, across a range of key pests, VERTENTO® insecticide has versatility; making it a valuable tool for growers managing diverse orchards. With a wide window of application, it also makes it easy for growers to include in their insect management program.

APPLICATION BEST PRACTICES

Like any crop protection application, to maximise the effectiveness of VERTENTO® insecticide, growers must prioritise thorough coverage and accurate dosing. The product sits on the surface of the plant, making it essential to achieve complete and even distribution across the crop canopy. Always use a non-ionic adjuvant such as AGRAL® spray adjuvant with every application to enhance performance. It is also important to adjust water volumes according to crop growth stage to ensure thorough coverage, and be aware that new growth emerging after application may not be protected.

Timing is crucial – monitor your orchard regularly and apply VERTENTO® insecticide only when local economic thresholds are reached and adhere to the label instructions, including the maximum number of applications per season and the minimum interval between sprays.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

While VERTENTO® insecticide is a powerful tool, it should be included as part of a comprehensive integrated pest management strategy. VERTENTO® insecticide may disrupt some beneficial arthropods. Care should be taken to minimise spray drift to reduce harmful effects on beneficial arthropods in non-crop areas. Using VERTENTO® insecticide only when pests reach threshold and carefully timing beneficial releases will ensure pests are controlled and beneficials are not adversely impacted.

Orchard hygiene is also important. For instance, to assist macadamia seed weevil control or Carpophilus beetle in almonds, remove and destroy fallen nuts within two weeks of spraying to prevent the pest lifecycle from completing.

A VALUABLE ADDITION TO YOUR PEST MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

VERTENTO® insecticide represents a significant advancement in tree crop protection. Its novel mode of action, low use rate, and robust efficacy make it a valuable tool for growers seeking to optimise their pest management strategies. By incorporating VERTENTO® insecticide into your program and following best application practices, you can enhance the protection of your orchard, potentially improve crop yields and quality, and ultimately increase the profitability of your tree crop operation.

With its impressive performance and unique chemistry, VERTENTO® insecticide has the potential to become an indispensable tool in your efforts to grow healthy, productive tree crops for years to come.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on VERTENTO® insecticide, please visit syngenta.com.au/vertento or speak with your local Syngenta representative.

VERTENTO® insecticide has the potential to become an indispensable tool in your efforts to grow healthy, productive tree crops for years to come.

MISSING THE TARGET: **STUDY PREDICTS SHARP DECLINE IN AUSTRALIANS' DIETS BY 2030**

NEW RESEARCH FROM CSIRO, AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL SCIENCE AGENCY, SHOWS AUSTRALIANS' EATING HABITS ARE ON A DOWNWARD SPIRAL AND WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT INTERVENTION THE NATION WILL FALL DRAMATICALLY SHORT OF ITS AMBITIOUS 2030 HEALTH TARGETS.

Findings from the new study, published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, predict the consumption of discretionary foods to surge, fruit intake will decline, and vegetables will remain well below recommendations over the next five years.

Key findings show:

- Discretionary food consumption (ultra processed foods and sugary drinks) will soar by 18 per cent by 2030.
- Fruit consumption will drop by nearly 10 per cent.
- Vegetable intake will remain stagnant at well below recommended levels.
- Young adults (18-30) are the only age group showing some positive trends, yet still consume excessive amounts of discretionary foods.

The research also indicated some concerning trends for older Australians, with those over 71 showing the steepest projected decline in fruit consumption – a 14.7 per cent drop by 2030.

Using predictive modelling techniques, CSIRO researchers analysed nine years of data from over 275,000 Australian adults to forecast future dietary trends and compare against the national targets.

Dr Gilly Hendrie, Senior CSIRO Research Scientist, said this innovative approach allows researchers to anticipate and address potential public health challenges before they occur, marking a significant advance in preventive health planning.

"Predictive modelling gives us a powerful early warning system," Dr Hendrie said.

"Rather than waiting to see the impact of poor dietary habits, we can now identify concerning trends and intervene before they become major public health issues."

The findings come as Australia aims to achieve nutrition targets of:

- Two servings of fruit per day
- Five servings of vegetables per day
- Reducing discretionary foods to less than 20 per cent of total energy intake

The targets are part of Australia's National Preventive Health Strategy (2021-2030), which identifies poor diet as a key risk factor for chronic diseases, as well as accounting for significant healthcare costs and reduced quality of life.

Improving access to and consumption of healthy diets is one of the Strategy's seven key focus areas, highlighting the critical role of nutrition in preventing chronic disease and supporting long-term public health.

"The gap between our current dietary trajectory and our national health targets is widening," Dr Hendrie said.

> *"We have five years to get back on track with our diets and reverse these concerning trends."*

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.csiro.au/

TWICE THE BALES, HALF THE TIME: QUICKE LAUNCHES NEW UNIGRIP L+ / XL+

QUICKE IS PROUD TO INTRODUCE THE NEW UNIGRIP L+ AND XL+, THE NEXT-GENERATION BALE GRABS DESIGNED FOR FARMERS AND CONTRACTORS WHO NEED STRENGTH, EFFICIENCY, AND SOFT HANDLING IN THEIR DAILY TASKS.

The Unigrip L+ and XL+ is built to handle the toughest farm work while also preserving the quality of your bales and saving time.

"We set out to create a bale grab that gives you both robustness and efficiency," said Henrik Jönsson, Product Manager Implements at Quicke. "From reinforced stress points to an adjustable back bale support, every detail has been designed to help farmers get more work done in less time, without compromising on bale quality."

DOUBLE THE BALE, DOUBLE THE EFFICIENCY

Thanks to its adjustable back support and the option for a second bale back stop, the Unigrip L+ and XL+ let you grab and transport two bales at once — doubling your productivity in the field. Whether you are handling silage, hay, or straw, the L+ version can handle bales from 120 to160 cm, and the XL+ version goes up to 190 cm. This versatility makes them the perfect tool for any farming operation.

EFFICIENCY WITH SOFT HANDLING: HANDLE YOUR BALES SOFTLY AND SECURELY

One of the key features of the Unigrip L+ is its ability to handle bales softly while securely holding them in place. This means you can transport bales without damaging or compressing them, keeping your silage, hay, and straw in perfect condition.

"We are excited to offer a bale grab that helps you work smarter, not harder," added Yenny Fredriksson, Managing Director of Quicke. "The Unigrip L+ and XL+ are designed to give farmers a reliable solution that improves productivity while protecting the quality of their crops."

With the optional equalizer bar, you get synchronized arm movement which gives the same fea-tures as a two-cylinder bale grab. Unigrip L+ and XL+ comes as standard with a pressure restrictor valve to protect the silage from compression and to prevent structural damages to the basic design. Additionally, a load-hold valve for handlers with free return to tank on third service is offered to ensure a secure grip.

The Unigrip L+ and XL+ are compatible with most agricultural loaders and handlers, thanks to the BoH system 80x80, making it a perfect fit for both today's needs and future farming technologies.

In early 2026, Quicke will launch the smaller S+ and M+ versions, completing the full Unigrip family to meet all round bale handling needs.

ABOUT JOST:

JOST is a world-leading producer and supplier of safety-critical systems for the commercial vehicle industry. Under the umbrella brand of JOST, the comprehensive range of products is categorised into systems for On-Highway (transport industry) and Off-Highway applications (agriculture and construction industries). The Quicke brand specialises in agricultural front loaders and equipment. This additionally includes products for the mining, construction and forestry machinery industries. JOST currently employs over 7,500 staff worldwide and has sales and production sites in more than 35 countries, and operations on six continents.

MORE INFORMATION

Further information on JOST can be found here: www.jost-world.co

FARMERS CALL FOR LONG-TERM GOVERNMENT ACTION FOLLOWING EX-TROPICAL CYCLONE ALFRED AND SEVERE WEATHER EVENTS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND'S PEAK AGRICULTURE BODY— THE QUEENSLAND FARMERS' FEDERATION (QFF) AND ITS MEMBERS COTTON AUSTRALIA, QUEENSLAND FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS (QFVG), AND CANEGROWERS — ARE CALLING ON THE QUEENSLAND AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE A LONG-TERM APPROACH TO SUPPORT THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR.

With two significant weather events already hitting Queensland this year, climate resilience, preparedness and response are front and centre with Queensland's farmers who are once again facing devastating losses, including damage to crops, infrastructure, and essential farm resources.

As the sector works to recover, industry leaders are urging the government to review and enhance long-term disaster recovery measures to ensure farm businesses can rebuild quickly and build resilience against future events.

QFF CEO Jo Sheppard said urgent changes to disaster recovery support frameworks are needed to enable farms to build their capacity to prepare for natural disasters and also to return to full operation after an event with minimal disruption.

"Queensland is Australia's most disaster-prone state and extreme weather events are unfortunately no stranger to our farmers and regional communities. Farmers have done an incredible job in proactively building their resilience and managing risk, but they need targeted, long-term support to recover quickly and prepare for future events. We need to ensure preparedness and response frameworks reflect the realities of modern farming and the weather risks that challenge the agriculture sector," Ms Sheppard said.

"The cost of recovery is rising, and disaster funding needs to keep pace. We have seen some really positive announcements and reforms from the Queensland and Federal government which have been sincerely welcomed by industry, however further measures are needed so that we can be more effective in the way in which we support Queensland farmers to recover and prepare for future weather events.

"We need a long-term approach and must move away from the start / stop way in which we deal with disasters. QFF and our peak body members have been advocating for many years for the establishment of a 'spine of resources' established across the state, skilled resilience and response professionals who are in place all year round to work with farmers in preparing for and managing risks on their farms and to a team that are already in place and ready to respond whenever a weather event takes place. The opportunity to partner with industry to make this happen is there, so let's keep the momentum going and address the remaining issues that need reform."

Canegrowers CEO Dan Galligan said the State and Federal governments' announcement yesterday to increase disaster recovery funding for primary producers to $75,000 was a step in the right direction.

"We are grateful for both the Federal and Queensland governments' recognition of the scale of the challenge faced by farmers when it comes to recovery efforts following a natural disaster," Mr Galligan said.

"This increase reflects the increasing costs of recovery for growers who have been hit hard by recent flooding and will take years to bounce back. This week's weather events have particularly impacted sugarcane growers at Rocky Point who have had their cane paddocks inundated and who are now playing the waiting game while they wait for flood waters to recede.

"We also welcome recent updates to disaster funding regulations, which formalise new rules allowing growers to use recovery grants for replanting lost crops – a long-standing gap in Queensland's disaster recovery framework.

"Both of these are crucial steps forward, however there is still a need for a longer-term approach to disaster and recovery funding, with further on-the-ground resources needed.

"For the sugarcane industry, this includes updating the definition of a primary producer to reflect modern farm structures, including those with off-farm income, indexing grants to match rising recovery costs, improving workforce support to help businesses retain staff

during recovery periods and establishing a dedicated pool of rural recovery officers embedded within industry groups to expedite recovery efforts."

Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG) CEO Rachel Chambers has called for urgent improvements in disaster response and recovery for the horticulture sector following recent extreme weather events.

"Horticulture faces a variety of challenges in disasters—damage impacts can differ widely due to factors such as farm infrastructure, crop types, and workforce structures. The impact on operations can also depend on the size and scale of the business, and in many cases, assessing crop impact particularly in the case of tree crops, can take months or even years," Ms Chambers said.

"Given that availability of food has once again shown to be at risk in these events, QFVG is calling on behalf of the entire horticultural supply chain for a more resilient transport network along with urging policymakers to ensure that support for growers is timely and fit for purpose."

Cotton Australia General Manager Michael Murray stressed the need for improved risk management strategies for farmers.

"We need to introduce preparedness grant funding for all natural disasters, similar to existing drought assistance, and remove the 9% stamp duty on crop and parametric insurance to encourage independent risk management," Mr Murray said.

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.qff.org.au/

FUTUREAG EXPO AUSTRALIA'S PREMIER TRADE FAIR AUGUST 6-8, 2025

FUTUREAG - POWERED BY AGRITECHNICA, TAKING PLACE FROM 6-8 AUGUST 2025 AT MELBOURNE ROYAL SHOWGROUNDS, VICTORIA.

Complementing the FutureAg trade exhibition and back by popular demand, the FutureAg 2025 Conference will take place across all three-days of the event. Featuring insightful sessions, strong perspectives and lively discussions the 2025 theme is Transformative Farming Efficiency and within that theme, each day will focus on a different aspect of the future of farming realised today.

Day 1: Innovation

Day 2: The Business of Ag

Day 3: People Power - bolstering the workforce, building careers, upskilling on farm

Expect to discover the innovations accelerating growth in growing practices, find out about collaborations driving farm resilience in the face of disruptions to climate, trading and workforce, and most importantly, hear from farmers on what's working and challenges still to overcome. Register now to secure your FutureAg Conference Ticket for just $180 and get full access to the Main Stage, Expo Stage and three days of FutureAg.

Dr. Jonathan Richett
Research Scientist (Agriculture & Food), CSIRO

Belinda Lay
Chief Administration & Finance Executive, Coolindown Farm

Dr. Sara Hely
Director, Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption & Innovation Hub

Brett Hosking
Chair,
VFF President

Natalie Collard
CEO, Farmers for Climate Action

Charles Simons
Chief Sales & Revenue Officer, BioScout

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://futureagexpo.com.au/

NEO SIGNS CONTRACT WITH ESA ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HYPERSPECTRAL SATELLITE CAMERA FOR METHANE DETECTION

NORSK ELEKTRO OPTIKK (NEO) HAS STARTED TO DEVELOP AN ADVANCED HYPERSPECTRAL IMAGING SYSTEM FOR SATELLITE-BASED METHANE DETECTION. THIS INITIATIVE, SUPPORTED BY EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY'S (ESA) INCUBED PROGRAM, AIMS TO ENHANCE GLOBAL MONITORING OF METHANE EMISSIONS FROM SPACE. NEO ALREADY HAS SIMILAR SYSTEMS FROM UAV AND AIRBORNE PLATFORMS.

ADDRESSING METHANE EMISSIONS FROM SPACE

Methane is a major contributor to climate change, with and there is increasing regulatory pressure for improved monitoring. Satellite-based hyperspectral imaging offers a precise and scalable solution, enabling industries to detect and mitigate emissions effectively. The new system will provide a commercially available tool for Earth observation services, expanding access to high-quality methane monitoring.

"Securing an ESA InCubed project is a major milestone for our company and a testament to the cutting-edge work being done by our SPACE department. This collaboration not only validates our technology but also accelerates our mission to drive innovation in the space sector. With ESA's support, we are confident that we can push the boundaries of Earth observation and satellite technology, creating real impact for the industry and beyond." said Trond Løke, CEO at Norsk Elektro Optikk.

INNOVATIVE FEATURES FOR ENHANCED DETECTION

The camera incorporates key advancements, including:

- Optimized hyperspectral technology for improved detection capability
- A refined optical system for higher imaging precision
- Extended spectral range covering critical methane absorption bands
- Compact, lightweight design for seamless satellite integration
- Enhanced cooling mechanisms for stability in space

With funding from ESA, the project will progress through key design and testing phases over the next year. A commercial agreement for multiple flight models has already been proposed, signaling strong market interest.

TRANSFORMING EARTH OBSERVATION

This initiative will make methane detection technology more widely accessible, offering an alternative to proprietary solutions. By opening the market to multiple operators, it is expected to play a significant role in environmental monitoring and commercial satellite services.

Ole Bjørn Eithun Pedersen, Research Scientist at NEO said the following: "Being the second most significant contributor to global warming, identifying and stopping methane emission has been recognized as one of the most effective ways of limiting further global warming. Using our existing HySpex SWIR cameras we have already proven that we can accurately identify methane emissions remotely. Now, building on our proven systems, we are developing a new and highly sensitive satellite camera optimized specifically for methane detection and quantification. Allowing for more accurate and reliable identification of methane emissions on a large scale."

ABOUT NORSK ELEKTRO OPTIKK AS

Norsk Elektro Optikk was established in 1985 as a privately owned research company within the field of electro optics. The founders had their scientific and technical background from the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, at that time the leading research organization in electro optics in Norway. The company's objective is to play a leading role in applied research within its area of expertise to develop and manufacture advanced industrial products for an international market.

ABOUT HYSPEX BY NEO

With offices in Oslo, Norway, Clinton, US and now Berlin, Germany, HySpex is established as an industry-leading brand for both airborne and ground-based hyperspectral imaging. HySpex sensors are renowned for their stability, flexibility, and superior data quality. To learn more about HySpex, visit us online at https://www.hyspex.com/

MORE INFORMATION

Ole Bjørn Eithun Pedersen
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AVOCADOS AUSTRALIA SECURES ASEAN-AUSTRALIA CENTRE GRANT

AVOCADOS AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN AWARDED A $200,000 GRANT OVER TWO YEARS THROUGH THE ASEAN-AUSTRALIA CENTRE'S 2024-25 GRANTS PROGRAM. THE GRANT WILL SUPPORT AVOCADOS AUSTRALIA'S EXPORT ACTIVITIES STRENGTHENING REGIONAL TRADE AND CULINARY ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR SOUTHEAST ASIAN MARKETS.

The ASEAN-Australia Centre's 2024-25 Grants Program aims to strengthen connections between Australia and Southeast Asia through initiatives in creative industries, cultural exchanges, and research.

The Centre received nearly 300 grant applications and Avocados Australia was 1 of the 10 recipients, the only stakeholder from the agriculture sector.

Australia is a significant producer of premium avocados, for the 2023/24 financial year national production reached 150,913 tonnes, valued at AU$649 million. Australia exported 21,979 tonnes, representing a 7-fold increase over the past three years, and 14.56% of the total 150,913 tonnes produced in Australia in 2023/24.*

Southeast Asia is a priority export region for the Australian avocado industry, accounting for around 43% of total Australian avocado exports.* According to the latest Australian avocado exports and imports 2024 report the major Southeast Asia markets included Malaysia (3,266 tonnes worth US$9.4m), Singapore (4,373 tonnes valued at US$13.3m), and Thailand (517 tonnes valued at US$1.75m).

Market research undertaken as part of the Hort Innovation funded "Avocado Market Access and Trade Development" (AV23003) project says the Southeast Asian region's demand for fresh avocados is surging, driven by rising incomes, urbanization, and a growing health-conscious consumer base. The grant will support Australia's premium horticultural produce supply chain into Southeast Asia, with a strong focus on education, training, and engagement with the foodservice channel along with culinary training.

Avocados Australia's project aligns with the grant program's business and education priorities, and the funding will help to: 1) Train key stakeholders across the supply chain (including importers, distributors, retailers, and foodservice professionals); 2) Engage the next generation of Southeast Asian chefs (introducing them to the sustainability, traceability, and premium quality of Australian avocados through programs); and 3) Leverage food as a cultural bridge, positioning Australian avocados as an ambassador for high-quality, sustainable produce and strengthening trade relationships.

"The ASEAN-Australia Centre's grant comes at a pivotal time. We would like to thank the ASEAN-Australia Centre, as these funds will add value to Avocados Australia's export programs," said Avocados Australia's CEO, John Tyas.

Matt Kleyn, Avocados Australia's Chair, agrees and believes that using food as a way to engage with cultures in Southeast Asia is very important. "Food is culture, and a bridge to connect with cultures in our Southeast Asian markets," he said.

> ***"This grant will fund initiatives that demonstrate how Australian avocados can integrate into local and international cuisines, driving long-term demand," said Matt Kleyn.***

The Avocado Market Access and Trade Development Project (2024–2029) (AV23003) has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the avocado research and development levy, and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is Australia's grower-owned, not-for-profit organisation that invests in research and development, marketing, and trade initiatives to build a prosperous and sustainable future for growers.

**Source: Avocados Australia Facts at a Glance Report 2023/24*

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: australianavocados.com.au

MARQUIS MACADAMIAS ANNOUNCES 2025 NOTIONAL PRICE AND ENHANCED DELIVERY OPTIONS

MARQUIS MACADAMIAS HAS ANNOUNCED ITS 2025 NOTIONAL PRICE, REFLECTING THE CONTINUED RESURGENCE OF THE GLOBAL MACADAMIA KERNEL MARKET. WITH DEMAND INCREASING ACROSS ALL MAJOR MARKETS, THE COMPANY IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT ALL SUPPLIERS, BOTH SHAREHOLDERS AND NON-SHAREHOLDERS, BENEFIT FROM THESE POSITIVE TRENDS.

Ben Adams, CEO of Marquis Macadamias

Marquis Macadamias has announced the 2025 Notional Price at 33% Premium Kernel Recovery (PKR) at $4.22/kg, marking a strong return for growers. This follows the recent $0.20/kg NIS bonus paid to shareholders to close out the 2024 season. With overall crop quality on the rise, the 2025 Price Table has been designed to reward suppliers for delivering high-quality consignments.

“Despite the challenging start to the year for our Northern NSW growers due to severe weather, seeing the market continue its positive momentum is encouraging. The strong global demand for premium macadamia kernels allows us to return improved value to our suppliers,” said Ben Adams, CEO of Marquis Macadamias. "Our strategy of driving kernel demand across multiple segments worldwide, combined with a weakening Australian dollar, has been key in enabling us to offer this price increase. We encourage our growers to take advantage of the tools we made available, including our online Price Calculator, to understand how their consignments will be valued under the new 2025 Price Table.”

As a grower-owned business, Marquis Macadamias continuously seeks innovative ways to improve product quality and efficiency across the entire supply chain. Since 2012, the Lismore factory has operated a delivery system that reduces the need for full, on-farm sorting, leading to significant cost savings for growers while improving product quality and shelf life. In line with this commitment to efficiency, this successful delivery sorting system from Lismore will now be extended to the Bundaberg factory, ensuring all suppliers can share in the benefits.

"We are very pleased to offer these new options at both our Bundaberg and Lismore facilities. Growers with any questions about the changes are encouraged to contact our knowledgeable Grower Liaison team for assistance."

Bonus payments remain in place to reward best-practice farming. Freshcare-accredited growers will continue to receive a $0.03/kg bonus, while segregated single-variety A203 consignments will receive an additional $0.05/kg.

Payment terms for the 2025 season will be consistent with previous years, with 50% of the consignment value paid on the Friday, three weeks from the week of delivery. "It is our goal to finalise 2025 season payments as early as possible, depending on market performance and shipping volumes. For reference, payments for the 2024 season were successfully completed by December 2024," concluded Mr. Adams.

Marquis Macadamias remains committed to supporting its growers and ensuring they receive strong returns for their high-quality macadamia consignments. More information, including the updated Price Table and price calculator, is available on the Marquis website: **www.marquis.com**

ABOUT MARQUIS GROUP

Established in 1983, Marquis Group is Australia’s largest macadamia grower, processor, and marketer, supplying premium-quality macadamias to food manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers in over 45 countries worldwide. With more than 40 years of industry experience and two state-of-the-art processing facilities, Marquis has the capability to supply macadamias in quantities ranging from small packs to bulk container loads. The Marquis Group is 100% grower-owned and boasts a processing capacity of 28,000 tonnes of NIS per annum. With over 250 supplying growers and shareholders, Marquis represents 38% of Australia’s macadamia harvest.

NEW TECHNOLOGY MAKES BIOSECURITY RESPONSES EASIER FOR FRUIT GROWERS

A NEW $1.7 MILLION MAPPING INITIATIVE IS EXPECTED TO CHANGE HOW FRUIT GROWERS WILL SOON RESPOND TO BIOSECURITY THREATS. DRAWING ON CITIZEN SCIENCE BY ASKING APRICOT, CHERRY, DRIED FRUIT, LYCHEE, NECTARINE, PEACH AND PLUM PRODUCERS TO LOG LOCATION DATA THROUGH AN APP, THIS TECHNOLOGY COULD HELP PROTECT AUSTRALIAN FRUIT FROM PESTS AND DISEASE.

The aim of mapping the location data is to safeguard the industries by allowing first responders and authorities to quickly plan protection zones during pest and disease incursions.

Delivered through Hort Innovation and led by the University of New England's (UNE) Applied Agricultural Remote Sensing Centre (AARSC) in partnership with Future Food Systems CRC, the new tool marks an expansion of the Australian Tree Crop Map – a map which services eight tree crop industries and also boasts market access, traceability, yield forecasting, carbon storage, regeneration, and drought resilience applications.

Hort Innovation CEO Brett Fifield emphasised the critical role of the map in supporting biosecurity preparedness and response.

"The Australian Tree Crop Map has repeatedly proven its worth, particularly in the face of biosecurity challenges like the Varroa Mite incursion," said Mr Fifield.

"With its ability to quickly pinpoint areas of concern, the map is an essential tool in managing biosecurity risks and equipping the industry with the timely data needed for an effective response."

Cherry Growers Australia president Alison Jones said the map will be a game-changer for industry.

"Being part of the Australian Tree Crop Map provides cherry growers with vital data to not only manage production more effectively but also to stay ahead of potential biosecurity threats and mitigate their impact," Ms Jones said.

"This tool will ensure we are better prepared to tackle biosecurity challenges and respond swiftly to emerging risks."

University of New England senior researcher Dr Craig Shephard said the map is becoming a cornerstone for biosecurity monitoring.

"The Australian Tree Crop Map, created to Australian mapping standards and freely available for industry use, is rapidly advancing as a benchmark for industry-wide spatial data adoption. This data is critical for early biosecurity detection, risk assessment, and response coordination," Dr Shephard said.

"In this next phase, we're expanding the map to include cherries, lychees, dried fruit, and summerfruit, while also enhancing it with additional data such as variety, planting date, and management practices for those fruits we already track such as mangoes. This will enable tailored biosecurity strategies for different industries."

Australian Lychee Growers' Association executive officer Jill Houser said the map will enhance biosecurity planning for lychee growers.

"Access to this comprehensive mapping resource will give lychee growers invaluable insights to better respond to biosecurity risks and other industry challenges," Ms Houser said.

"The data on crop trends and regional variations will help us make informed decisions, ensuring that we can protect our industry from both biosecurity threats and market shifts."

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.horticulture.com.au/

FUTURE ARRIVES WITH **VICTRATO® SEED TREATMENT**

- Global ag-tech leaders Syngenta deliver a once in a generation innovation for Australian farmers, lifting productivity and driving sustainability
- Extensive Australian development program supports best-practice crown rot management, helping to address $434 million in annual yield losses1
- VICTRATO® seed treatment offers unprecedented protection from devastating crown rot when used as part of an integrated disease management program

A whitehead from an untreated plot, caused by crown rot, compared to the crop planted with VICTRATO® treated seed.

Katie Slade, Product Lead for VICTRATO® seed treatment at Syngenta Australia

Five years of Australian development has culminated in a breakthrough for wheat and barley growers, with VICTRATO® seed treatment now registered for the management of devastating Fusarium sp. crown rot.

Since the exciting moment Syngenta field biologists first observed the results of what was then an unnamed, coded molecule, there have been more than 300 trials conducted nationally making it the company's biggest program to date.

Crown rot is estimated to cost the Australian industry $434 million annually in lost production through reduced yield and impacts on grain quality.

Syngenta Australia General Manager David Van Ryswyk said the registration will bring immediate benefits to those broadacre cropping communities most affected by the disease.

"Crown rot is a cruel disease that is often present in crops and characterised by white heads, which only become apparent once the wheat or barley reaches maturity close to harvest," he said.

"VICTRATO® seed treatment helps interrupt the disease lifecycle, protecting the seedling from infection as it emerges."

Fusarium sp. inoculum, the cause of crown rot, survives in the stubble of previous crops. When crops are grown with VICTRATO® treated seed, TYMIRIUM™ technology interrupts the energy producing mitochondria. Without VICTRATO®, the disease can quickly colonise the plant with mycelium growth, restricting the movement of water and nutrients to the head of the wheat and barley plants. From outside the plant, growers and their agronomists might sometimes observe basal browning – a honey yellow-to-brown discoloration of plant stems – or whiteheads at plant maturity. These whiteheads are indicative of hollow or pinched grains, which the plant has been unable to fill. This can cause devastating yield losses of up to 50 per cent, while also resulting in penalties at grain receival depots due to increased screenings.

Katie Slade, the Syngenta Australia Product Lead for VICTRATO® seed treatment, said few crop protection products before it had represented such a significant development for the industry.

> ***"Rarely as an industry do we have the opportunity to help growers drastically change the outlook for their crops on a scale like this," she said.***

This was especially the case, she said, where farmers had put crown rot in the 'too hard' basket, some dropping durum wheat from their program for this reason.

"There are many agronomists – too many to name here – to whom we are grateful for their support in our journey with VICTRATO® seed treatment," she added.

"We are just as excited as them, to see the first batches of seed being commercially treated with VICTRATO®, now that we can begin releasing supply."

Whether we see cheaper beer at the pub remains to be seen but it will enable Australian farmers to better manage these costly crown rot losses, benefiting prosperity in rural communities. VICTRATO® will even restore confidence to grow sought-after durum wheat in the worst effected regions, enabling farmers to unlock premiums for this key pasta making ingredient.

1 Murray G and Brennan J (2019) *The Current and Potential Costs from Diseases of Wheat in Australia* (Grains Research & Development Corporation)

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit syngenta.com.au/ or speak with your local Syngenta representative.

FARMERS EARN HIGH MARKS IN AG SCORECARD

THE RURAL COMMUNITY IS BUOYED TODAY BY THE NEWS THAT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE SECTOR GREW BY 5 PERCENT IN 2022-23, ACCORDING TO DATA PUBLISHED THIS WEEK IN THE TASMANIA AGRI-FOOD SCORECARD.

TasFarmers President Ian Sauer welcomed the results, congratulating farmers and everyone beyond the farm gate for contributing to such a positive outcome.

“We want to take this moment to congratulate our members, farmers, rural communities, and everyone beyond the farm gate who adds value to Tasmania’s world-class agricultural sector,” Mr Sauer said.

"Agriculture is an economic pillar of Tasmania’s wellbeing, and without it, our country towns simply couldn’t survive, let alone thrive. But farming is more than just economic output; it’s the three-legged stool that delivers economic, social, and environmental benefit.

"Inside the farm gate, we’re among the most efficient. However, we face significant hurdles, including high rates and the rising cost of doing business.

"Market Access for primary producers, needs to improve. Tasmania exports a bulk of its produce, and of course shipping across Bass Strait is expensive. We must have a more efficient shipping regime for freight if we're to reach the government's farm gate goal of $10 billion by 2050.

"By extension, cutting red and green tape is crucial, as excessive regulation directly erodes the sector’s profitability. Too often, bureaucracy acts like a fire blanket, smothering communities and stifling economic activity.

“We need to take a hard look at how to make farming businesses across Australia, particularly in Tasmania, sustainable for the long term. At the heart of that is fostering a positive environment that instils confidence in people to invest,” he said.

MORE INFORMATION

To read the scorecard, visit: https://nre.tas.gov.au/agriculture/multifaceted-agriculture/facts-figures/tasmanian-agri-food-scorecards

FARMERS WELCOME CALICIVIRUS RELEASE TO COMBAT RABBIT PLAGUE

TASMANIA'S PEAK BODY FOR PRIMARY PRODUCERS, TASFARMERS IS WELCOMING NEWS THE CALICIVIRUS IS BEING RELEASED INTO POPULATIONS OF WILD RABBITS ACROSS THE STATE TO CONTROL THEIR OVERPOPULATION.

TasFarmers CEO, Nathan Calman said, TasFarmers is acutely aware of the issue faced by primary producers over the last two years by rabbits which are obviously in plague proportions across the state.

"We strongly support the news that the state government will be releasing calicivirus as a tool to manage the populations within the state within the state," Mr Calman said.

"And whilst we understand the timing for release needs managing, this really can't come soon enough for primary producers.

"It will have a significant impact on the rabbit population while there is low alternate feed, we'd expect this to lead to a higher update and spread of the virus, but is only one tool in the toolbox that producers have to manage rabbit populations.

"TasFarmers will continue to call for reforms for the use of suppressors to be made available for primary producers for property protection purposes. Producers must have other options when the calicivirus can't be released," he said.

On behalf of members, Tasfarmers has been a strong advocate for managing rabbit populations and farmers having access to the proper tools. Without tools like suppressors, the ability to manage biosecurity risk on farms is incredibly limited.

"We've been able to raise the current issue with decision-makers and we remain firmly of the view that invasive species, be they rabbit, deer or even European wasp have a negative impact on primary producers and the state's environment.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://tasfarmers.com.au/

TIME TO DRAW A LINE IN THE SAND ON FARM SAFETY

THE LATEST DATA RELEASED BY AGRIFUTURES AUSTRALIA AND COLLATED BY THE TEAM AT AGHEALTH AUSTRALIA HAS REVEALED A SHARP AND DEEPLY CONCERNING RISE IN ON-FARM FATALITIES AND SERIOUS INJURIES, WITH 72 LIVES LOST AND 133 SERIOUS INJURIES RECORDED IN 2024.

Farmsafe Australia, the national peak body for farm safety, is calling for urgent action, declaring that it is time to draw a line in the sand and make farm safety a non-negotiable priority.

"This is not just a wake-up call - it's an emergency," said Felicity Richards, Chair of Farmsafe Australia. "We cannot continue to accept farm fatalities and serious injuries as just part of life on the land. The data is clear: we need to change the culture around safety, and we need to do it now."

A PREVENTABLE CRISIS

The 2024 figures more than double those recorded in 2023, with side by sides (14 deaths), quad bikes (10 deaths), and tractors (8 deaths) continuing to be leading causes of fatalities. Queensland alone saw an alarming jump in serious injuries, increasing from 11 to 61 cases. These statistics are not just numbers; they represent real people - farmers, workers, and family members - whose lives are forever changed.

AgriFutures Australia Senior Manager, Rural Futures, Ulicia Raufers emphasised the importance of data in identifying and addressing emerging safety risks. "We cannot allow the rising trend of on-farm fatalities and serious injuries to persist," Ms. Raufers said. "Every person who lives, works, or visits a farm has a role to play in prioritising safety and reversing these troubling figures."

AgHealth Australia's Farm Safety Research Manager, Kerri-Lynn Peachey, who monitors and collates the incidents each year, called the latest statistics a stark reminder to prioritise farm safety. "With deaths and injuries more than doubling since 2023, we can't ignore the warning. While some fluctuation is expected, 72 fatalities far exceed the five-year average of 53," she said.

"We must stop treating these incidents as unfortunate accidents and start treating them as preventable tragedies," Ms Richards said. "Farm safety isn't about red tape; it's about keeping people alive. If we don't act now, we will be having the same conversation in another 12 months—only with more names added to the toll."

A UNITED FRONT FOR CHANGE

Farmsafe Australia is calling on industry, government, and corporate partners to step up and take responsibility by working with the organisation. Collaboration is key, and this moment must be seized to align policy, investment, and action towards a safer future for Australian farms.

"Farm safety isn't just the responsibility of individual farmers—it's a collective effort," she said. "We must bring together industry leaders, researchers, and policymakers to ensure that awareness of evidence-based solutions is consistently raised and that live saving habits are put into practice. Every farm, every worker, every family deserves better."

Farmsafe Australia is urging government and corporate partners to work alongside them and invest in long-term safety initiatives, including training programs, awareness campaigns, and technology-driven solutions. By leveraging data and insights from initiatives like the Ag Safety Data Net, the industry can make informed decisions that drive real change.

NO MORE EXCUSES

"We have the knowledge. We have the tools. Now, we need the commitment," Ms Richards said. "This is our line in the sand. We cannot afford to let these numbers continue climbing—we must act, and we must act together."

ABOUT FARMSAFE AUSTRALIA

Farmsafe Australia is the agricultural industry's peak body for farm safety, driven by farmers for farmers. As a not-for-profit organisation, we are dedicated to championing practical, effective solutions that protect the lives and livelihoods of those who live and work on Australian farms. Our work is to embed a safety-first culture in agriculture, ensuring that every farm is a place where health, safety and well-being comes first.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.farmsafe.org.au

SUPERMARKETS A DANGER TO FRESH PRODUCE VIABILITY

THE FINAL REPORT OF THE SUPERMARKET INQUIRY FROM THE AUSTRALIAN COMPETITION AND CONSUMER COMMISSION (ACCC) WARNS COLES' AND WOOLWORTHS' EXERCISE OF MARKET POWER AND PRESERVATION OF THEIR INFORMATION ADVANTAGE OVER FRESH PRODUCE SUPPLIERS WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF AUSTRALIA'S FRESH PRODUCE SECTOR.

In response, the ACCC reserves over half of all its recommendations for dealing specifically with ways to better protect fresh produce suppliers from abuses of supermarket bargaining power.

Jolyon Burnett, chair of the NFF Horticulture Council, said the report must serve to establish better and continuously improving trading practices in fresh produce that ultimately put more money in the back pocket of hard-working growers.

"What is clear reading the report is that the relationship between supermarkets and fresh produce suppliers has been unfair, and too often exploitative and abusive.

"Sometimes you need to hear from an impartial observer, outside a relationship, before you realise the extent to which it's been unhealthy.

"We hope more than anyone, that supermarket senior executives and boards sit with this report, absorb its findings and conclusions, and use it to proactively turn a corner in terms of their practice and culture.

"The Council needs to thank the ACCC for quite obviously listening to growers and their representatives. Many of the recommendations concerning fresh produce supply, in part or total, have been advanced by the Council and its members.

"So, we are glad the Federal Government has seen fit to accept them all in principle. But of course, these wouldn't be the first ACCC recommendations to be left on the shelf.

"The Council will work hard with the Federal Government to ensure advanced protections are enshrined in the Food and Grocery Code of Conduct or otherwise put in place as soon as possible.

"We will also continue dialogue already initiated with major supermarkets to identify and remediate those trading practices not recommended for reform in the report but still detrimental to a fair and efficient fresh produce market."

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://nff.org.au/

FLEXI GRAIN EXPANDS OPERATIONS TO INCLUDE FABA BEANS IN 2025

FLEXI GRAIN, A LEADING GRAIN MARKETING COMPANY, IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE ITS EXPANSION INTO THE FABA BEAN MARKET. STARTING IN 2025, FLEXI GRAIN WILL BEGIN CONTRACTING FABA BEANS UNDER ITS UNIQUE AREA BASED CONTRACT AND MANAGED UNDER A POOLING STRUCTURE OFFERING PRODUCERS AN ALTERNATE MARKETING AVENUE TO MAXIMISE RETURNS AND MANAGE RISK EFFECTIVELY.

Flexi Grain, which has successfully managed wheat and barley, under its pooling structure for 12 years, has built a strong reputation for risk management and creating value for producers. By leveraging its relationships with tier 1 counter-parties, the company is well-positioned to mitigate risks associated with this new commodity, offering a secure and reliable platform for faba bean contracting.

"The decision to include faba beans in our offering is a natural next step in our ongoing commitment to providing value and flexibility to our growers" said Jarrod Tonkin, General Manager at Flexi Grain.

"Our tier 1 counter-parties will help ensure that we can manage market risks and deliver favourable outcomes for producers. Flexi Grain's entry into the faba bean market aligns with its strategic vision to expand its product offerings and better serve their grower base. Producers will benefit from the same pooling arrangements and transparent processes that have made Flexi Grain a trusted partner in the grain marketing industry."

As the market for faba beans continues to grow, Flexi Grain aims to be at the forefront, providing innovative solutions and reliable services to help producers optimise their operations and navigate an increasingly complex agricultural landscape.

ABOUT FLEXI GRAIN

Flexi Grain is a reputable grain marketing company specialising in pooling arrangements for wheat, barley, canola, and now faba beans. With a strong focus on risk management, value creation, and long-term relationships with growers and industry partners, Flexi Grain continues to lead the way in helping producers optimise their grain marketing strategies.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on faba bean hectare contracts or other grain marketing services, please visit www.flexigrain.com.au or contact Jarrod Tonkin at jarrod.tonkin@flexigrain.com.au

19-YEAR-OLD SAHIL CYCLING ACROSS 20,000 KM AND 20 COUNTRIES TO SAVE SOIL

SAHIL, A 19-YEAR-OLD PASSIONATE CHANGE-MAKER, HAS EMBARKED ON AN EXTRAORDINARY 20,000 KILOMETER BICYCLE JOURNEY ACROSS 20 COUNTRIES TO RAISE GLOBAL AWARENESS ABOUT THE URGENT CRISIS OF SOIL DEGRADATION.

His mission: to inspire action, engage with world leaders, and advocate for policies that will restore and protect soil health for future generations.

Sahil began his journey in Bundaberg, Australia, on March 21, 2025. From there, he is traveling south through Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and more. Over 15 months, he will cycle across Australia, Asia, the UK, Europe, and the United States. Along the way, he will visit cities, towns, and rural areas, speaking at schools and universities, meeting with environmental groups, rallying influencers, and engaging policymakers to make soil health a global priority.

Soil degradation is a looming global crisis that threatens food security, climate stability, and biodiversity. If we do not take immediate action:

- Over 2 billion people will continue to suffer from nutritional deficiencies due to declining soil quality.
- Soil degradation will accelerate climate change, increasing CO2 emissions and contributing to water scarcity.
- Wildlife and ecosystems will face increasing threats, leading to widespread biodiversity loss.
- By 2045, food production could drop by 40%, putting billions of lives at risk.

The solution lies in increasing the organic content in soil, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and enacting policies that prioritize soil restoration.

At just 16, Sahil was inspired by the Save Soil movement and took action. Over 15 months, he cycled 15,000 kilometers across India, meeting with over 250 institutions, politicians, and media outlets to spread awareness about soil health. His advocacy efforts resulted in:

- 300+ media articles and interviews with national leaders and influencers.
- Speaking engagements at schools, universities, and climate forums.
- Growing awareness and mobilizing communities to demand soil conservation policies.

Now, he is taking this mission to the world stage with his global bicycle tour.

The Conscious Planet movement, which inspired the Save Soil initiative, has successfully mobilized millions of people worldwide to advocate for policies that restore and protect soil health. Through extensive global outreach, policy engagement, and public participation, the movement has influenced governments to take action, ensuring a sustainable future for soil and humanity.

Through this journey, Sahil is carrying the hopes of billions who depend on healthy soil for survival. He is committed to raising awareness, pushing for policy changes, and ensuring that soil health becomes a global priority. Support from individuals and organizations is essential to help amplify this mission and bring meaningful change to soil health policies worldwide.

Imagine a future where children thrive on nutritious food grown in fertile, healthy soil, where sustainable agricultural practices restore the planet's ecosystems, and where governments worldwide enact and implement policies that protect soil health for generations to come. This future is possible, but only if we take action now. Join Sahil on his mission to Save Soil and be part of the change that our planet desperately needs.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: https://www.instagram.com/soilsahiljha/
or https://x.com/soilsahiljha

GROWHER EVENT EMPOWERS NEXT GEN AG-TECH LEADERS

INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS AND TEAMWORK – THOSE WERE THE THEMES THAT COMPRISED THE FIRST GROWHER AG-TECH EVENT IN ROCKHAMPTON

The winning team from Rockhampton Grammar School.

The first cohort of 50 secondary students from 14 schools across the Central Queensland region worked with industry mentors and researchers to collaborate and design innovative solutions to emerging and current issues in agriculture.

Culminating in a pitch event, the girls formed teams to present their ideas to a judging panel, with the winning team to attend a QLD innovation event later in the year.

CQUniversity Senior Lecturer in Agriculture and Agri-Tech Education researcher Dr Jaime Manning said the event was integral for empowering and equipping the next generation of females in ag-tech with new skills and knowledge, whilst building industry networks and key mentor relationships.

"As agriculture changes, the next generation workforce will require a whole new suite of skills that we don't currently have yet, so this event has been a great opportunity to brainstorm solutions and innovative ideas for new and emerging opportunities in agriculture," Dr Manning said.

"It's also been a great experience for the girls to develop strong and supportive industry connections that will be able to continue to nurture and assist them with finding their place in the world of agriculture."

The winning pitch was by a team from the Rockhampton Grammar School comprising of Ella Holcombe, Lalita Roopnarinesingh and Kathleen Nguyen, with support from their mentor Dylan Gannan of PestSense.

Year 12 student and passionate youth advocate Kathleen from the winning team said the event was a valuable opportunity to be able to connect with other young women in the region and hear from women working in the sector.

> *"Being able to network and share ideas with so many amazing women in the community and in the sector has been really valuable," Kathleen said.*

"I've always been a strong advocate for youth empowerment and for more younger people to be at decision-making tables, and I think the agricultural sector would definitely benefit from some of our ideas – so it's been a big step forward not only for myself, but other young women in the community and across the state to be able to present their solutions."

Judges of the pitch competition comprised of CQUniversity Associate Professor in Ag, Science and Environment Karen Harper, alongside Advance Rockhampton's Senior Advisor, Investment Attraction Brendan Ryan.

Rockhampton Regional Council Mayor Tony Williams said that he was pleased to see the response the initiative received, and highlighted how critical the agriculture sector is to the Central Queensland region and economy.

"I want Rockhampton to succeed and that means having thriving local industries that drive jobs and economic activity," Mayor Williams said.

"That only works when we have bright, committed and energetic young people in the sector and driving that next generation of farmers and ag specialists across the region."

Of the 14 pitches presented, Dr Manning said she was impressed by the caliber of ideas and was looking forward to seeing the girls progress towards eventual careers in the sector.

"There were teams who certainly presented feasible ideas to address problems in the ag sector over the next several years," Dr Manning said.

"For us in the sector, we really need to start considering some of these ideas from our young people – workshop those ideas and see how we can make them a reality to really help out the agricultural sector."

Over three years, the GrowHer project delivered by the CQUniversity Agri-tech Education and Extension Team and AgriBusiness Connect will support 450 female participants to innovate, collaborate and lead in agriculture's tech-driven future.

Each year, winning teams of participants will represent GrowHer at an innovation event, to further develop their idea and grow industry connections.

MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, visit the GrowHer website: https://www.growher-agtech.com/. GrowHer is proudly supported by Advance Queensland, as part of the Regional Enablers Program.

Tyson Fechner with the 45 centimetre Brown Trout he caught in Lake Jindabyne.

Bayer's Rural Angler of the Year, Tyson Fechner, with Matt Tripet from The Fly Program.

TWO MATES ON THE PODIUM AT NATIONAL FISHING COMPETITION

ANGLERS INDULGE IN AN ACTIVITY THAT'S GOOD FOR THEIR OWN MENTAL HEALTH, WHILE ALSO RAISING FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL WELLBEING OF RURAL AUSTRALIANS.

In a remarkable result, a stock agent from rural South Australia and his mate have taken first and third place a national fishing competition – beating anglers from across the country to the podium.

Winning the final round of the Bayer Big Fish Challenge, Tyson Fechner from Barossa Valley was crowned the Bayer Rural Angler of the Year on Sunday after the competition in the NSW Snowy Mountains.

The competition leverages fishing to give participants and rural Australians the space and time to reflect, while enjoying nature and improving their mental and physical health.

Tyson has taken part in the competition for four years, leading his South Australian team, however this was the first time he'd been to the grand final.

"Two years ago my mate Jed Haberman won the crown – we flipped a coin and he got to attend that time around," Tyson said.

As the best performing team in the 2024 competition, Team Barossa raised $2,000 for the charity and earned two places in the Bayer Rural Angler of the Year competition.

"We're in the middle of one of the dryest seasons in living memory here in South Australia, and as a livestock agent I often speak with farmers who are feeling the weight of that.

"While winning the competition last weekend was undoubtedly great fun, it was also refreshing to get some skills to help my clients build their mental strength."

Tyson said fishing "brings you down to earth" and allows anglers to take note of what's going on around them.

"It's great that the competition not only benefits the mental health of those who participate, but also that of those rural Australians who are nominated to attend Bayer Retreats and who pick up some of the same skills we learnt on the weekend."

Tyson caught two Brown Trout on the first day of competition and two Brook Trout, a Rainbow Trout and a 45 centimetre Brown Trout on the second day.

He said competing against Jed for the Bayer Rural Angler of the Year crown made for an entertaining weekend.

"Jed and I fish together all the time, and it's always very competitive between us. Normally he comes out on top, but not this time!"

Bayer Crop Science's Head of Sales, Tony May, said Tyson and Jed quickly became known amongst the anglers as the "Barossa twins".

"It was great to see these two younger blokes take on some of the competition's older participants," Tony said.

"Personally, I appreciated taking a moment for my own mental health and enjoyed the company of everyone who fished and attended the event dinner on Saturday night.

"It goes to show the role that fishing can play in bringing people together and just how thoroughly this competition supports the mental wellbeing of rural Australians. The anglers have an incentive to get out and fish, while also allowing their fellow community members to a Bayer Retreat."

Together, participants and Bayer contributed $45,000 to The Fly Program last year.

To date, the funding has allowed The Fly Program to deliver Bayer Retreats for more than 70 rural Australians who needed to take some time to focus on their mental wellbeing.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about the competition, contact your local Bayer representative or email **info@bayerbigfish.com**

STUDY TOUR BEEFS UP STUDENT KNOWLEDGE

AN IMMERSIVE STUDY TOUR DESIGNED TO BOOST GLOBAL AGRICULTURE HAS SEEN A GROUP OF CQUNIVERSITY STUDENTS TRAVEL TO INDONESIA.

The tour provided a comprehensive insight into the country's diverse beef supply chains and farming systems, with a focus on international collaboration, partnerships, and joint research opportunities.

Associate Professor of Agriculture Dr Karen Harper said the program was instrumental in equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a global agricultural landscape.

"Our goal was to instill an appreciation for the complexity of food supply chains, the importance of sustainable farming practices, and the potential for agricultural advancement to secure the industry's future," she said.

"We focused on the interconnectedness of agricultural practices, food security, and farmer empowerment, while considering the economic, cultural, and environmental factors shaping agriculture in Indonesia."

She explained that the tour covered three main regions and institutions with a special focus on the University of Mataram, with whom CQUniversity has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

"The students were able to experience the CQU campus in Jakarta before attending IPB (Institut Pertanian Bogor) University in Bogor," Dr Harper explained.

"There they worked on an Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research funded project with CQU's Dr David McGill on Indodairy2. Students visited local villages to see firsthand dairy and beef production, as well as large feedlots."

At the University of Gadjah Mada located in Yogyakarta in central Java, they explored tea, coffee, cocoa plantations and horticultural production.

"The final leg was the University of Mataram in Lombok with a focus on indigenous cattle production in more extensive farming systems.

"The University of Mataram was very generous with their time and hospitality, providing electric push bikes for campus tours and guiding us to villages, mountains and beaches. We even attended a local wedding."

To help support their participation in the program, seven undergraduate students each received a New Colombo Plan Mobility Grant valued at $3,300.

Final year Bachelor of Agriculture student Tyler Aspinall said she was grateful for the opportunity which allowed her to compare Indonesian and Australian systems, developing a broader perspective on agriculture.

"Participating in the New Colombo Plan-funded trip to Indonesia was an incredibly enriching experience that has had a lasting impact on both my education and career aspirations," Tyler said.

"As someone deeply interested in biosecurity and live export logistics, this program provided an invaluable opportunity to witness Indonesia's beef production systems firsthand and understand the complexities involved in international agricultural practices.

"What stood out most was the ability to apply my academic learning in a real-world context. From understanding on-the-ground biosecurity practices to experiencing the re-entry process into Australia, every aspect of the trip helped bridge the gap between theory and practice.

This hands-on experience has not only strengthened my professional skills but also reinforced my passion for contributing to international agricultural cooperation."

An additional study tour will take place later this year with funding for another 13 students to expand on the ongoing research activities, programs and projects.

"For anyone considering the program, I highly recommend it," Tyler said.

"It's a unique chance to gain cross-cultural insights, build industry-relevant experience, and grow both personally and professionally."

The program is open to agriculture students at CQUniversity.

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.cqu.edu.au