

Local Territorian Mango Breeder awarded an OAM

Ken at home in his orchard (Source: Goulburn Post)



Lady Jane above and Lady Grace below (Source ABC Rural)



NT mango breeder and industry pioneer Kenneth Rayner has been recognised and honoured for his contribution to the mango industry. He has spent 30 years perfecting his mango varieties, Lady Jane and Lady Grace, and they are now grown in 12 countries around the world.

Mr Rayner has been cross-pollinating mango trees in the Katherine area for more than three decades, experimenting to produce new varieties. These varieties offer exciting new opportunities for growers in the industry and extend consumer choices.

His work has led to him being awarded a Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia for service to horticulture as part of the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours List. Mr Rayner was humbled by the recognition and attributes this achievement to the valuable assistance he has received from around the country.

NT Farmers Association congratulates Ken on this wonderful accolade and thank him for his significant contribution to the Australian Mango Industry.



With life gradually returning to some sort of normality across the Territory, your Board was able to meet face to face for the first time in three months on June 23rd.

Regular videoconferencing via Zoom, one of the pandemics few benefits, will live on, but thankfully some pretty average 'iso' beads haven't!

Covid19 and its impact on growers continues to dominate both the Board's agenda and the staff's time. Harvest labour shortages for mango and some melon growers is of critical concern.

CEO Paul, continues to work closely with government and industry to find pathways for backpackers, seasonal workers, international students and unemployed locals to cobble together an available pool of several thousands in the coming months.



The lifting of border restrictions in July will ease the pressure somewhat, however it also lifts the likelihood of new infections in the NT and reinforces the need for growers to not just have, but also to strictly apply, Covid19 Management Plans.

Victoria's worrying rate of increasing community transmission is a sobering reminder of the threat Covid19 still poses whilst infection clusters at Cedar Meats in Victoria and processing plants in Europe and North America make certain that mango and melon packing sheds will be viewed as high risk by the NT Government. Those accommodating staff on farm will be deemed as even higher risk and can expect regular auditing.

However all growers need to strictly adhere to their plans or they jeopardise not just their own business but the entire industry. This is going to be a tough and even more stressful year than usual for business owners and managers and NT Farmers will continue to offer whatever assistance it can.

Adversity does create opportunity and the planets seem to be aligning for NT Farmers in areas where we have long been lobbying for change and in emerging opportunities that have substantial potential benefits for members and stakeholders.

CEO Paul has done a phenomenal job to ensure three key NT Farmers policy initiatives were included in the NT Governments Green Paper on recovering the economy post pandemic titled 'Operation Rebound':

1. Developing the Katherine Agribusiness Hub (read Cotton Gin as priority) is one of only a handful of projects earmarked for early investment as critical enabling infrastructure.
2. Establishing local fresh produce supply chains and maximising the return for 'seconds' through processing facilities are listed as other immediate rebound initiatives.
3. Precinct development across the Territory to open up new land for farming along with streamlined policy settings to fast track the development application process are highlighted as vital for attracting investment and long term resilience.

As part of the rebound strategy I was pleased to be appointed by the Chief Minister to 'Team Territory' (TT) a key reference group that will advise the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission (TERC). My presence on TT will ensure these key policy areas, along with other new initiatives to benefit farming, remain front and centre of the recovery process.

The TERC is charged with charting the course to create an economy worth \$40B (presently \$26B) and to add 35,000 new jobs by 2030. They hand down an interim report in late July and expect agriculture and horticulture to be key drivers in their plan.

Although temporarily relegated to the second most talked about droplet, water for irrigation will always remain a high priority for your board. Thanks to concerted lobbying by NT Farmers and a very practical approach by Water Controller Jo Townsend, producers across the Territory will see no reduction in their allocations for the coming year.

NT Farmers will be launching our Water Efficiency and Productivity Project in July. This five year project is aimed at maximising irrigation water use and increasing farming resilience particularly during dry years.

Thankyou again to all our dedicated staff for continuing to work in the best interests of members during these challenging times.

Take care everyone.



Boundless Possible - Where are the Workers?

As I sit and reflect on the last few months, I wonder how we got to this point. Workforce has been a constant issue across agriculture for decades. Plenty of programs and visas have passed under the bridge some have worked to some extent, but most have missed the mark and we now again wonder how we got here.

With a strong mango season ahead of us, melons growing across the Territory, emerging industries hitting there straps we return to the same question, "where are the staff coming from." This year the prospect of having a skilled mobile workforce to service our industry looks further away than ever.

With COVID-19 still biting across most of the economy and an unemployment level at heights I have not seen in my lifetime, you would wonder how we got here? We have jobs available; we have committed employers; we have focused on work force development and still the workforce does not come. Think back - the Seasonal Worker program was championed as the silver bullet from successive governments. It seemed to good to be true, a mobile, willing workforce on our door step and the opportunity for Australian fruit and vegetable growers able to pay award rates in Australia and then the workers taking monies back to there communities in the Pacific to better their lives.

With no pathway and little desire from the Federal Government to work with industry to create a pathway for the seasonal workers to return, you might well ask, "How did we get here?" The answer is simple, Australian people do not want the type of jobs we have on offer in the locations we have them at the time of year we have them.

To add to the dilemma, the backpackers that are normally floating around the Territory to fill the gaps have either chosen to stay put, have not been able to travel or are back in their home countries. We are in a serious jam unless the industry has structural reform and a concerted effort from all levels of government and we will be in the same position for the foreseeable future. The numbers of backpackers will take many years to build back to pre COVID-19 levels.

NT Farmers have worked tirelessly to try and find alternate workforces with varying degrees of success. We have sourced some available workers through the refugee population in the Territory; we have advocated for variations to visas and flexibility in study hours for the 3,000 overseas students in the Territory; we have championed the Territory Jobs Hub to assist our fellow Territorians find jobs; We have advocated through the National Bodies, like NFF and AUSVEG to grant current visa holders extensions to allow them to stay longer.

Whilst all of these options have and will deliver some success, they will not solve the problem by themselves or collectively. What we need are some clear pathways to bring our seasonal workers into Australia to ensure our crops are picked and our businesses can assist in the COVID recovery and most importantly ensure our businesses survive, prosper and flourish. We all signed up to a better system in the Seasonal Worker Program and now government must support us into the continuation of this program. Without it we have few options left in the toolbox. It is worth considering the Northern Territory is first in line for the massive staff shortage ahead of us and will spread to all growing regions quickly.

Every grower across the Territory and Australia understand the importance of biosecurity better than most, in fact it is part of our business planning, induction and daily lives. Furthermore, we all understand that protecting our fellow Australians is of the highest importance, we all have family and/or friends that are high risk. These are high stakes and we need to get this right.

What we are asking for is for the Federal Government, supported by the Territory Government to stand up a quarantine facility in the Northern Territory to guarantee the workers we have supported from our closest neighbors can return and pick our fruit. By doing this the Federal Government can protect all our fellow Australians, support our closest neighbors and support the Territory economy.

I must also acknowledge the support NT Farmers have received in advocating our position from the Australian Mango Industry Association, National Farmers Association, AUSVEG, Department of Primary Industries and Resources, Minister Kirby's Office, NT Mango Industry Association and our fellow state-based farming organisations. All these groups have given tremendous support. Yet we are still no closer to a solution.

How many millions of dollars of produce need to be left on the trees or rotting on the ground before governments realize we have an issue?

As Chief Executive Officer of The Northern Territory Farmers Association I give a commitment this is our number one priority. We will continue to knock on every door until we have a workable solution.

Good luck for the season ahead - we have your back.

We are very fortunate to be in the Northern Territory during the COVID-19 outbreak.

In March 2020 the pandemic precautions affected our industry including: the hospitality industry being forced into temporary shutdown and many producers experienced a slump in sales; and the border closures both interstate and internationally meaning reduced options for employing staff, especially in an industry that relies heavily on an international workforce.

Whilst there have been many changes, with more to come, with an unknown timeframe and potential for a second wave of outbreaks of the Coronavirus it is recommended to be proactive not reactive as an agri-business manager.

The Territory Jobs Hub is a talent pool of people to choose from. The NT Government is currently supplying this online portal free of charge to Territory businesses. Register online <https://get.cited.com.au/organisation/registration> Should you require assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Territory Jobs Hub

Are you an employer needing to access staff?

The Territory Jobs Hub is a free service



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The [National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee](#) have invited NT Farmers Board and members to participate in a Farmers Roundtable to provide NT specific input into the National Agriculture Workforce Strategy which will also consider the related services, logistics and processing industries. This strategy will position Australia's agriculture industry to attract, retain and develop the future workforce it requires. The committee is interested in understanding the NT Farmers perspectives on (depending on your particular interests/experience):

- where Australian agriculture is now and how this compares to our international counterparts
- drivers affecting agriculture generally, in particularly drivers that affect the attraction and retention of the agricultural workforce
- workforce availability (now and future), including barriers and impediments
- skills and knowledge needs of the agricultural workforce and business owners (now and future) and whether current education arrangements meet these needs and opportunities, examples of best practice (case studies) and priority areas for action.

This aligns with the key areas in the discussion paper, available on the departments [website](#). The paper is open for response submission and all are encouraged to make a response by 3 August.

Employing Casuals long term?

In 2018 there was a court case Workpac versus Skene, the court ruled that an employee who was hired as a casual and paid the 25% loading, but worked regular hours over lengthy periods was permanent, and therefore owed leave entitlements.

Recently, another case involving Workpac versus Rossato the Court confirmed the above position, despite the fact that in Rossato's case the 25% casual loading was clearly identified as such in the employment contract and Enterprise Agreement. The court also found that the employer could not offset the leave entitlements against the 25% (notional casual loading) or recover it as an overpayment. For further advice view the National Farmers Federation Guidance on their website. More information is available on page 5 of this magazine.

If you missed the NT Farmers Workforce Webinar held on 12 June, you can view it anytime via YouTube. There is important information all Employers should be aware of on this road to recovery.



NFF Guidance for Employers: Classification of Long-Term Casual Employees

Status of Casual Employees and the Rossato Decision

On the 20th of May 2020, the Full Federal Court reached a decision in the matter of **WorkPac v Rossato** which effectively confirms (and possibly expands upon) the decision in 2018 on casual employment which the court reached in **Workpac v Skene**.

The decision confirms that employees who were notionally engaged as casuals but can demonstrate that they were working fixed, regular shifts are considered to be permanent employees in the eyes of the law

The practical effect is that those employees can retroactively claim leave and other entitlements of permanent employees despite having received a casual loading.

The Decision in Rossato

A central factor in the Court's reasoning has been the question of whether the parties understood that the employment relationship would be ongoing and certain, and whether the worker was employed on a regular, ongoing basis.

Mr Rossato's employment with WorkPac over approximately three and a half years was not "casual" because he:

- Had a pattern of employment that was 'stable, regular and predictable'.
- Worked in a regular weekly roster of 7-days-on/7-days-off.
- Was expected to work all shifts allocated to him and essentially worked every shift he was assigned.
- Maintained an adherence to this work pattern, as set out in shift roster issued 7-months in advance, on an indefinite basis.

The Court also found that the payment of a casual loading (which in Mr Rossato's contract was explicitly said to be paid in lieu of the entitlements of a permanent employee) could not be used to offset the monetary value of those entitlements.

The Decision in **Rossato** opens the worrying potential for such employees (particularly those whose work patterns resemble those of Mr Rossato) to effectively 'double-dip' on entitlements.

What happens next?

The NFF has joined with a number of other industry bodies in voicing our concerns and calling upon the Government to act swiftly to address the matter and restore confidence to businesses.

What Should I Do?

In the immediate term, there are steps that employers can take to minimise or eliminate the possibility of such a situation occurring.

Those steps may include the following:

- Employers should undertake to comprehensively review their casual employees to gauge whether there are similarities between the conditions of their employment and those of the plaintiffs in **Skene** and **Rossato**.
- Explore the possibility of restructuring the shift rosters of casual employees in order to ensure they cannot be said to be working on a regular and ongoing basis that could be said to be 'stable, regular and predictable'.
- Ensure that shifts worked across multiple weeks are not following a patterned cycle, and that these shifts are not rostered more than a few weeks in advance.

Review and update employment contracts of casual employees to:

- Explicitly set out their casual employment status.
- Provide that the employer can elect whether to offer employment on any day and that the employee may decline.
- Specify the amount of the casual loading (per hour) and that it is paid pursuant to the award requirements — do not use language like "in lieu of leave" as that would suggest they are permanent because they are owed those entitlements.
- Include an option for the employer to recover or off-set casual loading payments against entitlements in circumstances where the employee is deemed to be "other than casual".
- Clearly identify the casual loading component of any pay in the pay slips and records.
- Maintain an awareness of further developments in this area, including Government guidance for affected employers and the potential for legislative change intended to address confusion around casual classification.

26 May 2020

COLES ADDS FAIR FARMS CERTIFICATION TO ETHICAL SOURCING PROGRAM *Industry-based solution to promote fair treatment of horticulture workers*

Coles has taken another step toward being Australia's most sustainable supermarket, incorporating Fair Farms Certification into the Coles Ethical Sourcing Program to support farmers using ethical employment practices and fair treatment of workers.

Fresh produce suppliers to Coles can now register with Fair Farms to satisfy the requirements of the Coles Ethical Sourcing Program, which sets out detailed standards for treatment of workers in the supply chain that suppliers are required to follow and demonstrate their compliance.

Aimed at addressing problems around workplace compliance and exploitation within the Australian horticulture industry, the Fair Farms program provides support and training for farm employers on fair employment practices and a pathway to independent third-party audit and certification.

Horticulture industry body Growcom developed the Fair Farms Certification Program with support from the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Federal Department of Agriculture and AUSVEG. Coles contributed to the original design of the Fair Farms Standard to ensure the program would meet Coles' already-established ethical sourcing standards.

Coles General Manager of Produce Craig Taylor said adopting Fair Farms Certification meant farmers now had multiple ways to become approved under the Coles Ethical Sourcing Program, which also uses the internationally recognised Supplier Ethical Data Exchange (Sedex), a global ethical supply chain management platform used to assess supply chain risk in over 150 countries.

"Around 95% of the fresh produce we sell comes from Australian farms, and it's important to Coles and to our customers that the workers in our supply chain are treated fairly," he said.

"By adopting this additional industry-based solution that can be used by all suppliers regardless of who buys their produce, Coles is making it easier for Aussie farmers to meet ethical workplace standards."

Fair Farms Program Manager Thomas Hertel welcomed the support from Coles, which will work closely with produce suppliers who wish to transition to the Fair Farms Program and participate in its ongoing development through the Fair Farms External Stakeholder Reference Group.

"We are delighted to have Coles on board. Their commitment to collaborate with industry on matters of ethical sourcing policy is very good news for businesses in horticulture," he said.

The announcement follows the development last year of the Coles Ethical Retail Supply Chain Accord, through which Coles is working with unions representing workers from every stage of the Australian fresh produce supply chain to promote ethical employment practices and treatment of workers.

The Accord, signed by Coles and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Australian Workers Union (AWU), aims to achieve a safe, sustainable, ethical and fair retail supply chain for all workers regardless of their employment status, citizenship or visa status.

For further information, please contact

Coles Media Line (03) 9829 5250 or media.relations@coles.com.au



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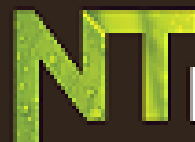
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Asian Citrus Psyllid Project

The Department of Primary Industry and Resources is working with the Northern Territory Farmers Association to look for evidence of the Asian citrus psyllid in the NT.

Why do we need to check for this psyllid?

The Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) is an insect widespread in Asia, (including Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and East Timor), as well as recently invading south, central and North America. They are currently not detected in Australia, after being eradicated from Northern Territory in 1915, however their close proximity to Australia cannot be overlooked. Their potential damage to the citrus industry requires regular surveillance to verify that they have not arrived.

What does Asian citrus psyllid look like?

They are sap-sucking bugs that you may find in either adult form, as nymphs or eggs. Eggs are bright yellow and almond shaped and are laid in groups on buds and young flush tips less than 10mm long. Nymphs are hard to see as they are very small, dull orange with red eyes. They are found mainly on buds, leaves and stems of young flushing growth and secrete a white, string-like honeydew, (as shown in picture 1 below).



Picture 1, ACP nymph - courtesy of daf.qld.gov.au



Picture 2, adult ACP - courtesy of nathistoc.bio.uci.edu

When they develop into adults, they are small (3-4 mm), brownish insects, with distinct mottled brown patches on their forewings. When viewed from above, the abdomen has a pointed shape and they have a distinctive feeding posture, (as shown in picture 2).

Where do they occur?

All citrus cultivars are potential hosts of the psyllid, though some species and varieties are better hosts than others. The plant host list includes grapefruit, mandarin, lime, kumquat, lemon, native citrus, as well as curry leaf and mock orange/orange jasmine (*Murraya* spp.).

What problems could Asian citrus psyllids cause?

The Asian citrus psyllid can be a serious pest of citrus plants. Their feeding can cause direct damage to citrus plants, (such as distorting or causing the death of new growth, as well as possibly leading to sooty mould growth on plants). However, it is their ability to transmit the bacterial disease Huanglongbing (HLB) that is most damaging. This is also known as citrus greening, which could significantly affect citrus crops and potentially devastate the citrus industry in Australia.

What's being done in the NT?

As part of the national Citrus Australia project, NT Farmers and DPIR are conducting trapping in a number of commercial citrus orchards. Sticky traps have been put out and after a few weeks the traps will be collected and checked by DPIR laboratories for all insects collected. The DPIR laboratories staff will check if there is any evidence of ACP, as well as looking for other insects of interest. The results will then be passed to Citrus Australia for assessment.

In addition to trapping in commercial citrus orchards, the DPIR entomology team together with Citrus Australia will conduct another trapping season in urban areas during August, following the same method of using yellow sticky traps. This is organised as part of the tomato potato psyllid national surveillance program led by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in Western Australia.



Both these projects are using the MyPestGuide App for recording results, a collaborative app available to anyone keen to join a network of people reporting and learning about pests.

What can I do?

To help ensure Asian citrus psyllid does not invade the NT, you can monitor host plants such as citrus, *Murraya* spp. or curry leaf by:

- inspecting new flushing growth for adults, nymphs or eggs
- looking for the cause of sooty mould or honeydew on plants
- checking for the cause of leaf distortion or brown shrivelled shoot tips
- scanning for adults on mature leaves, especially on the underside between flush events
- checking your plants frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms
- becoming familiar with common citrus pests so you can tell if you see something different
- downloading the MyPestGuide app to report observations of any common, interesting or possibly exotic pests, as well as the absence of pests across Australia.

Contact details

If you would like any further information on Asian citrus psyllids email quarantine@nt.gov.au or phone 8999 2118 or contact the DPIR entomology team insectinfo@nt.gov.au or 8999 2258.

You can also get assistance from NT Farmers on 8983 3233.

Mango trees are beginning to flower, signalling the start of another mango season in the NT.

Mango growers have luckily avoided the brunt of the pandemic impacting their businesses and the industry is cautiously optimistic about the season ahead. Sourcing sufficient staff numbers and managing the risks of COVID-19 within the workforce remain major issues for growers in the upcoming season.

To assist with planning for the 2020 season, Australian Mangoes has compiled a COVID-19 Grower Guide, which can be found [here](#), for the national mango industry which is currently being translated into Vietnamese.



The aim of this document is to provide industry stakeholders with reputable sources of information and provide a starting point to develop their COVID-19 management plans.

Employers and their staff should download the COVIDSafe app to assist with the process of contact tracing if a person within their business tests positive for the virus.

We strongly urge all growers to have an approved and implemented COVID-19 Management Plan in place for your business operations, even if you are using NT staff or do not pack your own fruit.

This plan will reduce the risk of the virus entering your business, assist in keeping your staff safe and reduce the likelihood of any business interruptions during the short but busy season.

A template can be found on the NT Farmers website and assistance in writing your plan is available from myself or the NT Farmers team.

Social distancing and personal hygiene, such as handwashing, are the key principals to reducing the risks outlined in this guide.

While these practices may slow down normal activities or slightly increase workload, the outcomes of protecting staff from the virus and keeping businesses open are much better than the alternative.

Environmental hygiene is another crucial consideration at the moment as COVID-19 is spread by coming into contact with droplets on surfaces (it is not airborne). Cleaning and disinfection practices should be thoroughly implemented and regularly reviewed.

Finally, the importance of communication cannot be understated. Communicate regularly and effectively with your staff, suppliers, customers and service providers as the situation is continually changing and quickly evolving.

Accurate and up-to-date forecast data and maintaining high eating quality standards throughout the season will be the key to ensuring consumers keep coming back for more all season. This standard of quality and detailed record of data will also keep the fruit moving through the marketplace for the entire season.

We are here to help so please get in touch with myself if you need any direction, clarification or assistance with your personal circumstances.

Sarah Hain - 0407609914

sarah@mangoes.net.au





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Encouraging the next generation...

NT Farmers are delighted to host Reilly Burnell from Palmerston College for work experience each Wednesday.

Reilly is currently working towards his Year 12 certificate. He has achieved Certificate One qualifications in Retail and Agrifoods and hopes to commence his Certificate One in Business next semester.

Reilly is a bit of a computer whiz and loves to play console games when he isn't working out at the gym.

His IT knowledge has come in very handy with helping us to set things up around the office!

We are keeping him very busy with general administration work, and helping him to discover the range of careers paths available in the agriculture sector.

Reilly has been out on farm and found it interesting but he prefers inside work and sees himself in a data processing or administration type role.

Reilly was born in Alice Springs and has grown up with his three brothers in the Darwin rural area.

We'd like to say a big thank you to Reilly for his hard work and great attitude.

The advertisement features a top section with a photograph of a vast agricultural field with rows of young plants. Below this, the text 'THE PERFECT IRRIGATION DELIVERY SYSTEMS FOR EVERY TYPE OF CROP' is displayed in white and blue. The bottom section shows six circular icons representing different irrigation components: a pivot point, a valve, a pipe, a filter, a manifold, and a riser. At the bottom left, the Netafim Australia logo and contact information are provided. At the bottom right, the Netafim logo with the tagline 'GROW MORE WITH LESS' is shown.

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The advertisement has a background image of various fresh fruits and vegetables. In the top left corner is the 'Pacific Labour Scheme' logo, and in the top right is the 'Seasonal Worker Programme' logo. A large white circle in the center contains the text 'DO YOU EXPERIENCE LABOUR SHORTAGES?'. Below this, another white circle contains the text 'CONTACT RONAN MACKEY NOW!'. At the bottom of this circle, the contact details 'TEL- 0487 777 433' and 'Rmackey@chambernt.com.au' are listed. In the bottom right corner, the 'Chamber of Commerce NORTHERN TERRITORY' logo is displayed.

Pacific Labour Scheme

Seasonal Worker Programme

DO YOU EXPERIENCE LABOUR SHORTAGES?

CONTACT RONAN MACKEY NOW!

TEL- 0487 777 433
Rmackey@chambernt.com.au

Chamber of Commerce NORTHERN TERRITORY

The VegNET program phase 2 has commenced, funded through Hort Innovation Australia, with a strategic 2020-2025 plan focus. Regional activities will be focusing on targeted and measurable practice change to support the profitable and sustainable growth of the Australian vegetable businesses. The principal driver behind this Extension Strategy Development is through key stakeholder engagement. The development of a Regional Vegetable Extension Reference Group will be paramount to the success of this program. The group will oversee the development and implementation of regionally appropriate key focus areas which meet the needs of the vegetable industry regionally, ultimately enhancing the long-term sustainability of the vegetable industry in the NT. The development of a Strategic Plan is in the drafting phase and stakeholder further input is being sought. Current key focus areas being considered are water efficiency practices, soil wealth, IPM development and market supply chain opportunities. All inputs and suggestions will be considered as valuable inclusions in the plan. If you are keen to become part of the Regional Vegetable Extension Reference Group or would just like your suggestions to be considered please contact **Simone Cameron** on **0413 308 335** or ido@ntfarmers.org.au



National Vegetable
Extension Network

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Hort
Innovation
Strategic levy investment

VEGETABLE
FUND

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the vegetable research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au

OUT and ABOUT

With the easing of Covid19 restrictions NT Farmers have been able to get out and about visiting and connecting with our important stakeholders. The cooler days and nights signalling the commencement of the dry season and our



regional growers and producers are now in full swing with much of our valuable NT seasonal produce. It is essential, as part of your best farm practice, to monitor your crops regularly for pest and diseases and to have an action plan ready to go should any pest and disease thresholds rise. Remembering that there is a large population of beneficial organisms out there that help to keep pest populations under control, and these should be encouraged in any production system to help minimise the reliance on synthetic chemicals.



Local beneficials: Hover Fly & Stingless Bees pollinating melon flowers (Source: S Cameron)

The Area Wide Surveillance (AWS) Project for this season has started and is a vital part of assisting with crop monitoring and surveillance across the NT. Over the coming weeks and months, NT Farmers will be visiting regional growers to help with the management practice of identifying what's happening in your seasonal crops both good and in some cases not so good.

These visits are a massive value add to the longer-term sustainability of our northern production. The more variety of crops that can be a part of this surveillance the better our northern production capacity will become.

The key focus behind the project is to enhance productivity and general plant health. Remember, NT Farmers is here to help you. If you would like to be a part of this regional project please contact **Simone Cameron** on **0413 308 335** or email at bio@ntfarmers.org.au



The importance of managing safety in agriculture

Agriculture is recognised by Safe Work Australia as being the most dangerous industry to work in due to the combination of hazards as well as the fact many farmers work alone or in remote locations. More than one in five workers who died at work, worked in Agriculture. It has the highest fatality rate of any Australian industry (14.8 fatalities per 100,000 workers).

What is being done about this?

Sadly, statistics show that a very low percentage of Australian agribusinesses have a current safety management system in place, but this is changing. By becoming more aware of the risks and penalties associated with not having a safety system, business owners are starting to change their attitudes and increase acceptance when it comes to safety.

What is a safety management system?

A safety management system is a process that is put in place by an employer to minimise the risk of injury and illness. When implemented correctly, it becomes part of the culture and impacts the way people carry out their jobs.

Why do I need a safety system?

As a business owner, there are legal requirements that you must comply with to ensure your workplace meets WHS obligations. This may include the health and safety of your customers, employees, visitors, contractors, volunteers and suppliers.

The principal WHS law in the Northern Territory consists of the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform

Legislation) Act, supported by the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations.

Do I need a safety system if I don't employ anyone?

WHS legislation does not differentiate between an employee, contractor or a family member working on your farm. If you have any worker coming onto your farm, you hold the same legal obligations to provide them with a safe work environment and safe systems of work as you would an employee.

What happens in an investigation?

Record keeping is the key to protecting your business against any unfair claims or disputes. If a regulator was to come onto your property, they will request to see your safety management system. They are likely to:

- conduct interviews with any person who was present or who may know about the incident/workplace
- take photographs
- ask to see appropriate documentation such as inductions, maintenance records, training records, safe work procedures and policies as well as any other evidence that demonstrates the business has an active attitude to safety in the workplace
- any associated Contractor and Partners will be contacted related to the investigation.

What can I do?

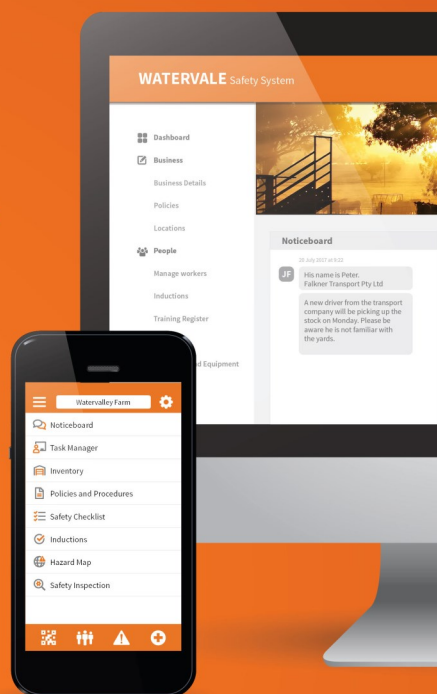
Agribusiness owners are urged to improve their processes to help make their workplaces safer and their businesses prosper. We understand this task can seem unattainable when faced with a hefty workload and an insurmountable amount of paperwork.

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Following on from last year's cotton crops and the increase in plantings this year there has been an increased interest in a wide range of farming developments, from new crops, revisiting previously planted crops and further development/modification of existing industries.

With continued interest from farmers for new and existing crops, access to water and the cost of irrigation development (including perceived pumping costs) in relation to the returns available has increased. There is considerable consultation with irrigators (and potential irrigators) being carried out around the Territory and especially within the Katherine Tindall Water area with the allocation announcements for the coming year.

Working on these issues Plant Industry Development has focussed on:

1. Developing Cotton as the cornerstone of Farming Development
 - a. Gin viability and funding
 - b. Public relations campaign underway
2. Available suitable land – precincts, subleases, Indigenous engagement
 - a. Finding local market opportunities
 - b. Current 2,000t yearly opportunity for soybeans to Feed Mills
 - c. Annual grain and hay requirements of Feed Mills and Feeding yards
3. Finding viable local markets
 - a. Intensification of local beef industry for fodder and grains)
 - b. Short term spot market for millet, soy, sesame and other grains
4. Best option future crops
 - a. Cotton (Barkly North)
 - b. Peanuts (cornerstone of Central Australia, significant rotational crop in North)
 - c. High quality fodder such as cavalcade, desmanthus, rhodes and sorghums
 - d. Grains including sorghum, millet and rice
 - e. High value grains and oil seeds, hemp, sesame etc
 - f. High value horticulture – nuts, citrus, avocado and grapes in central Australia
5. Understanding and trying to streamline the government approvals process
 - a. There is now a published development timeline from DENR for approvals of water applications, land clearing and non pastoral use permit applications
6. Surface water/wet season harvest opportunities
 - a. Broad acre irrigated crops will require surface water to develop faster
 - b. Currently no water allocations available in the Katherine water area from ground or rivers
 - c. NT Government is looking for applications to start the process of development of this resource - bore and bore field development and new crop observation trials

Other major meetings during the last 3 months have included:

- Working on value adding opportunities for existing horticultural operations
- Identification of future precinct development areas
 - ♦ Barkly and Daly Waters
 - ♦ Finke River region
- Water Advisory Committee representation

I am now representing NT Farmers with a seat on the Australian Hemp Council being formed this month. I will hold the position until we have a commercial person that may want to be on the council. This is a great step forward to bring industry learning as quick as possible to the developing opportunity around hemp in the NT. I have been working with commercial entities and researchers across Northern Australia on a potential hemp research application for the development of a viable commercial hemp industry for the north.

Photo: peanut harvest at Ali Curing courtesy Andrew Philip

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It is hard to think of anything that is more important to all Australians than water. Everyone has a stake in using and conserving water every day of our lives. Water is important in health, environment, culture, community, recreation, tourism, development, amenity and even biosecurity.

In the NT, we do have a lot of water. Even in Central Australia there is significant underground water which gets topped up during infrequent rain events. In the Northern zones there is a dependable wet season, which is getting a bit less reliable according to old timers. What we need to do is manage it wisely. This is where water allocation plans for catchments or aquifers are essential but need to be outcome focussed.

NT Farmers Association and our growers have contributed to many water allocation plans and processes run by the NT Government. These plans reserve water for our environment, cultural, recreational and domestic & livestock water supply use and allocate the amount of water out of what is left for productive uses like horticulture, broadacre farming, aquaculture, mining, and other industry uses.

The plans also have a section on what happens when the Wet season is a dud and the aquifers do not get fully recharged. The announced allocation for the water year can be varied to ensure the community and environment water needs are met first. This happened in the Katherine Tindall aquifer this season. The aim of the plan is to, above everything else provide enough water to the community and the Katherine river for the multiple reserved priorities.

This is based on assuming 100% of all the extraction licence allocations are being used. Any reduction in the announced allocation would impact on lower security water licence entitlements first. This could have had a huge impact on some farms with low and medium security and not on other similar farms with high security licenses .

This allowed NT Farmers to work with The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), who modelled the effects of actual projected water use for 2020 rather than theoretical use, and found the same outcome could be achieved if farmers stuck to using just the water they had planned to use in 2020. NT Farmers worked with the department to consult with growers and are pleased to say that the announced allocations for 2020 by the NT Water Controller for the Tindall aquifer meant farmers could continue with their 2020 plans with the required flow maintained in the River. <https://denr.nt.gov.au/water/water-management/announced-allocations>

NT Farmers is ramping up our Water program with the Water Use Efficiency, Sustainability and Productivity Project set to start in July 2020. Funded by NTG, PAWA and corporate contributors. The project will assist growers to embrace improved irrigation monitoring technology and management systems as well as benchmark water use against productivity to get the best out of our water resources and only use the optimum water required to reduce the pressure on our water resources especially in the Katherine and Darwin aquifers.

NT Farmers is also supporting the bid by CDU and other stakeholders for a Water in the North Cooperative Research Centre which can take a much more wholistic view and drive the research that is needed to fill the gaps in our knowledge of water supply and management across the varied regions and communities of Northern Australia.

NT Farmers is very keen to work with everyone interested in water management across the North and is very committed to achieving a balanced sustainable economically viable Northern Australian Farming Industry. If you would like to get involved please contact Greg Owens, NT Farmers Industry Development Manager

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- Personal Accident and Illness

Grower Profile

Michael Jakobi - NT Hay, Seed & Grain

Mick was born in Sydney and grew up on a farm near Bathurst. After leaving school, he became a diesel fitter and started operating a mobile diesel fitter business in 2006.

Being quite an adventurer, Mick first came to the NT in 2008 when he was employed as a helicopter pilot. He saw the opportunities on offer here and transferred his business and his family to the NT shortly after.

Originally interested in agriculture machinery repairs and maintenance, Mick now focusses on growing hay and seed and provides contract farming services including spraying, ploughing, seeding, harvesting etc.

Originally Mick found the Territory to be deceiving - at first glance opportunities were not visible, there seemed to be nothing around, no land, etc, but once his name got out there, networks provided more and more work and the opportunities are endless.

For the first few years, Mick and his young family travelled around in a caravan from station to station. When baby number three came along, the caravan was just a bit too crowded, so the family moved to the Greater Darwin area. The older children were originally educated via School of the Air but are now in mainstream schools since their move closer to Town.

Mick is 'in town' most of the time now but still travels out bush for remote work when he needs to. With modern technology and automation, he doesn't have to be 'on the farm' to manage the farm and he makes the most of remote management whenever he can.

Mick said that there are challenges in the NT and one of them is that when supplies are not available in town, you have to use the internet and freight system to get things up from south. This can be difficult, expensive and time consuming. You need to be well organised and build a network of people around you to make things happen efficiently.

He says the lifestyle that the NT offers is incredible, one day he can be in the desert culling camels, and his family can feast on camel steaks, the next day his children get to hold a baby crocodile, and the day after that he can be fishing for barramundi in Arnhem Land - these experiences are priceless.

Mick says he is planning to stay in the NT forever, as it is a piece of paradise.



Pictured above: Mick Jakobi enjoys the adventures of the NT, including working with crocodiles

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The goal of **drumMUSTER** is to reduce the amount of non-returnable agvet chemical container waste generated in the rural and urban sector by:

- increasing the number of containers recycled.
- providing a known destination for containers at the end of their life which will ensure the product is recycled



With the easing of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions be assured that **drumMUSTER** operations continue to operate. Current NT collection depots are:

NT Recycling Depot 19 Pruen Rd, Berrimah

Humpty Doo Transfer Station Spencely Street, Humpty Doo

Douglas Daly Research Facility Jungwa Road, Douglas Daly

Katherine Waste Management Facility Novis Quarry Road, Katherine

Ti Tree Council Depot Spencer Street, Ti Tree

Alice Springs Hazardous Waste Facility Compound Commonage Road, Alice Springs

NT Farmers have recently purchased a baler unit that will allow collection services to be streamlined making collection of drums from depots and collection sites easier to transport to our Recycling Centre in Darwin. This unit will be contracted out for a regular and regional collection service. The baler unit (much like a wool baler) compresses the unused drums into a neatly wrapped compressed bale. Drums must display the drumMUSTER logo and require inspection at the collection depots by a registered inspector.

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