

# GROW NT



A publication from the Northern Territory Farmers Association  
PO Box 748, Coolalinga NT 0839 Tel: 08 89833233 [www.ntfarmers.org.au](http://www.ntfarmers.org.au)

February 2020

## Come and catch a Barra! at the

#FoodFutures20



NORTHERN AUSTRALIA  
**FOOD FUTURES**  
CONFERENCE 2020



**27 - 30 April 2020 Darwin, NT**

[www.foodfuturesntfarmers.org.au](http://www.foodfuturesntfarmers.org.au)



*Photo credit: Tracy Sherwood with her 1m Barra!*



# REGISTRATIONS NOW OPEN!



## NORTHERN AUSTRALIA FOOD FUTURES CONFERENCE 2020

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- Field trips / farm visits
- Welcome reception
- Barramundi Adventures experience
- Gala Dinner and awards
- Industry workshops
- Networking and business matching

#### Industry sessions on;

Cotton, grains, horticulture, fodder, rice, agroforestry and peanuts accross NT, WA and North QLD

**Registrations close 12 April**

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**27 - 30 April 2020**  
**Darwin Convention Centre, NT**  
**[www.foodfuturesntfarmers.org.au](http://www.foodfuturesntfarmers.org.au)**



## From the CEO *Paul Burke*



Welcome to 2020.

It is March already and the wet season for most areas has been late and inconsistent.

More than ever, we as an industry need to ensure we are utilizing our water as efficiently as possible. The year ahead, whilst exciting and full of opportunity has some significant risks on the horizon and closer than we may expect.

The Coronavirus represents some real risks for industry, most notably with the export of our produce to some key markets. The import of labor through various programs is also a major concern and some imports of farm inputs could be disrupted.

NT Farmers have raised these issues through AUSVEG and National Farmers Federation and will continue to advocate strongly for industry that these are real risks and that they need to be addressed. Businesses need to be planning now to mitigate these risks within their own enterprises.

The VHT Plant and Cold Store and Logistics hub located at the Darwin Airport is taking shape quickly and is looking like a positive addition to the key pieces of infrastructure in the Northern Territory.

The Mango Roads Project should be out to tender by mid year and NT Farmers welcome these pieces of key enabling infrastructure.

NT Farmers have been working hard to get more land into production and are excited to partner with NT Landcorp with the release of new parcels of suitable land with water and are pleased to have completed the Expression of Interest process for 200ha on the Douglas Daly Research Farm. An announcement of the successful proponent will be announced in the very near future.

There will be other significant land areas released to coincide with the Food Futures Conference in April, these opportunities will be varied and exciting. A real opportunity to get some new players into the industry.

NT Farmers have successfully applied for funding to run a tropical fruit symposium in 2020 and we are really excited to bring tropical fruit growers together to prioritize research areas, biosecurity and market development.

We have also been successful in partnering with DPIR NT to deliver a broadacre research project looking at cotton and peanuts.

Currently NT Farmers are leading a research bid for a similar broadacre hemp trial.

NT Farmers will continue to identify opportunities for NT Growers to be involved in research and development. It is critical that growers are giving feedback to us of their priorities so we can explore these opportunities.

Within NT Farmers we have had some staff changes with Camilla Philip and Laura Cunningham moving on to new opportunities and we thank them for their significant contribution to the plant industry in the Northern Territory.

On behalf of all the staff and Directors of NT Farmers I wish you every success for the season ahead and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the **Northern Australia Food Futures Conference** - 27 to 30 April 2020.

If you haven't registered yet, make sure you go to <https://www.foodfuturesntfarmers.org.au/register>

And remember, that **NT Farmers Association financial members are eligible for a \$1000 discount off the registration fee!**

Please contact Robyn Purtill at [info@ntfarmers.org.au](mailto:info@ntfarmers.org.au) for further information.





# NORTHERN AUSTRALIA FOOD FUTURES CONFERENCE 2020

## Here's what previous conference attendees have to say:

### Ron Greentree - Gulf Farming

I'm not a big conference person but I like the grassroots approach of Food Futures events run by NT Farmers. I've attended the Darwin conference and Gulf Farming hosted a regional roadshow in 2019. We've all got a lot to learn from each other in developing northern agriculture. Food Futures events have helped me make the linkages I need to make northern agriculture succeed. See you at Food Futures 2020 in Darwin.



### Adam Kay - CEO Cotton Australia

I can strongly recommend attending Northern Australia Food Futures Conference in April 2020 in Darwin. It's great to see successful northern farmers providing leadership in developing northern agriculture. The cotton industry has invested a lot in northern cotton development over many years. Food Futures Conferences have linked the farmers across the north, and linked the north with southern organisations like Cotton Australia. The cotton industry will be well represented at Food Futures 2020, and I recommend those interested in northern cotton attend Food Futures 2020 in Darwin.

### Dr Chris Chilcott - CSIRO Research Leader Northern Australia

CSIRO has supported and participated in Food Futures conferences and regional road shows since 2014. Food Futures conferences have provided a good opportunity for CSIRO to connect with all those involved in northern agriculture, especially successful northern farmers.

CSIRO's long history in Northern Australia has given us a wealth of knowledge and research capacity to guide the continued sustainable development of the region. As Australia's national science agency, we look forward to continuing to provide key information on water, transport logistics, land tenure, soil mapping, and health and biosecurity.





### **Rob Boshammer - Ord farmer**

NT farmers have done a great job of Food Futures Conferences and Roadshows. I can highly recommend the Food Futures Conference 2020 in Darwin for those interested in developing agriculture in northern Australia. I'll be speaking at Food Futures 2020 on my passion, developing irrigated fodder crops.



### **Bruce Vandersee - Vanderfield**

Vanderfield have been strong supporters of the Northern Australia Food Futures Conferences with NT Farmers in 2014, 2016, 2018 and the next conference in April 2020. It's a great forum, run by successful northern farmers, to help develop agriculture in northern Australia. Vanderfield has supported northern farmers to visit southern farming areas and taken southern farmers to look around the north. I look forward to the 2020 conference in Darwin and recommend attendance of all those interested in developing northern agriculture.



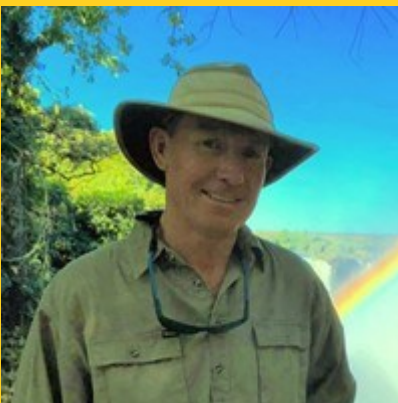
### **Alister Trier - CEO NT Department Primary Industry and Resources**

"My Department has been a proud financial sponsor of Northern Australia Food Futures since its inception in 2014. We are financial sponsors of Food Futures 2020. The event's success comes from bringing together everyone involved with northern agriculture – politicians, government agencies, farmers and agribusiness, from NT, WA, Queensland and Nationally. It's a great opportunity to meet and discuss the development of agriculture across northern Australia. I strongly recommend everyone interested in northern agriculture to attend Food Futures 2020."



### **Fritz Bolten - Ord farmer and Chairman OrdCo.**

Food Futures conferences have been a great opportunity to hear what's happening across the north in agriculture, especially to hear from successful farmers in the north. OrdCo has joined with NT Farmers to run Food Futures 2020. I look forward to meeting all those interested in northern agriculture at Food Futures 2020



Happy New Year!

On 1 January 2020, farmers had a win, with the National **Horticulture Industry Labour Agreement** (HILA). This agreement allows horticulture businesses to access skilled and semi-skilled staff. The HILA will enable approved businesses to sponsor skilled and semi-skilled overseas workers from a select list of occupations to fill jobs where growers can demonstrate there are no local workers able or willing to fill them. The HILA is demand driven and will remain uncapped, meaning growers will not be limited to a particular number of places under the agreement.

Nationally, industry bodies came together on this common issue for the benefit of growers.

See how the HILA may benefit your business:

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/skilled-migration-program/recent-changes/new-horticulture-industry-labour-agreement>

The **NT Young Farmers Group** Committee have been successful in obtaining some funding towards a program called Generation Next. After the Young Farmers Group members informed the committee of their needs, the program was created, which includes seven training modules; finance management, media training, advocacy, personal development, mental health, know your Assembly, employment & work, health & safety & regulations e.g. Fair Farms Initiative.

There are positions vacant on the Committee after two active members left: Laura Cunningham and Jacob Betros. If you have some creative ideas and approx. 1 hour a week to contribute, this **volunteer role** may be beneficial to you. Message the Committee via Facebook @NT Young Farmers Group.

The NT Young Farmers Group are hosting a breakfast as part of the Northern Australia Food Futures Conference on Wednesday 29 April. The event will include a panel of peers who will be interviewed by Peter Lewis and the audience. If you would like to participate contact [wpc@ntfarmers.org.au](mailto:wpc@ntfarmers.org.au)

Thank you to those who participated in the **2019 harvest labour survey**, verbal responses recorded will create the 2019 harvest labour report which will be completed by the end of March. This valuable information is used to advocate for improvements to a variety of workforce measures including the Horticultural Award.

The Fair Work Commission made determinations that added [new rules about annual wage arrangements](#) in the Horticulture Award commencing from the first full pay period on or after 1 March 2020. For example, if an employee's fortnightly pay starts on Thursday, 27 February, these new rules won't start until Thursday 12 March 2020. The new rules affect full-time employees who are paid an annual wage.

Employers can still pay all employees an annual salary without using annual wage arrangements in an award, as long as it covers all of their minimum entitlements. Employers should get independent advice to ensure compliance with the new rules.

NT Farmers are being consulted on a national agriculture labour strategy. The national taskforce is seeking input from Employers who have experience with a variety of employment options e.g. permanent staff, temporary staff, visa holders and trainees. To be included in the consultation which will consist of a roundtable discussion at Coolalinga, and provide input please contact Aisla Connolly.

Recently NT Farmers have been submitting funding applications for a suite of educational programs. One example is the Federal Department of Agriculture invited NT Farmers (one of 10 state farming bodies nationally) to apply for funding to facilitate government, Catholic and independent primary school visits to farms and other primary production worksites to learn about agriculture production, sustainability practices and land stewardship.

See you in April at the Northern Australia Food Futures conference to hear about balancing development and the environment, take a field trip and catch a Top End barramundi.

If you require further information please contact Aisla Connolly, Workforce Planning Coordinator  
0400 416 558 or email [wpc@ntfarmers.org.au](mailto:wpc@ntfarmers.org.au)







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# Territory Legends

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AHC30716 Certificate III in  
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**For further information contact:**

**Aisla Connolly**  
**Workforce Planning Coordinator**  
**NT Farmers**

**P: 0400 416 558**

**E: [wpc@ntfarmers.org.au](mailto:wpc@ntfarmers.org.au)**

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This program is funded by the  
NT Government, Department of Trade Business and Innovation.  
Charles Darwin University, RTO Provider No. 0373





Welcome to the International Year of Plant Health 2020  
#IYPH2020

The opportunity all plant industry can have throughout this year is to increase national and international awareness around protecting plants, protecting life. A call to action to improve plant health and build a better future. Involvement can be as simple your own farm awareness through identifying your own best management practices and through regular monitoring and surveillance of your crops right through to the wider industry engagement. Be active in your conversations with others, ask questions, seek advice and support, support your community.

The Biosecurity Champions project is nearing completion and is shaping up to be a positive alliance to awareness and best on farm practices for biosecurity. The key messages are that biosecurity is everyone's business, is not designed to be an extra burden but rather a valuable tool in ensuring your farm, your future. We all understand the implications of the possibilities of a pest or disease incursion and the unfortunate outcomes that can bring with it for our production and trade, with Citrus Canker as an example now in the final eradication stages of the National Citrus Canker Eradication Program. Do you have your biosecurity farm plan ready?

The more recent concerns of late 2019 is that of African Swine Fever (ASF) in pigs. This disease has been positively identified in Indonesia and could cause significant impact to the Australian Pork Industry should it find itself here, currently it is NOT here. Our largest concern in the Top End is around our feral pig population. This population is unregulated, widespread and if ASF was to infect this population it would be difficult if not almost impossible to eradicate.  
#helpsaveourbacon

More recently 2020 announcements have been of the outbreak of Banana Panama TR4 disease on a number of banana farms in the Ayr and Tully districts of Queensland. The NT is very aware of the implications this causes to industry as we experienced our own Banana Freckle incursion in 2013 which ultimately shut down the banana trade and forced several producers in the Top End to end their production for good. The NT led the national response program and the NT was declared banana freckle free in February 2019. It is essential that strong biosecurity protocols are practiced and adhered to, to alleviate the spread of the disease and allow trade to continue.

In February a positive identification of the Fall Armyworm (FAW) *Spodoptera frugiperda* was located in the Torres Strait Islands and now around Georgetown, Qld. This species has a host of more than 350 host plants and is known to heavily impact production both agriculturally and horticulturally.

It is crucial that everyone becomes familiar with the life cycle of this species and actively monitors their crops this season. The DPI will be placing a significant number of pheromone traps around the top end over the coming weeks in order to monitor and trace its possible movements into the NT. Everyone needs to play a positive role in ensuring the FAW has a minimal impact now this it is in Australia.

Fall armyworm larva (Source: Matthew Bertone)



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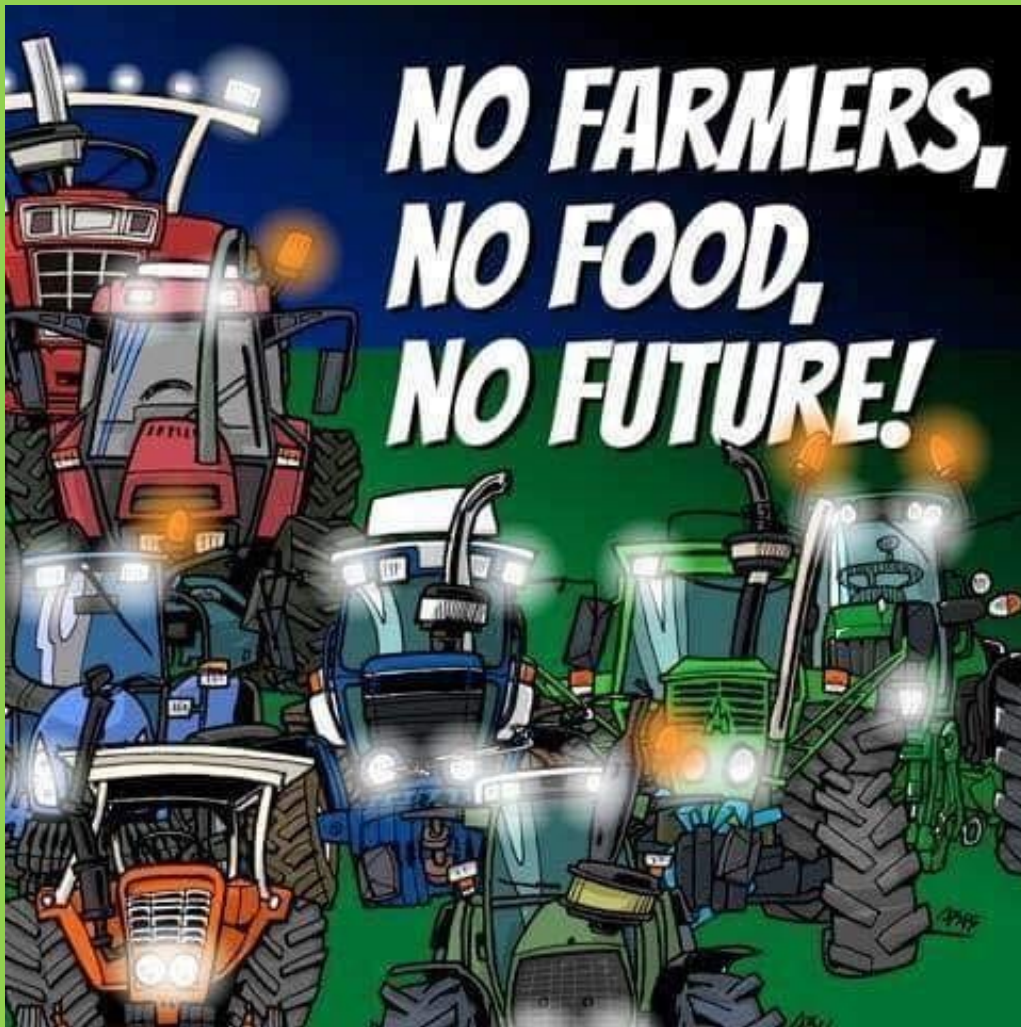
If you suspect fall armyworm, you should immediately call the

**Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.**

This season NT Farmers will be continuing the area wide surveillance project alongside the DPI and NAQS. This project is a valuable connection between grower and industry allowing for a greater communication, awareness, understanding and mindfulness around crop monitoring and its impact on crop production. If you are interested in having your farm be a part of this surveillance, please email [bio@ntfarmers.org.au](mailto:bio@ntfarmers.org.au)

Last week NT Farmers had the opportunity to take visiting interstate stakeholders and industry officers to a number of properties in the Darwin and Katherine region as part of the Protected Cropping Forum held at Berrimah Farm. It was a great opportunity for them to see firsthand some of the wonderful produce and the biosecurity practices adhered to by our growers and producers. NT Farmers looks forward to exchanging these visits throughout the coming season. Networking is a powerful tool for all across the many and varied plant industries.





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# 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?

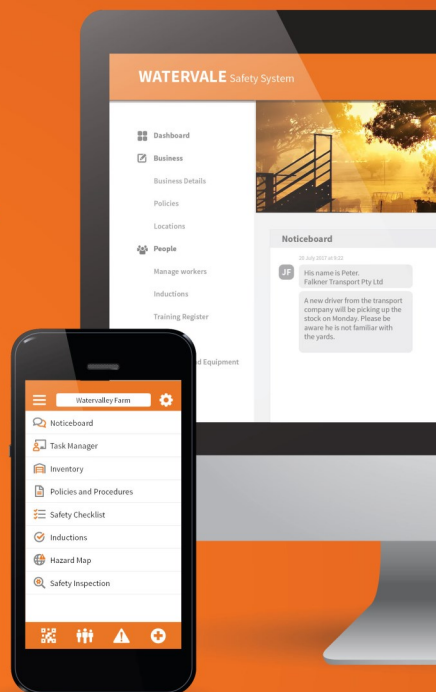
Agribusiness owners are urged to improve their processes to help make their workplaces safer and their businesses prosper. We understand this task can seem unattainable when faced with a hefty workload and an insurmountable amount of paperwork.

Being prepared without compromising productivity can be achieved by using a system that meets your obligations and is tailored to your specific needs.

## Forget the paperwork – go digital.

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For businesses that want to get rid of the paperwork, improve efficiencies and keep their workers safe.



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## Thank you, goodbye and farewell!

This edition we say thank you and farewell to two of our Industry Development Officers.

Laura Cunningham has contributed significantly to the development of plant industries in the last 2.5 years. Specifically the Integrated Pest Management project, and the ongoing development of the trial plot at Coastal Plains Research Station .

Laura was successful in obtaining funding for the chemical drum bailer which will have long lasting benefits across our industry.

Laura developed strong networks across our producers that will deliver increased outputs for our industry.

Her enthusiasm and passion for the agriculture industry is evident in everything she does

Laura has moved to a role at the abattoir in Bachelor and we have no doubt she will add to the impressive results she achieved at NT Farmers.

Thank you Laura for your dedication to the growth of the plant industries sector and we wish you all the best with your future endeavours.

Camilla Philip has achieved much and been a strong advocate for the horticulture industry in the Northern Territory since joining us just under 2 years ago.

Many growers, members and stakeholders have benefitted from Camilla's knowledge and network connections.

The NT Plant Industry has gained significantly from her work on the export market and our organisation is viewed very positively with a range of industries we had not previously engaged with.

Some of these relationships will be critical to our industry as it embraces export as part of future development.

Camilla has taken up an opportunity to work in international trade management.

We have no doubt that our industry and organisation will benefit from Camilla's passion and advocacy for the Northern Territory.

We wish you every success in your new position Camilla and look forward to seeing your ongoing achievements for the industry.



*Aisla Connolly, Laura Cunningham, Camilla Philip, Paul Burke and Greg Owens share a farewell drink*



The start of the wet was certainly patchy and late and forced farmers to adapt planting practices and timings, especially for the rain fed cotton crops. Considering the start to the season the crops are looking excellent with six commercial dryland plantings in the ground looking very promising. There are four irrigated plantings that have been planted later under centre pivot or drip irrigation that are off to a very good start.



*Cotton in the Douglas Daly*

These plantings totalling approximately 1000 Ha, with another 1000 Ha in Kununurra will certainly continue the building of momentum for expanding broad acre cropping production in the North.

The establishment of cotton crops on commercial farms has continued to create real interest in expanding production (especially as 'rain fed' and with supplementary irrigation to finish the crop off) even after rain in the South. In the last 12 months we have seen at least 6 enterprises buy properties for cropping development. The development of a processing facility in the Northern Territory, is progressing very well with investment being pledged from a number of sources and support from the community growing to see a real value of a long term sustainable industry that will bring viable returns for farmers and increasing jobs for the community.

The Fodder market looks like it will remain strong again for another year mainly from the dry start in and around Katherine. There is an increasing focus towards quality hay, not only for weed free hay, but also for tested feed values that can deliver a return on the investment for the purchaser. As with any product there will become an increasing need for producers to know their market and know their customers. It is great to talk to an increasing number of producers that have all or at least a majority of the hay sold in advance to customers that know the quality that will be delivered.

On the horticultural front there is interest from marketers for a range of products to supply local NT, interstate and export markets. There is especially strong interest in vegetable lines such as tomatoes, capsicum, eggplant, pumpkin, rockmelon/ honey dew, sweet potatoes, ginger and onions. Fruit lines where interest has been shown include passionfruit and a range of tropical fruits.

I have recently returned from Dubai where I visited and had meetings with major supermarket chains and specialist importing/wholesaling businesses. There were great opportunities for a range of products, with the major comment being commitment to the market. There was good suppliers of Australian mangoes, melons and vegetables. Both supermarkets and importers see an opportunity for Australian supplies on a regular (even seasonal) basis. The main issue as with any market is do your homework, understand your customer, understand that each market is different and commit to marketing – trading on market highs will not build a market.





## Cotton is clearly top priority for NT's food bowl dreams

Cotton is clearly top of the Federal Government's agenda to create a super food bowl in the NT. The push for more cotton planting in the Territory won even further support from the Government today.

A \$1.4 million research program was announced to trial high-value crops such as cotton and peanuts, with potential crop rotations with sorghum, maize, rice, pulses or pasture. The government says the program "could help open up areas of the Territory as a significant grower of broadacre crops". The government has already given the CSIRO \$3.5 million "to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the development potential of the water and soil resources of the Roper River catchment".

The plans for increased irrigation and new broadacre crops is all part of a long-held dream for [a super food bowl](#) in the NT.

Many people believe the recent purchase of large cattle stations in the Katherine region by overseas buyers is with an [eye to growing broadacre crops](#) like cotton and even rice.

The [CSIRO study](#) into a dam on the Roper would potentially open up one million hectares to cropping, the Federal Government believes.

There remains many people staunchly opposed to development of cotton and rice growing crops in the Top End. Katherine hosted a packed public rally opposed to the industry in 2002 which led to the ALP of the time banning the GM crop. The then NT Government banned cotton growing or dams in the Daly River and halted any further approval for subdivision or clearing until a sustainable land use plan was developed. Yet another report, one of the very many on the long-held dream of the northern food bowl, was produced to support the ban in 2004. Genetically modified cotton was being trialed at the time in Katherine, which initially provoked the uproar.

Today, Resources, Water and Northern Australia Minister Keith Pitt said the latest research program would investigate the feasibility of new farming systems which could [help broadacre cropping](#) in the Territory. "This study will be a valuable resource for our agricultural industries and will determine the potential for high-level large scale crops for both dryland farming and with irrigation systems," Mr Pitt said. "Each of the project participants will bring unique expertise to help develop crop management strategies which will identify and remove some of the risk of broadacre agriculture in the Top End."

The two-year project is being co-funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia, along with the Grains Research and Development Corporation, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and 14 industry partners.



*GROWS WELL: Nick Black, Maya Black and Steve Black stand with one of the many bales of cotton successfully grown on their their station about 50km outside of Katherine last year. Picture: courtesy Katherine times*

There have been successful trials growing cotton at the Katherine Research Farm. There were also moves announced last year to [establish a cotton gin](#) in the Katherine region.

Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews said the research project would use a range of field trials and simulation techniques, with an initial focus on rain-fed and irrigated systems growing cotton and peanut crops. Peanuts were successfully grown on small plots in the Katherine region for many years in the past.

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"This research collaboration has the potential to expand Australia's agricultural sector and drive further development, economic growth and jobs in Northern Australia," Minister Andrews said.

"This is also a great example of how government, industry and researchers can work together to help open up Northern Australia and develop new industries."

The study will be the largest CRCNA research collaboration to date. The project partners are:

Grains Research & Development Corporation; Cotton Research & Development Corporation; Northern Territory DPIR; University of Southern Queensland; Queensland's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries; Northern Territory Department of Environment and Natural Resources; Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO); NT Farmers Association; Tipperary Station; Ruby Downs Station; Rockyhill Table Grapes; Edith Springs Station; Mainoru Station; Ooloo Farms; Glen Arden Cattle Company; Cotton Seed Distributors Limited; Greening the Northern Australia landscape with broadacre cropping

The Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia says the research could deliver a boon for new broadacre cropping developments across the Territory.

The two-year, \$1.4 million project is being co-funded by the CRCNA, the Grains Research and Development Corporation, the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and 14 industry partners.

Researchers from the NT Department of Primary Industry and Resources will lead a project team from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), CSIRO, universities, natural resource groups, industry associations, seed distributors and producers from across the Territory.

DPIR senior research agronomist Dr Ian Biggs said the project is focused on developing cropping systems for growers by building on earlier studies on the agricultural potential across the Katherine/Douglas Daly region, southern and central NT, and CSIRO's Northern Australian Water Resource Assessment study for the Darwin regions.

"This means undertaking trials that target high-value broadacre crops like cotton and peanuts and developing farming systems that incorporate crop rotations like sorghum, maize, pulses or pasture.

"Our physical small-scale trials will be complemented by larger, commercial demonstration trials and supported by crop simulation tools like APSIM (Agricultural Production Systems sIMulator) and OZCOT.

"Advances in these crop simulation models provide a powerful tool which can be used to extend learnings from past and current field research, build an understanding of the short and long term risk profiles, identify key management decisions, determine irrigation water demands and incorporate producer experience while developing an overall picture of the cropping potential of a region," he said.

Data collected as part of the trials will be added to the APSIM, OZCOT applications, while University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Associate Professor Keith Pembleton said his team will contribute its cropping system modelling expertise to the project.

The USQ Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Systems assists decision-makers to identify system constraints and make informed, science-based decisions that improve the productivity, profitability and environmental sustainability of agricultural systems," he said.

RCNA CEO Jed Matz said this information will help producers decide which crops to grow and when and where to grow them.



*Growers and industry representatives from the Territory have toured Queensland cotton farms*



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## Looking for Farm Workers?

**The Job Shop** is the Top End provider of the Australian Government's Harvest Labour Service. It is a **free** service to growers in the NT where we provide workers who have been screened to ensure they are eligible to work in Australia.

Get ready this mango season and contact Carol in Darwin on 0448 101 477 or Shelley in Katherine on 0437 041 606 so that we can have workers ready for you.



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*Janine Buckingham*

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# NT farmers share sustainability knowledge in India

Story courtesy Charles Darwin University

<https://www.cdu.edu.au/news/nt-farmers-share-sustainability-knowledge-india>

Northern Territory agriculturalists have begun a sustainable farming knowledge exchange with their Indian counterparts.

A \$66,000 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade grant (funded through Australia-India Council) has helped deliver the first stage in a Charles Darwin University-led sustainable farming knowledge exchange between NT agriculturalists and farmers in the Punjab.

In December 2019 Research Institute for the Environment and Livelihoods Research Fellow Dr Kamaljit Sangha led a group of eight NT farmers on a tour of the sub-continent's Punjab agricultural region, which also included a workshop at one of the region's higher education institutes.



*Central University of Punjab Vice-Chancellor Professor R.K. Kohli welcomes NT farmer Greg Owens (right) and Charles Darwin University Research Fellow Dr Kamaljit Sangha (centre) Pic courtesy CDU*

Dr Sangha said the 10-day research trip was an “eye-opener” with regard to a wide range of sustainable organic practices developed by the region’s “zero-input” farmers.

“The zero-input farming techniques in the Punjab region grew out of a mounting dissatisfaction among a relatively small group of farmers after the 1960s Green Revolution, which has led to widespread mechanised agriculture for the last few decades to meet India’s food demand for wheat and rice,” Dr Sangha said.

“The ‘Green Revolution’ has created a huge ecological backlash giving rise to organic farms that grow up to 10 different crops and more, which rely solely on organic fertilisers and pesticides.”

Dr Sangha said the collaboration between the Punjab Agricultural University and the region’s sustainable farmers had led not only to growth in development of sustainable farming methods, but also to the creation of purpose-built capital equipment – designed and built by the university’s engineering department.

Exchange group delegate and NT Farmers Association Industry Development Manager, Greg Owens said the NT farmers were impressed by the Punjabi farmers’ organic farming practices that increased soil organic matter and improved water use efficiency – achieved with sustainable techniques such as understorey planting, row cropping and recycling cattle waste through custom-made digesters (which is then added to irrigation water).

“The Charles Darwin University / NT Farmers sustainable farming study tour and knowledge exchange of the Punjab region in India was a fascinating and informative experience,” Mr Owens said.

Dr Sangha said planning was under way to host a reciprocal delegation of farmers from the Punjab in May or June this year – an exchange that would include a sustainable farming conference on CDU’s Casuarina campus.



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To successfully grow, produce and sell quality products, both locally and nationally, many agricultural producers utilise chemicals to treat their products. Naturally, there are strict guidelines to ensure correct chemical use.

In Australia, the Commonwealth Government monitors the amount and types of chemicals being used by growers to ensure dosages do not exceed the maximum residue limit (MRL) and that the correct chemicals are being used for the right crops.

A maximum residue limit (MRL) refers to the highest amount of an agricultural chemical residue that is legally allowed in a food product which is sold in Australia. Limits are set using internationally recognised methods and national scientific data. Limits are set well below the level that could pose health and safety risks to consumers.

The current monitoring system concentrates on testing in major agricultural commodities such as meat, grains and some horticultural commodities.

It is proposed to increase monitoring to a wider variety of crops therefore providing consumers with increased assurance that the produce that they buy is safe to eat.

A monitoring plan is currently being developed by the Commonwealth outlining how the proposed monitoring program will work and be governed. It is not yet known when the plan will be released for public comment.

Within the Department of Primary Industry and Resources, the Plant Biosecurity Branch (PBB) is responsible for administration of the *Agricultural and Veterinary (Control of Use) Act 2004* which includes following up with growers with maximum residue limit (MRL) detections. The branch is keen to work with growers to ensure:

- the appropriate use of chemicals;
- that label directions are understood and adhered to;
- that correct methods for safe storage are being utilised;
- that training requirements are understood; and
- that spray records are maintained.

We are also happy to answer any queries relating to the licensing requirements for S7, (or restricted chemical products), as well as the use of 1080 for vertebrate pest control.

If you would like any further MRL information, simply contact the PBB team on ([chemicals@nt.gov.au](mailto:chemicals@nt.gov.au)) or phone (08) 8999 2344.



*Photo courtesy of wallingtons.com.au*



*Photo courtesy of disruptordaily.com*



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## Meet the Chefs behind Charlie's of Darwin - a new Venue in Darwin CBD

Head Chef, Nathan Croton and Chef De Partie, Sammantha Devlin are the dynamic duo behind Darwin's newest kitchen at 'Charlie's of Darwin', located on the second floor of the iconic old Woolworths building on Knuckey St. Nathan and Sammantha come from different backgrounds, but both have hit the ground running with their menu design and eagerness to embrace local NT produce. Both attended the Roundtable meeting on 17 February, a collaborative event by Hospitality NT, NT Farmers Association and Culinary Federation NT Branch. In order to get to know them a bit more, Hospitality NT asked the following questions:

*Q: How long have you been a chef?*

NATHAN: I have been a chef for 29 years

*Q: Best thing you like about being a chef in the NT?*

NATHAN: Being able to use native wild products and meeting the locals who sell, grow and use them

*Q: Most challenging thing about being a chef in the NT?*

NATHAN: The heat outside makes the kitchen even hotter and it's so unpleasant.

*Q: What are you looking to do with the menu at Charlies of Darwin?*

NATHAN: we are hoping to show you what the NT is all about when you eat our food. We want to showcase all the native and, local ingredients and tell a story of the territory.

*Q: What's the best dish you have ever eaten?*

NATHAN: there has been so many so it's hard to come up with the BEST, but I would have to say Numnas.



Nathan Croton

*Q: How long have you been a chef?*

SAMMANTHA: I have been a chef for almost 7 years now

*Q: Best thing you like about being a chef in the NT?*

SAMMANTHA: Being new to Darwin I am yet to discover what it's like to be a chef in the NT but so far it's been great, I have managed to get my foot in the door with the new opening of Charlies of Darwin and I'm really looking forward to cooking some amazing food.

*Q: Most challenging thing about being a chef in the NT?*

SAMMANTHA: being new here the humidity is killing me I'm dying up here, and it makes it more uncomfortable in the kitchen but it's all worth it in the end.

*Q: What are you looking to do with the menu at Charlies of Darwin?*

SAMMANTHA: Whatever Nathan tells me to do haha. Seriously though we hope to bring all the fresh and native ingredients available in the NT onto your plate when you dine at Charlies

*Q: What's the best dish you have ever eaten?*

SAMMANTHA: That's a bit of a hard one to answer...so let's say my mums cooking when I go home to see my parents because I don't have to cook.



Sammantha Devlin



# AGVET CONTAINER RECYCLING IN THE NT



## Important information for NT farmers and agvet chemical users.

Dumping of containers at unmanned waste facilities is illegal and contravenes the NT EPA guidelines as containers holding chemical are classified as hazardous waste.

Most product labels state not to bury or burn containers. This activity is also illegal. **drumMUSTER** endeavours to provide a service to all levy payers and in the case of larger corporate operations can, if possible, provide an on farm collection service\*.

*\*Minimum numbers of containers would be required to access this service.*

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For more information contact NT Farmers Association:

08 89833233

ido@ntfarmers.org.au

[drummuster.org.au](http://drummuster.org.au)

