

NT Farmers achieved the restart of the Seasonal Worker Program.

Thank you to our Growers and stakeholders for the collective effort to make it happen.

To achieve this outcome was both inspiring, and a testament to the strength we have when we work together.

Paul Burke - CEO

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Photo courtesy of Barry & Sue Albrecht - Arnhem Mangoes

GROW NT

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PO Box 748, Coolalinga NT 0839 Tel: 08 89833233 www.ntfarmers.org.au

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As we head (hurtle?) towards the end of the strangest of years, I know I speak for the Board and I'm sure the entire membership, in acknowledging the incredible effort of our dedicated team so ably led by CEO Paul, through this *Covidus interruptus* year. The nation leading initiative to get two planes of Seasonal Workers in from Vanuatu and help salvage our mango harvest heads a long list of achievements in the CEO report. We have welcomed three new staff this year; Anna Day (Education Development), Iain Forest (Policy Development and Communication) and Di Renfree (Water Efficiency, Productivity and Sustainability) to add important capacity to our already impressive team of Aisla, Andrew, Simone, Greg, Robyn and Trish. Thank you all for going above and beyond this year.

Although November brings a much needed Christmas break closer my thoughts also turn to our AGM and the prospect of changing personnel on the Board. While I believe members should be pleased with the performance of the current stable and engaged group of directors, the best interests of our organisation will not be served going forward unless the makeup of Board is representative and relevant and evolves as our industry evolves.

Achieving balance and renewal on the Board is challenging given the increasing range of crops produced by our farmers and their geographic spread. The emerging cotton industry needs representation yet one of our biggest sectors, vegetables, remains unrepresented. We have no Aboriginal, Vietnamese or Cambodian directors, only two women and no one under 30. We have only one grower director from each of Central Australia, Katherine and the Douglas Daly. While mangoes are our largest sector having 6 mango producers on the Board (all grow other crops as well) has made reaching a quorum for meetings difficult during mango season.

So how do we ensure we have equitable sector representation along with the necessary skillsets for effective governance and strategic planning in such a diverse and dispersed industry? We have some levers to pull but I believe it is time to look at alternative Board structures.

During my first stint as a director in the early 2000's the then NTHA had a 'commodity' based Board with a maximum of two representatives from Mango, Nursery, Cut Flowers, Citrus, Bananas, Tropical fruits, Organic growers and Table grapes. Most groups had their own organisational structure with Chairs or leading growers as the NTHA representative. Growers were almost exclusively first generation, many were part time or sole traders and secretariat support for each group was a key function of NTHA. Departmental extension staff and experienced farmers provided guidance and encouragement for new growers in each sector. Board emphasis back then was on fostering individual business success where now it is much more about creating successful business environments.

Fast forward twenty years (encompassing the amalgamation with NTag in 2012) and we have only one remaining sector group (NTMIA), and 2 newly formed groups (FIANT & Cotton) perhaps a quarter the total number of growers but with a turnover in excess of \$400M if we include forestry. Would a single director from eight or ten sectors work? Should we have four or five regional committees with two directors from each?

The current system is far from broken and the recently amended constitution enables some flexibility with the Board able to appoint by resolution, 'skill based' (technical/professional) board members. Clause 22.3 reads "From time to time, the board may temporarily increase the number of positions held by associated members of the organisation to meet strategic or operational business priorities".

Whilst grower members will always maintain a majority on the Board it is clear we need to augment grower knowledge with specific outsourced skills and experience. Labour, supply chain and marketing, water, land availability and Aboriginal engagement are examples of specific skills that would lift the Board's effectiveness while we debate possible new structures.

Congratulations to the NTMIA Board, their helpers and Associated Advertising & Promotions for the hugely successful Mango Madness Festival October 25th.



Inspiration is one thing but the perspiration to pull together an event of that scale right in the middle of picking was a truly herculean effort. Well done to all those who gave their time, fruit and dehydrated bodies so generously! Thank you also to the NT Farmers staff who volunteered. Having been involved with the Nursery Industries' Tropical Garden Spectacular for 14 years the first event was definitely the hardest so I hope everyone can recover and make this an annual celebration of a great industry and its people.

I'll take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board members and their families for the time they have given throughout this stressful year. To our amazing staff again a huge thank you for all you have done to help get NT Farmers and our growers through this year.

Finally, to our members and friends thank you for your continuing support of NT Farmers and of each other. Enjoy the festive season like never before and on behalf of the Board I wish you all a safe and prosperous 2021.



As 2020 draws to a close it is important to reflect on the year that has been the most complex, I have ever experienced in my 50 years on this earth. The resilience that our farmers have shown to keep their operations working is nothing short of outstanding. The continuously changing environment during COVID-19 has required owners and managers to be flexible and adaptable to operate in these unpredictable times. A majority of enterprises have achieved this and continued to operate at a professional and productive level.

Not an easy feat, I congratulate you.

NT Farmers has also had to remain flexible and able to adapt to this new environment. We have listened to your issues and concerns and have acted upon them. NT Farmers swiftly responded to calls from members and the industry for access to workers. The entire organization worked tirelessly to help achieve workforce solutions to support farmers to do what they do best - provide the highest quality food and fibre to consumers both here and abroad.

The fact that we achieved the restart of the Seasonal Worker Program, and established a new pathway is nothing short of amazing.

It was a collective effort with growers reaching out to their political contacts, giving freely of their time to get the message out through our key media partners and contacts, hosting ambassadors and politicians in a collective and coordinated manner to achieve an outcome that was both inspiring and a testament to the strength we have when we all work together.

*Right - Seasonal Workers from Vanuatu work on Farm near Katherine
Photo courtesy Andrew Dalglish - Foxalicious Fruit*

We did not achieve all we wanted in the space - it would have been preferred to get 'on farm quarantine' over the line and also to access Timor Leste' as a partner in the seasonal worker program. Whilst this was not possible in 2020 it remains the highest priority for us and we will continue our advocacy to achieve it.

The year 2020 highlighted the fragility of our workforce like never before and if we look forward to 2021 that will constrict even further. With back packer numbers continuing to shrink at almost 10% per month this cohort of workers will be more difficult to source and retain. NT Farmers launched a Work Force development strategy in July this year and are currently working with all levels of Government to fund the implementation of this plan.

We all need to prepare for a changing workforce next season and NT Farmers will support growers in this area. A key component of this workforce plan is an Ag specific visa. The Northern Territory has been leading this charge through national media, national Peak industry bodies, Federal Government and key government departments. The strengthening ties with our Pacific neighbors, through the seasonal workers program, will also be critical in what will become an even more complex labor market over the next few years.



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NT Farmers were at the forefront of supporting our emerging industries such as cotton. Especially when environmental groups set out to disrupt this new and exciting industry through a campaign built on lies and emotions.

We as an organisation will continue to refute the claims that 'Cotton kills Rivers' and will be front and centre in delivering fact-based conversations that supports growers to diversify their operations in a sustainable manner.

NT Farmers has delivered sensible regulatory and biosecurity measures in conjunction with Dr. Anne Walters and her team to allow a cotton industry to establish.

NT Farmers have been leading plans to deliver a cotton gin in the Northern Territory and will continue to support the industry to establish a gin by July 2022. We as an organisation are committed to supporting the industry through human resources and networks to achieve this.



Cotton being harvested Douglas Daly. Photo courtesy Andrew Philip - NT Farmers

It seems like a lifetime ago, but the work to secure water for our Katherine growers is a testament to what can be achieved by working collaboratively with Department of Environment and Natural Resources to support our industry. In March 2020, our growers were looking at receiving 0% of low and medium security water and 50% of high security water licenses. Through a professional and common sense negotiation with government, we were able to achieve a guarantee of the same level of water that growers used in 2019 and also allowed for growers that had invested in on farm developments to also receive the water they needed to make those developments a reality. Thank you to the other water users that gave meaningful input into a workable solution.

NT Farmers appreciate that water will continue to be a limiting factor and a key restraint to development, therefore through hard work, we have been able to secure funding from corporate partners to employ a water efficiency and sustainability project officer for 5 years to support growers. I would also like to acknowledge Power and Water, Department of Environment and Natural Resources for supporting this initiative. NT Farmers contributed significant human capital and financial resources from cash reserves to support this critical issue for industry.

NT Farmers have listened to farmers and prospective growers that one of the key constraints is access to land and water in the NT. NT Farmers have partnered with NT Land Corp to deliver the largest agriculture land release in the history of the Northern Territory. The Larrimah, Wildman and Keep River agricultural precinct developments will deliver almost 100,000 hectares into production in the coming years.

We will continue to advocate for more land opportunities for growers to expand sustainably. NT Farmers are working closely with the Aboriginal Land Economic Development Agency (ALEDA) to support their vision for agricultural development on Indigenous lands so we can say honestly and proudly, ***“that all Territorians can participate and profit from agriculture, No matter where you come from or where your land is”.***

We have had success in Land Development; the Douglas Daly Research Station leased a portion of land that was not currently required and we are pleased to report that a melon grower has established an enterprise on this land and is now producing and employing people. NT Farmers are committed to exploring Douglas Daly stage 2 and are actively advocating for this.

NT Farmers leads a consortium of growers, land holders and other businesses to map out a sustainable and livable agriculture precinct in the Western Davenport Region. A development proposal is currently in development and is expected to be finalized shortly.

NT Farmers are proactively working with government to deliver on farm water storage solutions, that will protect the environment, maximize water storage, increase production capacity and provide water security now and into the future. With the reliable wet seasons in the north, water should be our comparative advantage. Let us make sure we protect our waterways for all Territorians to enjoy and prosper from.

On education - NT Farmers secured a Federal Grant to increase agriculture content available in schools at an early learning level, grades transition to 6. We have applied for a similar grant to roll out these age appropriate resources to levels 7 – 12. One of the key election asks, from NT Farmers was to have agriculture embedded within the NT education curriculum.

NT Farmers have led, at a national level, the 'gap' year concept that gives university students an opportunity to work regionally for a period to receive a HECS debt discount. The initiative would provide participants the opportunity to earn money, as well as an understanding of agriculture and the challenges we face living regionally. Thus, creating a bond with our future farmers across all sectors.

In research and development NT Farmers are contributing partners in over \$3 million dollars of research and development projects. All these projects will help de-risk agriculture and solve problems to grow the industry. The projects will significantly help to enhance productivity and efficiency in the NT's agriculture sector.

NT Farmers launched a concept at the 'Food Futures' road show event in Katherine to create a Research Centre of Excellence in Tropical Agriculture. The concept has been well received however, there is still a long way to go. If agriculture groups, government, landowners and universities enter into these discussions with an open mind, I am sure we can achieve something very meaningful.



The Federal Government recently announced over \$150 million nationally to create 8 regional hubs and this presents a real opportunity to modernize R & D as a matter of priority. Our key priorities are to ensure industry has a seat at the table to make decisions, to have a mechanism to feed research priorities into the system, minimize administration and maximize output and to deliver for all industry. NT Farmers will keep industry updated.

In 2020, NT Farmers supported the development of a Forestry Industry Association of the NT and are continuing to support the Northern Territory Cotton Growers Association.

NT Farmers and the Buffalo Industry Council of the Northern Territory are finalizing a formal arrangement to closely align the organisations.

NT Farmers recognizes the role that hemp can play in the NT agriculture sector and we have joined as a founding member of the Australian Hemp Growers Association.

We continue to support the Northern Territory Mango Industry and have secured funding to create an industry strategic plan, GAP Analysis and RD & E plan. This work will help industry make informed decisions into the future and enhance mango farmers operations in the NT.

As a small organisation we have achieved significant outcomes in 2020 for our members. Our small, dedicated team have your interests at heart in everything we do. I am immensely proud of what we have achieved in 2020 and thank every staff member for their commitment, dedication and hard work, "Well done."

The work has not finished, in fact it is just starting. As an organisation we are in this for the long run and your business is at the center of our work. Our success should be measured against the success of our industry. In order to continue to work at this level we need resources and the support of the entire industry, if you are not a member of NT Farmers, please join - the membership is very affordable and tax deductible. We are and will only be, as strong as the industry we proudly represent.

To the board of NT Farmers, thank you for giving so freely of your time and advice, it shapes a far more informed view of the sector and our industry is far stronger for it.

One of our organisations key activities is to deliver the Northern Australia Food Futures Conference. We had to postpone due to COVID-19 in 2020, but we are back in 2021. **The North Australia Food Future Conference** will be held 17-20 May 2021, the theme is 'Balancing Agriculture Development with the Environment'.

Now more than ever this is what we need to deliver if we are to grow and develop. Unashamedly the conference is a farming conference not a farmer's conference, it exists to inform and educate our leaders about farming. The take home message to all farmers, growers, and industry is come along and help us inform the conversation across North Australia to the decision makers.

Finally, if you can believe it, we are only a few weeks from Christmas, so on behalf of all of the staff, thank you for your support. Give yourself a pat on the back for getting through 2020, well done. Let's make 2021 a year to remember for all Territorians.

From the Minister

I am honoured to manage the incredibly important and exciting portfolio of Agribusiness and Aquaculture. Since becoming Minister for Agribusiness, I have toured many farms across the Territory and met with the NT Farmers Association to fully understand issues affecting the industry.

Visiting Territory farms clearly demonstrated to me the enormous potential for the industry to drive long term economic growth in the NT.

The NT's land, climatic conditions and prime location enable us to feed Australia and export to rich northern markets. The Territory must seize the opportunity to lead Australia's post COVID-19 recovery through agriculture.

As Minister, I am committed to supporting the agriculture industry and creating opportunities for all Territorians. NT Farmers Association have briefed me on their five priority areas to drive growth in the industry. I will work with my department to cut red tape and grow the industry while safeguarding the NTs significant environmental and cultural resources.

The Territory Labor Government has made considerable progress in supporting the industry to expand and drive improvements in the sector. The government and the NT Land Corporation have just opened the largest agricultural land release program in the history of the Territory to expressions of interest. The blocks of land which are located on the Keep Plains, Wildman River and at Larrimah have been selected due to their proximity to key supporting infrastructure and favourable growing conditions.

The land release program will form agriculture precincts that will be central to the NT's agricultural expansion. Precincts will revitalise regional economies by attracting new workers to the Territory's agricultural projects. Precinct development will enhance supply chains in the form of improved roads and improved freight services. These developments will drive efficiencies and profitability for farmers in the region.

We are also continuing to support the industry by improving road networks to support our valuable mango farmers.

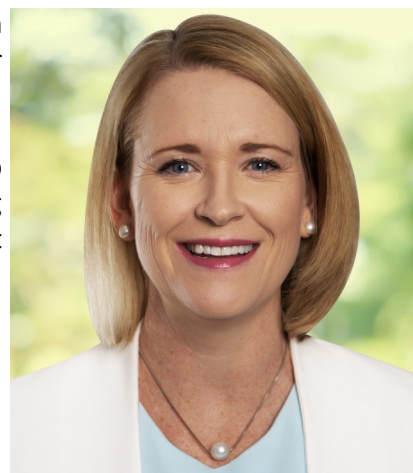
The Department has been working closely with industry to develop and approve new crops to drive the future of the industry. The first commercial license to grow hemp was approved in October, the crop will provide further potential revenue streams for Territory farmers. Emerging agricultural industries such as cotton, forestry, peanuts and avocados to name a few, look set to generate significant economic opportunities for Territory farmers.

I am aware that land zoning and water approvals can often be a complicated and lengthy process. My department is currently working hard to streamline the process and deliver decisions faster to businesses waiting to invest in the Territory. Minimum processing times have been implemented and we are actively working on enhancing the approval process for farmers and developers.

The future of agriculture in the Territory is extremely exciting and I am pleased to be part of it. I look forward to fiercely advocating for the industry and working closely with NT Farmers. My office and department are always available to meet and hear from industry.

Regards,

Nicole Manison
Minister for Agribusiness & Aquabusiness



In 2020, we have learnt that we can survive without concerts, sport, parties and conferences but we can never survive...

without our farmers

NT FARMERS

#FarmersfeedtheNation

Looking for Farm Workers?

The Job Shop is the Top End provider of the Australian Government's Harvest Labour Service.

We are redeploying seasonal workers throughout Australia to meet growers needs.

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.



Seasonal Worker Programme



**ISO 9001 QUALITY
Certified System**



Pacific Labour Scheme



**Pacific
Labour
Scheme**



Chamber of Commerce
NORTHERN TERRITORY



**Seasonal
Worker
Programme**

Workforce solutions for the NT

Foxalicious Fruit, a certified organic farm located outside Katherine, has become the first NT employer in the agriculture sector to use the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), hiring Inacio De Araujo Sarmento from Timor Leste on a 2-year contract.



Inacio De Araujo Sarmento on farm at Foxalicious Fruit

up to 3 years. The extended employment period means more opportunity to plan ahead.

“Inacio started with us at the end of August on a 2-year contract as a farm hand,” said Andrew Dalglish, owner of Foxalicious Fruit.

“He came to us with excellent skills, including tractor operations and ChemCert. In the short time he has been with us, Inacio has performed a wide range of duties including planting and picking, irrigation, tractor operation and maintenance, spraying, packing and other general duties.”

PACKED BY
FOXALICIOUS FRUIT

The company has employed workers from Vanuatu through the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) since the beginning of 2017, using the services of The Job Shop, an approved employer for both the SWP and PLS programs.

The SWP has provided Foxalicious Fruit with a reliable, returning workforce each season, but they could see the benefit in hiring workers for a longer period.

While the SWP allows employers to recruit workers in low skilled positions for up to 9 months, the PLS includes low to semi-skilled positions in contracts for



Andrew Dalglish - Foxalicious Fruit



Foxalicious Fruit grows mangoes and asparagus and provides packing services for other farmers.

This year, the farm produced 20 tonnes of asparagus, which Andrew hopes will increase to about 50 tonnes next year.

The farm also devotes 26 hectares to mangoes, producing about 250 tonnes of product.

“The longer employment contract provides reliability and stability in the workforce. We can retain good workers for longer and focus on building up their skills.

“This is great for us and for the worker, as they return home with skills and knowledge that benefit their families and local community,” said Andrew.

“We will definitely look to employ more PLS workers through The Job Shop in the future.”



*Above: Inacio in the field at
Foxalicious Farms*



*Above: Andrew Dalglish, Manager
Foxalicious Fruits & Inacio in the
packing shed*



*Right: Inacio has many varied duties
on the farm*

What is Pacific labour mobility and can it help you?

Pacific labour mobility is an Australian Government initiative that connects workers from nine Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste with eligible rural and regional businesses in Australia.

Participating countries include Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste.

There are two Pacific labour mobility programs, the Seasonal Worker Programme and the Pacific Labour Scheme.

Labour market testing applies to both programs, which means that employers must advertise jobs in Australia and demonstrate that they cannot fill vacancies with Australian workers before becoming eligible to participate in Pacific labour mobility programs.

How to find out more, or apply to become an approved employer:

Specific criteria applies to become an Approved Employer with either the SWP or PLS.

In addition to the usual criteria such as labour market testing and business documents, prospective employers must ensure appropriate worker accommodation and COVID-19 management plans approved by their state or territory government.

To find out if the PLS meets your employment needs and if you are eligible, visit www.pacificlabourmobility.com.au or contact Ronan Mackey at the NT Chamber of Commerce on rmackey@chambernt.com.au or 0487 777 433



Workforce Planning Coordinator

Aisla Connolly

NT Farmers staff have been productively busy achieving outcomes for our members.

When COVID-19 first affected the NT, NT Farmers funnelled applications from locals who lost their jobs through the [Territory Jobs Hub](#). This online talent pool has many skilled personnel listed where Employers can filter to find suitable candidates and can now advertise jobs on the website. <https://cited.com.au/territory-jobs-hub>



NT Farmers in collaboration with the Department of Primary Industries and Resources ran a [promotional campaign](#) to attract locals into the 2020 mango harvest. Check out the [YouTube](#) videos on the Department of Primary Industry and Resources Channel.

NT Farmers also hosted Information Sessions about mango harvest opportunities in the Greater Darwin region, cohorts included international students, (in collaboration with the Harvest Trail Provider) new migrants and refugees, CDP & Jobactive Providers and Participants.

The [NT Plant Industries Workforce Development Plan 2020-2025](#). Published in August 2020 sets out a roadmap to ensure that the industry can meet its workforce needs for expected future growth and is not so reliant on international labour. Starting with creating a NT Agriculture Education Framework, educating kids about agriculture from primary school, improving and promoting career pathways, increasing local staff attraction and retention including Aboriginal participation, developing a continuous improvement culture, creating a toolkit of resources for employers and collaborating with industry across Northern Australia.

NT Farmers were represented at two career expos, one at Casuarina Secondary College the other was a mixture of school attendance specialising in Information Technology (IT). To show these students who maybe interested in IT the various career opportunities available in NT plant industries.

The Federal Government announced on 21 August 2020 that the agreement was made to resume recruitments under the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), which connect Pacific and Timorese workers with Australian businesses and fill rural and regional workforce shortages when Australian workers are not available.

The Seasonal Worker Programme Pilot was a collaborative effort of NT Farmers Association, Employers, various Government departmental staff and international stakeholders.

To provide the pathway to access seasonal workers through the program for the 2020 mango harvest, negotiations and approvals were sought, many hours were spent on phone and video conference calls to ensure all requirements were met, most importantly keeping everyone involved safe and healthy.

Employers had to pay for the seasonal workers from Vanuatu to fly here and undertake 2 weeks quarantine. This pilot was viewed nationally and internationally opening the pathway to access workers from overseas.

Well done to all involved, an excellent example of prompt and efficient collaboration.

NT Farmers are participating in the evaluation of the pilot and continuation of the SWP.

Advocacy efforts have included

- Recommending a Higher Education Certificate (HEC) debt discount for Australians who Gap Year in the industry.
- NT endorsement of the Agriculture Worker Movement Code to allow movement of workers to be able to follow the harvest trail to help with labour shortages across the nation. Further detail on how this will be consistent across states will develop in the coming weeks.

Other tasks have included assisting with COVID-19 Management Plans and Checklists to get Growers, staff, and machinery into the NT for this essential service.



Photo credit: Topcon Agriculture Precision Agriculture Solutions Catalogue

Labour supply options for the NT Mango Harvest



Government-funded employment service providers are ready to work with the NT farming sector to connect jobseekers with employers that have been hit by workforce issues as a result of COVID-19.

In the NT, there are several employment programs that can assist you to find staff, at no cost to your business.

Harvest Trail Services (HTS) and the Harvest Trail Information Service (HTIS) connect workers with employers in harvesting areas across Australia.

The HTS and HTIS are complemented by the re-designed and updated [Harvest Trail website](#) that hosts an interactive map showing current available harvest jobs across the country on the [Harvest Trail jobs board](#). Employer vacancies can be advertised on the jobs board and jobseekers, including temporary working visa holders not sponsored by employers, can access the advertised harvest job opportunities online or through the jobactive mobile phone app.

HTS providers are organisations contracted by the Australian Government to deliver HTS, advertise vacancies on behalf of employers, match suitable job seekers with seasonal harvest jobs in harvest areas across Australia, and work with other employment service providers including jobactive, Transition to Work, Community Development Program (CDP), Disability Employment Service (DES), and employers, to address the main barriers faced by local job seekers when taking up seasonal work, as well as raising job seeker awareness of seasonal work and career progression opportunities.

The Job Shop is the local HTS provider in the NT. We would encourage you to contact The Job Shop on (08) 8971 0938 to assist you with your recruitment needs, including liaising with other employment service providers katherine@thejobshop.com.au

The HTIS is a national call centre that can assist with harvest employment related enquiries 1800 062 332, Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm (excluding national public holidays).

Jobactive and the Transition to Work employment programs work with employers and job seekers in Darwin and Alice Springs townships, and the Community Development Program (CDP) operates in the rest of the Territory.

People who register as unemployed and looking for work with Centrelink are linked to government-funded employment service providers. The role of these providers is to help job seekers prepare and look for work, linking them to jobs, including in the agriculture sector. This is a free service for employers.

CDP providers will:

- Work with employers to identify job opportunities and training needs
- Place job seekers into hosted work experience placements and job vacancies with employers
- Promote employment opportunities for local people
- Provide support to employers when they place job seekers into a job
- Wage subsidies can be negotiated for the right fit.

Jobactive and Transition to Work providers are also able to assist, with your recruitment needs. They will outline the services they provide, including:

- screened and job ready candidates
- pre-employment training and work-related equipment, if needed, for the jobs in your business
- support while new employees settle in.

CDP providers are often looking for employers who are willing to host work-like activities on their farms in order to provide work experience opportunities for job seekers. This will help build capabilities in the industry over time that can be deployed when the harvest season arrives.

If you would like to assistance for your recruitment needs, please contact your nearest Employment Service provider at: <https://jobsearch.gov.au/serviceproviders>
More information can be found at:

<https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/employment/cdp>
<https://www.employment.gov.au/jobactive>

Kate Green & Annette Danaci helping farmers in the NT and small business owners to manage financial challenges

Proudly supported by NT Farmers Association

Rural Business Support (RBS) has further expanded its Northern Territory team as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is felt across the Top End and particularly hard within the horticulture and tourism sectors.

Recent new rural financial counsellor Kate Green has filled the shoes of former RBS member Peter Cottle, while a new full-time small business financial counsellor Annette Danaci commenced with the organisation this week (October 12).

Kate and Annette are based out of the RBS office at the Northern Australia Development Office in Darwin, but travel to meet with their rural and remote regional clients as required.

RBS CEO Brett Smith said the focus for the newest RBS NT recruits was on helping NT farmers and small business owners to manage the current economic challenges and plan for their future on the other side.

“The growth of our services in the Territory has coincided with a sequence of challenges that few could have predicted, but we’re committed to working with our NT clients to help them come out the other side,” Brett said.

As well as working with primary producers for more than 30 years, RBS now also provides a Small Business Financial Counselling (SBFC) program modelled on the successful Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS). Both services are free, independent and confidential to eligible clients.

The new program is the result of additional Australian Government funding through the Regional Recovery Small Business Support Program.

“Our team can help to prioritise the important decisions that need to be made now and develop plans to help business owners gain some much needed clarity amid the uncertainty. First up this may involve looking into government grants or other payment options to help ease some of the financial pressure,” Brett said.

RBS can work with clients to:

- Develop plans to manage cash flow and creditor payments
- Prepare for talks with lenders and insurance companies
- Access dispute resolution services
- Connect with broader professional advice and support
- Apply for government and community grants, programs or schemes

To be connected with the RBS NT team please call 1800 836 211 or email NT@ruralbusinesssupport.org.au. Supported by the Australian Government and Governments of South Australia and the Northern Territory, RBS is currently working with more than 640 rural business owners across SA and NT.



Kate & Danaci - photo courtesy Rural Business Support

Thank you to everyone who attended our AGM. It was encouraging to see so many engaged and interested Growers and Stakeholders in the room.

We are pleased to advise that the Board of Directors for 20/21 is as follows:

- Simon Smith
- Paul McLaughlin
- Kate Peake
- Martina Matzner
- Vin Lange
- Andrew Dalglish
- Gavin Scurr
- Brett Gill
- Frank Miller
- Bruce Toohill
- Bruce Connolly
- Jessie Jenkins
- Andrew Coldbeck
- Joe Martin-Jard

The commitment and input of our Board is very much appreciated and NT Farmers would not be what it is today without their efforts.

We would especially like to acknowledge outgoing Directors, Han Siah and Dave Gray. Both Dave and Han have worked tirelessly for the Association over many years and their insight and vision has significantly attributed to the growth of NT Farmers.

We look forward to continue working closely with

Han and Dave and hope they will re-nominate for the Board at a later date - after they have enjoyed a well deserved break!



Left: Han Siah

Right: Dave Gray

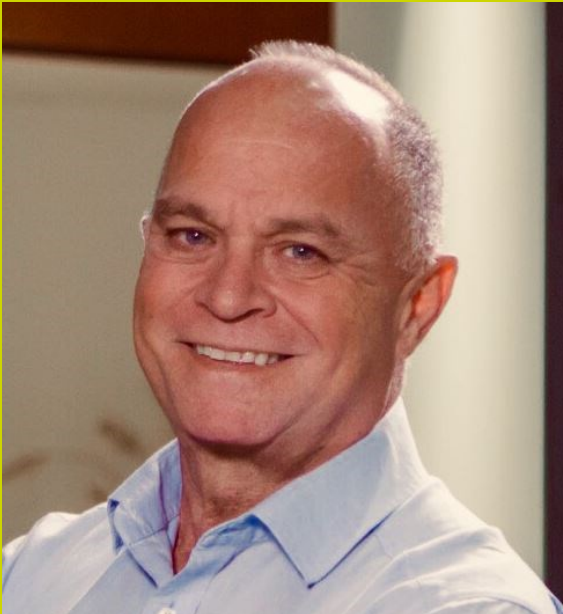


We extend a warm welcome to Directors new too the Board and invite you to get to know them as below:



Andrew Coldbeck (above) will be known to many of our members through his role with the employment agency, The Job Shop. He has had significant involvement with NT Farmers including holding a position on the NT Farmers Workforce Development Committee. He has been of great assistance to the Association as we negotiated the pilot Seasonal Worker Program planes from Vanuatu recently.

Andrew is well respected within industry for his integrity and comprehensive knowledge of farm worker employment. With a high likelihood of staff recruitment being a challenge for the next few years, Andrew will be a great addition to the Board.



Joe Martin-Jard (above) is the CEO of The Central Land Council. He is an enthusiastic support of agriculture and horticulture development across the Northern Territory, particularly on Aboriginal Land Trust Land, and the improved employment, social and economic outcomes for Indigenous Territorians this will bring.

He has watched with interest and admiration the development of NT Farmers over recent years and is also very keen to help foster stronger and mutually beneficial relationships between our organisation and all four Land Councils. We look forward to Joe helping NT Farmers shape the NT's farming future.



Jessie Jenkins (above), has been actively involved in the NT horticulture industry for over 13 years. Jessie is the General Manager at Jenko's Mangoes. She is responsible for the commercial mango packing line, staff administration, audit compliance and IT operations. Jess is Vice President of the NT Mango Industry Association



Bruce Connolly (above) is the Farm Manager at Tipperary Group of Stations. Bruce is a founding member of the Northern Territory Cotton Growers Association and is the inaugural President. Bruce has many decades of experience in broad acre cropping across North Australia and is a passionate advocate for regional issues





Simon Smith
President



Paul McLaughlin
Vice President



Kate Peake
Treasurer



Martina Matzner
Public Officer



Vin Lange
Director



Han Shiong Siah
Director



Brett Gill
Director



Bruce Toohill
Director



Andrew Dalglish
Director



Dave Gray
Director



Gavin Scurr
Director



Frank Miller
Director

Thank you for your hard work and dedication

NT Farming Production 2019

NT Agricultural production statistics GVP \$ million

\$0 \$5m \$10m \$15m \$20m \$25m \$35m \$45m \$60m \$70m \$95m \$128m

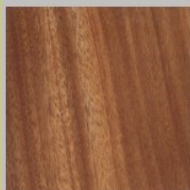


Mango

Value \$128.8 million

Tonnes 32,300

Area 7,120ha



Forestry

Value \$115m (rolling 10 year average)

Plantation Area 42,000ha



Melon

Value \$69.4 million

Tonnes 66,400

Area 1,180ha



Vegetables

Value \$61.0 million

Tonnes 21,500

Area 1,480ha



Field Crops & Fodder

Value \$37.1 million

Tonnes 137,000

Area 17,580ha



Other Fruits

Value \$22.4 million

Tonnes 6,152 tons

Area 672 ha



Nursery & Turf

Value \$15 million



NT Markets

Value \$9.5 million

Tonnes 2,380

Area 250 ha

Industry Production Snapshot

Total value of produce grown in the NT:

- 2019 - \$456 million (\$341 million + \$115 million Forestry)
- 2018 - \$278 million
- 2017 - \$251 million
- 2016 - \$253 million
- 2015 - \$244 million
- 1980 - \$ zero!

Total tonnage produced:

- 265,705 tonnes
- 128,705 from horticulture
- 137,000 from field crops and hay production

Total estimated farming area:

- 10,702 ha irrigated horticulture
- 17,500 ha of field and fodder
- 42,000 ha plantation forestry
- Total 720 km²



NT growing regions

Horticulture land and water use averages:

- 2.02 t/ml
- \$3760 /ml
- 16t /ha
- \$29,200 /ha



Meet our Silver Sponsors

We are delighted to welcome Peats Soil & Garden Supplies and Katherine Tree Maintenance as Silver Sponsors of NT Farmers Association.

Leading organics recycling, composting and renewable energy manufacturer Peats Group Ltd are proud to announce the official opening of their fifth organics processing and manufacturing site co-located at Shoal Bay Waste Management Facility.

Peats Group commenced organics processing operations on 1st April 2020 in conjunction with processing partners Katherine Tree Maintenance (KTM) and site operators Veolia, resulting in production of 10,000 cubic metres of mulch products in the first three months. Plans are in place for the processing facility to be fully operational by mid 2021.

Operating under the banner of Peats Group, Peats Soil and Garden Supplies is a second-generation company with a vision to be a world leader in sustainable and innovative organics recycling. Based in South Australia, for 45 years Peats have been processing and marketing recyclable organic resources, creating valuable landscaping, garden and horticultural products and earning a reputation as a true environmental and carbon friendly company.

Drawing on years of composting experience and expertise, streamlining the processing of the current organic materials and growing the capacity of the Darwin site will be paramount. The operations will provide businesses and City of Darwin residents with a solution for their green waste and will importantly divert organic materials from landfill. The breakdown of organic materials in landfill generates the potent greenhouse gas methane and produces potentially polluting leachate. From a climate perspective, diverting green waste from landfill has the largest impact of any solid waste component.

Apart from the environmental reasons to divert green organics from landfill, the processing of these materials produces nutrient rich soil improving products for growers, farmers, landscapers and gardeners to use.

Peats soil amendment and mulch products are already available at the site, including the innovative carbon building product Peats Blend 437™ granules, and others will be added as operations expand.

Peats Managing Director, Peter Wadewitz said, “Our product will improve soil production, water retention, are environmentally sustainable and carbon friendly and we are ready to work with the agriculture industry in the Territory to deliver great outcomes.”

Peats and Katherine Tree Maintenance look forward to working with NT Farmers to support residents, local government, commercial and agricultural industry in the Northern Territory to “Put life into their soils”.





2020 Katherine/Big Rivers Food Futures Roadshow

Attendees of the Food Futures Roadshow in Katherine would agree that it was the premier industry event for 2020. Over 150 people attended the two-day event which included presentations, farm visits and industry updates.

Attendees were able to hear directly from industry about unique development opportunities in the north.

Graham Anderson, from Anderson Avocados discussed the new Maluma variety that is ideally suited to the Top End's growing conditions. The presentation generated significant interest from prospective farmers and the media about a potential Territory avocado industry.



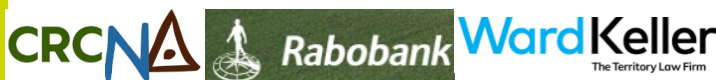
Graham Anderson - photo credit ABC Rural Jon Daly



Bruce Connolly - photo credit Iain Forrest

Bruce Connolly delivered an impressive presentation on the latest developments in building a cotton industry and establishing a cotton gin in the North. Despite some challenges the industry can generate significant long term economic opportunities for regional areas. Other highlight presentations were delivered by

CRCNA, LandCorp, Alex Peachy from DPIR, Ward Keller, and Rabobank to name just a few.



The bus tour provided attendees with an insight into the significant farming related activities being undertaken in the Katherine region.



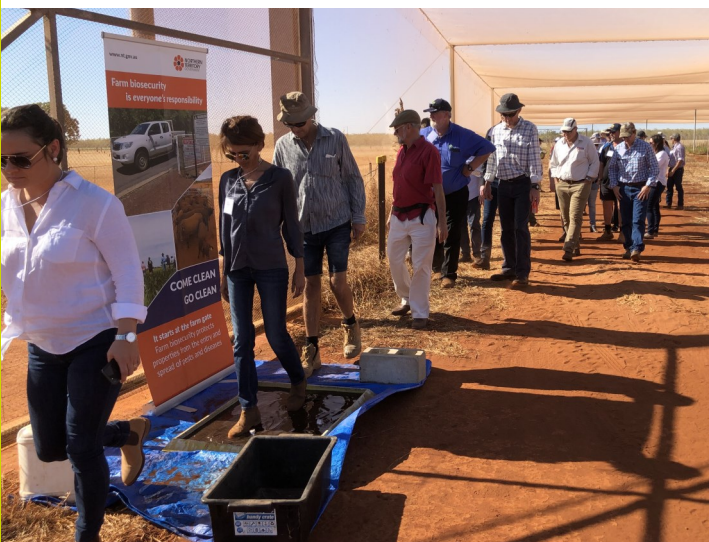
Attendees visited National Feed Co's production facility of fodder and stock feed pellets created using Territory grown crops.

Also visited was Manbulloo mango farm which has over 65,000 trees and is conducting high density planting trials. During the visit participants gained an insight into the technology and research behind growing and delivering crops to consumers.



Early days for the high density plantings at Manbulloo

The tour stopped at DPIR's research farm to learn about their spice plantation trials before concluding at Andrew Dalglish's property, for a farm equipment demonstration by Vanderfield and a BBQ.



The tour arriving at Katherine Research Station showing biosecurity protocols

The BBQ was held in Andrew's packing shed and gave attendees the opportunity to network and discuss the agriculture possibilities in Northern Australia.

Presentations during the second day provided audiences with an overview of the current state of the industry, along with the potential challenges and opportunities in the North.

NT Farmers utilised technology to share the roadshow with people who could not make it in person. Select presentations were streamed on Facebook Live and can be watched on our Facebook page.

The videos proved extremely popular, we will continue to trial posting live videos on Facebook. Like our facebook page to receive future Facebook Live videos.

<https://www.facebook.com/NTFarmersAssociation/>

Roadshow attendees and presenters came from across Australia and from a wide range of industries. Even presenters under lockdown restrictions participated via Teams, demonstrating the excellent broadband service of our sponsor, the NBN.

All attendees stated that they found the event a valuable use of their time and would attend next years **Food Futures Conference in 2021**. We look forward to seeing you there!

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Vanderfield



Dinner at Foxalicious Farm



Vanderfield display



Looking at the spice trial at Katherine Research Station



Full house at the Roadshow!



The three months since starting at NT Farmers has been an amazing journey.

Highlights include helping the team at the Katherine Food Futures Roadshow and having the privilege to visit numerous farms in the Darwin rural area.

The majority of my role is spent writing a range of materials for NT Farmers, I have written to numerous Territory and Federal politicians raising awareness and advocating for the industry.

In particular, I have helped to develop policy and communicated the urgent need for the Commonwealth to establish a Forestry Hub in the NT.

After the NT elections, I wrote to all successful candidates to inform them of NT Farmer's five key areas to drive economic growth in the Territory.

Some of our calls for policy reform and support will take time but it is important that we communicate the significance of the industry to politicians and stakeholders now. The considerable economic contribution industry makes to the NT and our successful environmental management should be at the forefront of the community's thoughts about agriculture. Well informed community members and stakeholders will assist our efforts to expand the agriculture sector in the NT.

Recent media coverage involving NT Farmers has been extremely positive and mainly focused on the reinstated seasonal worker programme.

Over the last two months, Paul has been extremely busy appearing on nearly all major national and local media channels, raising the profile of the industry and the importance of seasonal workers.

For a small organisation, the media attention and reach received for NT Farmers work has been enormous.



Seasonal Worker Programme



Air Vanuatu plane on the tarmac in Darwin ready for seasonal workers to disembark

Recently, the NT Farmers team, together with Sally Clayton from MintKey, have been working hard to submit numerous grant applications for projects that the association hopes to deliver for the industry.

The potential projects that arise out of the funding will deliver significant benefits to a variety of farmers in the Territory. Hopefully in the next edition of the magazine, we can provide an update on newly funded projects!



NORTHERN AUSTRALIA FOOD FUTURES

The Food Futures Roadshow was an incredible event, the two days were extremely interesting and provided excellent networking opportunities.

If you could not attend, some of the presentations were recorded via Facebook live and appear on the NT Farmers facebook page. The video of Bruce Connolly discussing the cotton industry is particularly insightful.

The videos taken during the roadshow were only for a trial, however given their popularity we will try to post more live videos.

Like the NT Farmers Facebook page to receive our updates.

<https://www.facebook.com/NTFarmersAssociation>





Water Use Industry Development Officer *Dianna Renfree*

The NT Farmers Team continues to grow and we are very happy to welcome long term Territorian, Di Renfree to the Association!

Originally from Narrabri NSW, Di grew up on a mixed cropping and livestock farm. Always interested in agriculture, she worked in the cotton industry in New South Wales and Western Australia for a few years before moving to Katherine where she worked at the Research Station as a Technical Officer.

Di has spent the last 5 years working for Red Dirt Melons, just outside Katherine as an Assistant Grower.

Along the way she met and married Ritchie and had two boys - Di says like typical NT kids, they are pretty feral! When not working the family enjoys heading bush and going fishing.

Her role with NT Farmers is to develop and implement programs to monitor and benchmark efficient crop water use for optimum productivity of the key horticulture and developing broadacre crops of the NT. She will be working closely with NT Government agencies and will provide information to support ongoing NT Government water allocation and management processes.



Dianna Renfree - pic courtesy Di Renfree

Di says she is very excited about starting this new role. She has a passion for agriculture and enjoys spending time on farm and working with farmers to help improve industry production and practices.

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Citrus Growers on the Path to Freedom

Australian citrus growers are set for some relief as the Northern Territory (NT) heads towards declaring proof of freedom from citrus canker later this year. Once the NT has declared proof of freedom, Australia will once again be able to demonstrate 'Country Freedom' and resume normal trade with international partners.

Since its detection in the Territory in April 2018, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (DITT) through the National Citrus Canker Eradication Program (NCCEP), with the support of the local community and industry, have worked tirelessly to contain and ultimately eradicate citrus canker from the Territory.

DITT anticipates the proof of freedom report will be ready for submission to the national committees in early 2021. Once the NT's freedom submission is approved by the National (Biosecurity) Management Group (NMG) and freedom from the disease has been declared, movement restrictions can be lifted in the NT and interstate trade protocols removed. After three years of production and trade disruption, citrus trade can then recommence and growers can get back to business as usual.

Until these restrictions have been formally revoked, all growers must have valid property freedom registration and interstate trade orchard and fruit inspections must continue. Orchard inspections are planned for November, February and April and will proceed as planned unless interstate trade restrictions are removed and adherence to the protocols is no longer required. All interstate consignments of citrus fruit and kaffir lime leaves will also continue to require inspection and plant health certificates will be issued until growers are notified otherwise by the DITT's Plant Biosecurity Branch.

Despite restrictions, the NCCEP has continued to support the ongoing trade to interstate markets. A summary of orchard and produce inspections completed during the last financial year (2019-2020) at Territory commercial properties for interstate trade requirements is summarised below, with a total of 58 tonnes of citrus fruit exported to interstate markets.

Inspection type	Number completed
Citrus fruit orchards	15 Properties inspected for property freedom
Citrus fruit produce	4 Properties sent consignments under interstate trade protocols Minimum of 600 pieces of fruit inspected per batch during 28 inspections Over 16,800 pieces of fruit inspected
Kaffir lime leaf orchards	Five properties registered and inspected for property freedom
Kaffir lime leaves	538 inspections (plant health certificates) conducted on consignments ranging from 2-50 boxes each Consignments to New South Wales and Victoria – Approx. 10 batches twice a week throughout the year inspecting approx. 6,000 leaves per week

Additional highlights and updates from the Citrus Canker Program are summarised below:

Compliance and movement controls

- Compliance measures were implemented to prohibit the export of any declared host plant or plant-related materials to contain and limit potential movement pathways.

- Regular inspections of commercial nurseries and greenlife businesses were undertaken routinely throughout the program to ensure compliance with movement controls and sale restrictions.
- Movement protocols were developed and implemented for the movement of citrus fruit and kaffir lime leaves to maintain interstate trade.
- Movement restrictions were reviewed and refined to manage the risk of the disease spread while minimising social and economic impacts to the Territory.
- Following the completion of the host free period the movement restrictions within restricted areas were lifted in Katherine in November 2019 and in the greater Darwin rural area in March 2020.

Treatment

- A 600m diameter restricted area was established around each infected premises in order to help eradicate the disease. All host plants were destroyed in these areas. A total of 13 restricted areas were declared in the Territory.
- 6,163 host plants located within the restricted areas were destroyed.
- Regrowth surveillance and treatment was undertaken on all required properties within the restricted areas. Regrowth was found at 11% of premises during the first round of surveillance and at 8% of premises during the second round. All regrowth found to date was non-symptomatic and has been removed.

Surveillance

- Inspections of over 15,000 host plants occurred across the Territory. Only 32 of those were confirmed as infected across 16 properties. 1,047 plants underwent surveillance in remote and regional locations within the NT, all of which showed no symptoms of citrus canker. 40 plants are under surveillance as part of the sentinel plant program. No citrus canker has been detected on any plants to date.

Tracing

- Trace plants were confirmed and identified by their batch numbers, supporting the identification of high-risk plants and trace plants throughout the program. Over 1,700 trace plants were identified in the Territory, and over 4,600 across Australia. Western Australia was the only other state to have confirmed cases of citrus canker. These plants were traced from the Territory.

Science

- Routine diagnostics were undertaken on 518 samples. 32 samples were confirmed positive for citrus canker.
- Experiments were performed to determine a more accurate host range and level of susceptibility and symptoms development in a range of citrus canker host varieties including non-citrus plants.
- Climatic condition experiments were performed to determine the spread and symptoms of citrus canker in different citrus growing areas of Australia.

The Territory's Chief Plant Health Officer, Dr Anne Walters acknowledges that a move to proof of freedom would not be possible without industry and community participation and restriction compliance.

"While there were many wins and challenges throughout the program, a recent external audit of the program identified strong industry engagement, meaningful community engagement, clear, open and transparent sharing of information, consideration of broader social, mental and economic wellbeing, and a continuous improvement focus as contributing success factors" said Dr Walters.

"Remember Biosecurity is everybody's business. If it looks suss, call us!" she concluded.

If it looks suss, call us! Biosecurity is everybody's business.



**NORTHERN
TERRITORY**
GOVERNMENT

**The Department of Industry, Tourism and
Trade**

Boosting diagnostic capacity for plant production industries FACT SHEET

Background and purpose

The Northern Territory Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade is a partner organisation in a new national project 'Boosting diagnostic capacity for plant production industries'. This project is coordinated by Grains Research & Development Corporation, through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment as part of its Rural R&D for Profit program and 19 partner organisations including Cotton Research & Development Corporation, Hort Innovation Australia Limited, Wine Australia, Sugar Research Australia Limited and Forest & Wood Products Australia Limited. The Rural R&D for Profit project's aim is to build national diagnostic capacity to assist industry with early and accurate detection of industry priority pests and improved diagnostic tools.

This project will fund a field pathologist who will be trained in field triage and early detection of key plant threats causing disease in major horticulture industries in the Territory, including mangoes, citrus and forestry. The Rural R&D for Profit project has several components to build capacity and early detection of key pests of importance to the Territory.



Mango twig tip dieback in the field

Mango and forestry diseases

Surveys will be conducted in mango orchards to establish the incidence of mango twig tip dieback and mango malformation disease (MMD). Surveys will be undertaken in collaboration with the NT Farmers Association, Australian Mango Industry Association and department researchers to monitor and track disease incidence.

The samples collected in the surveys will be used to investigate the causal agent/s of both diseases. Earlier work on mango twig tip dieback in the Territory has identified numerous fungi and several bacteria potentially associated with the disease. Pathogenicity testing will be performed on these and any new organisms detected during the project surveys.

New molecular methods using next generation DNA sequencing to analyse microbial communities will be used to further investigate potential pathogens.

In the Territory, several species of the fungus *Fusarium*, including a previously unknown *Fusarium* species (*Fusarium* sp. nov.), have been found to be associated with MMD. Pathogenicity testing will be carried out to investigate whether *Fusarium* sp. nov. causes malformation symptoms in mango plants.

In land production use, the Territory has 49,000ha of plantation forestry, including African mahogany, acacia and sandalwood. To help fill a gap in expertise in tree pathology in Northern Australia, training and capacity building in identification of forestry diseases will be provided by interstate pathology experts. This project will also link with the National Forestry Biosecurity Surveillance Program (Plant Health Australia) for early detection of tree pests. In addition, the department will develop a national diagnostic protocol for exotic termites (*Cryptotermes* spp.), a national priority plant pest. Termites are also a pest of concern for the Territory's citrus industry.



Mango malformation disease

Improving diagnostics and early surveillance in the Territory

Additional areas of research will include verifying national diagnostic protocols for detecting pathogenic *Xanthomonas* bacteria on several crops. A rapid molecular diagnostic assay to detect MMD pathogens will also be tested, including for the new *Fusarium* species. The Department will also coordinate and run a simulated surveillance and response training blitz for the Asian Citrus psyllid to improve early surveillance and diagnostic capability for industry and government biosecurity preparedness.

What you should do

If you would like to be involved or want more information please contact us:

Dr Maxine Piggott - Maxine.Piggott@nt.gov.au Dr Merran Neilsen - Merran.Neilsen@nt.gov.au

Recent showers and predictions of an early wet, certainly signals the time to be ensuring that plans are in place for the coming wet season production, especially in the rain-fed cropping sector. Growers should not only be thinking of getting their land prepared and machinery organised for the start of planting. It is also critical to work out a plan for crop inputs, talk to your input suppliers, contractors and agronomists and have a plan for the season. As the areas of production increase, it will be even more important that the inputs required are either on farm or at least in town. Timing is critical for most inputs and delays of days can cause significant yield reductions.



NT Grown Cotton

On the cotton front, it is expected that plantings could increase five-fold this season and the progression of the gin developments look set for Ginning in the North for the 2022 season.

Here is a checklist for growers considering growing cotton in the NT this season:

- **Ginning and module transportation:** Complete your arrangements for ginning before you commit to planting cotton.
- **Suitable equipment:** Successful cotton production depends on the ability to conduct timely agronomic operations, particularly during the wet season when the window for action can be very short between rainfall events.
- **Crop monitoring and management advice:** Wet season cotton production requires agronomic practices that are suited to tropical conditions and advice to match local conditions is essential.
- **Local communication:** Spray drift (onto and off cotton) is an important consideration, both for the cotton crop and for off-field impacts, discuss your plans to grow cotton with your neighbours so any concerns can be adequately addressed.
- **Biosecurity restrictions:** Biosecurity practices that limit movement of these organisms between regions is critically important.
- **Transgenic cotton requirements:** Talk with your relevant Bayer representative regarding your requirements.

- **Crop inputs:** You will need to source suppliers for farm inputs such as seed, fertiliser, herbicides, insecticides, growth regulators, defoliant and a licence to grow GM cotton Technology User Agreement (TUA).
- **Best practice:** The Australian cotton industry utilises the myBMP (best management practice) system www.mybmp.com.au to demonstrate to the community the industry's improved farming practices and careful management of our natural resources.
- **Expansion of cotton into new areas should consider and manage risks to water quality, local fauna, and natural vegetation.**
- **Marketing:** Cotton has unique marketing parameters based around fibre quality. Discuss premium and discount sheets as well as price with an experienced cotton merchant/marketer

Source: <https://cottoninfo.com.au/tropical-cotton-production>

Recent comments from Federal Agriculture Minister, David Littleproud, regarding the future of agriculture are encouraging for the sector and the NT cotton industry. The minister stated that the government's role is to invest, support and 'get out of the way' for farmers to develop opportunities in agriculture, particularly cotton. Federal government forecasts significant growth for agriculture over the next 10 years.

There is also renewed interest in a range of crops that have previously fitted into Northern cropping systems. These include legumes such as mung beans, soybeans and peanuts, speciality oil seeds such as sesame and safflower. It is great to see that after some time the first of many Industrial Hemp licences has been granted, further providing a range of crops that can be explored and developed. Rice crops offer exciting possibilities for the north, new varieties are well suited to our northern growing conditions. Sunrice's specially developed variety improvement program is developing crops with target yields of 9t/ha. These crops can be grown in an 'Upland' system (not paddy) as they have been grown in the past as well as a viable dry season irrigated crop for grain or even hay between cotton or other higher value crops. For more information please look at <https://riceextension.org.au/north-queensland> or contact me - kido@ntfarmers.org.au



Rice ready to harvest - Tortilla Flats 2020

The awareness divide between urban and rural communities in Australia continues to widen. As each generation moves further away from having grandparents, uncles, aunts or cousins on the land, the natural link that was very strong in the past is being lost. To compound this loss, fewer schools offer food and fibre related subjects.

In August, the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) released results from a survey conducted across Australia in relation to school student's knowledge and perception about primary industries. The survey results provide valuable insight into the attitudes of young Australians and some key findings from the survey include:

- 30% of students indicated yoghurt is made from something other than an animal product
- Over 30% of students did not know pasta and books are made from plant material
- 1 in 6 students did not know that bacon and scrambled eggs are animal products
- Over 60% of students did not know that denim cotton used to make jeans is a plant material
- 21% believed farming damages the environment

The Educating Kids about Agriculture project aims to break down the urban/rural divide and provide students and teachers with opportunities to engage in the agriculture industry.

One way to increase student engagement in agriculture is through garden programs, essentially getting kids to grow something.

NT Farmers have partnered with Food Ladder in Katherine to provide a horticulture experience for local primary students.

In Term 4, the first group of school students from St. Josephs in Katherine will participate in 3 visits to the Food Ladder.



Photo courtesy Food Ladder

On the final visit, students will spend time harvesting and cooking what they have grown.

During this process, students skills in literacy and numeracy will be strengthened through reading and following instructions and recipes, technology skills enhanced, while learning about the climate-controlled greenhouse and irrigation system as well as enhancing basic life skills such as growing, preparing and cooking food.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN AGRICULTURE



In October, NT Farmers Association and local farmer Mic Jakobi, presented a webinar to Year 9 and 10 school students as part of the nation-wide SPARK entrepreneur festival.

The webinar gave students a unique insight into agripreneurship and the challenges farmers face in their businesses. Technology, innovation and robotics are proven ways to engage school students. We highlighted the use of innovation and technology in agriculture and how farmers are quick adapters of new technologies. The webinar also provided students with an opportunity to ask questions about farming and the agricultural industry directly to Mic.

Another way we can increase engagement with agriculture amongst young people is through the subjects studied at school.

In 2019 following years of reviewing education and training, agriculture became part of the NSW school curriculum.

Western Australia also have a Food and Fibre unit as part of the technology curriculum. NT Farmers would like to see agriculture in the NT school curriculum (for all year groups) by 2022 and are working on this with the NT Department of Education and Minister for Education.

When agriculture is part of the curriculum, it encourages students to think about career paths and the diverse work options within the industry. It also builds awareness of where food and fibre come from.

Our greatest resource is our people, and we need to engage young Australians in the agricultural industry for a prosperous future.



FAIR FARMS

FOSTERING FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
IN THE AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY

WHAT IS FAIR FARMS?

Fair Farms is a training and certification program for employers in the horticulture industry

The program includes:

- An industry owned and developed Standard benchmarked against Australian workplace laws and ethical standards
- An online self-assessment against the Standard that identifies any training needs
- A coordinated system of individualised quality training to support growers and other horticulture suppliers
- A pathway to certification, if required, including cost-effective third-party audits
- A process for credible third-party audit and certification that enables ethical businesses to differentiate themselves from less reputable operators.

Why we developed Fair Farms

For too long, our industry has been plagued by rogue operators who purposely exploit workers to undercut compliant growers and create an artificially discounted cost of produce that good businesses have to compete with. These operators attract significant media coverage and tarnish our industry's reputation. While most growers and other produce suppliers intend to do the right thing, it can be challenging to navigate complex employment laws and regulations.

Fair Farms has been developed by industry, for industry. We will support all members of the Australian horticulture supply chain with tools, information and training to implement employment practices that comply with labour laws and ethical standards.

Through Fair Farms you can demonstrate your commitment to fair and responsible employment practices to your customers, workers and consumers. Over time, the transparency over who is compliant generated through Fair Farms will level the playing field and help drive out the rogue operators from our industry.

What's in it for the grower and supplier?

Your business will benefit from being Fair Farms certified in a number of ways:

- You will set yourself apart as an ethical employer. This will make more farm workers want to come and work for you. Labour hire firms are likely to send more workers your way. Overall, Fair Farms certification will help you to improve your supply of consistent labour.
- Fair Farms certification has been accepted by all three major retailers - Woolworths, Aldi and Coles. This means that Australian growers can now opt for the one program and adopt the one Standard that meets the ethical sourcing requirements of all three retailers. This will make compliance easier, cheaper and more effective
- You will demonstrate to regulatory bodies such as the Fair Work Ombudsman and the wider public that you are committed to complying with Australian employment laws and ethical standards.

Where can I join Fair Farms?

The Fair Farms Program is open to all businesses in the horticulture supply chain, including growers, packers, wholesalers, ripening houses and brokers. Sign up now at www.fairfarms.com.au

- ⇒ Read the Fair Farms Standard
- ⇒ Do the online self-assessment (allow a couple of hours)
- ⇒ Do the recommended training that is tailored to your needs
- ⇒ Schedule the audit for your next harvest

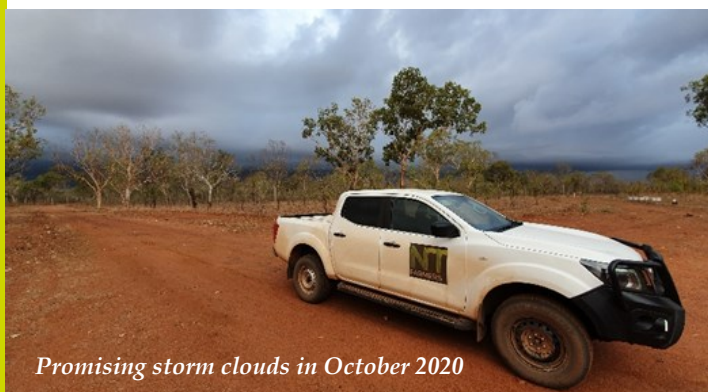
Who can I contact for more information?

Now based in Brisbane, the national program manager, Marsha Aralar is a Darwin-born Territorian who spent her early career as an environmental health officer at Territory Health Services!

Phone our office on **07 3620 3844** or email fairfarms@growcom.com.au

As our vegetable growing season starts to wind down, NT Farmers commends all our producers for their tenacity and resilience given what has been a challenging year in many ways. Firstly in the lack of a decent wet season and the higher than average temperatures, then due to COVID and the impact it has had on workforce and market logistics.

The volumes of produce coming out of the NT has been consistently positive and of a very high standard. The recent rainfall events seen across the NT in October have given all a renewed sense of hope that a decent wet season may be upon us which will be a blessing and hopefully see the commencement of the recharge of our aquifers and river catchment systems that we are heavily reliant on throughout the dry season production months.



Promising storm clouds in October 2020

Discussions around the development of the VegNET Regional Extension Plan 2020-2025 has continued with 5 identifiable key focus areas now prioritised for the NT. As part of this plan a Regional Extension Advisory Group (REAG) has been formed with the key focus being to ensure that our NT vegetable levy payers have opportunities to lead and drive appropriate and relevant R and D work being done in the NT for the vegetable industry and its northern development. Areas of focus will include projects and awareness programs around the following:

- Soil Health
- Water Efficiency measures
- Integrated Pest Management
- Biosecurity Practices
- Diversification of industry – protected cropping

Project briefs around each of these key focus areas are being developed, along with an annual operational plan which will ultimately aim to improve awareness, understanding, to educate, assist and support our producers with developing relevant benchmarks for the NT vegetable industry. They will be delivered through a variety of avenues, through on-farm demonstrations, workshops, webinars, podcasts and face to face sessions. These will be developed and rolled out over the coming months in preparation for the 2021 growing season.

Please contact Simone at ido@ntfarmers.org.au if you are interested to know more about the Phase II VegNET Project.

At the recent Local Government Association NT Symposium held in Darwin 7-9th October, an update on the recent acquisition of an autobaler to be used across the region for the drumMUSTER program was presented. The baler unit compresses plastic recyclable agvet containers into manageable units for the purposes of transporting more efficiently to a recycling centre. Since August the baler has been operational within the Katherine Region only and has been responsible for the collection of over 4316 plastic drums.

It has given the program which has been operational in the NT since the early 2000's a new lease on life. 2019-2020 total NT collection was 5604 drums. This demonstrates the value add the baler has been to the program in the short time it has been operational. Regional councils across the NT, many of whom have been aligned to the program now have a renewed eagerness to participate and encourage the adoption of this program as part of their strategic plans of reduce, reuse and recycle.

There are a number of DrumMUSTER collection sites across the NT and in Kununurra. Contact Simone at bio@ntfarmers.org.au if you would like any further information on the program or the autobaler. <http://www.drummuster.org.au/>

In mid-October I visited central Australia to meet and connect with our valuable desert producers. This trip was filled with adventure and engagement. It was amazing to see recent rainfall had awakened the outback, with vibrant greens and stunning wildflowers mixed among the vivid ochre reds and blue horizons.

Visits included a stopover at Desert Springs Farm at Ali Curung, Neutral Junction Station before heading to Ooloo Grape Farm at Ti Tree and then Territory Lettuce Farm in Alice Springs. There was discussion around current market environments; workforce and labour concerns; seasonal environmental pressures on production; and the recently developed Vegetable Regional Extension Plan. Rounding out the trip was the B2B Expo, which was being held as part of the Northern Territory's October Business Month.

My role as the Vegetable Industry Development Officer is a rewarding and exciting. Opportunities exist everywhere – and our growers and producers value the connections, conversations, advice, and support given by the NT Farmers Association.



Territory Lettuce Farm -

We have now collected over **36 MILLION** **DRUMS!**



drummuster.org.au

RINSE THEM OUT
ROUND THEM UP
RUN THEM IN

drumMUSTER
containers are
turned into useful,
sustainable
products rather
than being placed
into landfill.



Recycled into a
Wheelie Bin

visit
drummuster.org.au



Any questions regarding depot
drop off services, cleaning and
inspection services or if you
are unsure if you have eligible
drums please contact Simone
Cameron on 0413 308335 or
email ido@ntfarmers.org.au

*Wishing you all a very
Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year*

*from the Team at
NT Farmers!*

*Our office will be closed from
Saturday 19 December, 2020
until 4 January, 2021*

