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[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Membership](#) | [Events](#) | [Growers](#) | [Services](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#)

13 May 2016

The latest industry news at your fingertips

'Guacamole' is the Australian avocado industry's fortnightly newsletter delivering the latest news of relevance to the Australian avocado industry.

Make sure you check out:

[Double the numbers to Mt Tamborine Qualicado Workshop](#)
[PHA Biosecurity Levy Survey responses - FINAL CALL](#)
[Farmers angry about lack of clarity on backpacker tax stance](#)
[Robots to boost fruit output figures](#)
[Marketing Update](#)

Infocado and retail prices update

Industry news

Australian News

[AU: New appointments strengthen Fruit Fly Council](#)
[Report examines WA crop potential](#)

International News

[Chile: "Over 10,000 productive hectares of avocados lost"](#)
[Avocado tree-destroying pathogen now in 61 of 67 Florida counties](#)
[China: Avocado prices doubled within two weeks](#)
[Avocado market in Europe still short](#)
[UK: Tesco launches own avocado spread](#)



Double the numbers to Mt Tamborine Qualicado Workshop

More than double the usual number of attendees participated in this year's Mt Tamborine growers workshop on Thursday 5 May at Lindy and John Williams' Merrinee Farms, one of the oldest commercial avocado farms in the country.

Avocados Australia runs "Qualicado" Growers Workshops in all the growing regions of the country and Mt Tamborine/Northern Rivers is one of these areas. The sessions are designed to keep growers up to date with what's happening in the Australian industry and with research and development.

Avocados Australia's CEO John Tyas said more than 80 people attended - compared to an average of 31 attendees from the same area in the past. *Photo: John and Lindy Williams, Liz Dann, Simon Newett, John Tyas and Tom Silver*

"The Williams' farm is a lovely property to start with and is historical to the industry in its own right, which might have been one of the drawcards," he said.

“It was originally planted by Alec Kidd and some of the trees are quite old - one in particular is over 80 years old and still fruiting. This tree I understand Alec had planted as a youngster.”

Right: more than 80 people attended the event

Below: one of the oldest trees on the property is 80 years old.

During his early years of avocado farming, Mr Kidd planted a range of varieties include Hass,



Reed and



Fuerte, as well as some more unusual varieties like the Choquette, experimenting to see which were best suited to the climate and conditions at Mt Tamborine.

Attendees came from as far as Northern New South Wales and the Sunshine Coast and presenters discussed a range of topics including nutrition, pests and disease control (both organic and non-organic) and production management.

The current state of the industry and export potential was discussed, as well as insights from the South American avocado industry.

Lindy Williams also provided a brief history of the property just prior to the orchard walk which provided extra historic context for the group.

“We’d like to thank the Williams for opening their gates to us,” Mr Tyas said. “It was a fabulous day and everyone attending indicated they had learned a lot from the sessions.”

The next Qualicado is being held on Thursday 26 May at Robyn and Kevin Debreceny’s farm, Comboyne Avocados, at Comboyne, Central New South Wales.

The program for South Queensland’s Qualicado event on Thursday 9 June has been finalised. [Click here](#) to view it.

[Click here](#) to view the program for Central New South Wales’ Qualicado growers workshop.

[Click here](#) to view the other regions’ Qualicado dates.

PHA Biosecurity Levy Survey responses - FINAL CALL

Avocado growers should by now be aware of Avocados Australia’s proposed PHA Avocado Levy

and all growers should have received a survey, either by email via Survey Monkey, or by post to complete.

THE SURVEY CLOSSES MONDAY 16 MAY, COB.

Avocados Australia's CEO John Tyas said grower feedback was vital - as the organisation must demonstrate industry support for the changes.

"Effective biosecurity management for the avocado industry is a responsibility that is managed through a government-industry partnership with Avocados Australia Limited as the Prescribed Industry Representative Body," Mr Tyas said.

"It is important the avocado industry meets its biosecurity commitments on an ongoing basis and that appropriate resources are in place to achieve this.

"The board of Avocados Australia Limited has agreed to implement a change to the national Avocado Levy to provide resources for biosecurity management through Plant Health Australia," he said.

The current levy (for R&D and Marketing) on fresh avocados is set at 7.5 cents per kilogram, split between R&D (3 cents per kilogram) and Marketing (4.5 cents per kilogram).

The R&D levy is able to be matched with funds from the Australian Government through Hort Innovation.

On behalf of the Australian avocado industry Avocados Australia is proposing to reduce the R&D Levy on fresh avocados by 0.1 of a cent per kg (3.33 per cent) and to divert this to a Plant Health Australia Levy for biosecurity.

There will be absolutely no change to the total amount of levy paid.

If growers have any questions, or did not receive a survey about these proposed changes, please contact us on:

Email: admin@avocado.org.au

Phone: 07 3846 6566

Mail: PO Box 8005 Woolloongabba Qld 4102

Farmers angry about lack of clarity on backpacker tax stance

By ABC Rural's Arlie Felton-Taylor

As the Deputy Prime Minister took his campaign to a safe Queensland seat, the welcome might have been warm but farmers were happy to vent their frustration at the controversial backpacker tax changes.

Farmers said there was a lack of clarity in the National Party's stance on forthcoming changes to tax arrangements, which would see backpackers taxed at 32.5 per cent on all earnings from July 1.

They say the change is harming Australian agriculture's reputation as potential employers.

There is still no indication if there's going to be a change to the level of tax before its implementation.

But out on the hustings in the safe Coalition seat of Maranoa, Nationals leader Barnaby Joyce promised the Federal Government would address it before the election.

The president of the Queensland Farmers Federation, Stuart Armitage, said agricultural industries were already feeling an impact.

"It's already starting to deter people and you talk to other backpackers or potential backpackers, they're saying 'no we're going to go to Canada or we're trying our luck in the US, Australia is just going to tax us out'," he said.

Mr Joyce, during a visit to a cotton gin, said he was aware the issue was critical.

"We're not blind to this issue, we'll find a point of resolution and we'll do it on our terms and in our time," he said.

"I've been in discussions with the Prime Minister and the Treasurer about this as recently as last night, just watch this space, we will have a process to make sure we deal with the complexity of the issue."

After further questions of timings, Mr Joyce said he would not be drawn on exactly when he would address the issue.

"There's not going to be an announcement on it today, people think 'well they're just going to ignore it', well no we are not but let us get to a cogent outcome rather than just any outcome," he said.

Mr Joyce assured the media he would address the issue before the end of the election campaign.

Despite those reassurance, some farmers said until they were categorically told the tax would be changed or scrapped, they would hold their concerns.

Mr Armitage urged anyone who was unhappy with the tax to lobby their local candidate.

"It's going to be a small blip that will give the Government a little bit of money for a short time," he said.

"But the long-term effect is that we'll have less backpackers, less money.

"There'll be less food harvested by the backpackers so the end result is it's a lose-lose situation for Australian agriculture."

Robots to boost fruit output figures

Farmers may soon be able to achieve maximum fruit outputs, with the help of two Australian-made robots which identify issues for growers such as lack of pollination

The robots were part of a recently released study conducted by the University of Sydney's Australian Centre for Field Robotics and commissioned by Horticulture Innovation Australia.

Almonds, apples, lychees, avocados and bananas were part of the trial and the two robots worked concurrently on either side of tree rows using a number of cameras, lasers and software to create a series of algorithms which led to the identification of the fruit.

Horticulture Innovation chief executive John Lloyd said data supplied by the robots showed patterns in yield variations consistent with a lack of pollination.

He said at a test site, a grower planted more pollination trees in those areas and was already seeing positive results.

"By monitoring the data patterns produced by these robots growers can effectively help ensure the best yield possible."

Mr Lloyd said the robots also showed the capacity to identify individual pieces of fruit, and nuts – making way for fully autonomous tree fruit and nut picking.

"This study has provided a real window into a not too distant future where labour hire shortages and associated costs no longer need to be key concerns for tree crop growers," Mr Lloyd said.

"Ultimately, this technology will enable growers to save time and money, allowing growers to get their produce to consumers more efficiently while increasing their overall farm gate returns," he said.

And this isn't the only example where robots are being used on farms.

Mini robotic sprayers were put to work on Australian farms in March, launched by SwarmFarm.

The sprayers are the size of a large SUV and are designed to run completely autonomously, using GPS guidance and small diesel engines.

Source: weeklytimesnow.com.au

Marketing Update

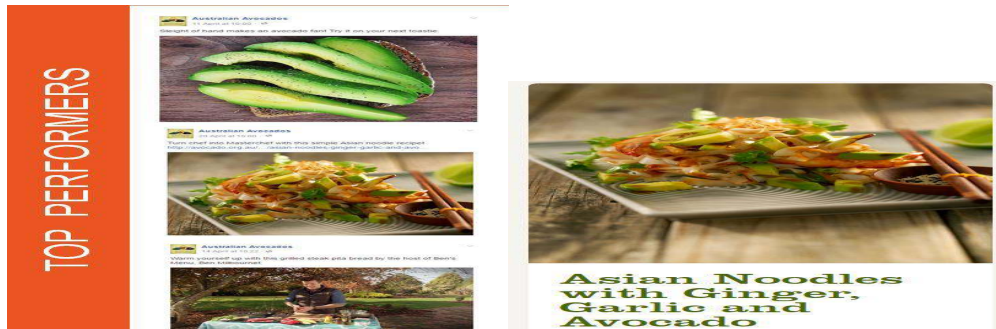
From the Hort Innovation Team

Mexican month social media campaign for May

The next social media campaign commenced last week and it is all about using avocados in Mexican recipes. The campaign will provide inspiring dishes and ideas for pairing Australian avocados with some key Mexican ingredients such as jalapenos, black beans and corn chips.

The ‘Mexican stand-off’ theme pits Australian avocados against a number of these key ingredients - the Facebook social media campaign adds some humour and encourages consumers to try the recipes. The recipes will be available on the website, featured on Instagram and in the e-newsletter.

The campaign will also feature Mexican recipes that have been generated by Ben from Masterchef and his new series Ben’s Menu.



Television buy for July

As an outcome of the Marketing workshop which took place a few weeks ago in Brisbane, it was agreed that Australian Avocados should be on TV in July, so we are currently buying spots. Consumers use and interact with a number of media channels and it is important to drive awareness through a ‘multi-screen’ approach which means that the commercial will be on free to air television (FTA) stations; subscription TV (STV); SBS and digital.

FTA will target high reaching programs and will be supported through the specialised channels such as lifestyle programs to ensure there is a cost effective mechanism to help increase our reach and consumers seeing our advertisement.

The campaign is due to run from 17 July - 6 August and more detail will be provided once spots have been bought.

Masterclass a success in ESP

The Food Service masterclass took place at restaurant ESP in April in Melbourne with chefs and cooks learning about using avocados in different and creative ways.

The first plate was to demonstrate the versatility of the avocado and the taste differences

from natural, salted, sugared and hot. Other recipes included spanner crab, tabiko and avocado veloute; wagyu rump and cheeks with charred avocado and togarashi pepper; and warm chocolate, avocado icecream with quince.

To see the highlights from the day and what the chefs had say - check out the session on [YouTube](#)

The next session is at the end of the month in Brisbane.

Landline avocado feature - another broadcast date change

ABC Landline was to broadcast a feature on Australia's avocado industry on Sunday 14 May, but this has again been delayed until midday Sunday 22 May to include a WA feature.

The program will be covering an update on the country's industry, emerging markets, and innovation.

Avocados Australia's CEO John Tyas was interviewed along with a range of growers including John Walsh from Central Queensland, Jennie Franceschi in Western Australia and Paul Bidwell from Tasmania.

Infocado and retail prices update

Past Infocado Reports and Retail Prices data are available for access from the Avocados Australia website. You can regularly access this information by going to the Avocados Australia website's [Infocado](#) and [Retail Pricing](#) pages.

Industry News

Australian News

New appointments strengthen Fruit Fly Council

The appointment of a full time manager and six new industry representatives has reinforced the credentials of the National Fruit Fly Council (NFFC). Darryl Barbour has been appointed national manager, entering the role with a background in entomology and experience in biosecurity, pest management, market access, and codes of practice for both Mediterranean and Queensland fruit flies. [More](#)

Report examines WA crop potential

Western Australia's production of six key industry crops on land near Manjimup and Pemberton could increase in value by \$20 million a year if additional water sources could be identified in the Warren-Donnelly catchment, according to a new report now available online. [More](#)

International News

Chile: "Over 10,000 productive hectares of avocados lost"

While last week Chile registered a lot of unexpected rainfall for this time of the year, in previous years, droughts had taken a severe toll on the avocado producing areas, from Santiago to the north of the South American country. [More](#)

Avocado tree-destroying pathogen now in 61 of 67 Florida counties

A University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences tropical fruit expert is doing his best to help commercial and residential avocado tree owners battle the dangerous laurel wilt pathogen. [More](#)

China: Avocado prices doubled within two weeks

As summer is just around the corner, the listing season of some fruit varieties, such as apple, grapefruit and other citrus fruits, is gradually coming to an end, which offers huge market opportunities for avocado and its price nearly doubled within two weeks. [More](#)

Avocado market in Europe still short

Strong demand for avocados has made for a short market for the fruit in Europe. With Israel, Chile and Spain finishing up their respective seasons, supplies from South Africa and Peru haven't been enough to satisfy current demand. [More](#)

UK: Tesco launches own avocado spread

Tesco is the first UK supermarket to launch an avocado spread. The product is said to have a "neutral flavour", costs £1.20 for a 260g pack and is designed to be used on bread, crackers and other savoury items instead of margarine or butter. [More](#)

Can't wait for Guacamole? You can read all the latest [Avocado News](#) and industry-related [National & International News](#) on the Avocados Australia industry website.

**Horticulture
Innovation**
Australia

This project has been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using the avocado levy and funds from the Australian Government.

This email was sent by Avocados Australia, Level 1 / 8/63 Annerley Rd, Woolloongabba, Australia 4102 to co@avocado.org.au

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