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19 August 2016

The latest industry news at your fingertips

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

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Bundaberg Qualicado proves to be a major drawcard

Central Queensland's Qualicado workshop finished the grower workshop series off in top style with record numbers for the full program throughout the country.

More than 80 people attended the workshop, held at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland facility in Bundaberg last Thursday.

Growers from as far away as Southern Queensland and Central New South Wales enjoyed the two field walks during the day to inspect the range of plantings at different densities and in particular, the high density, high productivity trellis plantings.



(ABOVE) The first field walk guided by Dr John Wilke looked at the plant density trials.

Speakers for the day included Avocados Australia's John Tyas, DAFQ's Dr John Wilke, University of New England's A/Prof Andrew Robson, as well as Helen Hofman, Kaila Ridgeway, Noel Ainsworth and Simon Newett all from DAFQ. Dr Brad Howlett from Food and Plant Research and Tim Archibald from Hort Innovation also presented on the day.

Avocados Australia CEO John Tyas said the day had been a great opportunity to see how the work was progressing.



(ABOVE) Helen Hofman conducted the second tour of the day, looking at different root stock performance in a high density trial.

"I'd like to thank DAF Bundaberg staff for providing this venue to us and for taking us through the field trials," Mr Tyas said.

"Its a fabulous chance for many growers to see cutting edge research first-hand and get a feel for what the future may hold."



(ABOVE) Some of the speakers on the day included from left - Noel Ainsworth, Tim Archibald, John Tyas, Simon Newett, Kaila Ridgeway, John Wilke and Helen Hofman.

The day also saw some media attention with the ABC and Bundaberg News Mail interviewing Mr Tyas and local growers.

"The Bundaberg reporters were very interested from a local perspective in what was being covered at the Workshop, as well as the current state of the industry," Mr Tyas said.

Meanwhile the Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne Wholesaler Qualicados updates were also held this week and Mr Tyas said topics discussed included an industry update and latest supply chain research.



(ABOVE) A relaxed atmosphere at the Sydney Wholesalers Qualicado

"There was a good turnout across the board by those committed to the industry," he said.

"Those who attended all found the sessions worthwhile and I believe it was a great opportunity to inform the sector of the supply chain on the issues we're dealing with and where the industry is headed.

"We also discussed possible changes to our Infocado system and reinforced the importance of increased participation from the wholesale sector."

The final Wholesaler Qualicado update is set for Brisbane on 30 August - [click here](#) for more details.

Bee hunt continues in Townsville

Issued by Biosecurity Queensland

The fight to eradicate varroa mites from the Townsville area continues with the help of 'balloon bee traps'.

Using techniques developed by the University of Sydney, the Townsville varroa mite response team has attached bee traps to helium filled balloons.

The traps are baited with Asian honey bee sex pheromones which male Asian honey bees are attracted to.

The balloons will be flown at a height of 15 metres at key sites in the Townsville surveillance zone between 1.30 and 2.15pm, which is the peak flying time for male Asian honey bees.

This balloon technique has been successfully used in other States to trap European honey bees and adapted by the University of Sydney for trapping Asian honey bees around Cairns.

Varroa mites were found on Asian honey bees at Townsville Port and Annandale and they have the potential to significantly damage the Australian bee industry, disrupting honey production and pollination services.

In the past week, Biosecurity Queensland have found a swarm of Asian honey bees in Hyde Park. Fortunately these particular bees were not carrying varroa mites.

The Townsville varroa mite response team is responding to bee sightings reported by the public in the Townsville area, and prioritising the destruction of all feral nests, including European Honey Bee nests, within the 10 kilometre movement control zone.

Biosecurity Queensland is urging people living in the areas of South Townsville, Railway Estate, West End, Hermit Park, Hyde Park, Pimlico, Mundingburra, Idalia, Rosslea or Oonoonba, to be on the lookout for feral bees and to report sightings to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 immediately.

The situation

Varroa mites (*Varroa jacobsoni*) were recently detected in feral Asian honey bee nests in Townsville.

The mites are a serious pest and a threat to the local honey bee industry. Certain species and strains can infest European honey bees, killing off hives and severely affecting honey production and pollination services.

Restrictions have been imposed on the movement of bee hives, bees, bee products (excluding honey), and used bee keeping equipment from the Townsville area to prevent any possible spread of the mite. See the map ([click here](#)) and Movement Control Order (PDF, 427.1KB) ([click here](#)) for further information. If you want to move any of those items you will need to apply to a Biosecurity Inspector for a permit ([click here](#)).

More information

Information about bee biosecurity, hive care, and photos that will help you identify varroa mite, is available at www.beeaware.org.au

More information on Asian honey bees, their appearance and associated symptoms once infected with varroa mites is available online at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au, or view the varroa mite pest alert.

Follow Biosecurity Queensland on Facebook and Twitter (@BiosecurityQLD).

Working holiday maker visa review now underway

Issued by Federal Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader Barnaby Joyce.

The Coalition Government last week announced the commencement of a review and public consultation on the broad range of issues affecting the supply and remuneration conditions of labour performed by Working Holiday Maker visa holders.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce, said Assistant Minister Luke Hartsuyker, who has responsibility for agricultural workforce matters, will lead the review.

“This review is essential to ensuring the government’s policy settings continue to meet growing demand for flexible labour, particularly in rural and regional Australia,” Minister Joyce said.

“Both farmers and tourism operators have expressed strong opinions about the supply and taxation of working holiday visa holders.

“The proper application of the long-established tax rate of 32.5 per cent for non-residents has been raised as a potential disincentive for backpackers to take on roles that are not being met by Australian workers.

“We have listened to those concerns.

“The government recognises that the 200,000 plus working holiday makers who come here each year are a vital source of labour across the nation, which is why we have deferred for six months implementation of the so-called backpacker tax, pending the outcome of this review.

“To help fully capture the views of both agriculture and tourism sectors, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu have been commissioned to lead the public engagement process.”

The review will address the government’s terms of reference, which are focused around four

key themes:

1. Australia's international competitiveness for backpackers
2. seasonal and temporary jobs and projected growth in agriculture and tourism
3. support for small businesses around engaging seasonal labour, and
4. protections for vulnerable workers.

Assistant Minister Hartsuyker said labour supply was a fundamental issue across many Australian industries, most particularly in the agricultural sector.

"However, it is equally important that working holiday makers pay a fair level of tax while in Australia. This is a complex issue that goes beyond the tax rate alone," Assistant Minister Hartsuyker said.

"This review will be based on informed understanding not only of the seasonal and temporary labour challenges facing our industries, but also the challenges facing the Australian economy in a global labour market.

"With jobs in our fruit and vegetable industries alone set to increase by 8.4 and 5.8 per cent respectively by 2020, we must ensure that Australia remains competitive in the international labour market where demand cannot be met domestically.

"I encourage everyone with an interest in these important issues to get involved."

Public submissions must be made by Friday, 2 September 2016; for more information or to make a submission, visit agriculture.gov.au/workingholidaymaker.

The review's outcomes will take the form of a government announcement in advance of any changes coming into effect from 1 January 2017.

Avocados Australia's media release issued this fortnight:

Issued 15 August 2016 nationally

Australians can boast highest industry standards for our avocados

Australian households can be assured the fresh avocados they buy at their local grocers or supermarkets are grown either in Australian or New Zealand - and are not from Mexico.

CEO John Tyas said today's report in The Guardian, Can hipsters stomach the unpalatable truth about avocado toast? by Joanna Blythman, ([click here to view](#)) details the impacts of the rising demand on the Mexican industry such as deforestation, environmentally unsustainable practices and slave labour and is featuring heavily on social media amongst Australians.

"I want to assure Australian households the fresh avocados produced in Australia and New Zealand must match the country's very high environmental, food safety and employment requirements," Mr Tyas said.

"Australia does not allow fresh Mexican imports at the moment."

Mr Tyas said the industry has worked hard for many years to build a strong reputation for premium quality fruit.

"Australia produces our own crops from most states nearly all year with some top-ups from New Zealand over summer to match the increased household demand over the festive season," he said.

"Our industry is closely regulated in terms of environmental, food safety and social standards, so the fresh fruit (and the Australian processed product) all match the highest standard.

"This ensures our households are getting premium, locally grown fruit all year round."

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

More consumers buying groceries online

Rabobank European horticulture analyst Cindy van Rijswijk reports that the online grocery shopping trend that started in Europe and the US is creating opportunities for growers in Australia. According to industry analysts, more consumers are buying their groceries online, with home delivered fruit and vegetable boxes also increasing in popularity. [More](#)

Trade Minister Steven Ciobo mounts full-throated defence of TPP, plans to give India talks another push this year

Trade Minister Steven Ciobo has rejected suggestions that negotiations for an India agreement have stalled, and says he expects to visit that country within six months to move discussions forward. [More](#)

International News

NZ: We expect a very large crop in volume terms with good sized fruit

Demand for avocados has not lessened through the winter and consumers will be looking forward to the New Zealand crop. The harvest is just about to start and grower and packer, Seeka Industries will pack its first avocados this weekend. [More](#)

Mexico: Wasps to combat avocado pests

A scientist from the Autonomous University of Nayarit (UAN) developed a research to use parasitoid wasps as a natural pesticide against the redbay ambrosia beetle that damages avocado crops in Mexico. [More](#)

First Chilean Hass arrive to a good market

The first Chilean Hass avocado arrived at Total Exotics in Ridderkerk, The Netherlands this week. "We see Chile as a strong partner which supplies fruit from September till March. The coming season is looking very promising, Chile expects to have 25% more fruit than last year and the weather conditions are good." [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.

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**Horticulture
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