Papaya

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Changing gears From Mining to Farming

Sitting at the foothills of Dimbulah, Ben Bozzo and Jaime Smith, from Sandy Plains Farming, are carving out their own slice of papaya paradise.

Today, they farm 10 acres of RB1 papaya with their two little helpers, Chelsea and Dominic, in tow. But they didn't follow the usual path into farming.

Ben, now a third-generation Dimbulah farmer, always dreamed of owning his own farm. Fresh out of his mechanic apprenticeship at age 21, he tried growing pumpkins but soon realised he needed cash fast to get ahead as a farmer—so he turned to mining.

"I knew mining was temporary," Ben says. "I grew up with my dad home every night, and I wanted my kids to have the same. Mining was just the best way to get ahead."

Mining also introduced Ben to Jaime, and before long, they started a family. At that point, the couple knew it was time to leave mining – but growing papaya was never part of the plan.

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In 2018, they purchased the farm, an ex-tobacco property, and planted it out with tea tree and hay. However, when the tea tree market collapsed in 2021, they had to diversify. With papaya experience under his belt, Ben decided to follow the lead of his father, who has grown papaya in Dimbulah for eighteen years.



The Sandy Plains Crew - Lykke, Barbara, Will, Anna, Dominic, Jaime, Ben & Chelsea.

Bit by bit, we're getting there – slowly but surely. It's been a ride, but totally worth it. We are really proud to be part of the Australian papaya industry and excited to see what the future holds.



Contact: Sherri Soncin, Secretary of Papaya Australia Email: admin@australianpapaya.com.au or Ph: 0499 045 979



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Hort Innovation is the growerowned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

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Hort PAPAYA Innovation FUND

See your levy at work!

Get an update on all new, current and recently completed levy funded activity on the Hort Innovation Papaya Fund page at *www.horticulture. com.au/papaya*.

You can access easy-to-read project updates, a snapshot of the Papaya Fund, research reports and resources, key industry contacts and more. Don't miss the Hort Innovation 'Growers' section to keep informed on your levy investments, upcoming events, scholarship opportunities and other handy info!

Stay in the loop with your levy by becoming a member of Hort Innovation, the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture. Paying a levy doesn't automatically make you a member but signing up is free at **www.horticulture.com.au/membership**.

From the Chair

GERARD KATH

appy Near Year and welcome back to another edition of the Papaya Press.

From what I'm



hearing, plantings and production seems solid and strong across all regions. As a result, production for the rest of the year is looking quite sound, barring how the rest of the wet season goes and how cold the winter is.

So far this year, the impact of the wet season was felt greater on the coast – Innisfail and Tully regions – as they are closer to the epicentre of the wet, which was the Ingham and Townsville regions. Albeit that it wasn't a direct hit like Ingham and Townsville experienced, they did have more of an impact than growers further north, but we're not at the end of the wet season yet. Cyclones have been known to strike on the 26th March and later, so we're not totally out of the woods yet.

For 2025, the negatives on the demand side are the uncertainty of economic news, the cost-of-living crisis, and outlooks in terms of world conflicts. Negative economic news has a flow on effect and the upcoming Federal Election also may or may not have effects.

Generally, I'm seeing some dark clouds on the demand side of things and I think the general population probably senses that too. But having said that, I think Papaya still sits in pretty good, strong shape and we'll fair OK. The prudent farmers that perform well, will still come through quite well. I'm always more optimistic than pessimistic, but I sense there's some dark clouds.

Looking at the SIAP (Strategic Industry Advisory Panel), we have expanded and following an expression of interest I would like to welcome new members; Candy McLaughlin and Emily Pattison (Mareeba), Josh Oldano and Will Darveniza (Innisfail), and Wayne Whitcroft (Carnarvon).

It's great to have them on board and it's a move towards succession for new blood to drive the industry in the future. They will be supported by us and I'm looking forward to seeing them take SIAP to another level. **Gerard Kath**

Chairman, Papaya Australia

FOOD FARMERS' COMMISSIONER OF QUEENSLAND

harles Burke has been appointed as the Food Farmers' Commissioner of Queensland.

The creation of this role was recommended by the Supermarket Pricing Select Committee.

Mr Burke is the point of contact for matters affecting farmers, provide advice to farmers in supporting their relationships with supermarkets, and advise the government on arrangements across supermarkets and their suppliers.

If you are having any issues with supermarkets and suppliers, please

give Charles Burke a call and discuss your matter with him.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Charles Burke

Food Farmers' Commissioner of Queensland Level 11, 275 George Street BRISBANE QLD 4000 GPO Box 45 BRISBANE QLD 4001 Email: Charles.Burke@offcq.qld.gov.au Mobile: 0448 661 305 (Continued from page 1)

Changing Gears from Mining to Farming

From the Mines to the Farm

After eight years in mining, switching to farming wasn't easy. The property needed a lot of work. Luckily for Ben, he was able to use his mechanical skills to repair second-hand equipment to help get things started. Things were tight in those first years. "I don't know how we could've done it without coming from the mines," Jaime admits. "Starting as a young farmer is near impossible

unless you've got some money behind you."

Family and other local farmers

were a big help, sharing contacts and advice to get the couple started.

"We wouldn't be here without them," Jaime says.

"I do miss the mates from Groote, but we've found great support here," Ben adds.

The name Sandy Plains Farming, Jaime's idea, captures the landscape they now call home. A typical day starts with picking in the cool of the morning, followed by an afternoon packing shed session. In the time between, as any papaya farmer would know, there's a list of jobs that never ends.



A full trailer heads back to the shed.

The Reality of Farming vs. Mining

For a while, Ben juggled both farming and mining, but he soon realised that papayas need



Third generation Dimbulah papaya farmer Ben Bozzo.

constant attention.

"You can't farm papaya week on, week off," Ben laughs.

Mining was easier in some ways – all meals cooked, a bus to work and back, and a steady pay cheque. Whereas on the farm, the couple are responsible for everything.

"We're busier than we've ever been," Jaime says. "The jobs never stop," Ben adds.

A key takeaway from mining that has helped on the farm is workplace health and safety.

"We understand why risk assessments matter," Jaime says. "I think we farm a lot safer because of it."

A Family Farm with a Future

Looking back, the early days were tough. Jaime remembers their first pick clearly. "I was heavily pregnant, helping on the tractor, wondering if we'd done the right thing. Ben was super stressed, and so was I."

Now, literally seeing the fruits of their labour makes it all worthwhile.

Sandy Plains Farming currently supplies Melbourne and Sydney markets year-round. Their papayas have custom stickers, and the couple are excited to see their new branded boxes arriving very soon.

They take pride in how far they've come and plan to grow sustainably, keeping the farm family-run.

"We don't want to be a huge operation," Ben says. "Just enough to support our family."

The business is a family affair, with all hands on deck. Ben takes care of daily operations, and Jaime handles all the admin. Chelsea already shows an interest in farming, pushing boxes around the shed, and Dominic enjoys riding around in the farm ute.

"I hope the kids want to get into it," Ben says. "I just hope the industry can support them like it has for my family."

When asked what advice he'd give his younger self, Ben simply says, "I wish I had gotten into the papaya industry sooner."

Story by **Ebony Faichney** Farmour



HORTICULTURE PROFILE

2024 MAREEBA & ATHERTON TABLELANDS HORTICULTURE PROFILE

- Total Gross Value of Production hits \$748M, a 42% increase since the last **Tablelands Horticulture Profile** in 2019.
- The citrus industry has experienced the most growth. It has increased in value by 200% in the past 5 years, due to maturation of high yielding lemon & mandarin plantings with strong market prices.
- Maturing orchards, new plantings and strong market prices have seen growth in banana, citrus, table grapes and papaya.
- The avocado industry value has declined. The total hectares of local

avocado have doubled in the past 5 years, however, market prices have halved, resulting in a net decrease in \$25M. The impacts of tree deaths following last summer's rainfall are yet to be fully assessed.

• These figures do not represent grower profitability. Most commodities have experienced farm gate Gross Value Production growth, but cost of production has increased significantly more.

Horticulture	Grower	Area	Volume	Industry	Horticulture	Growers	Area	Volume	Industry
Commodity	No.	(ha)	sold (T)	Gross	Commodity	No.	(ha)	Sold	Gross
				Value	-			m	Value
				(\$)					(\$)
Australian	11	264	304	10,551,900	Longan	12	250	1250	7,500,000
Natives					- ·				
Avocado	85	5047	38335	150,774,542	Lychee	40	350	745	11,175.000
Banana	29	2017	61292	169,377,210	Mango	60	2900	11613	53,982,493
Basil	<5	12	5	543,750	Melons ²	10	42	1667	1,417,382
Berries	6	195	1665	47,645,236	Mixed Fruit – other ³	17	19	351	2,530,000
Blueberry	<5	194	1628	47,212,000	Mixed Vegetable – other ⁴	36	45	889	4,454,000
Other	<5	1	37	433,236	Papaya	8	325	12673	40,202,701
Citrus	104	1656	47166	169,615,640	Red	5	290	10873	35,632,564
Grapefruit	6	53	1060	1,590,000	Yellow	<5	35	1800	4,570,137
Lime	92	826	16520	49,560,000	Passionfruit	18	40	600	3,214,286
Lemon	34	402	16080	51,456,000	Pineapple	<5	150	2800	3,360,000
Mandarin	6	324	11546	63,505,640	Potatoes	21	447	26129	15,425,300
Orange	<5	8	240	408,000	Potato	18	436	25779	14,575,300
Pummelo	12	43	1720	3,096,000	Sweet Potato	<5	11	350	850,000
Coffee	8	300	356	4,977,000	Pumpkin	24	250	8600	5,480,000
Custard Apple	6	14	213	1,384,500	Table Grape	<5	397	4446	44,464,000
TOTAL: 748.074.941									

Gross Value of Production of Mareeba & Atherton Tablelands Horticulture Industries 2024

PAPAYA - \$40M GVP

he Papaya Industry is a growing commodity on the Tablelands. The Industry has doubled in value from \$19M in 2019 to \$40M in 2024. This is a result of strong prices in addition to an increase in total planted area, most of which is the red variety. Production is predominately in Mareeba and Dimbulah. However, year-to-year growth has been volatile due to the short cropping cycle and the industry's susceptibility to environmental challenges, including

diseases exacerbated by wet conditions, flooding, cyclones, and strong winds. Production is concentrated in Mareeba and Dimbulah, particularly around Paddy's Green. To sustain this growth, increasing household penetration and overall consumption remains a priority.

Gross Value of Production: Value of production figures are based on wholesale prices at Brisbane Market's for the previous 12-18 months, multiple industry, government and grower sources and should be recognised as best estimates only.

1. Including finger lime, lemon myrtle, macadamia and tea tree. 2. Including rockmelon and watermelon. 3. Including carambola, dragon fruit, jackfruit, persimmon, pomegranate, soursop, star apple, stone fruit. 4. Including Asian greens, broccoli, capsicum, eggplant, garlic, ginger, other herbs, hydroponics, lettuce, mushrooms, spinach, tomato, zucchini

Dickinson, Emily Pattison, Dale Bennett of Horticultureand Forestry Science, Queensland Department of Primary Industries.

armour

Profile compiled by Ebony Faichney of Farmour and Geoff



REGIONAL ROUND-UP

What's happening in the regions?

GERARD KATH - TABLELANDS REGION, FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

The wet season started early – the 1st of December, traditionally it doesn't start until January. But in saying that it was not extreme, it's on par with normal wet seasons. From what I'm seeing there has been no major damage to crops up here on the Tablelands, but the wet season isn't over yet as it carries through until the end of March.

The only drama that did occur was the impact through difficulties in transport as a result of significant flooding in the Ingham and Townsville regions. There were weeks there where all growers coped a hit from fruit breakdown. A lot of fruit that was harvested in wet weather had short shelf life because transport took longer than it usually would.

Plantings are on track with normal years, but some growers have re-planted more because of the loss they experienced from Cyclone Jasper the year before.

Growers on the Tablelands are experiencing a fair bit of Spider Mite again since the weather has dried up. This time of the year there is a lot of spraying going on to counter the black spot that's about to start.

It's a little bit early to say what the rest of the year is going to do until the end of the wet season. But it looks to be solid, strong production year ahead.

CHRIS AND DIANE ROBINSON -KUNUNARRA, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, REGION

We had Cyclone Zalia go through the West Coast so that cut off our transport for about eight days -we had freight stranded. It has caused a drop in prices because there was a noncontinuous supply in the market. We also had a little bit of waterlogging and tree loss due to wind, but nothing more than expected. It wasn't as bad a previous year.

We're now in the extremely hot and dry time of the year, so that exacerbates things. We are starting to get fruit piercing moth problems and scale insect problems. With very hot weather the yields also go down, the plants stop producing, so have to keep the water up on the trees. But we expect that this time of year. We also do get a bit of sunburn on the fruit, especially if you haven't got any trees that have got good leaf.

We have been experiencing temperatures in the low 40s and predictions of up to 45 degrees, and it's been like that for several weeks. It makes it really hard on workers out in the paddock who are picking. But other than that, things are going OK.

MATT PHEENEY, COOLALINGA NORTHERN TERRITORY REGION

We've had less than 800ml of rain since the start of the year, which is down on previous years. It's been good growing conditions, we've only had about four or five days that were semimonsoonal. The rest has been afternoon and evening and overnight showers and storms. We still hit 37, 38, 39 degrees most days so it's not stress levels for the trees, but it's still hot.

It's been a hotter than normal wet, and much more humid than normal because we haven't had as much rain and cloud cover. Traditionally it starts to cool off in late April - more that it would dry out and you lose the humidity.

We haven't really had any disruptions with transport due to flooding in other areas. Some of the local growers might have been impacted for a couple of weeks with transport to Sydney.

Prices have been volatile – it's gone up and down over the past few months. With the problems in Queensland a lot of fruit must have got stripped and sent to away, which has flooded the market a couple of times. It's kept the price reasonably on the lower side ... but from what I hear there's a lot in the market.

We are looking at planting base specifically to take advantage of the big price hike that seems to happen in ripe fruit. We've seen in the last couple of years with the North Queensland wet and all the breakdown that happens.

WILLIAM DARVENIZA - INNISFAIL REGION

Growing conditions in Innisfail have been difficult at the start of this year, with both persistent wet and an extended dry period through February. The onset of the wet season brought with it the usual problems



with a little bit of flower drop creating a lull in productivity coming into March.

More consistent weather would be greatly appreciated so if anyone who controls the weather systems in the wet tropics is reading this, please take this into consideration for us poor papaya growers before we lose any hair we might have left on our heads.

The nursery is picking up a bit of activity now with growers looking to plant blocks in a few months, and using this beak in the wet season to get our next plantings ready. There is a bit of excitement around with growers in the Innisfail area increasing their plantings, returning to the industry and some people having a crack for the first time this year.

BRENT WILSON - TULLY REGION

January & February were very wet even by Tully standards, with cumulative rainfall YTD 800 mm ahead of the 10-year average. March has been relatively dry so far but unfortunately the forecast for the reminder of the month and early April is for a return to wet weather. It is raining as I write this update.

The wet weather has resulted in a significant disruption to scheduled fungicide and insecticide applications resulting in elevated fruit losses mainly attributed to a combination of anthracnose and phytophthora fruit rot. Thankfully tree losses have been kept to a minimum so far with a previously heighted focus on bed formation and increased drainage paying off so far. The recent dry and hot period experienced in early March has enabled us to catch up with all of our field-based activities and as a result, fruit quality has improved significantly. We even managed to start our planting program for 2025 and get a few plants in the ground. Despite the wet weather we are ahead of schedule with regards to land preparation for our early planting program and we are eagerly looking forward to the reminder of the year.

Industry professional aims to empower growers & strengthen agribusiness

With a passion for sustainable agriculture and fostering grower connections, Kelly Hodgkinson is helping Far North Queensland producers and businesses attract, train and retain a sustainable workforce across all commodities.

Employed by Far North Queensland Growers, Kelly is Far North region's dedicated Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network (QAWN) Officer.

She is one of seven QAWN Officers in Queensland who is delivering the vital, free service dedicated to supporting agribusinesses and working to connect agribusinesses with tailored workforce solutions and resources.

As a key initiative, Kelly has partnered with SmartAg Queensland, an industry-led program delivered in partnership with the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF).

"This initiative provides Queensland growers with access to subsidised training in essential safety and

compliance areas, including Forklift Licensing, Truck Licensing, Chemical Accreditation, First Aid, and Digital Literacy and Technology," she said.

"Over the past six months, more than 300 FNQ employees from the tree and plant crop industries have participated in these training programs.

"These courses not only enhance workforce skills but also contribute to long-term employee retention—a critical factor in an industry facing ongoing labour shortages."

To further support workforce sustainability, Kelly is working closely with education providers to deliver supervisor and business management training, alongside Mental Health in the workplace programs aimed at attracting the next generation of farmers through structured career pathways and accessibility.

She also collaborates with key stakeholders, including PALM, Migration Australia, Government agencies, and industry bodies to support workforce adaptability and development.

"These opportunities equip growers and their workforce with the skills they need to operate safely and efficiently, ensuring the continued resilience and growth of Queensland's agricultural sector," Kelly said.

Recognising the need for easy access to critical resources, Kelly has initiated a dedicated resources and events calendar on the Far North Queensland Growers website.

"This page provides vital information and links to help agribusinesses navigate workforce planning, onboarding templates, HR support, training opportunities, industry funding, and details on upcoming training courses and events," Kelly said.

For more information, to access subsidised training, or to arrange a one-on-one meeting, contact Kelly Hodgkinson on 0404 900 364 or via email at wfdo@ fnqgrowers.com.au

SPRAY DECISION GUIDE

Comprehensive list of **in-field** pesticides and fungicides available to the papaya industry for pest and disease control. **Current as of** January 2025. This list is designed as a guide to help inform spray decisions by presenting a full list of options and is not to be solely relied on. Always read the label and/or permit before making a spray decision and follow label directions.

Active	Tradename (s)	Status	Target Pest/Disease	Notes
Abamectin	Sorcerer	Registered	Two Spotted Mite	WHP = 14 days
Acetamapirid &	Trivor	Permitted	Fruit Spotting Bug, Queensland	WHP = 28 days
Pyriproxyfen		(PER89943)	Fruit Fly, Mediterranean Fruit	Permit expires 30-Nov-2025
		. ,	Fly, Scale Insects, Mealybugs,	https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER89943.PDF
			Leafhoppers and Plant Hoppers	
Beta-cyfluthrin	Bulldock	Permitted	Fruit Spotting Bug	WHP = 3 days
		(PER13671)	Banana-Spotting Bug	Permit expires 30-Nov-2027
				https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER13671.PDF
Bifenazate	Acramite	Registered	Two Spotted Mite	WHP = 7 days
Chlorothalonil	Bravo	Permitted	Black Spot, Brown Spot	WHP = 3 days
		(PER12592)		Permit expires 31-Jan-2030
				https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER12592.PDF
Copper (Cupric)	Champ/Kocide/Vitra	Permitted	Papaya Fruit Rot	WHP = 1 day
hydroxide		(PER14417)		Permit expires 30-Sep-2029
				https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER14417.PDF
Difenoconazole	Score	Permitted	Black Spot	WHP = 3 days
		(PER12592)		Permit expires 31-Jan-2030
a t 11		a		https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER12592.PDF
Dimethoate		Permitted	Orchard cleanup - fruit fly host	WHP = N/A
		(PER13859)	crops following narvest	Permit expires 30-Jun-2025
Etovarala	Daramita	Dormittod	Two spotted mits	MUD = 7 days
ELUXAZUIE	Farannie	(DED14009)	Two spotted filte	NAP - 7 udys Dormit ovpiros 21 Mar 2028
		(FER14058)		https://permits.apuma.gov.au/PER14098.PDF
Fenbutatin Oxide	Vendex	Permitted	Two spotted mite	WHP = 7 days
	Vendex	(PFR14097)	i wo spotted inite	Permit expires 31-Mar-2028
		(1 2112 1007)		https://permits.apyma.gov.au/PER14097.PDF
Flupyradifurone	Sivanto Prime	Registered	Fruit Spotting Bug	WHP= 3 days
Fluopyram &	Luna Senation	Registered	Blackspot, brown spot	WHP= 3 days
trifloxystrobin				
Maldison	Hy-mal	Permitted	Papaya Fruit Fly and	Only to be used in Male Annihilation
		(PER1205)	Queensland Fruit Fly	Technique
				Permit expires 30-Apr-2025
				https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER80877.PDF
Mancozeb	Mancozeb/ Dithane	Registered	Blackspot	WHP = 1 day
Matalauri	Rainsnield	Downsitted	Dhutanhthan Daat Dat and	
ivietalaxyi	Ridomii/Zee-mii	Permitted	Phytophthora Root Rot and	WHP = N/A Dermit evolves 21 Mar 2027
		(PER14490)	Pythium	https://pormits.apuma.gov.au/PEP14098.PDE
Phosphorus Acid	Agri-fos	Permitted	Phytophthora Boot Bot and	$MHD = N/\Lambda$
Thosphorus Aciu	Agii 103	(PFR14490)	Pythium	Permit expires 31-Mar-2027
		(1 2112 1 150)	, yennom	https://permits.apyma.gov.au/PER14098.PDF
Propamocarb	Proplant	Permitted	Pythium	WHP = Not required when used as directed
		(PER91912)	,	Permit expires 31-Dec-2026
				https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER91912.PDF
Spinetoram	Success	Registered	Caterpillars (various)	WHP = N/A
Spinosad	Entrust Organic	Registered	Caterpillars (various)	WHP= N/A
Sulfoxaflor	Transform	Registered	Fruit Spotting Bug	WHP = 3 days
Sulphur		Registered	Powdery mildew	WHP = N/A
Tebuconazole	Tilt	Registered	Black Spot	WHP = 3 days
Triadimenol	Bayfidan	Registered	Powdery Mildew	WHP = 7 days
Trichlorflon	Lepidex	Registered &	Fruit Spotting Bug (registered)	WHP = 7days
		Permitted	and Queensland Fruit Fly and	Permit for QFly and Med Fly expires 30-Nov-
		(PER12450)	Mediterranean Fruit Fly	2025
			(permitted)	https://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER12450.PDF

Guide produced by PP23003: Supporting Innovation in the Australian papaya industry using papaya R&D levy funds







INDUSTRY NEWS

CRACKING THE PAPAYA FLAVOUR CODE

he Genetics of fruit sensory preferences project (AS19003), funded through the Hort Frontiers fund, is transforming how we assess fruit quality and consumer satisfaction for papaya and pawpaw. For decades, total soluble solids (TSS), often referred to as Brix, has been the benchmark for determining fruit sweetness and appeal. However, Griffith University researchers Josh Lomax, Ido Bar, and Rebecca Ford are uncovering a far more complex picture of what truly drives customer satisfaction.

"The project has used machine learning techniques to uncover the link between papaya's chemical profile and consumer preferences," says Josh Lomax, PhD candidate on the project. "Our findings show that volatile organic compounds, or aroma, are the primary drivers of flavour perception, outweighing taste, texture, and aftertaste. This suggests that consumer preference is largely influenced by the interaction between aroma and sucrose."

The study showed three primary volatiles that worked strongly to

influence perception of papaya:

- Sulcatone a pear-like flavour
- Linalool oxide a lavender-like flavour
- Gamma octalactone a coconut-like flavour

To assess consumer preference, the researchers conducted a study with a panel of 125 participants. Results showed that a combination of these three key aroma compounds and sucrose levels was the strongest predictor of consumer acceptance. The study also found that consumers generally preferred red papaya over yellow pawpaw.

"Using machine learning modelling, we successfully predicted consumer liking scores based on the key chemical concentrations with remarkable accuracy." Says Mr Lomax.

"This research has opened several promising avenues for industry advancement. We're developing nondestructive imaging technology for objective flavour assessment that could supersede traditional total soluble solids measurements." He says. "Additionally, our investigation of genetic pathways and chemical profiles is advancing toward molecular selection tools comparable to those used in papaya sex determination but targeted at predicting fruit flavour and consumer acceptance."

This project continues to refine its predictive models and deepen its



PhD candidate Josh Lomax analysing papaya fruit.

understanding of the chemical basis of fruit quality, working toward a new standard for papaya breeding and assessment. By integrating machine learning, chemical analysis, and consumer preference data, it marks a significant advancement in fruit quality evaluation. These innovations will enable more precise and efficient variety selection, potentially transforming commercial production and quality control in the papaya industry.

For more information about the work being done in Genetics of fruit sensory preferences project (AS19003) please contact Josh Lomax at josh.lomax@ griffith.edu.au

Genetics of fruit sensory preferences project (AS19003) is funded through Hort Innovation Frontiers with co-investment from Griffith University, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation and contributions from the Australian Government.

The 'Papaya market supply data capture and analysis' (PP20003) project, led by Papaya Australia.

ueensland demonstrates a strong performance across both red and yellow papaya, with the red papaya from the Tablelands leading the overall total with 1,822 pallets.

Yellow papaya from the Coast and Tablelands combined for a solid 864 pallets, which contributed to a total combined of 3,289 pallets.

New South Wales shows a balanced distribution between red papaya from the Coast and the Tablelands. The red total of 1,886 pallets is primarily driven by the red papaya from the Coast (893 pallets) and red papaya from the Tablelands (993 pallets). Yellow entries are significantly lower but the yellow papaya from the Coast contributed 340 pallets to only 57 pallets from the Tablelands, with an overall total of 2,283 pallets Victoria's performance highlights a strong showing in the red papaya from the Coast with 1,035 pallets compared to only 400 pallets from the Tablelands. Yellow entries are minimal, contributing only 21 pallets, with an overall total of 1,456.

South Australia's numbers are lower overall, with red papaya from the

Tablelands accounting for the majority (174 pallets) and a total of 230 pallets across the red papaya. No yellow entries were recorded.

In total, the red category leads with 5,976 pallets across all regions. The yellow category, while contributing less, adds 1,282 pallets, bringing the overall total for the period to 7,258 pallets.

PAPAYA/PAW PAW CONSIGNMENTS - PALLETS SENT FROM NORTH QUEENSLAND (From 1st December 2024 to 2nd March 2025)

	Red Coast	Red Tablelands	REDS TOTAL	Yellow Coast	Yellow Tablelands	YELLOWS TOTAL	OVERALL TOTAL
QLD	603	1822	2425	313	551	864	3289
NSW	893	993	1886	340	57	397	2283
VIC	1035	400	1435	12	9	21	1456
SA	56	174	230	0	0	0	230
TOTALS	2587	3389	5976	665	617	1282	7258

MARKETING PROJECT UPDATES

GROWING APPETITE FOR PAPAYAS: 2025 MARKETING CAMPAIGN SET TO DRIVE DEMAND

he 2025 papaya marketing campaign is set to launch in April, aiming to raise consumer awareness, drive trial, and ultimately increase the number of households regularly purchasing papayas. Funded by the Papaya levy and endorsed by the Papaya Strategic Investment Advisory Panel (SIAP), the campaign will activate in three bursts of activity – from April to May 2025, September to October 2025, and April to May 2026 – creating a sustained push to engage Australian consumers.

INSIGHTS DRIVING THE STRATEGY

The marketing strategy draws on key consumer insights gathered in 2023/24:

- Household penetration of papayas remains relatively low, with just over a third of consumers purchasing the fruit once per year.
- 64% of consumers who intend to purchase papayas follow through with a purchase. This figure is a decrease from 69% last year indicating room to improve conversion at the point of purchase.
- Consumers view papayas as colourful, unique/ exotic, and premium, creating a strong foundation for engagement.

ENGAGING CONSUMERS THROUGH ACTIVE SAMPLING

A cornerstone of this year's campaign is an active sampling program. Set to kick off in April, this initiative will recruit 500 consumers nationwide, providing them with vouchers to purchase papayas and share feedback on their experiences via follow-up surveys.

The insights gathered will be invaluable for the industry, offering a deeper understanding of:

- Consumer attitudes towards papaya
- Purchase frequency
- Usage habits
- Drivers or barriers to repeat purchases

Findings will help refine the industry's messaging and ensure it resonates with consumer's preferences, maximising appeal and encouraging trial.

Participants will also be encouraged to take photos of in-store papaya displays, giving the industry critical insights into product presentation and quality across key retailers.

SOCIAL CAMPAIGN FOR MASS AWARENESS

Educating consumers is essential for driving trial and repeat purchases. A robust social media campaign will showcase the benefits of papaya and provide practical usage tips, with branded content rolling out across the three campaign bursts. Influencers will play a pivotal role in amplifying messaging, sharing easy papaya recipe ideas to inspire their followers.

By leveraging digital content, the campaign aims to keep papayas top-of-mind for consumers throughout the campaign period and beyond.



SAMPLING TO DRIVE TRIAL

To complement the active sampling and social boost, sampling will also play a critical role in driving trial, with activations planned across all three bursts. Key initiatives include:

- Sydney and Melbourne Good Food & Wine Shows (April – May 2025): Engaging with over 30,000 food enthusiasts at each event to build awareness of papaya among a highly relevant audience.
- In-store sampling (September October 2025 & April – May 2026): Providing consumers with the opportunity to taste papaya at the point of

purchase, driving trial and conversion.

With a strong focus on raising awareness, driving trial, and educating consumers, the 2025 papaya marketing campaign is set to elevate the fruit's visibility and appeal in the Australian market. By fostering long-term demand and expanding consumer interest, the initiative will create new opportunities for Australian papaya growers.

Stay tuned for more updates as the campaign unfolds!