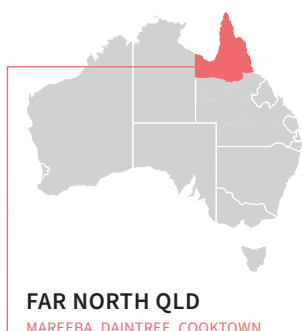


Regional Reports



Far North Queensland:

Cynthia and Dale Barbagallo, Packed with Passion, Mareeba

Can you believe that another year has passed and winter is here again? In October last year, it was wonderful to welcome, world-renowned guest speaker, Graeme Sait from Nutri-Tech Solutions, to our two-day Queensland Reef Water Quality Program Workshop on the Atherton Tablelands. Graeme shared his extensive knowledge and discussed how as farmers we can work together to improve our run-off water quality and soil nutrient retention, through nutrition farming. We visited several passionfruit farms and got to see firsthand how some of them have already implemented in part Graeme's Nutritional Farming Practices, with wonderful success.

The wet season in Far North Queensland was again challenging for growers in the region. The FNQ floods earlier this year caused widespread damage across parts of our growing regions and cut off all transport routes to key markets. Supplies from the south were limited to essentials only, and most transport depots and trucks were packed to their limits. Thankfully the region has once again recovered well.

As we move into winter, temperatures have so far been mild, and it is looking good for continued flowering for established orchards, which will hopefully see more fruit available on the market in September and October.

Sadly, *Fusarium solani* continues to be an ongoing challenge for many growers in our region, with some of our growers, including ourselves, spelling growing plots in the hopes of reducing vine death occurrence in our next crops.

Dale and I are also putting into practice the improved nutritional farming methods we learned in our workshops, and we're hoping they'll lead to an even more successful season ahead.

So, until next time, happy growing and we hope your next season is Packed with Passion!



Wide Bay:

Sarah & Jason Meiers, Meiers Tropical Plantation

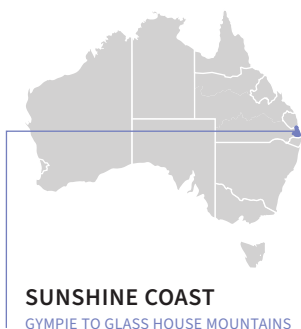
G'day from Bundaberg! We hope you're all doing well.

We've had a great start to the season once the rain disappeared after the first quarter and the fruit started to clean up after the wet, water damage. A few showers since but only around 30mm average every few weeks.

We are currently in a low period (mid-June) after being kept on our feet having some of our biggest weeks sending away fruit yet through May. It is looking like we will have a bumper crop coming in mid-July to August that will keep us very busy as we are expecting it to break our previous farm records!

The next crop coincides with peak grafting season, making it an especially busy time and adding extra pressure on all our workers. We have just started pulling out posts that have been in the ground for 25 years and should have the 5,000 new posts back in the ground ready for the upcoming planting season.

Wishing all growers a good season ahead from the Meiers family.



Sunshine Coast: *Brad & Hanna Millard, Beenham Valley Passions*

It's been another challenging season for growers in our region. After a dry start to the planting season in October, our young vines were longing for rain — and they certainly got it! The Christmas period brought persistent wet weather, which slowed fruit development and delayed harvesting.

Tropical Cyclone Alfred only added to the complications, dumping more rain onto already saturated soils. Although we were lucky to avoid the winds, the moisture decided to hang around. Combined with extended periods of cloud cover, this created ideal conditions for disease and fungal outbreaks. Over the past six months, an average of 48% of days have been classified as “wet and cloudy” — and as every grower knows, passionfruit vines thrive on sunlight. As a result, production has taken a hit.

Here on our farm near the coast east of Gympie, rainfall has consistently tracked above average. Frequent coastal showers have left the ground with little opportunity to dry out. In contrast, farms located to the north of Gympie have had significantly less rain and cloudy days. But on the positive side, Brad hasn't had to irrigate! Less picking also means there is plenty of time to tackle those maintenance jobs around the farm!

However, there's cause for optimism. The recent stretch of cold, sunny weather has signalled a change. While our vines have slowed during the cooler conditions, we're now seeing encouraging signs of recovery. Fresh growth is pushing through, flowers are setting, and we're hopeful for a solid harvest before the next planting season kicks off. Wishing you all the best for your growing season as the days start getting longer!



Northern NSW: *Dennis Chant, AD & JL Chant*

The weather in the northern rivers area has been particularly challenging for passionfruit growers, and other horticultural and grazing industries, over the last three months. Many farmers reported plant and infrastructure damage as a result of Tropical Cyclone Alfred that struck the Tweed Valley from 6-8 March. Widespread damage was reported with major impacts on trellises and young vines. Recovery efforts have been hampered by persistent rain since that event and disease control has been difficult.

Despite these setbacks, some growers are recording reasonable crops of fair quality given the weather conditions. The recent sunshine after lengthy overcast periods has seen plants starting to throw new shoots. Tweed growers have reported mixed results with new varieties they have planted whilst some of the plant breeding project trial vines are looking promising. Hopefully better times are ahead!



Western Australia: *Thea Walker, Seven Days Farm*

Hello again from Western Australia! The last 12 months have seen Western Australia have one of its largest production years in recent times, due to exceptional growing conditions. The mild spring and summer weather enhanced fruit set, which coupled with a slight increase in plantings, contributed to the significant increase in fruit volumes and quality. With the majority of our fruit ripening in the March and April months, we did experience a temporary oversupply of our WA wholesale market during this time.

Despite this, the favourable growing conditions facilitated excellent vine development in young plantings over summer, with new varieties and growing systems being trialled across multiple farms in the southwest. We are looking forward to seeing how they cope over the winter months and perform in coming seasons.

Looking ahead, the development of the WA market, cooler climate varieties and more efficient growing systems will continue to be a focus for growers here. The long-range weather forecast indicates another mild winter without extreme weather events which is positive for our spring season ahead. We hope to further connect with other growers in WA over the next few months and wish the rest of Australia a productive and rewarding season to come!