

REGIONAL FIELD DAY

FRIDAY 13 OCTOBER

Regional Field Days are part of the Australian Passionfruit Industry Communications Programme (PF16003) funded by Hort Innovation, using the passionfruit research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

It was a lovely morning as growers and industry supporters gathered at the Fresh Centre at Brisbane Markets to start a jam-packed day of discovery and discussion. Start time was 6.30am and the day was Friday 13th October 2017. After all the planning it was great to get underway.

After a short welcome from President Tina McPherson it was time to get down to business. Representatives from the Brisbane Markets - Vanessa Kennedy and Luke Lesson - greeted everyone and gave an induction briefing. Enclosed shoes were the order of the day. Hi-Vis vests were distributed as safety procedures were provided on what to watch out for in the busy market place. This was peak trading time. Fork lifts were moving produce around the complex and everyone needed to watch out!

Everyone moved out to get a good look at the main trading floors, see the produce on display and talk with agents at their stands. The Brisbane Markets have been on this site at Rocklea since 1964, and it is the main fruit and vegetable wholesale operation in Queensland.

Getting this up-close market experience was welcomed by all who were involved on the day. Everyone could see and hear from these market experts about how the whole system operated and what was needed to gain your sale.

600,000 MT



BRISBANE MARKET STATS



\$1.3 billion



MARKET DISCUSSIONS

Back at the Fresh Centre everyone enjoyed a wonderful breakfast delivered by Andrea Nicolaou and her great team at The Café Brisbane Markets. This gourmet feast was kindly sponsored by **JE Tipper** and we thank them most sincerely for this fantastic contribution to the day.



Image courtesy of GROWCOM

Passionfruit Australia Treasurer and JE Tipper principal Sean Russell then acted as the facilitator for some great discussion on the marketing of passionfruit from the professionals in their fields Andrew Young, the CEO at Brisbane Markets, was first in line.

He provided an overview of the markets, their operations and future developments planned at the site. It continues to grow and innovate. Now providing a wide range of services to the primary wholesalers including state of the art cooling and unloading facilities. Wholesalers in turn receive produce from over 7,000 fruit and vegetable growers from around Australia and sell and distribute product to more than 1,000 retailers and food service businesses.

One topic that was mentioned by Andrew was the Horticulture Code of Conduct. This Federal legislation is now in force and growers need to be aware that they need to comply with this code. The objectives of the Horticulture Code of Conduct are to regulate trade between Growers and Traders and to provide fair and equitable dispute resolution procedures.

To ensure Code compliance, growers need to:

- Understand that Traders and Growers are required to have a Horticulture Produce Agreement (HPA) in place
- Review, negotiate and accept the terms of HPA's with all Traders which you do business with; and
- Note that acceptance can be in writing or by way of an email, fax or text message.

Information sheets on these HPA's as well as other market information were provided on the day. For more information on what you need to do to ensure you are compliant with the new code see PAGE 21.

Brisbane Greengrocer Joe Carbone from Feast on Fruit at Morningside Central held the audience captive as he gave some powerful insights on marketing passionfruit to consumers. Joe's main theme was that his sales come from providing products with flavour to his customers. He advised that you need to be authentic in your offering to gain repeat sales - and this came about by focusing on flavour. He told how he sought out this product by walking the Brisbane Markets, going out back into cold rooms and would keep looking until he found what he wanted. Hear more from Joe on PAGE 21.

Next to join us was Aidan Hutton from **JE Tipper** in Sydney Markets. Aidan gave a position from an agent's view of the passionfruit supply chain. Aidan agreed that consistency and flavour were the biggest thing for selling passionfruit. He believed the industry needed to push the sampling and tasting to get the product eaten and drive repeat sales. Aidan believes there is plenty of room for growth with chain stores. He also praised the work of the Independent retailers in handling the product well and showing real care in how the fruit is displayed!

'Supermarket produce managers need more education on handling, marketing and display. They focus on shrinkage and can be wary of lines they believe are high shrinkage'

This points to the need for effective cold chain management along the supply chain, so retailers receive good performing fruit. Aidan believed a challenge was the high price at retail level and this should be a focus for the industry.

Sean Russell joined the market agent discussion by highlighting how communication was so important. He also believes we can grow the consumption of passionfruit here in Australia. He stated how a single greengrocer like Joe could sell 60 boxes of passionfruit a week, whereas a major retailer with all their outlets in Queensland was only taking 600 boxes. He reiterated his message that there is a need to work together, and if we can grow a good product we can take the market further.



Trevor Brewer. Image courtesy of GROWCOM

Long-time market reporter Trevor Brewer then joined the discussion. Trevor has worked in the Brisbane Markets for over 40 years. Initially he was the Fruit & Vegetable inspector with DPI and became a senior market reporter. He then founded and ran Market Information Services, Ausmarket Consultants and Brisbane Market Surveyors. These businesses were designed to address industry's needs in the absence of government involvement.

In providing some background Trevor noted that in 1992 his daily market price reports covered 2-4 pages. They are now over 9 pages long with many new crops and varieties, and the need now to provide pricing on pre-packed products as well.

They record pricing against over 4000 product descriptions, with 44 in use for passionfruit products alone. Price data they collect is published in some newspapers and provides a yardstick to what is happening in the markets on a daily basis. All data is available on a user-pays basis. They also offer support to growers in relation to disputes over quality by offering an independent assessment service.

If anyone is interested in purchasing data from the any of the eastern markets, or would like information about quality assessment services please visit www.marketinfo.com.au

Amanda Green, FreshTest Co-ordinator, then provided a summary of the FreshTest program. It was an initiative of Fresh Markets Australia and provides a low cost chemical residue and microbial testing service for wholesalers and their growers in all central markets. The tests are confidential and are used to verify Food Safety and Quality Assurance systems. Does your produce pass the test?

These presentations were then followed by a question and answer session, which captured the interest generated by these wide-ranging discussions.

A big thank you goes out to the team at Brisbane Markets, Sean Russell & Aidan Hutton from JE Tipper, Joe Carbone, Trevor Brewer and Amanda Green for providing excellent presentations.

PASSIONFRUIT LEVY PROJECTS ON DISPLAY

The Regional Field Day program then moved to the Tennyson Room at the Brisbane Golf Club situated next to the Brisbane Markets site. The first session of presentations was chaired by President Tina McPherson and included an update from the passionfruit levy program run by Hort Innovation.

Hort Innovation staff on hand were Brad Mills — our new Passionfruit Industry Relationships Manager — and Kelly McGuinness who is our Marketing Program Manager. They were joined by Peter Bundock from Southern Cross University who is managing the National Passionfruit Breeding Program.

Finally, in this section, Jane Richter provided a spirited presentation on the new Passionfruit Industry Communications Program and what it will be setting out to achieve in the next four years. Growers will have already noted the revamped Passion Vine, and the timing of these will now become seasonal to fit in better with growing conditions. The website is going to be updated, monthly e-newsletters are to be introduced as well as Regional Field Days and research forums. These will focus on identifying and delivering information, research and extension activities that will assist growers to "operate at the top of their game".

Jane stated that it was "an exciting time to be a passionfruit grower"

Look out for a survey heading your way soon where you can nominate the topic areas that you would like to be covered in the Regional Field Day Program like Soil Health, for example.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF HORT INNOVATION?

Please remember paying a levy does not automatically make you a member of Hort Innovation. Brad reminded attendees that you can get involved and have a say on how your investments are funded by becoming a member today— better yet it is **FREE** to join if you are a levy-payer. Further information is available at <http://horticulture.com.au/membership-application-form>