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The Vine is the official bi-monthly newsletter for Australian sweetpotato growers and forms part of a broader communications project funded by Hort Innovation through the Sweetpotato research and development levy, with contributions from the Australian Government.

Our goal is to keep growers informed, supported and connected, while showcasing the value of levy-funded R&D and extension. We encourage you to read, share and engage with The Vine, and welcome your feedback. Please contact Australian Sweetpotato Growers Inc (ASPG) Executive Officer Bree Watson with suggestions for future editions.

Contact ASPG

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BIOSECURITY UPDATES

Guava Root-knot nematode

Although *Meloidogyne enterolobii* or Guava Root-knot nematode (GRKN) has not been detected in commercial sweetpotato production areas to date, on-farm biosecurity measures are your front line of defence to keep GRKN (and many other pests) out of your property. Like other root-knot nematodes, M. enterolobii can be easily spread through infested soil and infected plant material. It is critical that growers are mindful of risk pathways and strive to avoid introduction to their property. Signage, restricted access (particularly to cropping areas), machinery wash-down and use of clean planting material are all measures which can help to reduce the risk. Simple, low-cost measures can make a big difference in keeping your farm safe.

Good information about farm biosecurity is available through the Farm Biosecurity Website,

including the Farm Biosecurity Action Planner. The Australian banana industry has also produced a lot of resources (e.g. Better Bananas On-farm Biosecurity) to help growers protect themselves from Panama disease, and many of the same biosecurity principles can be used to prevent *M. enterolobii* spread and protect sweetpotato farms. If you see any unusual or particularly severe nematode damage to crops, contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or via the Report a Pest or Disease website portal.

INDUSTRY UPDATES

Horticulture Code of Conduct Review

The Horticulture Code of Conduct (the Hort Code) is currently under review. The Code was last updated in 2017 making this an important opportunity for growers to have their say. Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers are playing a key role in grower engagement for this and have developed a survey in collaboration with QFVG and the Queensland Horticulture Council. This survey is applicable for all growers in all states. If you complete this survey, your personal information will not be shared with any other groups, only de-identified statistics. You may receive a survey from multiple sources but only need to complete it once.

Additionally, BFVG will be hosting Mr Chris Leptos AO who is leading the independent review of The Code in Bundaberg for a shed meeting and grower one-on-one appointments. Please contact Bree Watson to arrange a time or keep an eye out for the flyer as we lock in the details.

Have your say

How to get ready for Payday Super

From 1 July 2026, employers must pay their employees' superannuation contribution each payday instead of at least once every 3 months. The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has released new fact sheets, checklists and videos at ato.gov.au/PaydayResources to help you prepare for this change:

- How to get ready for Payday Super
- Key changes to super guarantee, providing a comparison between the old and new super systems
- Qualifying earnings (QE) – the new base for calculating super contributions, replacing ordinary times earnings
- Upgrades to SuperStream – the standards for the way all employers pay super guarantee

Take a look at the Payday Super Checklist for Employers form → HERE

Are You Directly Involved in Levy-Funded R&D Projects?

Hort Innovation is now formally recognised by AusIndustry as a registered Research Service Provider for 2024/25. In practical terms, this means some of the R&D projects funded through your R&D levy may be eligible to be claimed as part of your R&D Tax Incentive.

To make this easier, Hort Innovation has prepared industry-specific R&D summaries that outline the projects undertaken, the type of research involved, and the proportion of your levy that may be eligible to claim. These summaries are designed to support growers and their accountants when preparing R&D Tax Incentive applications.

Growers can request the relevant documents for their industry by completing a short expression of

interest form.

It's important to note that not all levy-funded R&D will qualify, as the tax incentive has a narrower legal definition of R&D than the levy system. Eligibility is ultimately assessed by AusIndustry under tax law, so growers should seek advice from their accountant or tax adviser.

Complete an expression of interest form to receive a copy of the supporting documents.

GRANTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Expert agronomy support available for sweetpotato growers in the Qld GBR region.

Sweetpotato growers know that good soil, smart irrigation and well-timed fertiliser are key to strong yields. But with variable weather, rising input costs and busy seasons, it's not always easy to fine-tune every part of the system. That's where Growcom's Agronomy Package can help. This package provides up to **$1,000** (ex GST) in funded agronomy support to help you make practical, on-farm improvements that reduce losses of nutrients, sediment and runoff, without reducing productivity or profitability.

The support is practical, tailored to your farm, and delivered by experienced agronomists who understand sweetpotato production systems.

Growers can use the package for one or more of the following services:

- Nutrient management planning (NMP) to better match fertiliser to crop demand
- Interpreting soil and/or leaf test results and translating these into clear fertiliser decisions
- Reviewing fertiliser programs (rates, timing and placement), including transitioning to split or staged applications to reduce losses after rainfall or irrigation
- Integrating irrigation and nutrient management so water and nutrients work together
- Identifying erosion and runoff risk areas and recommending practical groundcover improvements in headlands or high-risk zones
- Improving drainage pathways to slow water movement and reduce soil loss
- Assessing irrigation practices to improve scheduling and prevent runoff or deep drainage
- Improving irrigation efficiency and uniformity so water goes where it's needed

How to get started
To be eligible, growers need to benchmark their practices in Hort360. Benchmarking helps identify strengths, highlight areas for improvement, and ensures agronomy support is targeted where it will deliver the greatest benefit. If you're a sweetpotato grower keen to improve on-farm efficiencies, start by benchmarking in Hort360 in the Reef module and talk to your local facilitator about accessing the agronomy package. This initiative is funded by the Queensland Government's Queensland Reef Water Quality Program, proudly delivered by Growcom.

Contact:

Hort360 GBR Project Manager, Michelle Haase - 0428 586 890
Hort360 GBR Facilitator in North Queensland, Paula Ibell - 0498 119 633
Hort360 GBR Facilitator in Burnett Mary, Lilly Rehbein – 0408 104 967

LEVY PROJECT UPDATES

Pest management for the Australian Sweetpotato industry (Project: PW22000)

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the sweetpotato research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Cover crop screening

The use of resistant cover crops is a key management tool to reduce RKN populations in between sweetpotato crops. Another cover crop screening experiment has been completed. This was a repeat testing for Raptor oats with results confirming that this cultivar has good resistance against the common RKN species M. incognita and M. javanica as well as the Guava RKN species M. enterolobii which is as yet undetected in sweetpotato fields.

Sunn hemp was slightly susceptible to all 3 species in this screening. It has given variable results across multiple tests, varying between resistant reactions and slightly susceptible, but remains an acceptable legume rotation if used with caution. Note that Signal grass and Red Natal grass are classified as weeds.

If you are using cover crops that you would like tested for nematode resistance, feel free to contact Sandra on 0427 604 144. All we need is a cup of seed.

			M. enterolobii	*M. incognita*	*M. javanica*
Crop	**Common Name**	**Cultivar**	**Average RF**	**Average RF**	**Average RF**
Clitoria ternatea	Butterfly Pea		2.03 (SS)	0.00 (HR)	0.50 (R)
Avena sativa	Oats	Raptor	0.01 (HR)	0.07 (HR)	0.01 (HR)
Melinis repens	Red Natal Grass		0.01 (HR)	0.12 (R)	0.03 (HR)
Chloris gayana	Rhodes Grass	Callide	0.01 (HR)	1.40 (SS)	4.62 (SS)
Urochloa decumbens	Signal Grass		0.01 (HR)	0.01 (HR)	0.00 (HR)
Crotolaria juncea	Sunn Hemp		2.59 (SS)	1.54 (SS)	1.72 (SS)
Solanum lycopersicum	tomato	Tiny Tim	56.65 (MS)	151.40 (HS)	58.08 (MS)

HR = Highly resistant, R = resistant, MS = moderately susceptible, SS = Slightly susceptible.

Causes and management strategies for skin loss in Sweetpotato (Project: PW21002)

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the sweetpotato research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government.

On-farm testing of the SmartSpud® devices continues. These studies are instrumental in identifying optimal handling practices that minimise skin damage during harvest and packing processes. Most growers will have had this demonstration on their farm. If you missed out, you would like a re run, or have changed your system or pack line, feel free to contact Rach Langenbaker on 0436 928 512 and David Shorten, who will be only too happy to bring the smart spud out to your farm.

Improving root crop resilience and biosecurity in Pacific Island Countries and Australia (Project HORT2018/195)

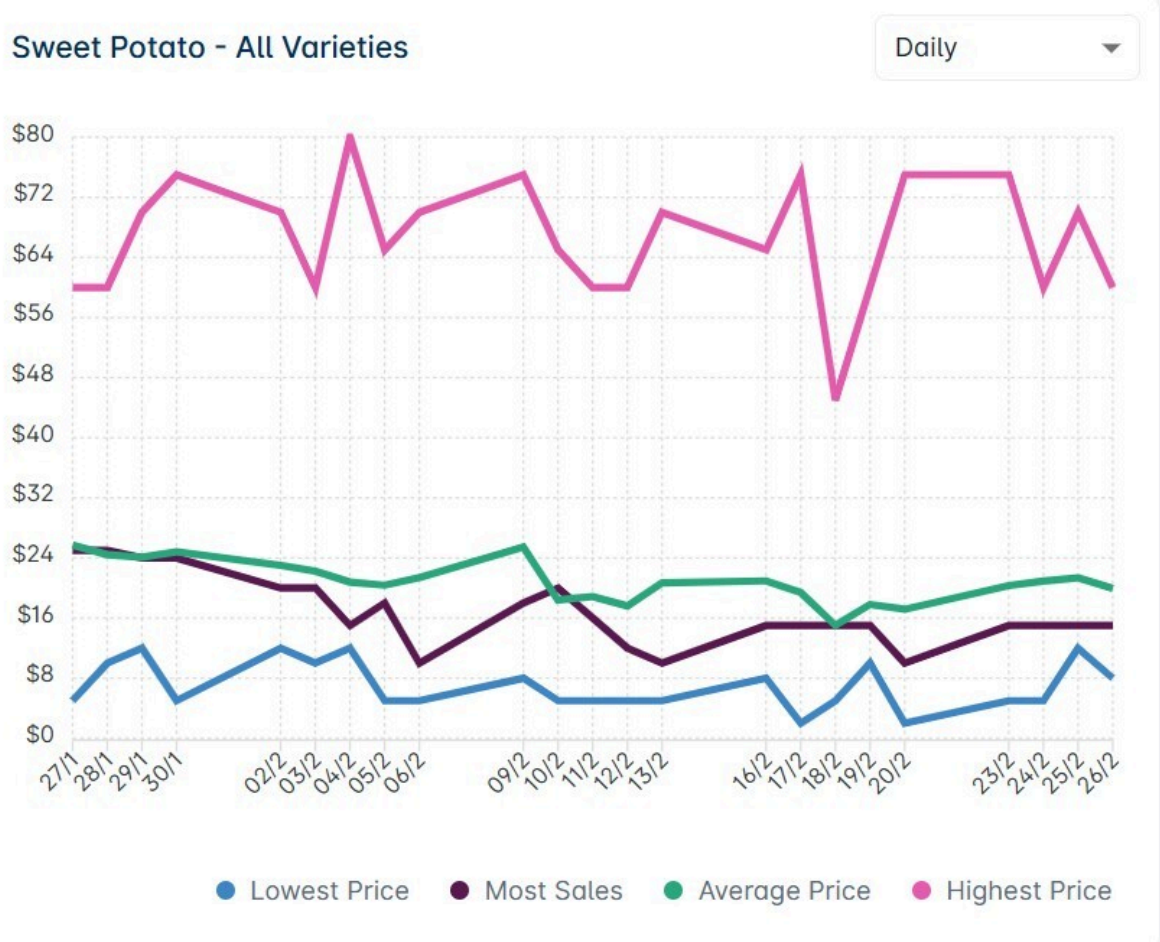
This project has been funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) from federal government funds.

Rach Langenbaker and Michael Hughes, visited Samoa, Fiji and the Solomon Islands in November. During the trip Rach and Mike reviewed Pathogen Tested (PT) sweetpotato activities, assisted in a field trial assessment, and delivered hands-on training with growers and extension staff.
Across all countries, PT planting material was being well maintained and there was strong interest in improving vine quality, seedbed systems and agronomic practices. New PT versus non-PT comparison trials are planned in Fiji and Solomon Islands for 2026, focusing on yield and quality benefits under practical farming conditions.

Rach and Mike also visited the laboratory at the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (SPC CePaCT) in Fiji. This lab is working with DPI sweetpotato researchers to standardise PT testing, ensure accurate sweetpotato virus detection and monitor for biosecurity threats and strengthen regional biosecurity across the pacific and Australia. ACIAR funding also partially supports the PT lab in Gatton.

MARKET PRICES

The Brisbane Markets Price Report provides a snapshot of current wholesale market conditions, highlighting price movements, supply trends and demand signals relevant to growers. This update is provided with thanks to the strategic partnership between Australian Sweetpotato Growers Inc. (ASPG) and Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers (BFVG), supporting informed marketing and production decisions as the season progresses.



SEASONAL OUTLOOK

Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook 2024/25

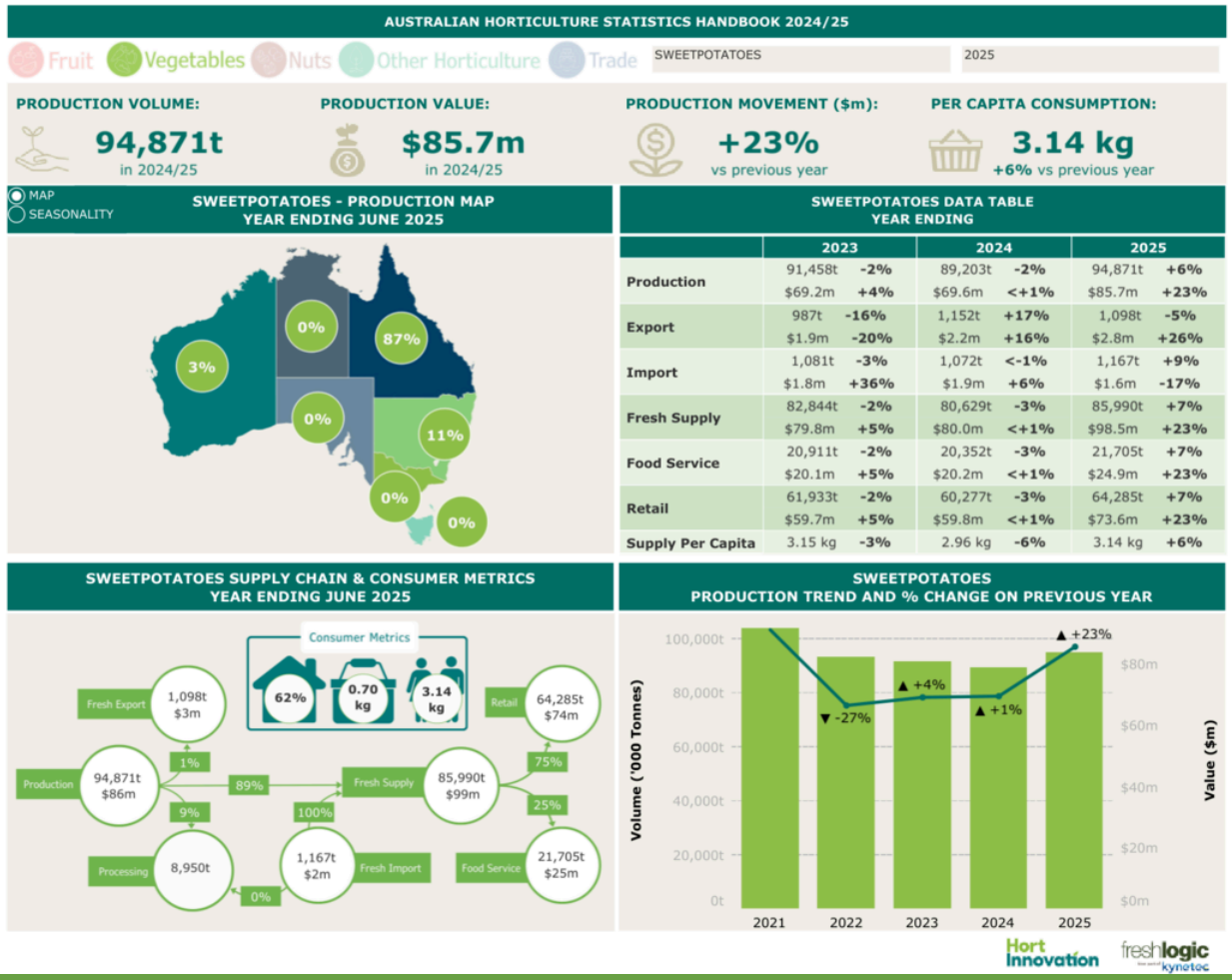
The Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook is an annual publication that offers the most comprehensive available data on Australia's horticulture industry. It covers 75 horticultural products including fruit, nuts, vegetables, nursery, turf and cut flowers.

Drawing on data from multiple supply chain sources, including international trade statistics and peak industry bodies, the Handbook contains information on retail and foodservice use, exports and imports, share of production by state and territory, wholesale value, and volume.
You can access the 2024/25 Horticulture Statistics Handbook on the Hort Innovation website here: Hort Innovation | Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook.

According to the Handbook, **the sweetpotato industry** has experienced strong growth in 2024/25, with production increasing to 94,871 tonnes and a total value of $85.7 million. Production movement rose by 23 per cent compared to the previous year, while per-capita consumption increased by 6 per

cent to 3.14 kg. Queensland remains the dominant production state, accounting for 87 per cent of national supply.

This growth has been supported by improved fresh supply and increased demand across retail and food service channels. The focus now is on maintaining this momentum and continuing to drive consumption, with the forthcoming marketing campaign expected to play an important role in sustaining demand.



SWEETPOTATOES IN THE NEWS

The Hon. Tony Perrett MP, visits Gatton Research Facility

The sweetpotato industry has received a welcome boost with the announcement of $4.5 million in funding for a new purposebuilt glasshouse at the Gatton Research Facility. Queensland's Minister for Primary Industries, Hon. Tony Perrett MP, along with State Member for Lockyer, Jim McDonald, visited the research facility in December 2025 to announce the news.

The new, climate controlled glasshouse will replace the current 60 year old structure, providing modern facilities to support continued research and innovation for the sweetpotato industry. During the visit, the Minister praised the industry's success and reaffirmed the Department of Primary Industries' commitment to supporting growers through ongoing research and development.

SHOWCASING SWEETPOTATOES

Sweetpotatoes continue to shine as a versatile and nutritious vegetable. Health and Wellbeing Queensland has been sharing a range of recipes to help boost fruit and vegetable consumption, and one standout from Nutrition Australia puts sweetpotatoes front and centre. Their Vegetable Shepherd's Pie delivers an impressive 4 serves of vegetables per serve, making it an easy, family-friendly way to enjoy more veg.

Link to receipe

Follow us on socials

As the 2026 Marketing campaign rolls out we're calling on everyone to like and share our socials to extend our reach and maximise your levy investment. Click the below icons to follow our journey.

Hort Innovation Strategic levy investment | SWEETPOTATO FUND

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the sweetpotato research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au

AUSTRALIAN SWEETPOTATO GROWERS INC.

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