SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2022

growcom

Fruit & Vegetable news



QUEENSLAND'S FAR NORTH ON SHOW

at inaugural R&D Field Day

FIVE-YEAR AGWORKFORCE STRATEGY LAUNCHED | HARNESSING AGTECH FOR BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT | HORTICULTURAL NETTING PROGRAM EXPANDED | PINEAPPLE INDUSTRY ON SHOW AT 2022 FIELD DAYS

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In July, Growcom attended the launch of the Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-27. Developed in partnership between the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) and Jobs Queensland, in collaboration with the Queensland Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance (RJSA) the Plan envisions that Queensland's agribusinesses aspire to be leaders in workforce planning and development; and that the state's sustainable, productive, and fair agriculture employers and training providers collaborate, engage, and develop a diverse and skilled workforce in Queensland's regions.

10. Harnessing AgTech for business improvement

From the creation of the plough to the irrigation system, mankind has always strived toward innovative solutions to meet the ever-increasing pressure to feed the world.

Considering the historically close relationship that exists between technology and agriculture, it's little surprise that within Queensland's present-day horticulture industry, fresh produce growers are trialing and relying on methods to take efficiency and productivity to the next level – with robots.

13. Horticultural netting program expanded

The Australian Government's Horticultural Netting Program, which offsets the cost of installing netting, has now been expanded from the initial trial of apple and pear production to include all horticultural industries.

14. Pineapple industry on show at 2022 Field Days

Over 160 pineapple growers and industry supply chain members converged on the Sunshine Coast in July to share knowledge and celebrate at the industry's annual Pineapple Field Days. While the pineapple industry, like horticulture generally, is dealing with its fair share of challenges right now, there is a strong sense of cohesion between growers and a shared commitment to staying at the cutting edge of technology and best practice.



5 QUEENSLAND'S FAR NORTH ON SHOW *at inaugural R&D Field Day*



welcome

Chief Executive Officer
Rachel Chambers

A role which combines my passion for advocacy, humans, horticulture, government, and problem solving into one giant, complex bucket. How could I say no?

Although the change in career from local government to horticulture took a leap of faith, being on the ground speaking to growers about highly complicated problems that need solving, immediately felt like home.

As a lover of all things food, to be able to represent the industry which not only provides the raw product but also provides copious amounts of jobs right along the supply chain, is an honour and a privilege. Moving forward one of my main aims is to further understand and map the significance of the fresh produce supply chain as part of our state and national economies, to ensure its value is known by consumers and government alike.

Planting a crop is a decision taken that impacts the livelihoods of many people responsible for getting food onto the table. Without growers getting up each day, dealing with the issues of staff shortages, rising input costs, biosecurity concerns and unstable end markets, there would be immeasurable (almost!) losses in machinery sales, transport jobs, marketers and agents, fertiliser and nutrient companies, and the 55,000 restaurants and caterers across Australia. Not to mention, we would go hungry, a fact that seems lost on many.

Day two in the job I was delighted to discover that we get to throw a big party next year to celebrate 100 years of supporting horticulture, celebrating all your amazing work. How lovely it will be to stop and reflect on a century of farming innovation, ideas and progress and industry advocacy, to stop for a moment in time to reflect and be exceptionally proud of the horticultural industry and all its achievements.

How fortunate I am to represent such a vital industry and the people who do the hard yards everyday to feed generations of humans across the globe. I look forward to working with you to understand how Growcom can best support you into the next century.





policy & advocacy

Manager, Policy & Advocacy
Richard Shannon

TURNING THE TABLES: WHY RETAILERS MUST DO BETTER

When growers supplying retailers are being asked to jump over ever higher packaging, quality, and other hurdles, can we not expect better treatment at the negotiating table?

There are few silver bullets when it comes to solving the inflationary pressures across the economy, and the costs of agricultural inputs, that have risen sharply.

We are told upward cost pressures are driven by a shortage of supply and yet hiking interest rates, the main tool we are relying on to turn inflation around, does nothing to improve supply but simply dampens demand.

So, until kinks in our global supply chains are ironed out there is an onus on fresh produce buyers to come back to the table to renegotiate prices that better reflect the new costs of production and keep otherwise profitable growers in the industry.

An increasing number of growers are directly supplying retailers, ALDI, Coles, Woolworths and Metcash, who are signatories to the Food and Grocery Code, designed to improve standards of business conduct in the food and grocery sector.

The Code consists of rules relating to important aspects of the commercial relationship between retailers and their suppliers including grocery supply agreements, the purchase and payment of products, good faith negotiations and an effective dispute resolution framework.

With regard negotiation, the Code requires retailers to accept or reject within 30 days any written price increase requests from suppliers. To keep buyers accountable for their conduct, the Code requires them to report annually on how they have responded to these price increase notices.

Latest reported figures for 2020-21 show less than stellar responsiveness from retailers.

Woolworths received 237 notifications of a price rise request and entered into negotiations with 94 of them. Of these, 75 negotiations were not concluded within 30 days of the initial request being made.

Coles received 1,101 notifications of a price rise request and entered into negotiations with 35. Of these negotiations, 32 did not conclude a position within 30 days.

Aldi received 45 notifications of a price rise request and did not enter into negotiations following the requests.

And Metcash failed to report due to a lack of records.

Growcom on behalf of its members is calling on signatories to the Food and Grocery Code to come back to the table and do better in meeting their own standards of fair dealing.

Growers with queries about the Code or need support through a dispute process are encouraged to contact Growcom for advice.

GROWCOM BOARD DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS INVITED

Growcom is inviting applications from financial grower members wishing to be considered for appointment as a non-executive director of the company.

Next year marks 100 years of Growcom and its predecessor organisations. This is your opportunity to be part of that legacy and provide strategic input to drive industry growth and prosperity for the next 100 years.

Applications must be received no later than COB Friday 30 September 2022. Should the number of applications outnumber the available positions, a ballot will be held.

To obtain an application form or for further information regarding the role and duties of a Director, please contact Growcom Manager, Corporate Services Andre Adins on aadins@growcom.com.au

The Boards Governance Charter sets out the skills requirements and attributes that the Board seeks from nominees. Please visit: www.growcom.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Corporate-Governance-Charter.pdf



Industry came together for a panel discussion during the morning session.

QUEENSLAND'S FAR NORTH ON SHOW AT INAUGURAL R&D FIELD DAY

Great things are happening in the north of our great state, and from all the talk at the FNQ Growers R&D Field Day held in Mareeba at the end of July, even greater things are just around the corner.

Over 400 attendees filed through the gates at the Mareeba Turf Club for the inaugural R&D Field Day hosted by local industry group, FNQ Growers.

Industry took the opportunity to network and engage with an array of peak industry bodies, including Growcom, stakeholders and commercial operators to learn about the latest in horticulture.

FNQ Growers President Joe Moro said diversification had driven the industry's development as growers worked to remain sustainable and protect their enterprises from extreme weather events.

"The farming landscape in far north Queensland has change immensely," he said.

"Mainstay crops have made way for other commodities, helping position the region as a horticultural powerhouse in northern Australia.

The region's billion-dollar agricultural industry is headlined by bananas, with avocadoes, sugar, blueberries, and citrus including lemons and limes all featuring in the top 10.

"At the same time, traditional production areas in crops like bananas and sugar have expanded geographically, from the coast to the hinterland and further west."

Growcom Chief Executive Officer, Rachel Chambers attended the Field Day and said in listening to the grower forum comprising of mango, avocado, banana, lychee, papaya, and cotton not to mention investors, one couldn't help but respect the powerhouse of produce grown in this region.

"It wasn't only the willingness to share positive stories, it was also the attendee's willingness to share challenges in the hope of helping each other's farms and industries," she said.

"These growers had some real conversations. One such conversation involved a question as to whether industries should be regulated to stop oversupply. Quickly this was answered with a reminder that growers are indeed regulated, by profitability, and that the next few years would certainly see some growers struggle to stay in the game.

"The challenges in the far north are no different to what we hear from the rest of the state. Biosecurity, inputs costs, labour and unstable retail markets were all front and centre of discussions along with water and connectivity.

"One grower spoke of how they've used technology to save 25 – 30 percent of their water costs and then went on to make a plea to growers to start to use technology as a tool to get their farming knowledge out of their head, in order to leave a legacy of information for future generations.

"Export markets were also a topic of the day as many are looking further afield now the domestic market is feeling a little overwhelmed. For growers in this region the ability to export has been made that much better by the investment into the agricultural distribution hub at Cairns airport.

"With the far north already leveraging a very successful tourism brand, investors spoke of the unique opportunity which exists for growers to internationally brand their produce in a similar way. Capitalising on this far north niche."

The FNQ Growers R&D Field Day is a biannual event with the next to be held in 2024.



Growcom Hort360 Great Barrier Reef Facilitator Phil Laycock.



Growcom Chief Executive Officer Rachel Chambers.



(L-R) Blair Brown (Growcom Workforce Officer), Rachel Chambers (Growcom CEO), Minister Di Farmer (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development), Jo Sheppard (QFF CEO), and Sachin Ayachit (Fair Farms National Program Manager).

Five-year Agworkforce Strategy launched

In July, Growcom attended the launch of the Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-27.

Developed in partnership between the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) and Jobs Queensland, in collaboration with the Queensland Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance (RJSA) the Plan envisions that Queensland's agribusinesses aspire to be leaders in workforce planning and development; and that the state's sustainable, productive, and fair agriculture employers and training providers collaborate, engage, and develop a diverse and skilled workforce in Queensland's regions.

To achieve this, four action areas are addressed:

- **Adaptability and business capability** – developing entrepreneurship and business capability for innovation and adaptation to change.
- **Workforce attraction and diversity** – developing a diverse and inclusive future agriculture workforce.
- **Workforce retention** – developing agriculture careers and opportunities and becoming employers of choice.
- **Workforce skilling** – developing future workforce skills in agriculture.

The actions that comprise the Plan seek to ensure that critical gaps and needs are addressed by strengthening agribusinesses, raising awareness of career and employment opportunities in a changing sector, embedding AgTech and innovation, and developing education, training, and career pathways.

Through consultations around the state, both online and in person, QFF's workforce planning team heard about the current and emerging workforce issues experienced by industry. The findings of this consultation informed a strategic five-year strategy.

The Plan was also informed by the Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Environmental Scan. The Scan highlighted four priority agriculture groups, based on gross value of production (GVP) and employment: grazing (beef cattle and grains), horticulture (fruit and nuts, vegetables, and nurseries), crops (sugar and cotton) and aquaculture.

National forecasts project that there will be changes in the composition of the agricultural workforce in the future with greater emphasis on professional and technical roles.

QFF Chief Executive Officer, Jo Sheppard says future sustainability and growth for Queensland agriculture is dependent on being able to attract and retain a highly trained and skilled workforce.

"As the sector continues to modernise, a skilled and appropriately trained workforce, prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, is critical for industry to remain competitive," she said.

"It is important that we work together closely to find effective ways forward in developing our future workforce."

For further information on the Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-2027 visit www.qff.org.au/projects/agriculture-workforce-plan





HORT HACKS & APPS WORKSHOP SERIES

For resilient horticulture farming families and businesses

Join Growcom throughout October, Mental Health Awareness Month, for a half-day workshop in Yeppoon, Gayndah, Childers, and Gympie, where we will dish the dirt on horticulture apps and time slashing hacks.

Horticulture is a tough gig and Growcom is committed to supporting the industry in getting the jump on administrative overwhelm. The Hort Hacks and Apps workshop series is an opportunity to take some much-needed time out from the daily grind, to unearth tools, resources, short cuts, and fixes to assist you in dealing with those painstaking, day-to-day tasks in the daily life of an average, Australian horticulture grower.

All workshops feature intel from start-up entrepreneur and Future Fields Leader Jennifer McKee who has developed record keeping and compliance management software specifically for the horticulture industry. Jennifer McKee is passionate about sharing fixes, short-cuts and time slashing hacks that she has come across in her one-on-one work throughout Queensland in horticulture.

Other presenters will be growers from throughout the state, sharing their own experience with a hack or app they've adopted in their business to make life that little bit simpler.

Growcom's team of Resilience and Hort360 Facilitators as well as regional industry officers from other industry groups such as the Australian Macadamia Society, Isis Canegrowers and Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers will be on hand as well, to share a few of their own hacks, apps and fixes.

Pop these date claimers in your diary and RSVP today to secure your spot! Here's a hack to ensure this workshop is a great day out; bring a pal!

EVENT DETAILS

YEPPOON
Tuesday, 11 October
9am – 2pm
https://bit.ly/3c3hQBs

GAYNDAH
Wednesday, 12 October
9am – 2pm
https://bit.ly/3TceKMa

CHILDERS
Thursday, 13 October
9am – 2pm
https://bit.ly/3waK9oj

GYMPIE
Friday, 14 October
9am – 2pm
https://bit.ly/3c3O0g7

COST
Free and includes delicious morning tea and lunch.

MORE INFO
Michelle Haase
Growcom Hort360 Facilitator
0428 586 890
mhaase@growcom.com.au

This workshop series is proudly brought to you by Growcom with the support of NBN and funding through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Queensland Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program.



DAF project lead, Yan Diczbalis introducing field day attendees to angled pruning and trellising of jackfruit.

HIGH-DENSITY ORCHARD ON SHOW AT NQ FIELD DAY

The rain didn't stop over 30 farmers, industry supply chain members and researchers from attending a recent field day held in north Queensland to learn more about the Demonstrating Next-Generation Resilient Orchard Production Systems for Tropical Crops project.

Led by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and supported by the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA), the project is investigating a range of high-density production systems and trellis planting systems for not only their cyclone resilience but also their production capacity and profitability.

Presentations on the day concentrated on the project background, reasons for choosing jackfruit as the model crop and jackfruit propagation work. Field day attendees were able to tour the trial orchard and were taken through the different trellising and propagation treatments with time for questions and group discussion.

A lot of interest was generated around the potential to trellis jackfruit and how different methods of propagation may affect tree growth and vigor.

Now entering its second year, strategies investigated through the project are expected to provide growers with a production methodology which mitigates the risks associated with tropical cyclones, enabling expansion of the horticultural sector through new plantings across northern Australia.

Jackfruit is being used as a model tree crop for the project with high-density orchards developed at multiple trial sites across northern Australia. Data on growth rates, fertiliser and irrigation inputs, pest and disease issues, canopy development, flowering and harvest dates, yield and fruit aril (flesh) recovery will be collected.

If you would like to learn more about the project, visit: www.crcna.com.au/research/projects/demonstrating-next-generation-resilient-orchard-production-systems-tropical-crops

Alternatively, you can also keep up to date via the Facebook page @NextGenResilientOrchards

This three-year project is funded through the CRCNA as part of the Australian Government's CRC Program, and is being undertaken in collaboration with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Northern Territory Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT DITT), Western Australia Department of Primary Industries and regional development (DPIRD), Manbulloo Limited, Zappala Tropicals, Northern Territory Farmers Association (NT Farmers) and Growcom.

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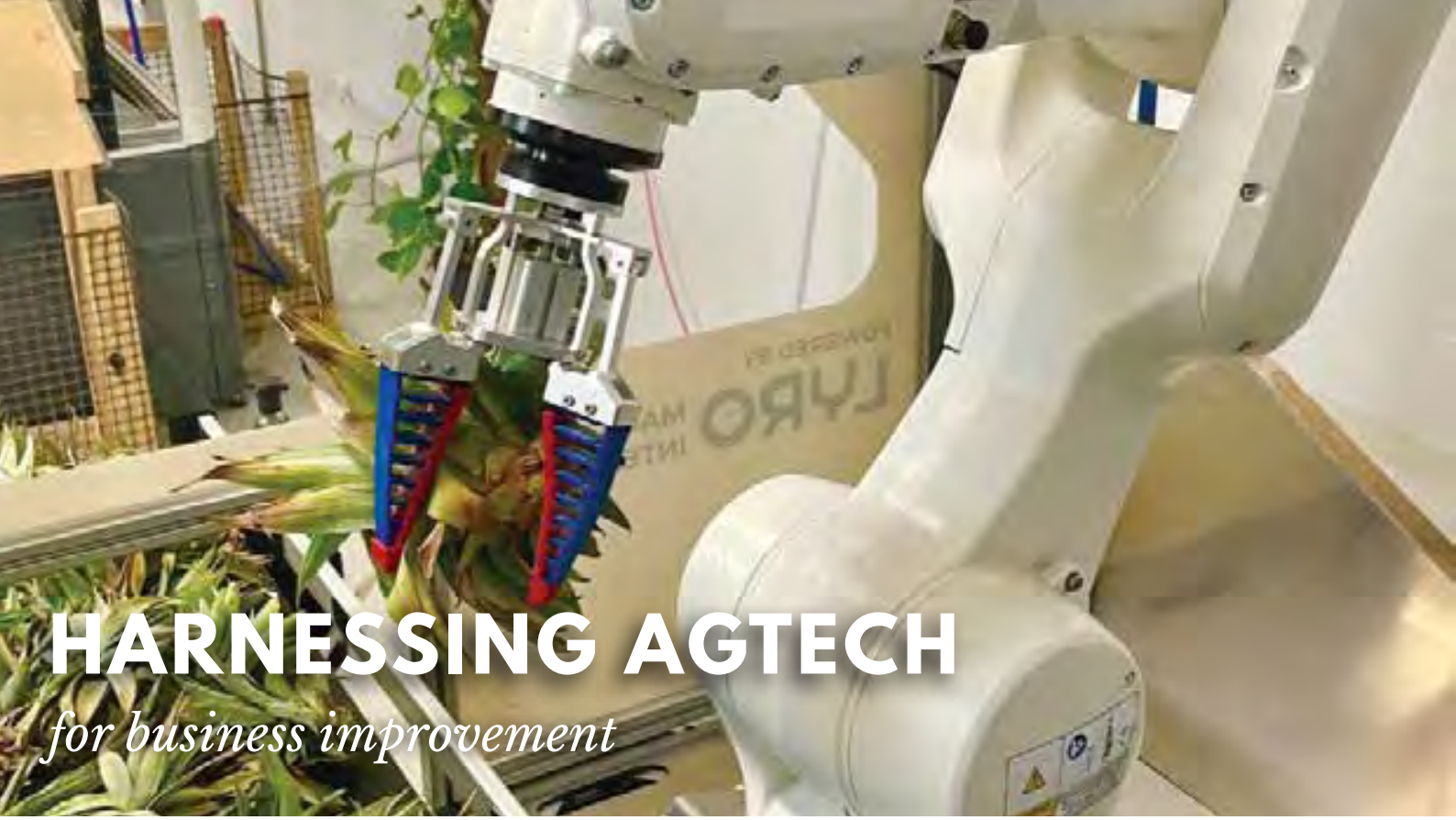
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- Short withholding period – 14-days in pome and 1-day in stone fruit
- Safe on most beneficial species and pollinators[#]

Visit **lunasensation.com.au** to view other growers' stories, or ask your reseller for more information.



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HARNESSING AGTECH

for business improvement

From the creation of the plough to the irrigation system, mankind has always strived toward innovative solutions to meet the ever-increasing pressure to feed the world.

Considering the historically close relationship that exists between technology and agriculture, it's little surprise that within Queensland's present-day horticulture industry, fresh produce growers are trialling and relying on methods to take efficiency and productivity to the next level – with robots.

Optimism about finding the right fit

When Fruit & Vegetable News visited Littabella Pines it was a hive of activity with pickers and machinery operators putting down tools for the day.

An early adapter who readily admits to looking to improve his pineapple farming operation every day, Littabella Pines owner John Steemson (pictured below right), recently trialled a robot on-farm, the LYRO Robotic Packer, created by LYRO Robotics.

John's goal - to see how mechanisation might work when sorting pineapple tops for planting.

The LYRO Robotic Packer first grabbed John's attention at a demonstration event held at another local farm where the robot was packing zucchinis.

"I was a little bit excited about the prospects," John said.

"My first thought for that robotic arm was to get a more even crop establishment through the sorting of pineapple tops."

John sees this as only the first step and maintains an optimism about the future of horticulture in the digital age – both as a producer, employer and for a farm's workforce.

"A robot arm is just one capability of the technology bundle," John explained.

"There's lots of emphasis or interest in the pineapple industry about mechanisation, in particular for harvesting.

"The COVID situation is amplifying people's needs for potential labour saving or reduction.

"This is going to create more than it will decrease [job] numbers.

"If we can increase our production by 10 percent that's 500t a year.

"If we're going to produce 500t more fruit, there's a need for that relative amount of labour."

However, John remains cautious about the direction AgTech is taking.

"Robots have been around for a long time, and I have been suitably unimpressed with the standard of robotic technology systems," John said.

Despite his scepticism about some of the robots in the field, John sees the LYRO Robotic Picker bringing success to many farms under the right circumstances.

"The machine that LYRO had here in the shed sorting pineapple tops, I'm sure it will be refined," John said.

"The robot arm will have a lot of potential for things like planting, when a plant has to be oriented in a particular way to be placed in the ground.

"The sky is the limit. It's all about creating situations that suit the mechanics as well as adapting the mechanism to suit the situation.

"There was some realisation at that point, tech engineers will sit in a lab and develop something that they think fits the market. LYRO are willing to come and meet the market and say, 'What can we do to fit the need?'

"I am impressed with their attitude, and it certainly suggests a profitable outcome will be available for both parties."

Rebooting the workforce with robots

For LYRO Robotics co-founder, Nicole Robinson, merging technology with horticulture has been a goal since her days studying computer science at QUT.

"It was something I knew quite well, both agriculture and robotics," Nicole said.

"Fruit and vegetables are all different. You need something that's intelligent enough to pick up different types of shapes, sizes, weights and colours.

"So it was a really interesting technical problem to bring our software stack to address. That's what the LYRO Robotic Packer excels at."

With R&D trials completed and the LYRO Robotic Packer contracted directly with clients to help ease labour force pressures, adaptability of the robot is important for its future success, meeting the needs of different fruit and vegetable growers.

When Fruit and Vegetable News asked Nicole what sets LYRO Robotics apart on its path to a commercialised product, they said working with growers to solve problems has been key.

"We're really driven to shape things in a way that is solving the right problem," Nicole said.

"We're focused to bring value in the fresh produce industry. Building the features that matter the most."

The one-armed robot, with a hand – known as a gripper – could easily be mistaken for an automated machine instead of a robot.

The differences are subtle and in the process of packing shed operations, results can vary.

"Sometimes, the idea of a robot brings about a specific image that people create in their mind," Nicole explained.

"A robot can be as simple as a piece of machinery that can perceive what it's doing and has the ability to adapt in an intelligent way.

"We consider it [LYRO Robotic Packer] a robot because it can perceive the environment and react in a dynamic way - slightly different to a machine or automation - where everything is in the exact same routine and if anything changes along the process, the machine or automation might not have any capability to deal with it."

The robots are coming for our jobs!

Mark Adams, LYRO Robotics general manager, is confident that the digital revolution will lead to a whole new class of roles for farm workers.

He refers to historical data to back his case up, echoing the words of John Steemson, who says farmers have always adapted and utilised new technological breakthroughs to enhance their farming operations.

"If you look historically, there were half a million people employed in agriculture feeding a population of about 4 million," Mark said.

"Now we have about 350,000 people employed in agriculture feeding a population of 26 million and exporting.

"We don't miss those 200,000 jobs – we celebrate efficiency and the advances in technology that allowed that to happen."

Additionally, Mark refers to the fact that there is a huge mismatch between labour supply and demand, which is hugely affecting regional Australia.

"A lot of the people aren't from the region, farmers are relying on backpackers and seasonal workers to do these jobs," Mark said.

"I think far from actually taking jobs, it's going to create a whole new class of jobs.

"In the long term it will be much cheaper to use the machines or robots instead of hiring people to pick and pack."

LYRO Robotics expects its technology to continue to gain momentum as growers find solutions to deal with labour supply pressures and that in the long-term a robotic workforce will be cheaper than a human one.

The goals of this robot start-up set a high watermark.

"Our goal is to have robots around that contribute to packing a wide variety of produce, this would be a great outcome for anyone who is feeling the pressure of getting their crops picked and packed," Nicole said.

LYRO have worked closely with fresh produce growers to optimise their technology and see a lot of strong parallels in key skills shared between techies and farmers.

"What we have in common with farmers is that they're entrepreneurs, first and foremost, and they're very good at solving their own problems," Mark said.

"There are some very sophisticated engineers on these farms.

"Looking at some of the solutions that John Steemson and some other growers have created in their back shed is very interesting - to solve problems because the market hasn't solved it.

"Ultimately in terms of problem solving there is more common ground than there are differences."

LYRO Robotics forecasts that mechanisation through use of robots will increase output from a current rate of 1:2 versus output from a human.

"I think you'll see that ratio creep up to a robot doing the output of two people," Mark said.

Scan the QR Code to see the LYRO Robotics pineapple top sorter in action.







YIELD PREDICTION GOPRO-STYLE; TO GUIDE DECISIONS ABOUT LABOUR NEEDS, MARKET SUPPLY

Walking through the tunnels of blueberry bushes at Perfection Fresh, Bundaberg, bees were abuzz, providing extra pollination support during the early stages of flowering, back in June.

At this farm, natural methods of production team up with data-driven technology to make informed business decisions.

Pollination helps more seed to grow in the individual berry, making it bigger and more appetising for the consumer.

For farm manager Shaun Corbett, once the bees have pollinated and been moved on by their beekeeper, and tiny berries start to form on the many laterals of the bush, Shaun will take video footage of each bush with a GoPro.

This side-on, plant-by-plant video footage is then loaded into a analysis system, called GreenView Portal, developed by BitWise Agronomy.

GreenView then identifies, counts and measures the growth stages of the blueberries and creates insight reports about the health of the crop, which Shaun uses to predict yield, workforce needs and consumer supply.

"According to that you can figure out how many people you will need for picking, how many punnets you will need for packaging," he said.

"Tech is a profitable way to reduce input costs.

"Tech helps you look for where there are savings, because all supermarkets pay growers the same amount."

It's a welcome move for Perfection Fresh, whose Bundaberg operation alone employs about 220 workers in peak season (September till October) to harvest berries.

This season was off to a slow start with warmer than normal weather during May and rain affecting pollination, delaying the crop by three weeks.

Picking is expected to last through to October.



Farm Manger Shaun Corbett. PICTURE: Perfection Fresh.





HORTICULTURAL NETTING PROGRAM EXPANDED

More horticulture producers across Queensland will benefit from an expanded trial of the Australian Government's Horticultural Netting Program, which offsets the cost of installing netting.

The Horticultural Netting Program - Trial has expanded from the initial trial of apple and pear production to include all horticultural industries except wine grapes.

Through the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA), producers can apply for a federal grant of 50 percent up to a maximum of $300,000 to offset the cost of purchasing and installing horticultural netting on existing commercial horticulture crops.

This includes the associated infrastructure such as poles or costs associated with contractors installing or preparing for installation activities.

The Queensland Government will administer the Horticultural Netting Program -Trial Expansion in this state on behalf of the Australian Government.

QRIDA will assess applications in order of receipt, and subject to the available federal funding.

For more information or to apply visit the QRIDA online portal at www.qrida.qld.gov.au/program/horticultural-netting-program-trial-expansion or phone 1800 623 946.



RED GRANT HELPS MAREEBA CITRUS GROWERS MEET MARKET DEMAND FOR FRESH FRUIT

Mareeba producers, Galati Farming are turning down the temperature on their fresh citrus produce and creating good jobs with the help of a Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant.

As one of 16 businesses to receive a grant of up to $200,000, Galati Farming will use the funding to install an additional cold room to support the expansion of their orchard to help meet consumer demand for fresh fruit.

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries Mark Furner MP said fresh, locally grown produce is what the market is demanding, and this grant will help Galati Farming meet that demand by funding a project that will help them increase their fruit production.

Director of Galati Farming, Gina Galati owns and runs the business with her husband, Giovanni, who is the second generation to own the business, said she looks forward to seeing the business grow with the help of the grant.

"We currently grow lemons, grapefruit, mandarins and pomelos but are struggling to keep up with the increasing demand for fresh fruit," Ms Galati said.

"After much consultation with multiple agents in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne we knew that we needed to expand our orchard and the new cold room will help us accommodate the extra produce."

Galati Farming is one of 16 businesses approved in the fourth round of the RED Grants program with total funding of just over $3 million. Overall, these 16 projects are expected to create more than 217 direct long-term good jobs across regional Queensland.

The initial three rounds of the RED Grants program have seen funding of $10 million over three years to support more than 30 projects which have created 1,800 jobs across regional Queensland.

The Palaszczuk Government has continued its investment with a further $6.6 million to be delivered in two rounds over the next two years to generate even more jobs, expand agricultural supply chains and provide significant economic benefit to rural areas.

The Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) administer the RED Grant scheme on behalf of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

PINEAPPLE INDUSTRY ON SHOW AT 2022 FIELD DAYS

Over 160 pineapple growers and industry supply chain members converged on the Sunshine Coast in July to share knowledge and celebrate at the industry's annual Pineapple Field Days.

Attracting keen interest this year was the implementation of a farm-wide bioreactor – a joint project between Growcom, the Department of Environment and Science (DES), Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and Healthy Land and Water.

Over the years, the Australian pineapple industry has implemented and trialled new practices to help keep nutrients in the soil where the crops need them.

However large duration, high intensity, or unseasonal rainfall events cause soil water drainage which rapidly removes nitrogen from the crop root zone to shallow ground water tables. To address the issue of nitrate transfer from farms into the surrounding aquatic environment, denitrification bioreactors are being constructed.

The scientific goal behind the bioreactor is to achieve de-nitrification. The bioreactor creates a home for naturally occurring bacteria, which use the woodchips as a food source and due to the anerobic – underwater – situation, they use the nitrate in the water to respire or breath. The bacteria convert the nitrate in the water into normal nitrogen gas.

Australian Pineapple industry operators continue to show commitment to making improvements in the way in which they farm, so that they can demonstrate to their consumers that they are striving towards more sustainable farming practices.

Other farm trials and demonstrations on show at the Field Days included pineapple plant material collectors, a geopolymer soil erosion demonstration trial, precision boom sprayers, alternative fumigation application methods, an overview of Favco's pineapple varieties and demonstration of a robotic plant material size grader developed by LYRO Robotics.

At the industry Gala Dinner, young growers Rian Pace, Jeffrey Pace, Hayden Marshall and Caitlin Marshall from Pace Farming in North Queensland jointly received the Rudy Wassman Award, recognising their achievements as the next generation of growers.

Garth Sanewski from the DAF was awarded the Col Scott Award for his outstanding contribution to the Australian pineapple industry.

Garth has worked in the industry for over 40 years and is recognised as a leading pineapple agronomist internationally. Garth's many career achievements include breeding three commercial pineapple varieties – Aus-Jubilee, Aus-Carnival and Aus-Festival; the publication of the second edition of the international CABI book 'The pineapple – botany production and uses'; and developing genetic markers for out-of-season flowing, phytophthora resistance and smooth leaves – all world leading.

Also recognised at the Gala Dinner were former Growcom staff members Janine Clark and Rowena Beveridge who both received Industry Appreciation Awards – Janine for her invaluable support to the industry around all things biosecurity, pest management and chemicals and Rowena for bringing the industry together to put the focus on sustainable farming practices.

Thank you to this year's sponsors, without your support the Pineapple Field Days would be impossible to hold: Favco, Golden Circle, Smyth Financial, Agrichem, TriCal Australia, Tropical Pines, Mineral Mulch, RDO Equipment, Opal ANZ, Elders, ATC Group, Nutrien Ag Solutions, FW Agronomy, Imtrade Crop Science, Swancorp, Australian Retirement Trust, Moreton Bay Regional Council, EE Muir & Sons, Queensland Farmers' Federation, Harvest Trail Information Services, Organic Crop Protectants, Bio Organic Sustainable Solutions (BOSS), Qld Organics, Agripower, Fair Farms, Hort360 and LYRO Robotics. A special thank you also to the Member for Glass House Andrew Powell for once again supporting the industry.







