

MEDIA RELEASE

April 4, 2016

Research to boost Queensland papaya quality and trade appeal

New research commissioned by Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) aims to improve the quality, yield, flesh colour, flavour and sweetness of one of Australia's most versatile fruits.

To be delivered by Griffith University in close consultation with the papaya industry, the work aims to increase the domestic market and export potential of Queensland papayas to other countries such as New Zealand by identifying and developing new higher quality varieties.

Hort Innovation Chief Executive John Lloyd said the \$330,000 project builds upon a breeding program that comprised the growth of 2000 papaya varieties and breeding lines on a farm in Mareeba, north QLD.

He said this next step is to “evaluate, select and cross/self pollinate successful trees to create this new premium papaya cultivar”.

“Papayas are a much loved Australian fruit that is packed with unique nutritional benefits such as anti-oxidants including high amounts of carotenoids and vitamin c, and fibre,” Mr Lloyd said.

Mr Lloyd said while Australian papayas are superior, variables such as variety type, weather conditions and crop management practices can affect the end product.

“This new research will see varieties developed that are tailor-made for north QLD, which produces 90 per cent of the Australia’s annual output of more than 6.5 tonnes (ABS). These new varieties will feature a consistent yield, flesh colour and sweet flavour, year-round.”

Mr Lloyd said these new cultivars will also be resistant to the Papaya Ringspot Virus – which was found in south east QLD in the 1990s, and while it has not been detected in North Qld, remains a serious threat to the industry.

“Once developed, these resistant papaya varieties will also have the capacity to benefit other countries affected by Papaya Ringspot Virus including the USA, parts of Europe, Asia, the Middle East and South America.”

The research, which is funded through papaya industry levies and matched Australian Government funds, will be complete in early 2019 and the new varieties are expected to be available to industry soon after.

Horticulture Innovation Australia delivers more than \$100 million in research, development and marketing activities across the horticulture industry each year with funding from the Australian Government, grower levies and other sources.

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