

MEDIA RELEASE
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\$160K boost for banana industry development

Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) has invested \$160,000 over three years to support the development of future industry leaders in the Australian banana industry through participation in the Nuffield Australia Farming Scholars program.

Hort Innovation Chief Executive Officer John Lloyd said banana growers serve one of the largest fruit growing sectors in Australia and are vital economic contributors to rural communities in banana growing areas.

“It is important that the banana industry maintains a consistent and quality supply of Australian bananas to meet consumer demand while continuing to increase its productivity gains,” he said.

“Through investment in the Nuffield Australia Scholarship program, Hort Innovation will help to support the Australian banana industry by identifying future leaders and providing them with the opportunity to identify world best-practice research, development and management techniques, with the view of applying them here in Australia.”

Far north Queensland organic banana farmer Matthew Abbott, a 2016 scholar, will study organic farming techniques, with a particular focus on sustainable practices. He will also look at the various ways global industries manage diseases such as fusarium (TR4), strategies for marketing bananas, category diversification and export markets. A further two scholars will be supported in 2017 and 2018.

Mr Abbott will meet the cohort of 2016 Nuffield Scholars from across the world at the Contemporary Scholars Conference, to be held in Cavan, Ireland, from March 5–12, where there is a robust exchange of ideas and experiences, and join a network of people who are at the cutting edge of primary industries.

He will also participate in a Global Focus Program, a six-week group study tour across Asia, Europe, North and South America where he will investigate organic farming, looking at banana varieties and systems to manage Panama disease. On return, all scholars produce a formal written report and present to their peers at the annual Nuffield Australia National Conference.

Using levy payer funds that are matched by the Australian Government, Hort Innovation is also supporting several other Nuffield scholars who are undertaking studies across a broad range of horticultural sectors including cut flowers, fruit and vegetables.

For more details on the Nuffield scholarships, go to the [Nuffield Australia Farming Scholars website](http://nuffieldaustraliafarmscholars.com.au). Applications for the 2017 scholarships open on April 1 and close on June 30.

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