



## **Media Release: Berries Australia welcomes new Coffs Recovery and Resilience Officer**

Berries Australia is proud to welcome **John Hay** into the new role of industry recovery and resilience officer based in the Coffs Harbour region.

Berries Australia Executive Director Rachel Mackenzie said the new position was funded by the Australian and NSW government's Storm and Flood Industry Recovery Program Stream 2 to support growers after a number of difficult years.

The Coffs Harbour region is home to 75% of Australia's blueberry production and a significant proportion of raspberry and blackberry production.

Ms Mackenzie said a key focus of the berry recovery and resilience project was building industry capacity to enable better preparedness and ability to bounce back in the face of future events.

"It is no secret that we live in a volatile and changing climate and the last few years of La Nina have been challenging for the sector. Whilst at an industry level we can't stop these events from occurring, we can ensure that our growers have the best capacity and tools to deal with these events," Ms Mackenzie said.

"All growers in the region will have the opportunity to undertake a facilitated on-farm assessment using the well regarded Growcom Hort360 tool which identifies areas of their business that need improvement. The tool covers off on a diverse range of topics including water use efficiency and run-off management, energy efficiency and soil and nutrient management."

"We are really pleased to have John on the team as he has spent the last few years working with the Queensland Farmers' Federation conducting energy audits and brings a new level of expertise to the team."

New Recovery Officer John Hay said that he is passionate about sustainable farming but recognises that sustainability and profitability go hand in hand so will be working with growers to achieve both objectives.

"The remit of the project is quite broad so I am excited to be using the Hort360 tool to ensure that growers get the resources and support they actually need rather than what we or government think they need."

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW Paul Toole said advice will be tailored to suit individual circumstances.

"Every property is different, that's why it's great to see Berries Australia taking this funding and using it to help growers right along the NSW North Coast," Mr Toole said.

"The NSW Government is committed to supporting growers and ensuring the more than \$250 million industry grows from strength to strength."

Berries Australia has also sub-contracted NSW DPI to deliver the project in the Northern Rivers and Tabulum areas and we are pleased to also welcome Industry Development Officer Steve Norman into the project team.

For more information and comment contact Berries Australia Executive Director Rachel Mackenzie on 0408 796 199.

*Berries Australia is a joint venture between the Australian Blueberry Growers Association, the Raspberry & Blackberry Association and Strawberries Australia Inc.*