

Move over plastic, it's time to go green

Moondarra Blueberries is owned and operated by the Deveson family who planted their first blueberry block in 1979. Over 40 years a reputation has developed around Moondarra's ability to produce blueberries of the finest quality.



The Moondarra brand is well known and held in high regard within the Australian industry as a benchmark for quality and integrity. Based at Moondarra in Gippsland, Victoria, in the beautiful foothills of the Great Dividing Range, the local conditions allow the business to grow many varieties of blueberry.

As a business, and personally, they are committed to the principles of environmentally friendly agriculture by fully utilising organic growing methods. Farming processes include increasing levels of organic matter in the soil so therefore sequestering carbon and improving micro flora and fauna as well as minimising energy usage and waste. They are continually looking at ways to improve their production systems to protect and improve biodiversity and ensure farm sustainability.

Since fruit production began, Moondarra has sold their fruit all over the world, including Harrods Food Hall in London, but to remain competitive and reduce food miles they decided it was important to focus locally, grow organic and produce the highest quality fruit possible.

About 15 years ago, their fruit was removed from the wholesale markets in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide and they developed their own direct delivery route to stockists around Melbourne. In this way, direct feedback was obtainable from the people who were purchasing their fruit, which in turn helped to develop their business, review objectives and adapt processes as necessary depending on the feedback being received.

Sustainable Packaging Journey

Everyone has been impacted by the recycling issues within Victoria in recent times and Moondarra Blueberries recognised that they too are a contributor to petroleum based plastic use and this concerning issue across of their fruit retail packaging.

A move to compostable packaging, made from plant-based renewable resources and bioplastics, provides a sustainable and sensible proposition in-line with their organic certification and the broader community expectations. Should someone place the compostable packaging in their land fill rubbish, it will still breakdown into water and humus, though ideally people would dispose of the packaging in their own home or building compost systems.

Wanting to base the new packaging on a circular economy, the packaging is 100% home compostable and endorsed with the home compostable logo. Using this logo means it is certified to Australian Standard AS5810-2010 and verified by the Australasian Bioplastics Association. The packaging decomposes under specific composting conditions back into water, carbon dioxide and biomass within 26 weeks at ambient temperature (20°C - 30°C) and is non-toxic to the environment, including the inks used.

Moondarra felt it was important to steer away from any European Standard EU13432 for industrial or commercial composting that is often used for packaging as many Australian councils are not yet in the position to offer this to their householders.

The complete packaging item includes a punnet base made from sugar cane and a heat-sealed film that is made from eucalyptus. The heat seal process helps with extending shelf life and also deals with the issue of product tampering by limiting access to the fruit.

Moondarra have also included an inhouse process for printing a barcode and information panel directly to the base of each fibre punnet before they are graded and weighed, which reduces the need to apply a label to the base which would affect the compostability and it once again reduces the use of non-renewable resources.

This year's harvest they are producing their 125 g fresh punnets in the new sustainable packaging and in 2021 they are aiming to output their 375 g fresh tubs in a larger size of the same style punnet. Due to the permeability of the fibre base and subsequent moisture loss, research is being completed on a fibre tub style that is suitable for the freezer so that their 450 g freezer tub can be also packaged in sustainable packaging.

Throughout the year-long research and development process, many stockists and end consumers have given overwhelming support for the concept, with many offering to perform secondary compost research and report back or promoting the product within their own circles. Their stockists are also willing to help with the cost of the sustainable packaging and paying more wholesale than in previous years.

The risks of transitioning to unfamiliar packaging has been considered and weighed up throughout the whole adaptation process. Customers will need to become accustomed to not being able to turn the punnet over and see the fruit in the bottom of the punnet. Customers can also not reseal the punnet once opened. Neither of these concerns have turned out to be a major issue with our customers preferring the eco-friendly packaging over those small inconveniences.

The current annual plastic use within a single harvest season is 1,710 kg across all of their fruit packaging. Their hope in their transition to sustainable packaging is that it encourages the broader berry industry to also adopt this form of packaging.



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