

New market access project to support blueberry exporters

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Delivering premium fruit into export markets is essential for the success of the Australian blueberry industry, particularly to make the most of newly ratified free trade agreement (FTA) opportunities. However, due to phytosanitary restrictions because of fruit fly in many parts of Australia, most of our fruit exports need an additional end-point treatment for market access.

These end-point postharvest treatments include cold treatment, fumigation and low dose irradiation. While not all markets accept these phytosanitary treatments, their effect on product quality after treatment and out-turn are sometimes perceived as 'variable'.

Many of these end-point treatments are already used in many industries, but the development of new markets requires the exploration of alternative market access treatments and new export pathways. There are many studies on the effects of different market access treatments on final product such as fumigation, but there is no direct comparative information on the effects of the different phytosanitary tools (cold treatment, low dose irradiation and fumigation).

This one-year project will provide commercially relevant information on the direct comparison of different market access treatments on final fruit quality to assist large export industries (citrus, table grapes) and growing export industries with potential (cherries, blueberries). A data set of comparative fruit quality following treatment and simulated export supply chain will provide growers and exporters with reliable clear information to decide which market access treatment is suitable for a specific market pathway. This will give exporters commercial confidence to use 'new' phytosanitary pathways to new export markets and realise opportunities created for Australian exporters under recent FTA agreements.

The blueberry component of the project is being completed with export quality fruit from Coffs Harbour with the fruit quality assessments being conducted at the Centre of Excellence for Horticulture Market Access at NSW Department of Primary Industries. The blueberry fruit assessments that will be completed include both subjective (skin bloom, fruit shrivel, skin colour, internal breakdown) and objective (weight loss, respiration rate, fruit firmness, total soluble solids and titratable acidity) measures.



Figure 1. Monitoring fruit temperatures from the orchard through the supply chain

Photo credit: John Golding, NSW DPI



Figure 2. Dr Wang measuring fruit respiration rates following treatment and storage

Photo credit: John Golding, NSW DPI



Figure 2. Measuring blueberry firmness with FirmTech instrument at NSW DPI

Photo credit: John Golding, NSW DPI

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