

Berry industry innovator wins Hort Innovation Churchill Fellowship award

Stuart McGruddy, founder and Managing Director of south-east Queensland based 'My Berries', is among only sixteen Queensland recipients of the prestigious Churchill Fellowship award for 2020.

Each year the Churchill Fellowship recognises and awards the commitment of individual Australians to create positive change within the community. Stuart McGruddy aims to use this award to expand his knowledge and understanding of the process between farm and manufacturer. He will travel to Serbia, France, the USA and Chile to research and investigate technologies used in the freezing of whole soft berry fruits and, in doing so, will seek to address the number of imported fruits dominating the Australian market.

There is a knowledge deficit in Australia regarding the freezing and processing of berries which Stuart believes can be met by fully understanding the techniques used in other countries. Stuart said, "I'm thrilled to be given the opportunity to speak with growers and manufacturers overseas - to better understand business relationships, logistics and the equipment used to acquire and process quality frozen fruit. In turn I aim to improve, educate, and help to create a much more efficient manufacturing process."

Working with his partners at Hort Innovation, Stuart is highly motivated to learn and implement his findings. He aims to do this by driving relationships with growers and create a positive impact on the development and transformation of the industry in Australia.

He will share his knowledge with growers and manufacturers through conferences, education facilities and industry magazines - including this berry industry journal. However, due to the current pandemic, international travel is not possible. At this time, The Churchill Trust is committed to being flexible and accommodating. "With international travel on hold for some time due to COVID-19, we will be supporting our new Churchill Fellowship recipients in making good use of this additional preparation time by connecting them with some of our highly achieved Churchill Fellows who work in similar fields or project areas via virtual networking and collaboration events," said Churchill Trust CEO, Mr Adam Davey.

My Berries was established in 2013 when Stuart and his wife Allison rose to the challenge of fighting food waste by finding a home for every berry from their local family farm. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, demand for Australian food products has been at an all-time high. My Berries recognises this and are determined to be a part of the solution that creates domestic food security by meeting that demand now and in the future.

My Berries was originally profiled in the Autumn 2018 edition of the Australian Blueberry Grower journal which can be found online at bit.ly/ABJ-Aut18



Photo credits: My Berries