

Queensland Berry Pre-season Prep 'n' Party event

Suzette Argent, Queensland Berry Industry Development Officer

The Queensland Strawberry Growers' Association (QSGA) are not proceeding with the Annual Dinner & Awards night in 2022. To provide an alternative networking forum this year, an all-berry industry pre-season 'Prep 'n' Party' social event was held on the Sunshine Coast in late February.

The day was structured to deliver both informative workshops and provide much-needed social and networking time for growers before the stress of the winter season kicked in. The event was delivered as part of the Host Innovation funded project 'MT18020 Facilitating the development of the Australian berry industries'.

The half day event was comprised of two workshop sessions, the QSGA Annual General Meeting and a social networking event with BBQ style dinner on the beach. Due to wet weather the BBQ moved indoors, but the weather did not dampen anyone's spirits with lots of catching up and laughs to be had.

Generous sponsorship from Multisteps, Nufarm and Elimbah Co-op funded the social aspects of the event making it free of charge to all growers. Elimbah Co-op kindly sponsored morning tea so everyone could enjoy a casual start to the day.

Nufarm sponsored a long warm lunch and Multisteps sponsored the BBQ dinner. The sponsors also provided complimentary drinks in the evening to all growers. Nufarm also donated a product sample of its latest product **Intervene® WG Fungicide** as a lucky seat prize for the pest and disease workshop.



Sam Adam Nufarm giving free product sample of Intervene® WG Fungicide to winner Adrian Schultz. Photo credit: QSGA

Workshop 1: All things labour

Blair Brown, a Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network (QAWN) officer from Growcom, shared the lessons he learnt from developing a gap year program designed to allow high school leavers to travel and explore their own country while making money through farm work.

Some interesting insights from this presentation included that this generation (Gen Z) will make up 27% of the total labour force by 2025, they want to do work that is purposeful to the world, and they are very tech-savvy.

Amy Nash from MADEC then gave an update on the services they provide to support growers with ethically sourcing a labour force. Rachel Mackenzie from Berries Australia gave a much-needed update on the changes to piece rates helping to explain how the new piece rate is calculated.

Workshop 2: Pest & Disease

Sam Adam from Nufarm started the session with a short presentation of Intervene®, a recently registered fungicide for berries with a new mode of action that will assist in the management of grey mould and powdery mildew across berries.

Sam also emphasised the importance of avoiding the pathogen population becoming resistant to fungicides by understanding the concept of mode of action rotation within fungicide products as well as managing the total number of sprays undertaken each season.

The highlight and a major draw card for the day was the interactive and hands-on pest and disease workshop component.

Apollo Gomez, Senior Plant Pathologist, from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries showcased the diagnostic process following through from field sampling to the laboratory analysis needed to obtain an accurate disease identification.

Apollo described what to look for when undertaking plant and fruit inspections and collections in the field. He also demonstrated a couple of laboratory diagnostic methods showing how to isolate and identify pathogens. Participants had a go at conducting 'isolations' of diseased plant parts onto media and then prepared slides to observe different fungal spores under the microscope.

Paul Jones and David Loxley from Bugs for Bugs, showcased the dynamics of strawberry Integrated Pest Management (IPM), bringing along a variety of beneficial mites and insects now used in the Australian berry industry.

The pair also presented a new biocontrol mite strategy, the 'kick start method', designed to speed up Two-Spotted Mite control and reduce the reliance on miticide. As well as leading the way with IPM innovations, a variety of insect traps and lures were also presented to help growers enhance control of difficult pests such as fruit flies, beetles, and caterpillars, all once controlled by broad spectrum chemicals.

Overall, the day was a success with everyone enjoying the opportunity to get out and socialise in a relaxed environment while also engaging in some really useful hands-on learning activities.



With thanks to these sponsors for their support of QSGA





David Loxley from Bugs from Bugs



Apollo Gomez from DAF demonstrating how to collect pathogen specimens



Laura Wells from TSL Family Farms attempting to make an isolation from a diseased plant material sample



Diseased plant material samples for growers to isolate and analyze

QUEENSLAND SUMMER BERRY PRE-SEASON

PREP 'N' PARTY EVENT

We welcome all Queensland Berry growers to kick-off the 2022 summer season with a preparation workshop to get ready for the season ahead. Have a special opportunity to network and socialise with fellow growers in a relaxed environment while the season is quiet.

THURSDAY 23 JUNE
11.00AM – 7.00PM

APPLETHORPE RESEARCH FACILITY
NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY, APPLETHORPE

**THIS EVENT IS FREE FOR ALL
BERRY GROWERS TO ATTEND.**

THERE WILL BE A FIELD WALK COMPONENT
SO PLEASE BRING APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR.

Lunch, afternoon tea & a BBQ dinner will be provided so we request that all attendees register in advance and inform us of any special dietary requirements at bit.ly/PnP-GB-22

Agenda:

11.00 am Arrival and check-in

11.30 – 12.30pm Lunch

12.45 – 2.30pm Session 1: All things Labour

- Harvest trail and incentives for sourcing labour (BEST Harvest Trail, Linda Clutterbuck)
- Lessons from developing a working gap year (Growcom)
- Fair Farms registration process and audit standard (Desda Cullearn, Growcom)
- Making peace with piece rates (Rachel McKenzie, Berries Australia)

2.30 – 3.00pm Afternoon Tea

3.00 – 4.00pm Session 2: Pest & Disease

- Disease resistance and introduction of Intervene® (Nufarm)
- Do you know the signs and symptoms while doing plant and fruit inspections? (Apollo Gomez, DAF)

Hands-on sessions – Do you know your pest and diseases?

- Apollo Gomez from DAF will be bringing the lab to you to explore common fungal diseases in strawberries
- Paul Jones from Bugs for Bugs will be bringing insects, both good and bad, for you to identify and take a closer look at

4.00-5.00pm Session 3: Field Walk

The Australian Strawberry Breeding Program (ASBP) team from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will showcase the temperate variety seedling trial at the Applethorpe research facility via a field walk.

5.00-5.30pm Berries Australia Update

5.30pm Social drinks & BBQ dinner

7.30pm Event close

Hort Innovation | BLUEBERRY FUND | **Hort Innovation** | RASPBERRY AND BLACKBERRY FUND | **Hort Innovation** | STRAWBERRY FUND

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This event is proudly delivered through the Berries Australia project 'MT18020: Facilitating the development of the Australian berry industries'

Need more information? Please contact Jen Rowling | 0448 322 389 | jenrowling@berries.net.au