

Profile: Anthony Lieu Landsdale Strawberry Farm, proud producers of Heavenly[®] strawberries

Helen Newman, Berry Industry Development Officer, Strawberries & WA, DPIRD

“My parents have been in the farming industry ever since they came to Australia 42 years ago, working for some of the most high-profile growers in WA. They started their own business growing strawberries 25 years ago in Landsdale. I have been on farm ever since, playing in the dirt, helping to fold boxes, and pretending to drive the tractors.”



Photo credit: Quality Produce International

When did you decide on a career in horticulture and why?

I initially went to university where I studied sports science and did a post-graduate in Sports Marketing and Management, but breaking my leg in a soccer game, and not being able to do much, really put things into perspective for me. I thought it would be a waste for my parents to build up all that experience, a brand, and a reputation all for it to end when they retire. I thought that I would give it a crack and see what I could achieve.

What made you decide to grow strawberries?

I'm not sure why my parents decided to grow strawberries but now it is something that I don't think we will ever give up. Our main crop is strawberries, but we also grow capsicum, tomatoes and eggplant during the summer months.

Is there are particular focus area in your business?

Our focus is, and will always be, quality over anything else. Quality in the way we pack with an emphasis on flavour, sweetness, and aroma.

How is your business unique?

I am not sure how unique our business is, but I think the way we grade is different because we double grade into a premium line (Heavenly®) and a regular line.

It is twice the work but it's important in ensuring the premium line is up to standard (there will be more on the Heavenly® brand in the Winter edition of the Australian Berry Journal).

What is your favourite part of growing berries?

Definitely seeing people enjoy your product when they take that first bite, all the hard work really pays off.

What challenges are you seeing in the industry?

Urban sprawl and finding the labour required because of it will be difficult. It has been highlighted this year because of COVID-19 and border restrictions but it just shows how careful we need to be as an industry.

Water will always be an issue and we have to remain vigilant in ensuring we maintain our efficiencies and have systems in place to reduce waste.

I also believe growing the right varieties will be important to the sustainability of the strawberry industry. We have noticed a steady decline in consumer satisfaction in the quality of fruit in retailers and I think we need to be wary of this as we want strawberries and berries in general to be a family favourite in every Australian home.

Where do you source your labour from?

We have a mix of local staff working almost year-round topped up with contractors and working holiday makers during the busy periods.

Last season was tough as labour shortages were widespread meaning some farms were unable to keep up with work. Hopefully, this changes for the coming season although hard international borders will make it very difficult.

The Pacific Labour Scheme will help alleviate the shortages but I'm not sure it will be enough, hopefully we are all in for a good year ahead.

Any advice for those seeking to begin growing berries?

I would say to start off small, berries are a tough crop to grow so small steps in building the experience required is definitely very important.

What are you looking forward to in the future?

Seeing the innovation in growing techniques and new technologies in making the industry more efficient.

What areas would they like to see R&D focus on?

Personally, I would like to see a focus on fruit with the flavour and quality to rival any variety in the world. Australian produce has an outstanding reputation for being clean and safe, but I would like to see it taken one step further and make Australian berries the go-to product for every country on the planet.

