

# What is the role of a Berry Industry Development Officer?

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Since I moved into the Industry Development role, I've had a number of growers ask, 'what exactly is your role as an Industry Development Officer?'. This is a very good question.

The role has a number of facets all centred around one simple concept which is to **'promote the development of the berry industry'**, but what does that really mean?

In simple terms, we are here to **understand your challenges, share known solutions** and **promote the development of new solutions** by industry stakeholders (like Hort Innovation) where these are needed.

The growers I have already visited have been extremely generous in sharing their knowledge and experiences with me. They have patiently answered my many questions, shown me their farms, and shared their concerns. Through these visits, and conversations with my fellow IDOs, a number of common but previously unknown problems have become apparent. This has then allowed us to seek solutions. I mentioned a recent example – foliar nematodes in strawberries – in my regional report in this edition on PAGE 12.

When we ask to visit your farm, we are not there to 'inspect', 'audit' or 'look for problems'. We are simply there to learn more about what is challenging you in your berry growing business and to identify common problems or issues that Berries Australia can assist you with.

As an IDO team, we have access to a wide range of resources that we can share to assist you with a host of common problems, and if we don't know the answer immediately, we have a network of industry stakeholders that we can reach out to on your behalf to find existing solutions. We are also key contributors to the process used by Hort Innovation to identify which new research and development projects are needed by industry.

So, if you are experiencing a pest or disease issue – reach out and tell your IDO as its unlikely you're the only one. If you have come up against a business roadblock – let your IDO know as its likely there are solutions available that you may not be aware of.

I now define 'industry development' as simply ensuring the industry is moving forward; identifying and tackling issues for our collective benefit. I don't need to understand the finer points of berry farming to be adept at noticing patterns and I am proud to say I love to find solutions.

**Lastly, I want to emphasise that when you talk to, email, text, or in any way communicate with your IDO, whatever you share will never be publicly linked to you or your farm without your prior permission. We are here to help you to succeed.**