

Strengthening the sustainability of Rubus production (RB22001)

Marguerite Renouf (Senior Scientist and Head of Strategic Business Development) & Gabriella Hooper (Head of Marketing and Communications), Lifecycles

In a mission to develop a long-term sustainability program for the Rubus industry, Lifecycles are embarking on a life cycle assessment (LCA) project aimed at generating comprehensive information and metrics about the environmental performance of raspberry and blackberry production in Australia.

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the Raspberry & Blackberry research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

Acknowledging the growing demand from both government bodies, markets and industry stakeholders for heightened transparency on environmental issues, this project aims to generate information that can inform a sustainability strategy and enable clear communication of the industry's environmental credentials to consumers and stakeholders.

The primary objective of the LCA study is to generate baseline and benchmark metrics for the industry's carbon footprint and water footprint. This will give growers and industry an understanding of the scale, significance, and sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and potential water use impacts. By doing so, the industry can identify potential risks, address data gaps, explore opportunities for reducing environmental footprints, and construct positive environmental narratives for the industry. This can feed into a sustainability strategy, via a workshop to be conducted as part of the project.

The LCA studies will be conducted at two scales – for individual businesses and at industry-scale. The individual business case studies will take a deep

dive into different production systems and consider feasible environmental improvement initiatives. The industry-scale LCA will have a broader perspective by collecting a larger sample of data by survey to generate environmental metrics representing industry averages, a baseline and benchmarks.

The project, which will run for approximately two years, will include the following:

- Complete a preliminary 'screening' LCA of raspberry and blackberry production based on existing data, as a starting point to plan the objectives and system boundary of the Australian study
- Develop individual business LCA case studies in different key Rubus producing regions to understand different production systems and explore environmental improvement opportunities
- Undertake surveys to collect data for the industry-scale LCA based on the Australian industry
- Provide an industry-scale LCA to generate industry carbon footprint and water footprint metrics – averages, baseline and benchmarks
- Deliver a workshop to discuss how the study findings inform the industry's sustainability strategy
- Rubus Carbon Footprint Calculator development, available for industry

In essence, the 'Strengthening the sustainability of Rubus production' project will equip the Rubus industry with information, metrics and resources for informing their sustainability strategy and decision-making about environmental improvements, and help growers respond to future requests from supply chain partners for information about environmental credentials.

The project team are hoping for grower participation in the project, which will help generate better quality data and more useful findings. Growers interested in being case study farms in the project (approximately between March and June 2024), are encouraged to get in touch via the link here:

www.lifecycles.com.au/lifecycle-assessment-project#rubusberry

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the Raspberry & Blackberry research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.