

# Watch out world! Australian berries are coming your way

Export Team, Berries Australia

The next iteration of the berry industry's trade and market access project has been contracted and began in May this year, with key learnings and experience from the previous three-year project used to build increased relevance and much-needed flexibility into the new project model.

The 'Multi-industry berry trade development and market access project (MT23004)' is a strategic levy investment under the Hort Innovation Blueberry, Strawberry, Raspberry and Blackberry Funds. It will run for a five-year term led by Export Manager, Jenny Van de Meeberg and delivered by Berries Australia.

The long-term outcome of the project is to foster sustainable growth of the Australian berry industry through export. Whilst each berry category is at a different point on their export journey, all can benefit from becoming more export oriented in order to manage periods of domestic market oversupply.

The project is designed to develop and support a range of initiatives that promote:

**Leadership** - steering industry toward successful realisation of the long-term outcome

**Broad Trade Literacy** - encouraging greater participation in export supply chains and ensuring non-exporters understand the national benefit of export-related investments

**Technical Market Access** - opening and maintaining access to markets

**Export Capability** - ensuring exporters have the skills and resources to export effectively and efficiently

**Export Competitiveness** - supporting commercial decision-making and enhancing/maintaining/defending market share

The global berry trade has grown significantly in recent years due to increased demand driven by their perceived health benefits, versatile culinary uses, and changing dietary preferences. The leading exporting countries include the United States, Mexico, Canada, the Netherlands, and Spain. Whilst a very modest exporter by comparison, Australia aspires to be a supplier of premium berries to Asia, underpinned by our world-leading berry breeding programs.

Australia's berry production sector has been expanding to meet both domestic and international demand. Overall, the Australian berry industry continues to thrive, and the popularity of berries among consumers, both domestically and internationally, provides opportunities for growth.

## Goal for Strawberry export

In 2022, Australia was the 19th largest exporter of strawberries in the world (by volume), although interestingly the largest exporter in the Asia-Pacific region, followed closely by Japan. In the first 8 months of 2023, exports increased by 92% vs exports for the same period in 2022. The goal however is to return to pre-COVID volumes of 2019 which were an export record for the industry. In 2019, Australian strawberry exporters airfreighted just over 5,000 tonnes at just under AUD\$5 per kilo. On the other hand, 2022 saw half the export volume at 2,408 tonnes but at more than twice the price reaching just over AUD\$12 per kilo.

Therefore, the aspirational goal for the strawberry industry within this five-year project is to return to 2019 volumes but keep the 2022 unit-price. This will be achieved by opening more markets with middle-class consumers willing to pay the higher unit-price and the capacity to absorb a greater volume.

## Goal for Blueberry export

In 2022, Australia was the 28th largest exporter of blueberries in the world (by volume), and again the largest exporter in the Asia-Pacific region, followed by China who exported half as much. Impressively however, Australia has the highest unit-value globally achieving just over AUD\$32 per kilo in 2022, which was AUD\$5 per kilo more than our nearest unit-price rival, Costa Rica. Australia's position in the market sets our unit-price just over 3.5 times the global average illustrating the exceptional premium enjoyed by Australian fruit.

This impressive figure also highlights the challenge facing Australian blueberry exports which are at the very high-end niche of the trading spectrum and therefore the industry requires access to sizeable affluent populations to maintain export growth. Encouragingly, despite the high unit-value, Australian blueberry exports have steadily grown in volume over the last five years and 2022 was a record high volume for the industry. The aspirational goal for the blueberry industry within this five-year project is to unlock access to high-value markets to enable continued growth of premium blueberry exports.

## Goal for Rubus export

Rubus exports are relatively flat, with an annual volume of approximately 12 tonnes being exported each year. At this stage, Australia is not a significant player on the world market. This is not surprising as the Rubus industry is in a different phase of its export journey and the Rubus industry is heavily influenced by a handful of licenced varieties. The aspirational goal for the Rubus industry within this five-year project is to prepare themselves for the market access they will need in the future when the industry reaches the tipping point of domestic supply and demand.

## Previous learnings and experience guiding new project development

Through the work of the previous export project (MT20004), the berry industry has cultivated an online export community of over 130 members, which is approximately 18% of our total member base. In the virtual environment of our **Export Hub housed in the Berries Australia website**, this community has been engaging with market insight material, trade data, education courses and overseas export enquiries. This is a terrific foundation for the new export project to keep building engagement across the berry export supply chain and, most importantly, a capability unique to Berries Australia.

**If you are not already a Member of the Export Group, you can apply to join now at the Export Hub on our website at [berries.net.au/home/export](https://berries.net.au/home/export)**

Export Group members have access to all of the Export resources listed above and receive dedicated e-newsletters specifically relating to export business.

Experience suggests that success in the export of horticultural products requires a combination of strategic planning, ongoing commitment of resources to market access negotiations, and commercially appropriate trade development activities. The berry industries have been very proactive in this regard, having produced a thorough and thoughtful set of industry export strategy documents to guide their investments at both an individual berry category level (commodity-specific export plans) and also at a cross-berry industry level (Berries Australia Trade Strategy). These documents are available on the Berries Australia Export Hub.

Since the global trading environment is a dynamic and evolving space, the new project has been designed to allow the maximum possible flexibility for decision-making whilst maintaining accountability by clearly defining the scope of activity through existing industry strategies and incorporating robust project governance arrangements.

Commodity-specific export committees have been established and are comprised of export leaders within each category who understand the complexities of market access and trade development. The committees will be responsible for taking their commodity-specific

Export Plan and prioritising a suite of activities to drive progress towards their goals. At committee meetings throughout the year, the members will review actions and progress against priorities, provide guidance on next-steps, and adjust the priority list if required.

## Welcome Jesse White to the Export team

Jesse White is a seasoned professional specialising in Horticulture international trade, market entry, and business development, with expertise in China and Southeast Asia. Fluent in Mandarin and having spent time living and working in China, Jesse has an extensive industry network and has invaluable on-the-ground experience.

His career includes leading market access projects at Global Victoria for skincare and cosmetic businesses seeking improved export pathways to China, leading consumer marketing programs to launch and develop markets in Asia, as well as cross-border e-commerce and corporate advisory services to Australian businesses on trade and investment in China.

In addition to his work with Berries Australia, Jesse has led marketing programs for the Australian Table Grape Association and contributes to national advisory committees for both the Table Grape and Summerfruit industries. With a Bachelor's in Business & Commerce and a Master's in Diplomacy and Trade from Monash University, Jesse combines academic rigor with practical insights to navigate complex international markets effectively.

Jesse has hit the ground running with his first trade visit already completed from 14-24 July to Beijing, Shanghai and Yunnan in China. The Export team are currently planning an extensive series of trade visits, meetings and participation in the right high-profile events in Asian markets to cultivate interest in Australian berries and ensure there is international demand underpinning the industry's market access aspirations.



For more information about the new export and trade development project for the Australian berry industry, please contact:

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