



BQI 25

AWARD WINNER: AGRONOMIST OF THE YEAR

STUART DOYLE
AGVISTA AUSTRALIA
AGRONOMY CONSULTING

Launceston-based berry agronomist Stuart Doyle, of AgVista Australia Agronomy Consulting, received the Agronomist of the Year Award at BerryQuest International 2025.

"My family has always been involved in agriculture and my father farmed grains and cattle in south-western QLD and northern NSW. Seeing him innovate and being exposed to agronomists as I grew up on the farm encouraged me to study agronomy and later plant nutrition. My mentors encouraged me to step out into independent consulting."



Stuart works in all four berry crops (blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries) and across all growing systems - soil, substrate, open field, and protected cropping, with clients on all continents except Antarctica!

"I started working with berries in 2007 after a chance meeting with George Jessett from Costa Berries. We were tasked with formulating nutrient recipes for fertigating the Berry Exchange farms. Upon a deep dive into the nutrient requirements of blueberries, I was hooked!"

Stuart built on his initial passion for plant nutrition, taking 'berry' deep dives into genetics, protected and substrate growing, cultural management, entomology, and IPDM. This has given him great dexterity and a fully integrated understanding of berry agronomic management, which he shares with growers.

"Overcoming the daily challenges of growing soft fruit alongside growers is the most exciting and

rewarding part of my job. At any point in time, I seem to be advising on all aspects of growing all at once! Pruning, growing, fertigating, irrigating, flowering, ripening, picking, and post-harvest are happening all around the world simultaneously. It shortens the feedback loop on new techniques."

"I have the privilege of working with great growers, researchers, and plant breeders who have helped to shape the diverse berry-growing systems we see today. These could not have been imagined 30 years ago. This allows us to grow in non-traditional areas, producing fruit year-round and using protected cropping to manipulate the plant to produce in shoulder seasons."

With the pending tsunami of automation and AI options about to hit the berry industry, Stuart sees both opportunities and challenges. A challenge of particular concern to him is a potential movement away from learning the essential grass-roots basics of growing.

"I see some of the simple '101' growing tasks being overlooked due to tech adoption and AI robbing graduate agronomists of the opportunity to learn from 'doing' some of the more menial tasks before being expected to process higher-level information."

Stuart has seen some epic stuff in his time as a berry agronomist, from driving to berry farms alongside donkey-drawn carts and military trucks loaded with missiles, to witnessing IPM at its finest when a wild Nuclear Polyhedra Virus single-handedly wiped out a population of armyworm in the field. Thankfully, he always makes it safely home to Tassie, where he enjoys spending his free time with his wife, Amara, and their three daughters, enjoying the Bay of Fires, and rowing on the Tamar River.

