

Unlocking Value in Every Berry

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The new research helping growers tap into \$2.5 billion opportunity in unsold produce under the project 'Reducing on-farm food waste and unlocking its value for grower profitability and sustainability' (HN24001)

- On-farm produce losses are a major yet solvable economic opportunity for growers
- End Food Waste Australia and Hort Innovation have launched a new research program focused on improving grower profitability by capturing more value from existing harvests
- The research will deliver practical solutions and insights to maximise first-grade produce sales, and find new markets for second- and third-grade produce

Australian berry growers reported an average crop loss of 21% per farm in 2023–24¹. Across Australia, it's a staggering one million tonnes of all fresh produce that never makes it off farm², estimated at up to \$2.5 billion a year³. In response, End Food Waste Australia and Hort Innovation are leading a new research program working collaboratively with growers and industry to tackle on-farm losses and maximise value in every harvest.

End Food Waste Australia works with growers, industry, and government nationwide to turn food waste into value and create a more productive, sustainable and resilient Australian food system. While we use the term food loss and waste, we see it differently: as valuable, nutritious food full of untapped potential.

We're committed to evidence-based, sustainable and profitable solutions, including helping growers sell more of every harvest. Our new research program 'Reducing on-farm food waste: unlocking value for grower profitability and sustainability' will work with growers and partners across the supply chain to pinpoint where losses happen, test practical ways to lift utilisation, and find commercially viable pathways for surplus and out-of-spec produce.

Similar international trials in the UK have shown that growers can increase profitability by up to 20% through food waste reduction⁴. Because when food isn't sold as intended, it's not just the food that is wasted; it is also the seed, water, fertiliser, crop protection, and labour that goes to waste – with growers often wearing the cost.

The program has funding from Hort Innovation, and Anthony Kachenko, General Manager of Production and Sustainability at Hort Innovation, says the program's focus is on improving profitability for growers and strengthening industry viability.

“**Australian growers produce some of the best horticulture products in the world and work hard to get it to market. This national program will support our growers by providing practical, commercially realistic tools to maximise value from each harvest,** said Kachenko



End Food Waste Australia is leading a new research program to help growers capture more value from existing harvests Photo credit: End Food Waste Australia

New markets for great, nutritious produce

Farm-gate focused outputs from the research will include market feasibility studies across key commodities to identify commercially viable pathways for surplus and out-of-spec produce, as well as assessments of value-added opportunities such as freeze-dried and frozen snack products, powder ingredients, relishes and other processed uses, and alternative end uses including animal feed and soil amendments.

The research arm of End Food Waste Australia has led other research initiatives helping food businesses transform food that would have gone to waste into marketable new products.

Our research project with SSS Strawberries, for example, has developed expanded freeze-dried and frozen berry product ranges which reduced their food waste by 80%⁵ - with aims to reduce to zero waste by the project's end. Reflecting on the project, Gina Dang, CEO of SSS Strawberries and their consumer brand "Gina's Table", said they've been able to transform over 250,000kg of waste into new value-added products.

"This research has helped us create great new products for market and consumer consumption. Now, instead of going to waste, that produce is nourishing more Australians," said Dang.

Our new research will avoid "one-size-fits-all" recommendations, as we know what works can vary between commodities, regions and seasons. Findings are planned to be published in accessible, farm-ready formats, including case studies and a dedicated knowledge hub to make resources easy for growers to find and apply.

Closing the gap between consumers' preferences and product specifications

A key element will be a deep dive into consumer preferences and tolerances regarding product specifications. This is a current knowledge gap, and this research will provide insights to inform recommendations that help growers sell more produce without undermining customer satisfaction or shifting waste elsewhere in the supply chain.

This will include consultation with growers and industry on their experiences and exploring options to potentially get more produce into the market. One of the first industry engagement opportunities for growers explores product specifications and on-farm waste, and we encourage you to register your interest to contribute to this and future input opportunities.



Australian Food Pact Signatories DASH Water utilise imperfect fruit as an ingredient in their drinks

Photo credit: End Food Waste Australia

Opportunities to get involved

Growers and horticulture supply chain businesses can register interest to take part in on-farm trials, workshops and advisory groups. Your participation will help shape the tools and training and provide early access to practical resources as the program progresses.

Jump on the program webpage to learn more and get involved: endfoodwaste.com.au/horticulture

Acknowledgements

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References

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