

Year in Review 2022-23



Fruit Growers
Tasmania

About Fruit Growers Tasmania

Fruit Growers Tasmania Inc is the peak body representing apple, pear, cherry, berry and stone fruit growers in Tasmania. It is a not-for-profit industry association run by Tasmania's fruit growers, for Tasmania's fruit growers.

Fruit Growers Tasmania engages with growers, industry partners and government to grow the viability, resilience and confidence of Tasmania's fruit sectors. Our aim is to create a business environment that will build a sustainably profitable fruit industry in Tasmania.

Our association provides Tasmanian fruit growers with services and information to grow their business and adapt to the changing business environment.

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While the COVID-19 pandemic was seemingly behind us as we moved through 2022-23, its effects were not. Nor were the effects from a devastating war in Ukraine – difficult for us but catastrophic for the Ukrainian people.

Supply chains were still long, freight rates went higher not lower, inflation hit new highs and interest rates just kept on climbing.

While no-one disputes fair and reasonable wages, especially for the lowest paid, a change in the structure of the Horticulture Award followed by a minimum wage increase mid 2022, followed by another now in mid 2023, coupled with rising input costs and often lower sell prices, presents serious challenges to the profitability of the fruit industry.

Add in challenging seasonal growing conditions and an early Lunar New Year, and growers were wondering if it was a “perfect storm”.

Continued investment and production increases in our biggest sector berries, greater competition from interstate growing regions and depressed prices, is causing serious reflection. What does this all mean for the future?

Tasmanian cherry exports were a record 70% of the national volume – a great outcome in difficult seasonal conditions. It says a lot about the benefits of growing cherries in Tasmania.

And what a difference a year makes for apples and pears. Thoroughly depressing last year to a positive year ahead. But is it short lived?

We continue to live in interesting times. That’s one thing that doesn’t change.

Pest and Disease

Pest monitoring and identification

To help growers detect and manage pests, Fruit Growers Tasmania made available to growers and crop monitors:

- waterproof pest ID cards for pests of trade concern
- foldout magnifying lenses
- pest sample submission kits for diagnostics.

We ran two regional workshops to help growers monitor and identify pests in orchard and be able to detect the presence of anything unusual.

Participants received an introduction to some key pests and diseases of biosecurity concern for Tasmania's fruit sectors, took part in practical insect trapping exercises using including nets, beating trays, and a vacuum sampler to see what pests were present. Caught insects were visually identified to a family or genus and could be compared against the government reference collection.

Preventative pest management

Another area of activity is helping growers to incorporate pest prevention and biosecurity into farm planning activities by providing resources including:

- on-farm biosecurity signage
- farm biosecurity planning calendars
- Plant Health Australia cherry grower's biosecurity manual

Other activities have included a survey of abandoned orchards, and information about the biosecurity duty.

Communicating about current outbreak responses

We continue to facilitate information to keep growers informed about biosecurity responses and get answers to grower's queries. This has included work on:

- changes to blueberry rust regulations
- preparations and response plans for varroa mite
- interception and clean-up of small hive beetle

Pest and Disease

Preparing industry for future outbreaks

Much of this work involves working closely with Biosecurity Tasmania to understand:

- the risks posed by different pests
- what actions and temporary restrictions are likely to be put in place during an outbreak
- what businesses need to know to be able to comply
- how we can make these restrictions as least disruptive as possible whilst still getting the job done.

The focus of this work is to cut through the noise and be a useful information conduit for growers. A key example of this is our upcoming Fruit Fly Incursion Response Manual, which:

- walks through the different steps of a fruit fly incursion
- identifies what actions growers need to perform
- outlines which markets and treatments growers will likely have access to
- provides a checklist of simple actions growers can do to reduce disruption and be prepared.

Providing input into regulatory changes

We provide input into biosecurity regulations at a state and national level, to help create a supportive business environment that is conducive to trade whilst safeguarding Tasmania's pest free biosecurity status.

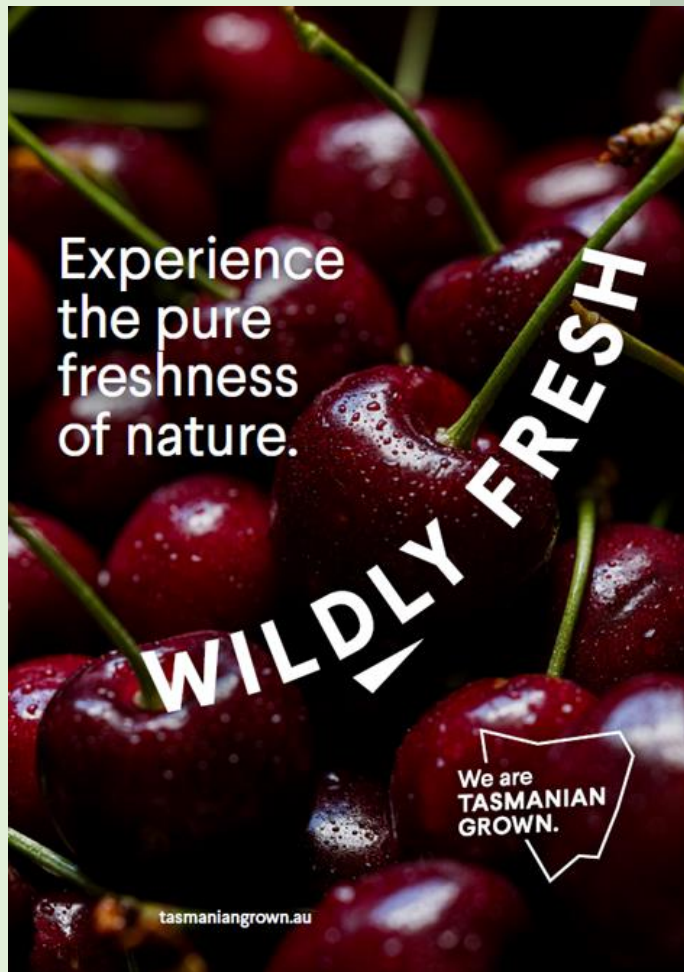
To do this, we work closely with Biosecurity Tasmania, Natural Resources & Environment Tasmania and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), and provide information back to government about the challenges and likely impacts of policy decisions and changes.

Areas of activity include commodity risk assessments and entry pathways for imported products, treatment options for fruit products of unknown pest status, safe movement and storage protocols for certified pest-free products, as well as improving product traceability across Tasmania's primary industries.

Trade Development

Supporting growers with trade activities is a continued focus for Fruit Growers Tasmania. This year there have been several key outputs delivered to build capability and create linkages between growers and buyers.

1. We launched the **TASMANIAN GROWN** website and Facebook page to support marketing of Tasmanian horticultural produce 24/7 to national and international markets. This has been a platform for industry promotional activities and provides an online register where buyers can link to exporters.
2. A **guided pathway to successful trade** was released which navigates growers through the fundamentals of successful trade particularly in protocol markets. It includes a crop monitoring tool kit, a database of service providers and video presentations on key topics.
3. Participation at **Asia Fruit Logistica 2022** in Thailand. This event attracted over 9,600 visitors from 70 countries. Fruit Growers Tasmania was one of 420 exhibitors representing 42 countries.
 - Across the three days there was strong interest for Tasmanian fruit particularly cherries but also blueberries, raspberries and apples. Fruit Growers Tasmania recorded 130 trade enquiries.
 - We launched the Tasmanian Grown and received media coverage through Fruit.Net and Fresh Plaza.



Trade Development

Ongoing support to growers who trade in both the domestic and international markets aims to allow growers to focus on growing and still navigate through the technical and detailed challenges of trade, particularly to protocol markets.

During the year Fruit Growers Tasmania:

- Provided in season weekly market analysis reports for cherries including competitor country trade.
- Facilitated verification of accreditation visits from customs officials from Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.
- Supported accreditation for apples and cherries into protocol markets
- Delivered pre-season export accreditation refresher workshops in Hobart and Launceston
- Held apple and cherry season debriefs for growers on our export markets
- Prepared a blueberry video to be used as part of a marketing campaign to consume more blueberries. This will run next season.
- Responded to trade enquires for fruit in export markets
- Worked with DAFF on a range of compliance issues around accreditation, crop monitoring audits, verification visits and workplans.
- Continued to collaborate with national peak industry bodies in relation to their trade development program activities and market access improvement priorities.



We are
**TASMANIAN
GROWN.**



Industry Promotion - International

Taiwan Campaign

For the second year in a row, Fruit Growers Tasmania ran a successful marketing campaign in Taiwan in the weeks commencing 8 January through to the 11 February.



Tasmanian Grown Cherries Campaign Taiwan 2023

Media Platform
Facebook 

Campaign duration
4 weeks 

Impressions
3.04 Million 

Views
2.3 Million 

Audience
913 Thousand 


Visits to website
7.6 Thousand 

Tasmanian Grown Facebook

Reach
582 Thousand

Video views
1.2 Thousand 

Follower community
108 Followers
42% Taiwanese 

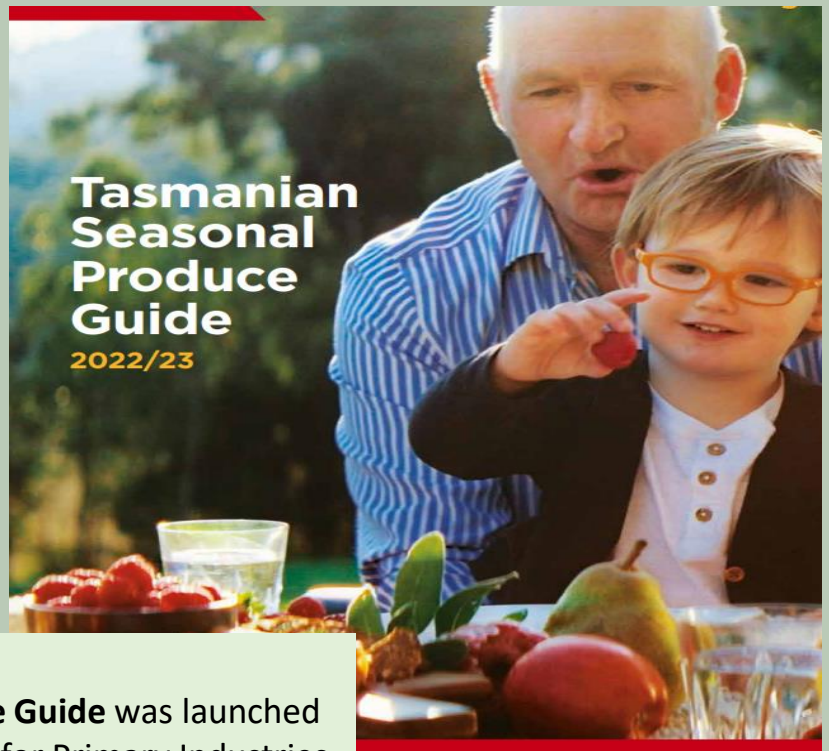
TAS cherry exports
1,975 tonnes
(↓ 11%) 

Taiwan
303 tonnes
(↓ 34%) 

The campaign involved two, 10 second, Facebook ads - one about giving cherries as gifts and the other about enjoying cherries as part of Chinese New Year celebrations. These linked to our Tasmanian Grown website.

The results were positive again this year with significant interest from consumers wanting to buy Tasmanian cherries.

Industry Promotion - Local



This year **the Seasonal Produce Guide** was launched by the Hon Jo Palmer, Minister for Primary Industries and Water at Rosevear's Farm on 8 December 2023.

It aims to promote pick your own, farm gate sales and farmers market experiences, increase consumption of fresh Tasmanian fruit linking into the broader State promotion of healthy eating and add to the agritourism experiences of the State.

This year **11,800 Seasonal Produce Guides** were distributed through **132 distribution points** including grower participants, visitor information centres, Spirit of Tasmania ferries and Tasmanian airports.

In addition, the guide was **downloaded** 83 times from the Fruit Growers Tasmania website.

We sold a record **120,000** cherry bags using a new Tasmanian Grown design.

Industry Development

This year we assisted Tasmanian growers on major issues including:

- Plastic and coir waste management
- Chemical registration information, including Minor Use Permits to address a lack of available chemistry for producers
- Pest and disease control and production techniques
- Information about the changes to the national Horticultural Award and Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme

Workshops and Field days

- Safe Farming - in conjunction with Safe Farming Tasmania
- Blueberry Update - Blueberry Rust deregulation, Blueberry Rust R&D projects & pest & disease control
- Cherry field days Jericho and Campania in collaboration with Serve Ag
- Preseason strawberry update
- Cherry orchard walk at Glenora in collaboration with Nutrien
- Berry sprayer field day
- Rain Cover workshop
- Strawberry runner field at JCLM Farming
- Use of smart technology in managing labour
- Partnered with TAPG and TFGA in support of the 2023 Ag Innovation Expo at Hagley Farm School. With more than 40 exhibitors, the program featured Fruit Growers Tasmania's presentation of the Tasmanian Grown Showcase.



Industry Development

Grower Support

Year to date we have conducted 146 grower visits to some 75 different growers. Our aim is to visit all growers by end June.

Our Fruit eNews was published weekly to some 700 subscribers, providing a one stop shop for growers to access the latest in fruit industry news, issues and developments.

Regular communication to growers nationally has continued through the Berry Burst newsletter, Australian Berry Journal and Australian Fruitgrower articles. Topics include grower profiles and articles of interest, such as coir and plastic recycling, protected cropping, and Integrated Pest Management techniques.

We hosted major UK berry grower John Gray.



John Gray visiting Burlington Berries

Industry development

Grower Support (cont.)

We arranged 74 Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) tests on behalf of growers in the year.

- While growers always have the option of arranging their own MRL tests, and many do, the ongoing provision of this service by Fruit Growers Tasmania ensures all growers have easy and affordable access to this important quality and food safety test.

We facilitated over 40 water sample tests through the Public Health Laboratory, again providing an easy and affordable option for growers.

We worked with DAFF to standardise export tape requirements for protocol markets and procured tape supplies for growers. The quality of this tape remains a work in progress.

Rain covers and netting program

Following several years of lobbying by Fruit Growers Tasmania the Australian Government provided \$1.94 million to support Tasmanian fruit growers installing netting and rain covers in orchards. The funding assistance was fully subscribed to some 13 growers.

Tasmanian Government investment in the fruit industry via Fruit Growers Tasmania

During 2022-23 we secured some \$1.4 million in investment from the Tasmanian Government for the next 3-4 years.

As a productive industry, this investment recognises the wider 'public good' nature of the industry's contribution to the state's economy, employment, government revenue (especially through payroll tax) and exports.

Policy and programs

It has been a busy year in industrial relations with the implementation and enforcement of changes to the Horticulture Award, ongoing changes to the Fair Work Act and the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme.

Horticultural Award changes

Changes to piecework provisions within the Horticulture Award have prompted growers to investigate new systems and employment agreements for hiring, managing and incentivising their harvest workforce.

Different options being trialed by growers include fixed hourly rates, hourly rates with productivity incentives, as well as piece rates under the new provisions. Fruit Growers Tasmania has been working with growers to help identify a compliant system which works for them and what the ongoing impact of the Award changes will be in terms of labour cost, productivity and availability.

Changes to the Fair Work Act

Following the national jobs summit there has been a number of changes made to the Fair Work Act, with more changes expected to be made later in 2023. These changes are likely to have differing impacts upon employers within the sector.

Fruit Growers Tasmania is working with both growers and state and national industry partners to be across these changes and to understand the impact on individual businesses and wider industry. We have continued to provide information sessions and resources around the changes, to help growers understand and efficiently comply with the new laws.

Policy and programs

Migration visa changes

With the recent publishing of findings from the Review of the Migration System, Fruit Growers Tasmania continues to work with state and federal government to increase awareness of the ongoing critical importance of each of the Working Holiday Maker program, Student Visas and PALM Scheme in addressing labour shortages in regional areas, and to ensuring reliable access to fill both harvest and ongoing production roles.

PALM scheme changes

The Federal Government is making a number of changes to PALM scheme, including to the structure, operations and employer obligations. Working with Approved Employers Association and industry representative bodies, Fruit Growers Tasmania continues to review changes and push back on new requirements which further increase the administrative burdens and costs for employers to access the scheme.

Tas Freight Equalisation Scheme

The cost of sea freight is one of the most important issues impacting the sustainable profitability of fruit growers. Fruit Growers Tasmania has made representations to both the State and Federal Governments regarding the Tas Freight Equalisation Scheme as its contribution to offset the escalating sea freight costs continues to decline. This will continue to be a key focus in the year ahead.

Small Horticultural Products Registered Establishment Scheme

Fruit Growers Tasmania has made representations to the Federal Minister for Agriculture regarding the need to amend the eligibility criteria for reduced annual fees for lower volume registered establishments. The threshold to access the reduced fees for some tree crops is very low making it very difficult for exporters to utilise. We will continue to work on making the case for change.

Honours Scholarship

The Fruit Growers Tasmania Honours Scholarship for 2023 has been presented to Kara Devlin who is commencing the fourth year of her Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Honours at the University of Tasmania. Her project will involve Integrated Pest Management and biological control of Tasmanian apple pests, in particular codling moth.

It is anticipated that Kara will present her project findings at the 2024 conference in Hobart.



Kara Devlin



Young Growers Group

Two social events were held in late 2022, both well attended. The program will be an important focus in the 2023-24 year.

We continue to encourage growers to bring their younger staff members along to industry events as a great opportunity to learn from others.



Fruit Growers
Tasmania

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