

## PRESIDENT'S WORD

***As you are all aware last year's big issue was reducing our marketing levy from 1% down to 0%. We can confirm the process of reducing our levy down to 0% has officially been completed and the last marketing levy collection was on the 30 June 2024.***

The positive to come out of this is that we now have close to \$2 million in levy funds to spend on R&D into the future.

I believe our R&D levy is still providing good value for industry. A recent prioritisation workshop held in Bundaberg in November 2024 highlighted the key issues ASPG should focus on in the future.

The main issues discussed were

- Nematode and virus research
- New and improved varieties
- Pest management
- Communications and industry development

If you were not present at the prioritisation workshop and would like an update on future investment, please contact Bree Watson our new Executive Officer.

As you are all aware our previous Executive Officer Peter Long retired in 2024. I would like to thank Peter for the last 3 ½ years as ASPG Executive Officer.

I enjoyed this time working together with Peter



and appreciate the knowledge and experience that I gained personally, and that he brought to the ASPG. Although there were some very frustrating times during this period, I also believe that his time in the role has put our industry in a strong position going forward. Enjoy your retirement, Peter!

I believe our industry is in a much better position than it was 12 months ago.

Increased market prices over the last 6 months have created far more optimism amongst growers, and hopefully this can continue for the next 6 months and continue to build confidence among ASPG members into the future.

The best way to maintain confidence in the future is to begin to work as a team again and all start moving in the same direction. This will, in my opinion, lead to far better outcomes for all ASPG members.



*Troy Pritchard*  
ASPG PRESIDENT

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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

***In August 2024 the ASPG Management Committee said farewell to Peter Long who has been the ASPG Executive Officer for the last three years. Peter's significant contribution to industry was celebrated by all and we wish him well in his retirement.***

ASPG's management team consists of a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and a management committee. Membership of the committee comprises at least 2 representatives from Bundaberg (Queensland) production region, at least 1 from Cudgen (New South Wales) production region and at least 1 member that represents minor production regions. The management committee appoints subcommittees to help with the conduct of the association's operations.

In November 2024 the ASPG held a successful Annual General Meeting which was well attended by 21 growers representing 13 agricultural businesses.

President Troy Prichard and Treasurer Eric Coleman were re-elected to their executive positions without opposition and were warmly appreciated by those in attendance for agreeing to continue in these important roles.

Formalities included the endorsing of the 2023 minutes, receiving the independently audited financials, announcing the organisation holds sufficient insurance to operate and appointing the 2025 auditor.

Following this the Executive Officer held a communications feedback session capturing feedback from those present regarding PW21000 Sweetpotato industry communications program for supporting the next iteration of this program to ensure it continues to meet grower needs.



*Bree Watson*

Secretary & Executive Officer



**Hort Innovation** **SWEETPOTATO FUND**

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the sweetpotato research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit [horticulture.com.au](http://horticulture.com.au)

# MEMBERS INFO

ASPG is a member-based not-for-profit industry organisation, where members pay an annual fee. This fee was increased in 2024 for the first time in many years to assist with the ASPG organisation remaining financial. Sadly, the ASPG membership base has continued to shrink over time and is reflective of our current times with several growers leaving the industry to either grow other crops or retire.

For the year 2023-24 we had 26 financial members, down from 31 members in 2022-23 and 39 members in 2021-22. Industry has seen significant increases in input costs of labour, fuel, chemicals, and fertilisers, whilst experiencing stable or declining wholesale prices received.

The reduction in the number of growers is not unique to the sweetpotato sector but a trend across horticulture. On the positive side for membership, an estimated 95% of Australian sweetpotatoes are grown by ASPG members.

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

### PRESIDENT

Troy Prichard

### VICE PRESIDENT

Matthew Prichard

### TREASURER

Eric Coleman

### SECRETARY EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Bree Watson

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Mal Beutel, Claire Maslen, Matthew Prichard, Troy Prichard, Russell McCrystal, Rodney Wolfenden, Emily Zunker and Bree Watson

# INDUSTRY RECOGNITIONS



In November 2024 at the ASPG Annual General Meeting, President Troy Prichard and Treasurer Eric Coleman had the pleasure to publicly recognise significant contribution to industry and present Life Membership to Rodney Wolfenden. Rodney was instrumental in the formation of ASPG in 2003 and its incorporation in May 2007 and was President from the very beginning through November 2021. Under Rodney's leadership and alongside other crucial supporters including Eric Coleman, Duane Joyce, Matthew Prichard and Russell McCrystal, ASPG was successful in commencing the sweetpotato R&D and marketing levies and establishing the strong grass-roots driven organisation it is today.

*Congratulations Rodney!*

**Hort  
Innovation**

**SWEETPOTATO  
FUND**



# SWEETPOTATO STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

2022-26

*The sweetpotato SIP is the roadmap that will guide Hort Innovation's oversight and management of the sweetpotato industry's investment programs. It lays the foundation for decision-making in investments and represents the balanced interest of the whole industry. The important function of this SIP is to ensure that the investment decisions align with sweetpotato industry priorities.*

ASPG alongside Hort Innovation delivered a SIP workshop in November 2024 to discuss investment priorities for the sweetpotato industry. Below is a snapshot of some R& D ideas that could be further developed to address key challenges in the industry.

- Evaluating and selecting varieties that are:
  - > Better for processing
  - > Resistant to nematodes
- Marketing opportunities and creating demand
- Barriers to improved yield, quality, and profitability
- Sweetpotato specific benchmarking
- Impacts on chilling on pitting and other post-harvest issues
- Education and capacity development
- Leadership
- Business development
- Study tours
- Technology in the production system



All strategic investment plans are due for renewal in 2026 and we look forward to working with Hort Innovation in the development of the next iteration.

You can read about the current SIP on this [link](#).



**ASPG Members and Executive participated in the SIP workshop in Bundaberg and online**

# HORT 2018/195 PROJECT UPDATE

## VARIETIES

- Varieties submitted to SPC in Fiji for all partner countries – some didn't survive transport and these have/ will be followed up with individual countries
- Roots proved to be most successful at surviving transport to SPC in Fiji.
- Sequencing to confirm variety identification and whether virus free options exist in SPC collection is ongoing – results due end of 2024
- SPC has commenced the virus removal process from variety submissions



## SWEETPOTATO FARMER SURVEY

- Completed in Tonga, Solomon Islands and Samoa
- Data analysis commenced for Solomon Islands and Tonga
- Analysis and draft report completed for Samoa
- From Samoa survey identified knowledge gaps and opportunities for hands on farmer workshops

## TRIALS AND DEMONSTRATION SITES

- SPC has bulked up virus free (PT) planting material of Golden Brown sweetpotato variety for comparison with non PT Golden Brown at Koronivia Research Station, Fiji
- Trial plan for PT/non PT trial at Koronivia Research Station, Fiji developed with Fiji Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways staff – due to be planted December 2024
- Solomon Island farmer seedbed demonstration currently in planning for early 2025
- Tonga planning seedbed vs field cut vine demonstration in December 2024



## EXTENSION AND COMMUNICATION

- Sweetpotato factsheets – translated into Solomon Island pidgin and Samoan
- 2 x farmer workshops held in Samoa on growing sweetpotato and seedbeds – included hands on seedbed demonstration. Feedback from participants currently being collated and summarised.
- Seedbed instructional video currently in development
- Fiji farmer in Australia visited with Australian sweetpotato farmer and now trialling new planting practice back in Fiji on his farm from planting on the flat to using ridges

For more information contact Julie O'Halloran - [julie.ohalloran@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:julie.ohalloran@daf.qld.gov.au)

**Hort  
Innovation**  
Strategic levy investment

**SWEETPOTATO  
FUND**

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# DISPLAY AND MERCHANDISING



## FUN FACTS

Sweetpotatoes come originally from tropical South and Central America. They are not related to potatoes. They have delicate skins and hate the cold. Never put them in a cold room at less than 12°C.



## HANDLE WITH CARE

To avoid bruising and to keep your displays looking neat and tidy, do not tip sweet potatoes directly onto your display. Always unpack and arrange your sweetpotatoes carefully, laying each potato gently onto the display in a horizontal direction.



## KEEP THEM COOL, NEVER COLD

To keep your sweetpotatoes nice and fresh, hold them in a dark and cool place until moving them to the shelf, never in a fridge.

12-20°C is the perfect temperature range for tasty sweetpotatoes. Keep at a constant temperature if possible as this extends shelf life and maintains a good appearance. Remove from mixed pallets that are moved into the cold room.



## CHECK FOR QUALITY

Inspect your sweetpotatoes for skin damage, softness (especially of tips), dried-out appearance, pitting and mould on cut ends. Even minor defects can contribute to a poor eating experience, so take time to ensure your sweetpotatoes are in good condition.



## DITCH THE BAD ONES

There won't be many bad sweetpotatoes, but never leave the ones with significantly defects like this on show as they prevent sales. If you won't buy it, your customers won't either.



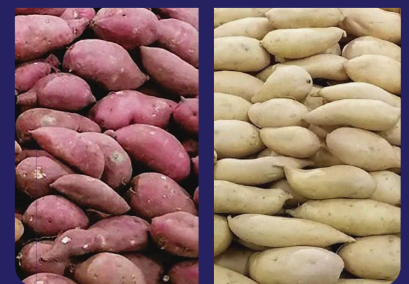
I AM A BRONZED SWEETPOTATO. I MAY HAVE DARKER PATCHES ON THE SURFACE, BUT I WILL EAT JUST FINE.



## PERFECT YOUR PRESENTATION

as for tomatoes and other vegetables

1. Within each type (gold, purple or white), arrange by freshness to ensure good stock rotation. Place new stock at the back of the display to encourage the purchase of existing sweetpotatoes first.
2. Arrange within these freshness groups according to colour and size. Group sweetpotatoes of similar colour together within each type and arrange larger sweetpotatoes on one side and smaller ones on the other. This will improve presentation and aid customer selection.





# Emerging Leaders Program CASE STUDY



ASPG facilitated a Hort Innovation funded three-year Emerging Leaders Program which offered a leadership program to sweetpotato industry personal aimed at upskilling future leaders (2022-24). The program was a professional and personal stretch for the participants. There was one primary activity each year which included: a Sydney supply chain trip, a two-day professional development workshop delivered by The Right Mind and a one-day workshop where participants presented their workplace project. The design of the program was to increase the broader industry awareness, curiosity and desire for increased leadership capability in their businesses and careers. This Case Study is based on one of the workplace projects.

<b>Business</b>	<p>McCrystal Agricultural Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriservices (sweetpotatoes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ establishment of 1st Generation Disease/Pest Free Seed.</li> <li>○ Management of Agronomic Input's into Established Seed Beds.</li> <li>○ Scheduling and Management of Planting Material Harvesting.</li> <li>○ Managed Planting Services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Labour supply</li> <li>• Worker accommodation</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	South Kolan via Bundaberg
<b>Emerging Leader</b>	Matthew Williams, Business Manager
<b>Project title</b>	<b>Building a Strong Workplace Safety Culture</b>
<b>The challenges</b>	<p>Inefficient traditional paper-based workplace health and safety systems (WH&amp;S)  Average staff exceeding 120 persons  Workcover cost are significant  Comprehension and learning outcomes are difficult to measure in workers whose first language is not English across compliance and assurance frameworks</p>

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	Compliance evidence is slow and difficult to document
<p>What we wanted to do differently</p>	<p>Comprehension and learning outcomes are difficult to measure in PALM workers whose first language is not English.</p> <p>Professional development to ensure best practice WH&amp;S principles practices.</p> <p>Meet and exceed all assurance framework and statutory compliance requirements, using digitized data collection.</p> <p>Identify workplace hazards, conduct risk assessments and develop multi-lingual training material for Horticultural workers.</p>
<p>What we did</p>	<p>1. <b>Improve Organizational WHS compliance profile:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Completed Injury Prevention and Management Program (IPAM), a joint initiative by WHSQ and WorkCover QLD in consultation with certified WHSQ Inspector.</li> <li>b) Digitized WHS management system end to end inc. Hazard Identification, Incident Reporting, Risk Assessment, Control measure implementation and monitoring, and Safety Series Material.</li> <li>c) Compliance Library available digitally for easy access reducing administrative load of WHS management for us and our customer base.</li> </ol> <p><b>Save on Workcover Costs and Injury related downtime for our Business and our customers:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Reduced Workers Compensation claims and work-related injuries by 100% in 2024 compared to previous year (zero injuries in 2024 and 289 days since last injury).</li> <li>b) Workers Compensation premiums reduced to 41% below industry average with quality data/ leverage to reduce premiums further in FY25.</li> <li>c) Customers enjoy qualified, at no cost WHS consultation. Workplace training material availability extends to our Host Employers.</li> </ol> <p><b>Improve Learning, Comprehension, and Upskilling outcomes for workers:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Using advancements in AI technology to efficiently translate digital training material to 3 languages ensuring real comprehension of safety training.</li> <li>b) Implemented Industry leading training delivery model utilizing senior team leaders to deliver WH&amp;S training in language reducing administrative load on senior management.</li> <li>c) Funded or co-funded upskilling opportunities in partnership with skills development fund to advance 8 workers from level 1 to level 2 positions in FY24 improving value proposition for our Host Employers.</li> </ol>
<p>What's next</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent wage increases of 3.75% are indicative that wage costs are only on the way up from here.</li> <li>• Government support is diminishing for mandatory 88 days regional service for backpackers.</li> <li>• Immigration policy is evolving to clamp down on the working rights of international student visa holders.</li> <li>• Return prices are not increasing in line with input costs (labour, fertilizer, chemicals, seed etc.)</li> <li>• Managing productivity in the new age of hyper compliance will be key to maintaining small business profitability.</li> <li>• Plans to fill this gap with entry level, semi-skilled, and skilled labour solutions with digital productivity tools designed in house, driven by a compliance focus to maintain competitive market access for our customers.</li> </ul>

# USA VISITS AUSTRALIAN SWEETPOTATO INDUSTRY

## ***United States sweetpotato research and extension experts visited the Australian sweetpotato industry***

Mid April 2024 three US sweetpotato extension and researcher staff visited Australian farms and presented at sweetpotato workshops at Cudgen, Bundaberg and Gracemere.

Prior to the workshops and farms visits they checked out the Gatton Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Research Station (DAF) and had presentations from Sandra Dennin and the DAF sweetpotato team. The Australian research team was excited to exchange research findings with fellow sweetpotato scientists from some of the few institutions specialising in this crop globally.

The visit was arranged by Eric Coleman from AUS Sweetpotato. The three US visitors were Dr. Don La Bonte from Louisiana State University, Dr. Lorin Harvey from Mississippi State University, and Mr. Scott Stoddard from University of California Cooperative Extension.

Don is well known to many Australian growers through previous visits to the US to meet with growers and discuss research projects at Gatton.

Dr. Harvey is an extension sweetpotato specialist with the Mississippi State University, and Scott Stoddard is a Farm Advisor at the University of California. Both



## ***Dr. Lorin Harvey, Dr. Don La Bonte and Mr. Scott Stoddard***

Lorin and Scott had not been to Australia previously. Together with Eric they also visited sweetpotato growers and packers on the north island of New Zealand, near Dargaville.

This exchange of information with DAF researchers and growers will benefit the Australian sweetpotato industry for long term productivity as it provided an excellent opportunity for constructive discussion on the current state of sweetpotato research and innovation globally and shared production issues.

# GATTON DAF RESEARCH STATION VISIT



*Sandra Dennien, Lorin and Scott*



*Jean Bobby, Rach Langenbaker, Eric Coleman, Don and Sandra*

# CUDGEN FARM VISIT AND NEW VARIETY FIELD TRIAL



*Scott checking out a new variety*



*Rach (DAF) and the team checking out the new variety trials at Cudgen*

# CUDGEN WORKSHOP

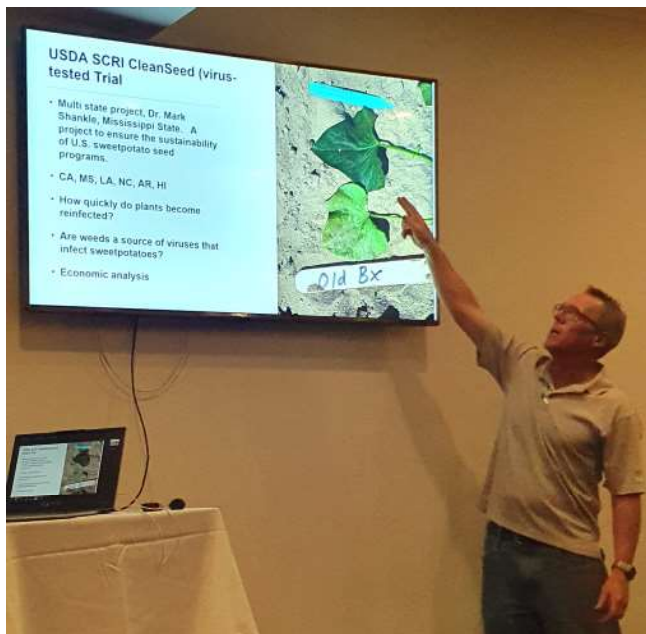
27 attendees



*Lorin describing the Mississippi sweetpotato industry*

# BUNDABERG WORKSHOP

22 attendees



*Quality project presentation by Tristan and Andreas*

# Scott presenting California industry results





## GRACEMERE WORKSHOP

15 attendees

### *Pricing and inputs: December 2024*

Input cost increases, including wages, have remained a major concern for the Australian vegetable industry, and one of the top reasons growers are considering leaving the industry. Read more at the link below

<https://ausveg.com.au/article/pricing-and-inputs-december-2024/>



**Rach (DAF) presenting nematode project results**



**Don presenting new LSU variety trial results**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS

***The first acknowledgement and huge thanks is to Eric Coleman (ASS Sweetpotato) for inviting the three US visitors to Australia and coordinating their Australian visit and presentations. He also arranged the New Zealand leg of the journey. Apparently, the Kiwis have a lot learn about the benefits of clean seed and plant material and agronomy (average yield is around 10 tonnes / acre) whilst we in Australia have a lot to learn from them about centralised packing and marketing (way better farm gate prices).***

The partnership Eric has built in the past 20 years with Don and the LSU team has benefited the Australian industry through the pipeline of new varieties and there is another batch currently in growers' fields being evaluated under Australian conditions.

The three US experts were very interested to see how the new varieties were performing under a range of Australian soil and growing conditions. Eric has trials established with growers at Cudgen, Bundaberg and on his Gracemere and Wowan farms. Eric has met with Scott and Lorin on his US visits and they were keen to better understand the Australian industry and production systems. A special thanks to Eric and Kristie for hosting the Gracemere workshop and the catering they provided for all.

The Australian leg of the visit started at the DAF Gatton Research Station with the DAF team sharing the history of Australian sweetpotato research and development and the selection journey of the varieties the industry currently grows in Australia.

They also discussed past and current work in Australia and the USA. Topics included the DAF initiated Australian clean seed scheme, the sweetpotato pathogen testing program, pest and disease research, planting techniques, crop production and marketing trends.

This was followed by a tour of the pathogen testing facilities at GRF, (laboratory, glasshouse and igloos) and a brief trip around the University of Queensland Gatton campus and the Lockyer Valley farming area. As a former DAF researcher Eric contributed to the presentation.

A big thanks to Sandra Dennien and the DAF team for hosting the US visitors. They went the extra yards to welcome the visitors and showcase their work. All DAF staff then traveled to Cudgen and participated in the workshop.

As always Matthew Prichard did a great job of arranging the venue and inviting and encouraging most of the district growers and some agribusiness to participate in the Cudgen workshop.

At the Cudgen workshop Tristan Kitchener and Andreas Klieber provided an update on the Improving Quality (and Sales) of Sweetpotatoes which is a three-year project finishing in mid-2024. On behalf of Tristan and Andreas Eric Coleman and Peter Long made the presentation at the Bundaberg workshop.

For the Bundaberg workshop a big thanks to Rach Langenbaker (DAF) for booking the venue and receiving the RSVPs, well done. Rach attended all three workshops and presented the latest results from the DAF research projects at Gracemere.

# SUMMARY OF US SWEETPOTATO PRESENTATIONS

## Don La Bonte

Don is a sweetpotato breeder with the Louisiana State University AgCenter and in Australia AUS Sweetpotato works closely with LSU to regularly import varieties that have potential in Australia.

Their program of developing new varieties is a long one with many stages with Don and the LSU team focusing on selecting new varieties with improved disease and nematode resistance, higher yields, favorable storage traits and enhanced consumer appeal.

After research station selection testing, potential new lines are evaluated in commercial fields in on-farm trials across different production regions of the US. Not all varieties that grow well in the US suit Australia conditions.

One critical difference to remember is that all the US crops are grown in one production season mainly under rain fed systems, then stored in temperature controlled barns so that the crop can be sold year round. In California, 100% of the crop is irrigated with drip tape.

In the Australian workshops Don presented some recent results from promising varieties. At this stage of development, they only have selection codes rather than a variety names. In the field trials they always compare yields with a current commercial variety (usually Orleans). A couple of varieties that show promise include:

### LA 18-100 (copper-rose skin/orange flesh)

	Harvested at 97 days	18kgs boxes
<b>Location A</b>	<b>LA 18-100</b>	<b>Orleans</b>
Grade U.S #1	471	355
Total	839	530
<b>Location B</b>		
U.S #1	588	518
Total	1175	857 (less jumbos)

### LA18-100 attributes

- Consistent high yield and excellent shape – early variety (90 days)
- Beauregard look, but rose colour at harvest
- Excellent flavor
- Guava Root Knot Nematode (GRKN) susceptible but resistant to southern root knot nematode (RKN)
- Stores well
- Excellent plant stand



**Harvesting 18-100 in Mississippi.**



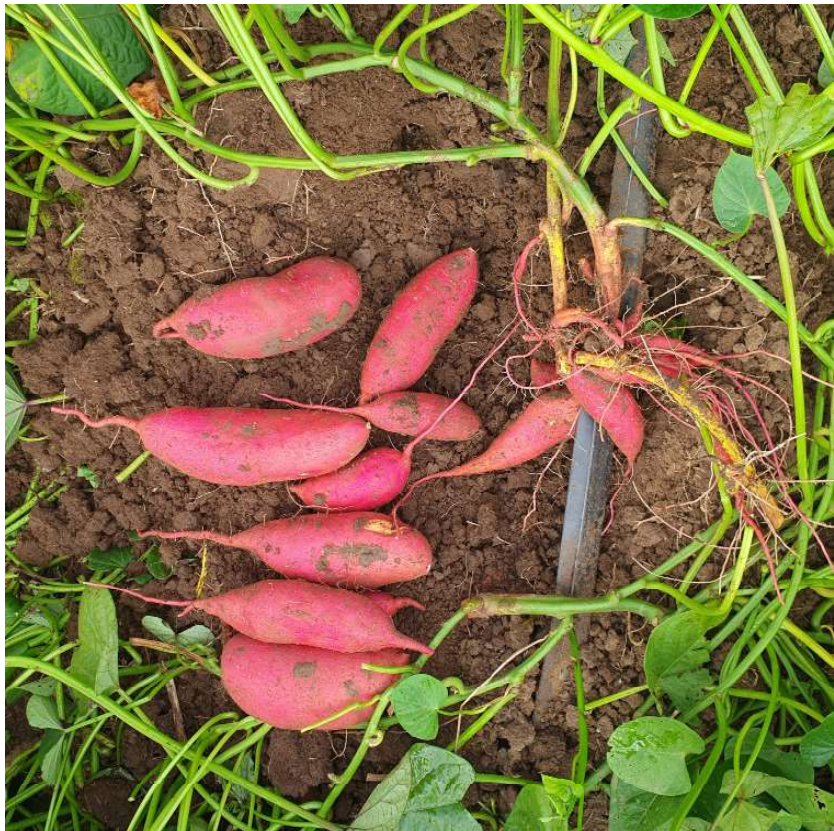
## LA 14-31\* (red skin/orange flesh)

Farm trial sites	LA 14-31 (U.S #1)	Orleans (U.S#1)
McKoin	950	785
Fortenot	309	395
Matthews	485	366
Weather	671	278
Senatobia	809	533
Fairhope	865	408
Sandy Ridge	664	696
<b>Average</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>494</b>

\*18kg boxes

### LA14-31 attributes

- Red Skin
- Shape and solid yield - good plant bed
- Fusarium wilt and soil rot
- Resistant to GRKN and RKN
- Firm when baked – good colour



**LA 14-13 at Gracemere**



**LA 14-31 from California**



**LA 14-31 at Cudgen**

## APVMA Permits

There are currently 14 active registrations for permits associated with sweetpotato crops. Several permits are due to expire in 2025 and may be renewed. If there is a specific permit expiring soon that is applicable and suitable for your crops, please let us know at [aspg.sec@gmail.com](mailto:aspg.sec@gmail.com) and we can look at applying to renew this permit.

### Final regulatory decision for chlorpyrifos reconsideration

The APVMA has released its final regulatory decision on chlorpyrifos and has removed most agricultural and urban pest control uses of chlorpyrifos due primarily to worker health and safety and environmental risks. There are 52 registered products and 23 approved active constituents that have been affected by this review decision. Three products have been cancelled and remaining products varied and affirmed with limited uses allowed. There will be a 12 month phase out period for cancelled chlorpyrifos products and for remaining chlorpyrifos products to amend their labels.

# SUMMARY OF US SWEETPOTATO PRESENTATIONS

Scott Stoddard

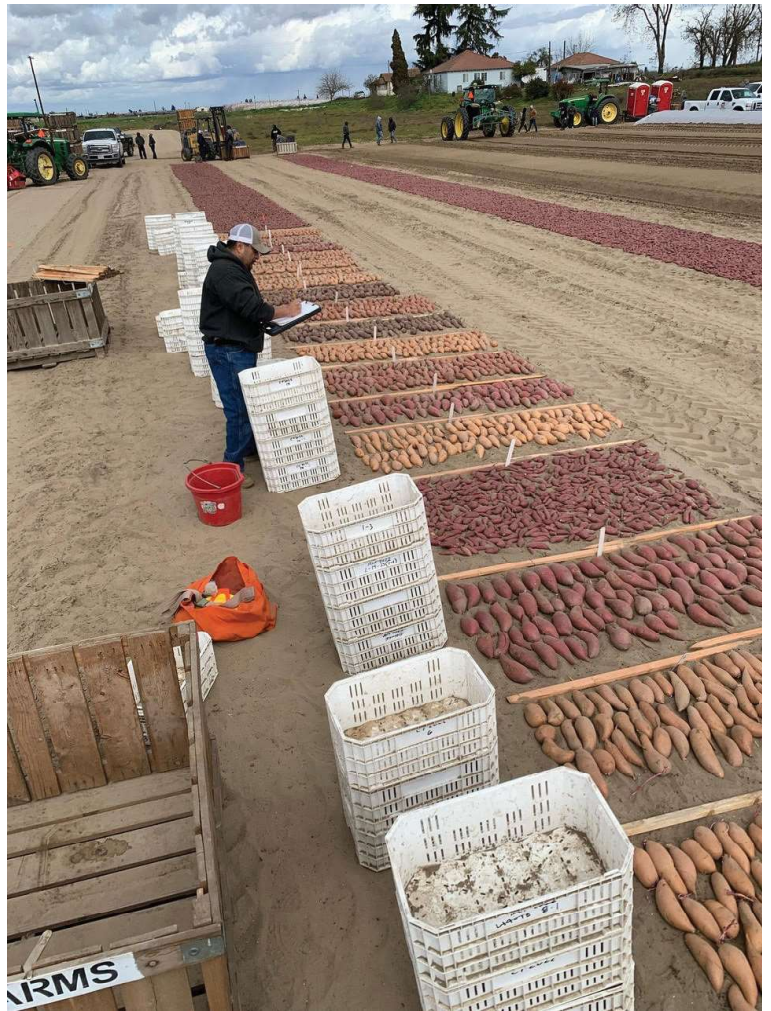
Scott is a Farm Advisor with the University of California and focuses on tomato and sweetpotato growers. California is the most diverse sweetpotato production region in the US which reflects consumer and market demand.

They grow:

- 15% Japanese
- 10% Sweets (white flesh)
- 35% Reds (red skin orange flesh)
- 40% Orange flesh (like Australian gold varieties)

A significant difference in California is that all the crop is irrigated. The big challenge in California is the cost of production which is way about regions in the US. In 2023 production costs were approximately US\$12,500/acre (or Australian \$19,000/acre) which is on par with Australian production costs. Higher labour costs are the primary reason for being greater than the rest of the US.

In recent years Scott has run a heavy metal testing program (2020 to 2022) prompted by elevated heavy metal content found in baby food and juice. They tested organic and conventional crops looking for traces for Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury, and Lead. When present Mercury is more likely to be found in seafood rather than agricultural crops. Combining all years, 96.5% of the samples were below the target threshold



## Variety trial seed bed

of 10 ppb. Historically, Arsenate of Lead was used as a pesticide which has left a residue in some US regions.

Scott and his colleagues run a clean seed program and undertake selection trials which includes a replicated variety trial and the Advanced Line Trial (since 2005). They focus on red skin orange flesh. Their goal is to find an improved cultivar compared to their currently produced 'Diane' variety.

One component of their on-farm trails is comparing different generations of plant material. They also undertake extensive nematicide efficacy and variety resistance in sweetpotatoes. The main nematode they have is southern root knot nematode, *Meloidogyne incognita*. The nematicides applied in California are Salibro, Velum and Nimitz, all registered for use in Australia.



## The scale of machinery required

### Lorin Harvey

Lorin is an extension sweetpotato specialist with the Mississippi State University. He leads an applied research and extension program which is guided by the Mississippi Sweetpotato Council Board of Directors. The sweetpotato research station is in the main production region of the state.

Annual production ranges from 28,000 to 30,000 acres in Mississippi with an average farm size of 634 acres. The largest grower farms 4,300 acres in comparison to Australia's total estimated production of 3,500 acres. There is some pivot irrigation, but 75% of the

crop is non-irrigated and the growers depend on rainfall.

Lorin shared that where supplemental irrigation is used, it is often applied too late to make much of a difference. After visiting Australian farms, he has plans to trial the use of trickle tape to demonstrate what yield difference that could make in Mississippi.

They have a totally different production system with all the crop planted in a close window (May-July) and harvested in a close window (late August to November). It takes a lot of effort to organise workers and have the necessary farm machinery to plant and harvest in limited windows.

**QAWN**  
Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network  
Wide Bay Burnett, Gladstone & Banana Regions  
Supporting Agri-Businesses in areas of Workforce Recruitment, Development, and Training



Through SmartAg Queensland, farmers can access subsidised accredited, non-accredited and micro-credential training to support their agricultural enterprise to attract, train, and retain a skilled and diverse workforce.



Safety



Production



Business



Technology

Types of training that may be offered through the four key areas include:

WHS essentials

Agronomy

Digital literacy

Risk management

Food Safety

Leadership skills

Contact

For More information

**KYLIE JACKSON**

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# SUMMARY OF US SWEETPOTATO PRESENTATIONS

The other big difference is with one crop per year they store for up to 13 months. Growers store unwashed at 13C to 15C and 85% humidity. Since storage occurs mainly during the winter, power costs are manageable. When orders come in, they wash and pack with 85% of Mississippi production consumed domestically. Per capita consumption in Mississippi is 3kgs which is very similar to Australia's per capita consumption of 3.2kg in 2023.

The Mississippi State University research station is one of six National Clean Plant Centre's focused on virus-tested sweetpotato plant material. Virus-tested cultivars are maintained year-round in the laboratory and propagated in certified greenhouses to provide Mississippi growers high quality planting material each year. They also have a program of establishing protocols to clean viruses from new cultivars through tissue therapy, and development of new genetics for growers.



**Planting at scale**



**Grading on the diggers**

***For those that missed the Merry Christmas from our friends at DPI messages please see below***



**As part of PW23000 Access to new sweetpotato varieties a Horticulture Innovation funded project, 4 newly imported sweetpotato varieties from Louisiana State University (LSU) were trialled in Queensland and New South Wales. As part of the project Dr Don Labonte (LSU) Scott Stoddard University of California Davis (UC Davis) and Dr Lorin Harvey Mississippi State University (MSU) presented information about new varieties they are working on in Cudgen, Bundaberg and Rockhampton.**

## 18-100

18-100 has been patented as 'Avoyelles'. In the US trials this variety has shown very early maturity and has the potential to reach a marketable yield in 90 days.

Avoyelles performs well in non-irrigated systems in the in the US and has moderate resistance to *Meloidogyne incognita*. Our trials to date have also shown fast early bulking however after 110 days shape deteriorates and colour fades quickly.



On all planting occasions it had the highest yield at 90 days. The picture below shows Avoyelles sampled in October from an April /May planting compared to Orleans. Higher yield but poor shape compared to Orleans.

## 14-31

14-31 has a red to crimson skin with a gold flesh and has strong root knot nematode resistance including to the new nematode we now have in Australia Guava root knot nematode (GRKN). On all planting occasions shape and colour stayed consistent with yields close to Orleans.

The consistency of yield and colour through different planting times makes this a promising variety with further plantings this season we may hopefully ascertain if 14-31 has any weaknesses



## 16-148

16-148 has a red to crimson double skin with a gold flesh and has strong root knot nematode resistance including the new nematode we have in Australia, Guava root knot nematode (GRKN). Summer plantings were comparable in quality to 14-31 but yield not as good. In the summer size was often achieved quicker than 14-31 however over winter the shape was a bit off with longer and more misshapen sweetpotatoes. Further plantings are now underway.

## 19-13

19-13 is very similar to Orleans and has been trialled due to a potentially harder skin. Shape and colour is very even and consistent in summer but quality suffers over winter with misshapen roots and roots with tails. If we didn't have Orleans this variety would have a place however at this stage further trialling is needed to see if it has a place.

## Congratulations Craig!

In December 2024, Craig Henderson celebrated earning his PhD from CQUniversity, with guidance from Principal Supervisor Prof. Phil Brown. His research, grounded in the ASPG/Hort Innovation project VG13004, examined plant bed agronomy and virus management. Craig expressed his heartfelt thanks to Rach Langenbaker, Sandra Dennien, and numerous assistants for their critical support in managing tens of thousands of sweetpotato sprouts during his PhD journey.

Craig also thanks ASPG members and experts Eric & Kristie C., Rodney W., Russ & Elke Mc., Mal & Cindy B., Darren & Linda Z., Russ & Shana M., Troy, Matthew & Henry P., Doug, Jim & Steve P., and Kevin, Stu, & Chanel K. who provided experimental sites and invaluable advice, exemplifying the strong community within the sweetpotato industry.

Key findings for growers included the identification of optimal bedding roots (5–8 cm wide), which maximised premium sprout production without excess costs from larger roots. The timing of sprout cutting was crucial: early cutting severely lowered both yield and quality, compared to optimal timing. Better to err on the side of cutting late. Additionally, plant beds exported more nitrogen in harvested sprouts than accounted for by soil, fertiliser, or bedding root nitrogen, suggesting significant biological nitrogen fixation may be occurring. Craig is eager to investigate this result further, with potential for better N nutrition and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

**If anyone would like to chat to Craig about his work please contact him at [craig@hendersonrde.com.au](mailto:craig@hendersonrde.com.au)**



# DATA AND INSIGHTS FUEL GROWER RESILIENCE

**By Andrew Francey, General Manager, Industry Service & Delivery, Hort Innovation**

After 20 years working in the Australian fresh produce sector, both in commercial production and now at Hort Innovation, one thing that strikes me is the resilience of our growers.

At the Hort Connections 2024 annual conference in Melbourne, cautious optimism was evident amongst the 4000 delegates, despite growers being tested by extreme weather patterns, surging input costs, consumers tightening their household budgets and more.

Yet, in spite of these factors, the Australian horticulture sector is growing.

In the past decade it has expanded by 81 per cent, from \$9 billion to \$16.3 billion in total value of production. It is outpacing Australia's agriculture sectors, and by 2030 is projected to reach \$22 billion.

This extraordinary growth is built on the innovation of growers across Australia who are doing things differently. It is part of their DNA to ask 'how can I learn?' and 'how can I continue to innovate?'.

Hort Innovation's key priority, which is enshrined in legislation, is to provide growers with the best answers to those questions.

Our teams work with growers to hear what's happening on farms while providing access to data and insights to identify the right technology solutions and research and development programs to deliver improvements and productivity gains. In fact, productivity tops the



priority list for growers given the challenges faced over the last few years.

Innovations addressing those challenges range from the 'one percenters', such as the control of fruit drop in mango, to larger-scale programs such as the \$10 million vegetable industry-led biosecurity program that will strengthen pest surveillance, preparedness and management efforts.

These grower-led programs are underpinned by an ever-improving understanding of what's happening locally and across international markets. In fact, export growth is projected at 11 per cent this year, to reach a record \$4 billion in 2024-25.

In the past 12 months we have introduced a fit-for-purpose advisory system, with 10 Industry Service and Delivery Managers (ISDMs) based in the regions meeting and working with growers on the ground.

Via these deeper connections, we are receiving an increasing number of requests from growers for information and insights to support them.

**Hort  
Innovation**

**SWEETPOTATO  
FUND**

# DATA AND INSIGHTS FUEL GROWER RESILIENCE

## Consumer insights – Hort IQ

The new Hort IQ platform, launched at Hort Connections recently, provides access to the latest, most comprehensive Australian fruit, vegetable and nut consumer data, giving growers access to market dynamics, purchasing trends and consumer perceptions.

The easy-to-use portal, which houses more than 100 pieces of consumer research and integrates more than 10,000 consumer surveys, is a vital one-stop shop for consumer, farm, industry and export market insights.

## Grower insights - Hort Stats Handbook

The Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook is released in the first quarter of each year. This resource provides growers with a deep dive into 75 different horticulture categories, equipping them with more data to help inform business decisions.

## Say g'day to your ISDM

Our 10 Industry Service and Delivery Managers (ISDMs) are based in major growing regions across Australia.

Each ISDM manages three to four industries and is charged with coordinating growers' engagement with the latest R&D, international trade and marketing information.

ISDMs also manage the investment advisory panels that meet regularly in the regions.

The reset of these advisory panels has provided a 70 per cent increase in new grower participation, which is energising these important groups.

It doesn't matter if you are a large grower or a smaller family business, a member of advisory panels or not, ISDMs want to hear your ideas.

## New Frontiers

To bolster Australia's \$16.3 billion horticulture industry, Hort Innovation recently launched a new approach to its non-levy-funded co-investment program. Frontiers will inject an extra \$500 million into research and development over the next decade through partnerships with local and global innovators, including Australian growers with big ideas, start-ups, tech companies and others.

This new co-investment approach is unapologetically commercial outcome-driven, designed to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving horticulture industry.

To keep across opportunities, register your interest here

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

1. Talk to your ISDM to discuss your challenges, ideas and resources available to you.
2. Find out about levy-funded R&D and marketing sharing events in your region and online webinars.
3. Join an Investment Advisory Panel or get involved in a project reference group to help steer investments.
4. Become a Hort Innovation member for free to enjoy perks such as Board voting rights, trial opportunities and free access to ticketed industry events.
5. Subscribe to regular information about the latest resources available to you, straight to your email inbox.



# HARVEST TO HOME DATA

## DECEMBER 2024 SWEETPOTATO

### USE OF INFORMATION IN THE DASHBOARD AND REPORTS

This report is an output of MT21004 Consumer Behavioural Retail Data Program and intended for use by Hort Innovation, Australian horticulture industries, and other stakeholders in the context of understanding and diagnosing market performance and shopper behaviour.

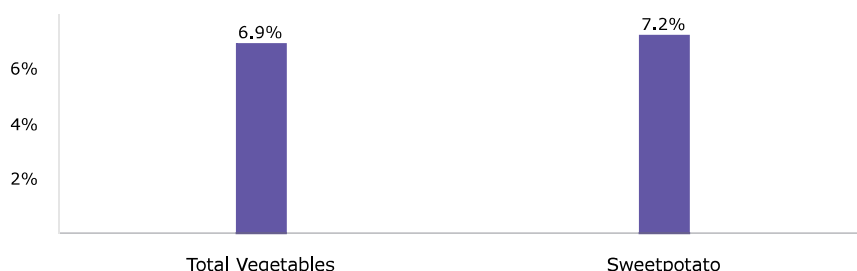
### DATA

Nielsen Homescan® is a continuous panel of 10,000 households who record all take-home packed and fresh grocery from all retail outlets. The sample is demographically and geographically representative of the Australian household population. To read the full document please [click here](#).

## MARKET OVERVIEW

In the latest 52 weeks, sweetpotato was rising quickly, at 7.2% in terms of dollars (\$) and falling (-3.7%) in terms of volume (kg). Buying household percentage fell from 61% to 59%. The average dollar spend rose from \$20.54 to \$22.17. Sweetpotato fell in terms of average weight purchased (kg).

### DOLLAR SALES (\$) GROWTH VERSUS TOTAL VEGETABLES



### KEY METRICS BY STATE

	\$ Sales Growth	Volume (kg) Growth	Percentage of Buying Households		Annual Household Purchases (Value)		Annual Household Purchases (Volume)	
			This Year	Year Ago	This Year	Year Ago	This Year	Year Ago
National	7.2%	-3.7%	59%	61%	\$22.17	\$20.54	9.1kg	9.4kg
Queensland	1.8%	-6.8%	62%	64%	\$23.23	\$22.60	10.5kg	11.2kg
New South Wales	6.9%	-1.5%	61%	63%	\$20.72	\$19.14	8.7kg	8.7kg
Victoria	12.6%	-2.9%	56%	54%	\$21.40	\$20.12	8.3kg	9.1kg
South Australia	6.2%	0.0%	49%	56%	\$22.11	\$18.48	9.0kg	8.0kg
Western Australia	12.7%	-2.3%	60%	65%	\$24.88	\$20.83	9.1kg	8.8kg

Source: NielsenIQ Homescan for the 52 weeks ending 01/12/2024 for the Australian market. Copyright © 2025 Nielsen Consumer LLC.

Data for Tasmania not available

In terms of dollar sales change, sweetpotato gained 7.2%, compared to carrots, which gained the most with 12.2%.

# WHO IS BUYING

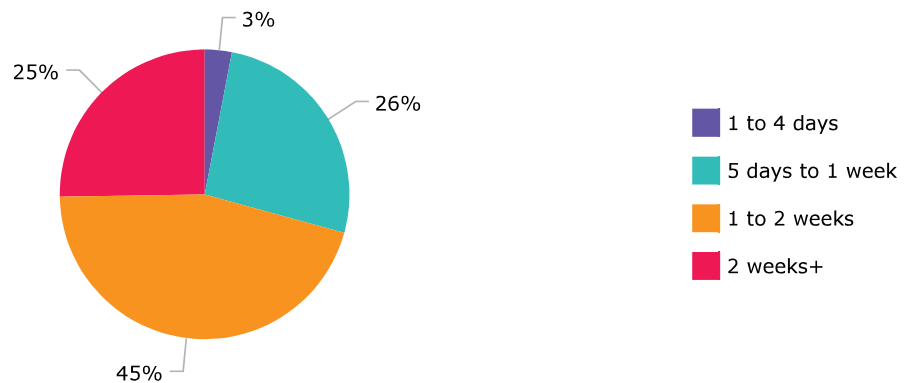
High income households contributed the most dollar sales to sweetpotato with 39.9% , in contrast to 41.9% for total vegetables.

## LIFESTAGE

### WHO BUYS MY VEGETABLES (\$)?



### STORAGE LENGTH EXPECTATIONS - ALL (AVERAGE)



Source: Attitudinal reports prepared by Nielsen for Hort Innovation, survey sample minimum n=300, fieldwork from 18/06/2020 to 24/06/2020 for the Australian market. Copyright © 2019 Horticulture Innovation Australia.

Q19: How long do you expect Sweetpotato to stay fresh for, once you have purchased them?

***There are hundreds of resources being developed across all commodity groups. We've scoured them all and chosen a few may be of interest to sweetpotato growers.***

## FOCUS: NUTRIENT USE EFFICIENCY

**Webinar recording:** [Developing a fertiliser program for vegetable crops with Bruce Scott and Doris Blaesing](#)

This webinar series aims to provide evidence based knowledge to make good decisions on site-specific nutrient management of vegetable crops using soil and plant testing and the 4R principles (right source, right rate, right time and right place).

The third webinar in the series focuses on developing a fertiliser program and features well-respected specialists Bruce Scott (E.E. Muir & Sons) and Dr Doris Blaesing.

The webinar series is free and are bought to you as part of the Soil Wealth project, funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia and the vegetable levy, with support from Fertcare® and E.E. Muir & Sons.

[Download presentation](#)

**Webinar recording:** [Nutrition management and plant disease with Dr Len Tesoriero](#)

Presented by renowned plant pathologist Dr Len Tesoriero from the NSW Department of Primary Industries as part of the Soil Wealth and Integrated Crop Protection projects, this webinar covers:

- Nutrition and disease relationships
- Effect of different forms of nitrogen and other nutrients on soil borne disease

[Download fact sheet on silicon](#)

**Video:** [Plant sampling for nutrient analysis](#)

Soil Wealth ICP team member Dr Doris Blaesing presented at a Soil Network of Knowledge webinar to discuss plant sampling methodologies which can be used in a broad range of production systems.

Learn what sampling approach is best taken for different crops and pastures (e.g. planning, monitoring and diagnostic) and more about the Fertcare Plant Sampling Guide in this webinar recording.

[Click here to watch the recording](#)