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Unlocking Australia's tropical fruit export potential

Premium Australian banana products could prove successful overseas; our unique dark-skinned passionfruit varieties set us apart, and our lychee production window is the longest in the world.

Those are just some of the findings from the recently released Australian Tropical Fruit Export Strategies 2023, funded by Hort Innovation and developed using research from market-mapping company McKINNA et al.

Hort Innovation chief executive John Lloyd said the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation and researchers had been working with industry the past six months to develop the strategies – and some export opportunities were more viable than others.

“Many Australian tropical fruit varieties undergo little to no export activity currently, so through the development of these strategies we are really breaking new ground,” he said.

“Some products such as bananas, have clear possibilities while other products such as papaya are faced with more challenges, particularly because they are highly perishable which is difficult with freight.”

Six strategies have been developed – papaya, passionfruit, lychees, bananas, persimmons and limes. Mr Lloyd said the overarching findings were that all tropical fruit sectors need to collaborate to build new export business models and supply chains, and maximise immediate opportunities while also pursuing new market access in the longer term. New product development with premium pricing and strong branding, he said, were also key.

Regional workshops, grower interviews, and a detailed potential market review informed the strategies, which Mr Lloyd said uncovered interesting findings.

“In relation to bananas, research has found that Australian bananas cannot compete just on price due to higher labour and freight costs than our competitors, which are mostly developing countries,” he said.

“However, there is an opportunity to market niche high-end products, highlighting strengths such as our environmentally sustainable production systems and the rich taste and colour that make Aussie bananas unique.”

Passionfruit, he said, was a stand out with the strong potential for product differentiation with only Australia and New Zealand offering a dark-skinned variety of the fruit.

“Discerning consumers, particularly in Asia, like premium-quality fruit that is attractive, and unique,” he said. “Partnering with New Zealand to extend our supply window could certainly bring decent returns to Aussie growers.”

The research on potential lychee trade, Mr Lloyd said, also uncovered some interesting findings.

“In lychees, there appears to be plenty of room to exploit current market access and opportunities in New Zealand, Hong Kong, the USA, and Singapore to continue building those markets,” he said.

“However, there is a need to address the efficiency of current supply chains, which is critical due to the fruit's acute temperature sensitivity and short shelf life.”

See summaries of the Australian Tropical Fruit Export Strategies via the following links:

- [Bananas](#)
- [Lychees](#)
- [Persimmons](#)
- [Limes](#)
- [Papayas](#)
- [Passionfruit](#)

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