

FEBRUARY 2022

# Sweetpotato

**Strategic Investment Plan** 2017-2021

## PERFORMANCE REPORT



## Sweetpotato SIP performance report

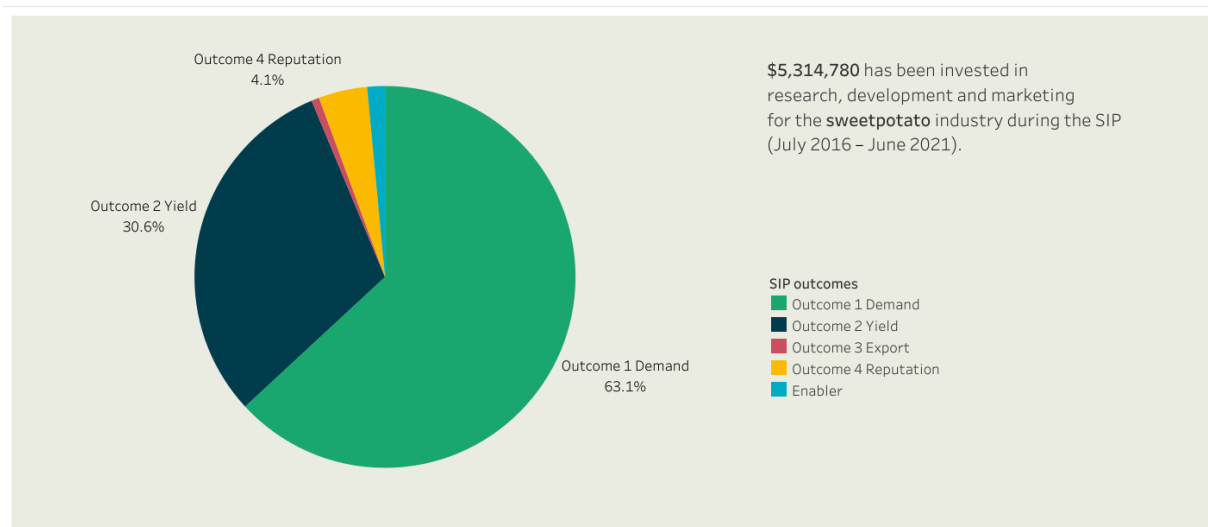
This performance report reviews the performance of levy investments delivered against the sweetpotato Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), which was active for the 5-year period from 2016/17 to 2020/21. The SIP was developed to strategically guide research and development (R&D) and marketing levy investment in accordance with core industry priorities. The SIP featured four outcome areas, 12 strategies and 12 key performance indicators (KPIs), summarised in Table 1. A total of \$5.3 million was invested into the Sweetpotato Fund over the 5-year period of the SIP. The total investment expenditure allocated against each outcome is provided in Figure 1.

**Table 1: Sweetpotato SIP outcomes**

Outcome	Description	Expenditure allocation*
1. Demand	By 2021, domestic per capita consumption of fresh Australian sweetpotato has increased, supported by positive consumer perceptions of product value	63.1%
2. Yield	By 2021, the Australian sweetpotato industry has increased marketable yield per hectare through adoption of technology, management best practice and cultivars	30.6%
3. Export	By 2021, the Australian sweetpotato industry has diversified its markets through export development and value adding	0.7%
4. Reputation	By 2021, the Australian sweetpotato industry has secured and strengthened its good reputation with the community, customers and governments	4.1%

\*Total investment \$5.3 million as of June 2021. Balance of expenditure comprises of enabler investments, which includes expenditure to support the delivery of the SIP including advisory meeting and publication costs.

**Figure 1: Sweetpotato SIP investment expenditure analysis**



## SIP performance analysis

This performance report reviews the investment achievements delivered within each outcome area that have generated impact for growers. The overall status of each strategic area, informed through an assessment of KPI performance, is also provided. The evaluation status and criteria were:

Strategic area status	Criteria
Achieved	KPIs for this strategic area were met
In progress	Investment delivery remains ongoing
Not achieved	Investment was not prioritised in this strategic area

The results have been informed from evidence compiled through reviewing investment documentation and engagement with project managers. Outcomes generated through the investments are documented and brief case studies of flagship performance and impact for each outcome area are also provided.

## Outcome 1: Demand – By 2021, domestic per capita consumption of fresh Australian sweetpotato has increased, supported by positive consumer perceptions of product value

The strategic intent of the sweetpotato SIP 2017-2021 was to maintain and strengthen consumer demand for fresh Australian sweetpotato as the foundation for sustainable expansion of production and consumption along with good average prices.

### Summary of strategic area and achievement status:

The strategies in the SIP that were identified to support sweetpotato demand are listed below. An achievement status is provided based upon internal evaluation of project performances:

Strategic area	Status
Increase domestic consumer demand for fresh, quality Australian sweetpotato	Achieved
Inform consumers about the positive and distinctive health and nutrition attributes of sweetpotato	Achieved
Monitor current perceptions and experiences with sweetpotato by different consumer segments	Achieved

### KPI callouts:

- The *Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook* (HA18002) reported the 5-year average wholesale supply per person increased 40% compared to levels prior to development of the SIP, which was above the 20% increase in sales targeted by the SIP. The increased supply contributed to a 9% decrease in wholesale prices with the net effect being a 35% increase in the 5-year average wholesale value of sweetpotatoes to \$93 million.
- The project *Australian sweetpotato consumer insights research* (PW18003) delivered research on Australian consumer perceptions and attitudes towards sweetpotatoes with the results made available for industry level and business level R&D and marketing.
- Marketing campaigns focused on promoting the versatility of sweetpotato to position it as the preferred vegetable choice for light buyers. In addition to 'always on' social media and public relations activities, sweetpotatoes were promoted at several events including parenting expos, The Sydney Royal Easter Show, Ekka Royal Queensland Show and through retail in-store sampling. More than 55,000 sample occasions were supported at retail during the period of the SIP, with a trial-to-purchase rate of 37% recorded in 2018/19.

## Outcome 2: Yield – By 2021, the Australian sweetpotato industry has increased marketable yield per hectare through adoption of technology, management best practice and cultivars

The strategic intent of this outcome was to accelerate the application of production practices that are proven to optimise returns and reduce risk to growers.

### Summary of strategic area and achievement status:

The strategies in the SIP that were identified to support sweetpotato yields are listed below. An achievement status is provided based upon internal evaluation of project performances:

Strategic area	Status
Promote the use of existing R&D and proven management practices that improve on-farm efficiency and increase yield	Achieved
Facilitate access to protectants of high value to growers	Achieved
Maintain and improve access to sweetpotato cultivars that meet market needs and offer superior performance with yield	Not achieved
Innovation in sweetpotato growing systems for sustainable production	Achieved

### KPI callouts:

- Through *Investigation of skin hardening and splitting disorders in sweetpotatoes* (PW18001) the sweetpotato industry partnered with USA researchers to better understand the causes behind splitting and skinning in sweetpotato crops, and how they can be reduced.
- Concluding in 2018, *Innovating new virus diagnostics and planting bed management in the Australian sweetpotato industry* (VG13004) demonstrated sprout multiplication could be improved by 25% through improved plant beds with recommendations extended to industry through plant bed and virus management guides, fact sheets, field days and workshops. Over 85% of sweetpotato growers were directly engaged with the project.

### ***Case study: Integrated pest management of nematodes in sweetpotatoes (PW17001)***

Nematodes are significant pests in sweetpotato production, with the ability to cause stunting, general un-thriftiness and yield loss.

Ongoing at the end of the SIP, this project aimed to extend existing knowledge and develop new knowledge specific to sweetpotato farming systems on soil health and nematode management.

Four masterclasses were held with 51 attendees from the major production areas of Bundaberg, Cudgen and Atherton. Classes consisted of presentations and hands-on practical sessions with a focus on participant interactivity to provide sweetpotato growers with the most up to date information on sustainable soil health management and a variety of nematode control options. 84% of growers reported the masterclasses were highly relevant for their needs.

Thirteen fact sheets were produced on key regional nematode pests and management strategies.

Four field days and two virtual field days were held with more than 66 attendees.

Intensive field surveys were conducted to gain an understanding of region-specific nematode species occurrences and identify any potential biosecurity issues. Growers were informed of which specific nematodes are present on their farms to support improved and targeted management.

A long-term farming systems trial was established in November 2018 at the Bundaberg Research Facility. The trial had the goal of investigating the possibility of growing sweetpotatoes in a manner that uses integrated management to improve biological soil health and minimise losses resulting from plant-parasitic nematodes. Practices incorporated in the trial included rotation crops, reduced tillage, traffic control and organic amendments.

## Outcome 3: Export – By 2021, the Australian sweetpotato industry has diversified its markets through export development and value adding

The strategic intent of this outcome was to reduce the industry's high dependency on the domestic market for fresh gold sweetpotato.

### Summary of strategic area and achievement status:

The strategies in the SIP that were identified to support sweetpotato exports are listed below. An achievement status is provided based upon internal evaluation of project performances:

Strategic area	Status
Work directly with major sweetpotato value chain businesses to prioritise three commercially viable market diversification opportunities	Achieved
Develop trade with existing export markets	In progress
Collaborate with government and other industries to gain technical access to new, high value markets	Not achieved

### KPI callouts:

- The *Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook* (HA18002) reported the value of exports for sweetpotato increasing from \$0.9 million at the start of the SIP, to \$3.1 million in 2020/21, however, the proportion of sweetpotato production, which was exported remained low, at an average of 1.4% over the past five years.
- The project *Australian sweetpotato market insight reports* (PW19000) provided the sweetpotato industry with valuable insights to improve the understanding of international markets and consumers for the domestic supply chain. The project delivered analysis on market consumption trends, preferences, behaviour, supply chain considerations, market access and regulatory factors, overall market demand, and growth for six priority export markets – UAE, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Netherlands and the UK.

## Outcome 4: Reputation – By 2021, the Australian sweetpotato industry has secured and strengthened its good reputation with the community, customers and governments

The strategic intent of this outcome is to manage knowledge, relationships, systems and processes required to communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders

### Summary of strategic area and achievement status:

The strategies in the SIP that were identified to support the sweetpotato industry’s reputation are listed below. An achievement status is provided based upon internal evaluation of project performances:

Strategic area	Status
Manage risks to the industry’s reputation as a reliable supplier of superior quality, safe and responsibly-grown produce	Achieved
Strengthen industry cohesion through direct, two-way communication with growers and other value chain businesses	Not Achieved

### KPI callouts:

- Ongoing at the end of the SIP, *Review of the biosecurity plan for the sweetpotato industry* (PW17000) was tasked with updating the industry’s biosecurity plan. The plan is a top-level document that identifies high-priority endemic and exotic pests, diseases and weeds, along with the risk mitigation activities required to reduce their biosecurity threat, plus surveillance and diagnostic activities.