



## **Final Report**

### **Mango Industry Conference 2017**

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## **Summary**

The 11th Australian Mango Conference provided an opportunity for all sectors of the industry to meet, learn and share experiences and increase awareness and understanding on new technologies and topics pertinent to mango growers and businesses working in the industry.

This year's conference was recognised by many delegates as the best to date. The conference had a great blend of presentations with an excellent social program. The presentations ranged from topics on retail trends to mango genetics. The three-day conference commenced with the first 1 ½ days as plenary sessions followed by 1 ½ days in the field with presentations at three different packing sheds and orchards. A focus for several presentations was on disruptive technologies.

The conference theme, 'Celebrate, Collaborate and Create' provided the focus for the conference program. The theme was the same theme used for the 10<sup>th</sup> Australian Mango Conference and was deliberately chosen to reinforce the continued focus on bringing the industry together to maximize the opportunities that are available to industry.

Almost 250 delegates attended the conference. 25 trade exhibitors also participated in the conference and added to the overall connectivity.

## **Keywords**

Mangoes, conference, collaboration, quality, research, marketing, technology.

# Introduction

Mangoes are grown commercially by approximately 800 growers throughout many areas of tropical and sub-tropical Australia. Key production areas include:

- Northern Territory; Darwin, Katherine and Mataranka
- Queensland: Mareeba, Dimbulah, Townsville, Burdekin, Bowen, Rockhampton, Yeppoon and Bundaberg
- Western Australia: Kununurra, Carnarvon and Gingin.

There are also several smaller growers elsewhere including in Northern New South Wales, the Mildura region of Victoria and South Australia.

The industry is characterised by diverse geographical spread of production and the diverse nature of the scale of production.

Because most Australian mangoes are harvested during the period from September through to March, the opportunity for industry participants to come to together is limited. The biennial Australian Mango Conference is traditionally held in May every second year and is developed to create the opportunity for people from all sectors of the industry to meet.

# Methodology

The conference was convened by Hayley Melhuish and Dale Kim from the company The Verse, with events staff to assist with operational aspects of the program. AMIA worked on a range of activities associated with the conference including but not limited to; program content and development, event delivery, sponsorship/trade exhibitors, registration, development of communication materials and financial management.

Conference planning commenced in mid-2016, with a conference organising committee meeting regularly to manage the conference.

# Outputs

The conference program which outlines the key output (delivery of the conference) is attached to this report—see Appendix One.

Experienced Master of Ceremonies, Andrew Klein led conference delegates through the program and facilitated the smooth flow of sessions.

Day 1. This session held during day 1 were a mix of presentations and facilitated panel discussions. The focus of day 1 was retail trends, mango marketing and quality and quality assurance

Day 2. The morning of day 2 followed a similar pattern to day 1, with a mix of presentations and facilitated panel discussions. In the afternoon, the delegates moved to view presentations at the three

orchards

Day 3. Delegates attended presentations at the orchards/packing sheds. The focus of day 3 were the outcomes of research and development activities occurring in the industry.

## Outcomes

The key outcomes from the conference included:

- Delegates that attended the conference gained a greater understanding on the range of topics presented at the conference, including:
  - The challenges retailers have in selling mangoes and the programs both industry and retailers put in place to increase sales
  - The implementation of the Harmonised Australian Retailer Produce Scheme (HARPS) and its implementation by growers
  - Current industry disinfestation research which may lead to improved market access to targeted export markets
  - Disruptive technologies which are bringing new technology to horticulture and the benefits these technologies will bring to industry
  - Current research outcomes for the industry.
- Delegates had the opportunity to discuss issues that were impacting on the industry and discuss future opportunities
- Key topics discussed at the conference will generate improved outcomes for industry, focused on consumers, marketing, quality, export and new technologies
- 100% of survey respondents rated the conference overall to be very good or good (the survey was distributed both physically at the conference and online after the conference. See Appendix Two for further details)
- Industry stakeholders (including growers) who were unable to attend the conference can / will receive information through the publication of articles and videos of the presentations that were made at the conference; via the industry website ([www.industry.mangoes.net.au](http://www.industry.mangoes.net.au)) and quarterly publication *Mango Matters*
- The Conference was well attended by a wide cross section of industry, with delegate numbers 20% higher than previous conferences. This was due to improved marketing of the conference with a program that was highly relevant to a cross section of industry. Most conferences are held in key mango production areas and holding the conference in a regional town, located amid the principal production region for the R2E2 variety of mango, while logistically challenging, provided a greater incentive for growers to attend
- Sponsor and trade exhibitor numbers were also higher than previous conferences
- There was a very positive atmosphere among delegates and the sense of optimism on the industry's prospects is continuing to grow.

## Evaluation and Discussion

Holding the conference in a regional town was logistically challenging as some services (e.g. catering, audio-visual) were not available locally. Also, the region was severely impacted by Cyclone Debbie, which crossed the coast approximately 60 kilometres south of Bowen on 28<sup>th</sup> March, five weeks before the conference. However, with support from local growers and the community, the organising committee proceeded with holding the conference in Bowen.

The conference was assessed through a survey undertaken by delegates either at the end of the conference or following the conference through an online survey. The survey was aimed at determining what aspects of the conference worked well and what aspects need to be improved.

A presentation of the survey results forms appendix two. In summary, delegates provided the following feedback:

- Highest rated presentation was Mango Marketing and Growing Demand
- Some respondents wanted more relevant presentations e.g. growers wanted more practical and clearly communicated presentations. To address this, it is recommended in future that more vetting of presentations is conducted and suggestions are made to improve presentations with presenters, prior to the conference.
- Some delegates would have liked more time looking at the properties where field days were and more practical (in-field) sessions
- Social events and the conference overall rated well (very good or good); the main complaint about the exhibition area was lack of space (consideration should be taken of accepting sponsors up until the last minute)
- Everyone took home different ideas from the conference / benefited differently, from the networking opportunity, to learning about mango flowering and fruit mapping
- Survey respondents would like the next conference to be held in Darwin or Mareeba / Cairns.

Holding a national conference is a significant burden on any small organisation, both in terms of workload and the financial risks involved. AMIA has held a biennial national conference for the past 15 years. Prior to commencing planning of the conference AMIA considers both the additional workload and the financial risks, and implements strategies to spread the workload and minimise the financial risks. AMIA believes there are real benefits for the industry in holding the national conference. The conference provides benefits including:

- A great opportunity for representatives from all sectors to meet and discuss issues, both in a formal setting (conference sessions) as well as informally (social events)
- Relationships are built among delegates and this provides a great opportunity for better understanding of the challenges each sector faces and builds the base for future opportunities
- The conference creates the opportunity for researchers to present the latest outcomes of their research and provides the opportunity for delegates to have one on one discussions with researchers
- As the key event for the mango industry, the conference brings a sense of unity and a sense of optimism for delegates. It is also a focal event for the industry as it is often the only opportunity

every two years that some delegates have an opportunity to meet and renew acquaintances.

As the biennial conference has become a key communication and extension activity for the industry it is recommended that it should continue.

## **Recommendations**

The biennial mango conference has become a key part of the industry's communication program and is an important event that provides a catalyst for all sectors of industry to meet. The conference provides a great environment for people working in all sectors of the industry to meet, make and renew acquaintances. It provides the opportunity for personal and business relationships to develop in a relaxed atmosphere. There are few other opportunities for this type of networking and relationship development. The biennial national conference should remain as an integral component of the industry's communication program.

## **Scientific Refereed Publications**

Not applicable.

## **Intellectual Property/Commercialisation**

No commercial IP generated.