



A win for consumers & growers



Industry wide efforts to improve table grape quality and consumer acceptability are proving promising, early season results show.

A three-year project to increase demand and consumption of Australian table grapes, which we reported on previously in the July edition of the *Vine*, has yielded several successful outcomes, after significant industry consultation and research.

Table grape supply chain quality 2017–2020 (TG17002) is funded by Hort Innovation using the table grape research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

The project brought together key table grape industry stakeholders, the ATGA, growers, Hort Innovation, key retailers and marketing companies to respond to grower concerns regarding the negative effects of immature fruit in the market.

Hort Innovation contracted Delytics Ltd to lead the project, in collaboration

with the ATGA, Kitchener Partners and Rudge Produce Systems Ltd.

Last year, major retailers Coles, Woolworths and Aldi accepted newly developed minimum maturity standards for table grapes, in a major win for consumers and growers alike.

The new minimum standards will apply to a number of public varieties grown in Australia. For Crimson, Flame, Red Globe and Thompson varieties, at least 80 per cent of fruit in a representative sample must have at least 16°Brix. Meanwhile, Menindee (Sugraone or Superior) variety must have at least 80 per cent of fruit in a representative sample with at least 15.5°Brix.

The newly adopted standards were developed based on the analysis of maturity monitoring of 13,500 table grapes carried out over the past two seasons by Delytics.

Delytics combines extensive experience in crop quality assurance with robust science and data analytics to optimise crop quality throughout the entire supply chain to increase

consumer acceptance and repeat purchase frequency of fruit.

While retailers are currently transitioning to the new standards, which will be in full effect by the 2021/22 season, the industry wide awareness generated by the project and the new standards has already had a positive impact.

Table grape consumer acceptability is at its highest point in five years – 81.4 per cent* – above the target of 80 per cent.

It's a promising turnaround from last season's 69 per cent – a figure which showed almost one in three purchases didn't meet taste expectations – and should give growers and suppliers confidence that ongoing attention to the common goal could yield positive sustainable results long term.

Delytics managing director Mark Loeffen said once maturity standards are set and followed across the board, turnarounds can happen relatively quickly for fruit categories. Delytics helped Calypso mangoes become a market leader in 2011, and assisted

Citrus Australia in 2014 in identifying maturity measures which led to vast improvements (an increase from 70 per cent to 90 per cent consumer acceptability within two seasons), among many other achievements.

"We try to take a whole-of-supply-chain approach," Mark said. "I think everybody is signalling that things are changing and will change in the future."

While it's too early to tell whether the results will have a sustained impact, Mark said it was a step in the right direction.

ATGA CEO Jeff Scott said it was great to see the consumer acceptability on

the rise, but said that it was important for growers not to become complacent.

"Growers need to adhere to the minimum standards to maintain consumer confidence," Jeff said.

"There are many alternative and competitive products. If consumers know that every time they purchase grapes they are enjoying that sweet burst of flavour that mature grapes provide then the consumer will have repeat purchases all through our harvest period. It's a win-win for all." ♦

* Figure at the time of print

Hort Innovation
Strategic levy investment

TABLE GRAPE FUND

CRIMSON, FLAME, RED GLOBE & THOMPSON

For Crimson, Flame, Red Globe & Thompson varieties, at least 80% of fruit in a representative sample must have at least 16°Brix.



MENINDEE (SUGRAONE & SUPERIOR)

Menindee (Sugraone & Superior) variety must have at least 80% of fruit in a representative sample with at least 15.5°Brix.



Export news

Taiwan has requested the Australian Government conduct cold treatment verification on fruit fly for grape exports from Australia.

Japan was previously the only other country which required verification trials, but the Australian table grape industry must now comply to continue exporting to Taiwan, at a cost to the table grape levies of about \$500,000.

The cold verification trials will involve both Mediterranean and Queensland fruit flies, and will take place at research facilities in Western Australia and Queensland on about 30,000 flies using organic fruit.

The fruit is infected with fly larvae, then placed in cool rooms at temperatures below 3°C for a period of 18 days, at which point inspections take place to see if larvae have survived.

Taiwanese biosecurity officials have also requested to oversee the fruit fly trials at the beginning and end of the trials. Francis De Lima will conduct trials in Western Australia, and Peter Leach in Queensland.

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