



News



& views

WINTER
2025

We are almost at the peak of our season on the East Coast and already the signs are evident indicating how the year is likely to shape up in terms of volume quality and pricing.

Happy to report that the Shepard season was much better than last year for all concerned with strong pricing driven by lower volumes and good quality. We handled fruit from Far North Queensland and the Bundaberg - Childers growing regions.

Unfortunately, the case is not the same for Hass growers.



**Update
from
Roger Turner
General Manager**

The season opened strongly late April but has since been a very difficult market with volume ex FNQ, Bundaberg area, South Queensland and recently some fruit from NSW available, contributing to an oversupply.

Pricing has been challenging particularly for smaller size trays and bulks due to the market being flush with fruit in all markets.

This applies to all grades including Premium.

Consequently, we are advising growers to delay picking where possible to allow the market to stabilise and prices to firm.

The news on a more positive note is the Board's decision to invest in new grading technology with the planned acquisition of a new grader. This will provide for improvements in grade consistency and more sophisticated grading capability in addition to cost savings owing to increased operating speeds.

In total the investment will allow Natures to better respond to market conditions at a lower cost to our growers.

We expect the new grader to be installed and commissioned before February '26.

As always, I would like to emphasise to growers the commitment of all at Natures Fruit Company to operate professionally, transparently and with the very best interests of our grower partners in mind, something which is unique in our sector these days.

We look forward to handling fruit from our Winter supply partners which will be packed and distributed as effectively as we possibly can.

Working for each other..

**Board elects
new Chairman**

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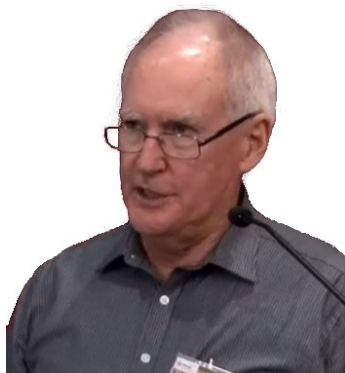
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Message from the Chairman



John Tannock

G'day Readers,

Sadly, I wish to advise that this will be my last report for the newsletter in my role as Chairman of Natures Fruit Company. After thirteen years in the role and after giving the matter a lot of thought, I decided it was in the best interests of NFC that there be a smooth transition to a younger Chairman.

While there have been many challenges that come with the role, it has been my honour to serve our grower members as Chairman of the Board and to work with many talented and dedicated directors and staff since accepting the chairmanship in 2012.

On the one hand I would have been happy to have stayed on in the role. However, I came to a view that, rather than have a sudden or unexpected changeover at some time in the future, NFC would be better served if there was a seamless transition to a younger Chairman, with my continuing to serve on the Board to provide continuity and to support the incoming Chairman as he grew into the role.

In my near 20 years on the Board, there have been many changes and testing times that have confronted NFC. Back in those days, there were two cooperatives in the avocado industry and between them they had approximately 30% of the Australian avocado market. Since then, a combination of the entry of private marketers and packers into the industry, larger growers who felt their volumes carried sufficient critical mass that they did not need the safety umbrella that a cooperative provided, and the exit from the industry of many smaller growers, have been just some of the game changes we have faced.

NFC is now the only remaining cooperative in the avocado industry. While the years ahead will continue to throw challenges at us, there are also many opportunities that are there for the taking. The decision by the Board at our last meeting to replace our grader at the Glasshouse Mountains packshed provides one of those opportunities. This has the potential to result in lower packing costs, increased throughput capacity and higher quality packouts. See Roger's front page report for more information.

In concluding, I wish to congratulate our incoming Chairman Matt Gray on his appointment. Matt is an experienced avocado grower, and since joining the Board, has been proactive in gaining a solid understanding of how NFC, and in particular our packing operation, operates. Pleasingly, the Board is totally supportive of Matt's appointment, and I am looking forward to our working together as a team under Matt's leadership.

John Tannock
Chairman

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Change at the helm

Following 13 years at the helm of Natures Fruit, John Tannock has decided it's time to pass the baton and retire from the Chairman position.

John announced his decision at the June Board Meeting when Board positions are routinely decided for the ensuing 12 months following the Company's Annual General Meeting.



**John Tannock (R) and Matthew Gray (L)
at the handover 13.06.25**

Matthew Gray was subsequently nominated as Chairman and accepted the post following unanimous decision of the Board.

John will continue on the Board as an elected Director ensuring a seamless transition for the continuity of Board matters.

Matt hails from Glen Innes (NSW) where he manages a family farming operation. He was first appointed as Director in 2020 and has brought to the Board a younger mindset and an energetic enthusiasm for involvement in all Company matters.

We thank John for his strong commitment and diligence during his tenure as Chairman.

Matt becomes the 9th Chairman in the history of the Company.

Preceding him were ...

1988 - 1994 Stewart Penny
1994 - 1996 Russell Page
1996 - 1997 Colin Krome
1997 - 2000 John Bolton
2000 - 2002 Graeme Thomas
2002 - 2005 George Green
2005 - 2012 Ros Smerdon
2012 - 2025 John Tannock

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRMAN

The role of Chairman is broad ranging requiring a combination of skills including strategic thinking, communication, good judgment and diplomacy. A brief résumé would look like,

- Taking the chair at Board meetings;
- Ensuring the proper working of the Board;
- Sometimes acting as the leading representative of the Company in its dealings with the outside world, including the financial markets, regulators, the press, governments, interest groups and the community;
- Maintaining proper shareholder relations, both formally through the Annual General Meeting and reporting procedures, and informally with all major shareholders;
- Initiating policy decisions with the General Manager and the Board;
- Ensuring the existence of an effective strategic planning system and the appropriate consideration of future development possibilities;
- Ensuring that the Board plays an active role in strategic review and that development proposals and planning issues are referred to the Board for discussion and approval;
- Setting sound corporate governance for the Company through policy, ethical values and attitudes;
- Ensuring that probity is maintained in accounting, reporting and all other respects;
- Monitoring the General Manager's performance against established measures of financial and operating performance, in conjunction with the Board;
- Deciding, together with the General Manager, what matters should be the concern of the Board, and which are purely management matters, to be left to the executive management;
- Acting as counsellor, adviser and listener to the General Manager and, where necessary, other members of the Board;
- Ensuring a sound management structure through the appointment of the best management the Company can afford.

Natures' commitment to the "Growing Robust Avocados" Project

Natures Fruit has been a strong supporter and advocate for the Growing Robust Avocados Project since its inception 2021.

This endorsement was predicated on the reality that fresh new research findings had identified certain nutritional measurements that were a reliable indicator of robustness in avocados.

This presented as a significant game changer for the industry but more specifically the avocado marketer and the consumer.

The ability to qualify fruit as being robust offers marketers wide ranging advantages over 'other fruit' ... key factors such as

- branding opportunities
- command of premium price points
- preferential ranging by retailers.

while consumers benefit with the confidence their avocado purchase won't disappoint.

Essentially the research had identified a link between the calcium: nitrogen ratio of the fruit and its robustness.

So what do we mean by robustness?

The term means the inherent ability of fruit to withstand the various rigours of handling in the supply chain.

This could be time, pressure or temperature related. Robust fruit will resist discoloration that often results from such challenges.

Why is robustness important?

A robust avocado can handle the rigours of harvest, packing, storage and distribution to reach the consumer in a state of acceptable quality. Benefits of supplying reliable robust fruit include improved market satisfaction and repeat consumer purchasing, as well as reduced wastage and consignment losses.

Acting on the research findings Natures initiated a fruit robustness testing and monitoring scheme and encouraged grower members to participate in a fruit skin analysis program.

This included the offer of a complimentary no charge laboratory skin analyses and report, postage and handling, with archival data recording ... all designed as an incentive to encourage grower engagement in the pursuit of robust fruit.

In many instances only simple changes were needed to bring about significant benefit.

The introductory offer generated enlightening feedback along with nutritional recommendations that helped many of the participating growers gain an insight into their agronomy management. Corrective action reports guided growers with measurements how to remedy their nutritional practices. In many instances only simple changes were needed to bring about significant benefit.

Chairman of Natures Fruit, Matt Gray has been a strong promoter of the Robust Fruit Project from the word go.

"If growers are able to use measurements to consistently produce better quality fruit, we as your marketer can confidently promote your fruit as being robust; it figures we're in a

What influences robustness?

Many pre-harvest factors contribute to the production of robust avocados. The avocado robustness wheel shows that soil and root health, mineral nutrient availability at critical growth stages, management of fruit diseases, and harvesting fruits at optimal maturity all play a role.

better position to negotiate more favourable commercial outcomes that would not otherwise be the case." Matt advised.

"We need more growers to join and help get better quality fruit out there in the market."

The Avocado Robustness Wheel



The 'Avocado Robustness Wheel' was created by the project team as the focal point championing the Hort Innovation's "Growing Robust Avocados" project (AV21005).

The 'Wheel' clearly illustrates the management practices required to grow quality robust fruit. These practices are suitably depicted in agronomic purpose clusters to serve as an easy-to-follow point of reference guiding growers in administering their own avocado robustness strategies.

Producing quality, robust avocados

For the past three years, the industry funded 'Robust Fruit Project' has been in progress. Prior to the project's commencement a review was undertaken of the body of research that had been done around the world to determine what factors contributed to producing robust, quality fruit. It was an exceptional review as it highlighted what was needed to realise the aim; there were gaps in some areas, failing to explain how to achieve a much anticipated objective.



Horticultural Notes

Graeme Thomas
GLT Horticulture

The process of producing good quality/robust fruit involves many factors.

In recent times, I looked at the situation and compared it to the famous 'Pegg Wheel' where celebrated agronomist Ken Pegg created a simple diagrammatic illustration that encompassed all the critical factors that were needed to help growers in effectively managing phytophthora root rot.

So as a part of the Robust Fruit Project, we were able to put together a simple diagram that pulled together all that was needed for growers to quickly do a check of their own management program.

This is now depicted in the 'Robust Fruit Wheel'. The Robust avocado production factsheet is included in this newsletter.

The Robust Fruit Wheel



As a grower, when studying this diagram, you can simply tick off what you are doing well and that which needs to be changed to improve your quality.

Our observations indicate that over the last few years, there are growers who are doing all things correctly and won't need to change but there are others that will see they need to improve.

From my experiences over this period, the most significant change that is needed to improve quality is calcium loading of the trees for the 10 weeks period post flowering.

There are many side issues that need to be considered in doing this, but they do form a critical part of the process of producing good quality/robust fruit.

These factors include:

- Calcium in the fruit is the key contributor to improving quality/robustness.
- Calcium uptake occurs through the root system and is transported in the xylem.
- Uptake is primarily taken up through the root tips.
- Phytophthora attacks root tips.
- Calcium accumulation in the fruit is confined to 1st 10 weeks after fruit set.
- Foliar calcium applications are not effective.
- Gypsum application timing needs to allow for calcium release into the soil solution.
- Gypsum rate needs to be sufficient to increase the soil water calcium level.
- Potassium and magnesium applications need to be avoided during the post flowering period to allow for maximum calcium uptake.
- Optimum moisture availability needs to be maintained to maximize calcium uptake.

As you would expect, there is one area where I do have a lot of data that would suggest that there is one agronomy area in the industry where more attention needs to be paid.

That is in the area of phytophthora root rot management.

I initiated the root phos acid monitoring service in the late 1990s and I have data on file representative of all phos acid analysis results for that period since.

In more recent times it has become very obvious that the levels detected in the root samples in Eastern Australia are significantly lower than that of Western Australia.

Recently, I collated all of the phos acid results in the period from January to May for the years 2022 to 2025.

See below ...

Average root phos acid levels (mg/kg)

	2025	2024	2023	2022
Eastern Australia	34	78	70	43
Western Australia	114	131	122	115
Minimum Req'd	80	80	80	80

In the Eastern Australia data, there is one grower with the following averages ...

Individual Grower	107	132	100	57

For a some time, I was aware of the difference between the Eastern & Western States ... but to quantify and make this comparison has highlighted a massive, alarming difference.

When you look at root health, as a part of producing robust/good quality fruit, these Eastern Australian numbers concern me.

Research over the years has shown that to prevent phytophthora root infection, you need a level of 80 mg/kg of phos acid in the roots of your trees at any time during the year. With normal root growth, the levels decline after application, through to the next application period.

So to maintain a level of 80 mg/kg, your level after application needs to be above 150 mg/kg. This allows for the natural decline down to 80 mg/kg at the next application period.

January to May is a critical period. During this time, soil temperatures are at optimum levels for rot development, moisture levels can be optimum to excessive. During this period tree root growth has to be maximized to set the tree up for the stressful period of flowering and fruit set. As we have now learnt and come to understand, it is a period when we need to maximize calcium uptake.

Whilst I have highlighted this data in relation to the need to produce robust/good quality fruit, yield is also dramatically affected by your root health. I appreciate there are a multitude of factors in determining your yield, but I work with many growers in WA who average 25+ t/ha and during exceptional years, are picking up to 60 t/ha.

Roots are not a part of the tree that you see every day, but they determine what the top of your trees looks like.

If you want to maintain yield, quality and profitability, root health needs to be seriously addressed. We can see from the foregoing numbers that many in the Eastern States are denying themselves a sustainable orchard.

In summary

- *To improve quality/robustness, we need to maximise the calcium content of the fruit.*
- *Calcium is primarily taken up by the fruit, in the 1st 8 - 10 weeks after setting. In those 1st 8 weeks, the skin of the fruit has functioning stomata. After that period the stomata seal off and become lenticels*
- *Calcium is taken up via the transpiration stream. Foliar calcium will have no effect.*
- *Calcium absorption is greatest at the root tip.*
- *Optimum moisture level is required to ensure nutrient uptake*
- *Avocado need for **potassium and magnesium** is predominately during the fruit fill period.*
- ***Nitrogen** is the manipulator of yield and **calcium** is the manipulator of quality and robustness.*
- *The longer you hang fruit after maturity, the more the quality/robustness decreases.*
- *The higher amount of calcium in the fruit, the great flexibility you have to increase nitrogen to optimise yield.*



Robust avocado production **FACTSHEET**

Special thanks to Chis Searle (MacAvo Consulting) for providing advice and recommendations.

This factsheet was produced as part of the “Growing Robust Avocados” project (AV21005) funded by Hort Innovation, using the avocado research and development levy, contributions from the Australian Government and co-investment from Qld Department of Primary Industries, Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Central Queensland University and GLT Hort Services.

Calcium application

Calcium transport from roots to fruits occurs passively through the plant transpiration stream.

Fruit calcium accumulation only occurs during the first 6 to 10 weeks after fruit set.

Application of gypsum (ideally micronised) should be timed to ensure calcium is readily available in the soil solution during this period. Be aware that gypsum form influences calcium release rate.

Avoid over-application of calcium to minimise risk of inducing magnesium deficiency.

Potassium and magnesium applications

Calcium, potassium and magnesium compete for uptake by the roots.

Adequate but not excessive applications of potassium during mid-late fruit development and magnesium throughout the year will promote fruit calcium accumulation without sacrificing yield.

Nitrogen application

Nitrogen is an important manipulator of yield, but excessive applications are detrimental to quality.

Leaf nitrogen should be maintained within an optimum range befitting the variety (genotype) and growing region (environment).

Maximising fruit calcium affords greater flexibility in optimising nitrogen application and yield.

Harvest maturity

Fruit should be harvested at recommended optimal maturity to achieve robustness.

Harvesting immature or over-mature fruit will undo all other efforts to produce a robust fruit.

Immature fruit will tend to be watery and have poor flavour upon ripening.

Fruits continue to accumulate nitrogen while they hang on the tree, causing undesirable increases in N/Ca ratio.

Fruits that hang too long on the tree are also likely to develop more postharvest rots and disorders and may even develop rancid off-flavours upon ripening

Phytophthora root rot management

Avocados are highly susceptible to Phytophthora root rot.

Phytophthora primarily attacks root tips where calcium absorption is greatest.

To optimise PRR management, root phosphorous acid levels should be maintained above 80 mg/kg all year.

Precise irrigation

Avocados are sub-tropical trees with no root hairs, are very susceptible to water logging and easily drought affected.

Accurate irrigation scheduling is critical.

Tensiometers are sensitive and well-suited to inform avocado irrigation scheduling.

Tensiometer readings should ideally be maintained between 10 and 18 centibars

Soil drainage and mulching

Avocados roots have a high oxygen requirement and should only be planted on well-drained soil due to their susceptibility to water logging.

Mulching provides organic matter for improved soil structure, aeration and drainage, thus promoting a network of healthy feeder roots and associated beneficial microflora.

Strategic pruning

Avocado production is basically harvesting sunlight.

Regular pruning maximises sunlight interception and provides good air movement for effective fruit disease management.

Pruning to balance vegetative growth and crop load promotes fruit calcium uptake by limiting diversion of the transpiration stream to leaves.

Fruit disease management

Fungicides should be strategically applied to prevent infection and development of fruit diseases.

Anthracnose infection can occur at any stage of development only to express disease symptoms during the postharvest ripening phase.

It is essential to be aware of fungicide resistance potential and to have a strategic monitoring and management plan in place.

BOOST YOUR SUPER WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BEFORE EOFY

Looking to give your superannuation a boost before the end of the financial year? Look no further!

Follow these five savvy strategies to maximise your contributions and make the most of your superannuation savings.



Peter Speechley
Partner
HLB Wealth, Perth

- **Consider additional Concessional Contributions (Pre-Tax Contributions)**
Why?
Because these contributions are taxed at just 15%, potentially lowering your taxable income. It's like giving less to the taxman and more to future you! You're allowed up to \$30,000 annually,
- **Catch-up on Unused Concessional Contributions**
If you haven't maxed out your concessional contributions from previous years, legislation now allows you to make 'catch-up' contributions if your super balance is under \$500,000. Look back up to five years to see if you've got unused caps you can access.
- **Or consider Contribution Splitting with your Significant Other**
You may be able to split up to 85% of your concessional super contributions with your spouse. This strategy can help even out your super balances, potentially reducing the tax paid on super pensions in the future. It's a smart move, especially if one of you is taking a career break or working part-time.
- **Contributions (After-Tax Contributions)**
If you're a low- or middle-income earner, the co-contribution scheme is a great way for you to contribute to superannuation personally AND get a little bonus top-up from the government.
It's also a great way to add larger amounts to super, because you're allowed to contribute up to \$120,000 per year (or \$360,000 if you are eligible to 'bring forward' future contributions).
- **Take Advantage of Non-Concessional Sharing the Super 'Love' with Spouse Contributions**
If your partner's income is on the lower side, contributing to their super could earn you a tax offset of up to \$540. It's a win-win: you help increase your family's total super savings while scoring a tax perk for yourself.

With the end of the financial year fast approaching, now is the perfect time to take action and grow your retirement nest egg. Don't miss out on the chance to supercharge your super before EOFY!

Article courtesy HLB Mann Judd

Important Tax Dates 21/06/25 through to 21/09/25

21/06/25	May monthly BAS & IAS (PAYG Withholding)	28/07/25	Deadline for making superannuation contributions for June 2025 quarter to avoid incurring penalties
25/06/25	Fringe Benefits Tax return due for lodgement and final payment of tax	21/08/25	July monthly BAS & IAS (PAYG Withholding)
30/06/25	Superannuation contributions to have been paid and cleared by the bank, in order to claim tax deduction	28/08/25	Taxable Payments Annual Report for the Building & Construction, Cleaning and Courier, Road Freight Services, IT Services and Security, Investigation, Surveillance Services Industries or Government entities due for Lodgement
14/07/25	End-of-year finalisation declarations of payroll tax and superannuation information through Single Touch Payroll (STP) software	21/09/25	August monthly BAS & IAS (PAYG Withholding)
21/07/25	June monthly BAS & IAS (PAYG Withholding)		
28/07/25	April to June quarterly BAS & IAS due for lodgement		