

## FEATURE

### Benefits of biosecurity for bananas, avocados

Growers of banana and avocado crops can expect to benefit from the transition of their clean plant programs to the Nursery Production Farm Management System over the next 12-18 months, and other horticulture industries are likely to follow suit.

Both the banana and avocado industries have well-established and well-recognised programs to ensure the provision of high quality, disease-free planting material, but decided to consolidate these into the overarching Nursery Production FMS to reduce the cost and improve the speed and quality of high health and biosecurity measures.

The decision to transition makes sense, according to John McDonald, National Biosecurity Manager for the Nursery & Garden Industry of Australia, as it will give the two industries a more 'complete' management system and economies of scale.



Figure 1: John McDonald, NGIA.

"There are similarities between our system and the Avocado Nursery Voluntary Accreditation Scheme (ANVAS) and Quality Banana Approved Nursery program (QBAN) in managing hygiene of growing surfaces, growing media, growing containers and some product traceability and irrigation water, but many of these have not been updated or are limiting for production nurseries in 2018," Mr McDonald said.

"The Nursery Production FMS is a holistic on-farm management system that embraces biosecurity, best management practice and environmental and natural resource management, and it's constantly reviewed and updated in line with new advances in technology, research and development.

"Because it's an integrated system, all elements are audited together at one time which reduces cost and there are clear processes for non-conformance and re-dressing compliance around program elements. No duplication and improved efficiencies means less administration costs, and that can be passed on to certified production nurseries and customers purchasing avocado trees or banana plants."



Figure 2: Tissue culture production

The transition of ANVAS, a production nursery accreditation program that supports clean planting material (trees) for growers, into the Nursery Production FMS will occur over the next 12 months and is currently on track to conclude at the end of September 2018.

Mr McDonald says the transition for QBAN, supporting the clean propagation of banana planting material in production nurseries and tissue culture laboratories, is more complex and forecast to take two years, due to updates in tissue culture criteria and the introduction of mother blocks.

“NGIA has worked with Australian Avocadoes Limited and the Australian Banana Growers Council for more than eight years and the bulk of ANVAS nurseries and a number of QBAN nurseries are already accredited under the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA),” he explained.

“While it will not be a significant change for many of the current businesses, it may be for some, particularly around issues such as testing and recording data in their cropping system, irrigation, pesticide application, site management etc.

“The majority of production nurseries in the programs at present overwhelmingly support the transition.”

Mr McDonald has also had early discussions with other horticulture industries to discuss the benefits of transitioning to the Nursery Production FMS.

“Other horticulture industries such as apples and pears, citrus, vines and strawberries all have certification or accreditation schemes that are applied to production nurseries, and there is the potential to align these to the Nursery Production FMS,” he said.

This could mean adding criteria to the program.

“The citrus industry has a program mainly based on trueness to type however, a number of citrus production nurseries operate under the Nursery Production FMS, which is also the same for the apples and pears certification, so it may make sense to integrate trueness to type criteria into our program and they could be audited just the once,” Mr McDonald suggested.

“NGIA has also had preliminary discussions with growers in the strawberry and nut industries to look at synergies, as well as the grape vine industry.”

Mr McDonald said the benefits of the Nursery Production FMS are multiple.

“Unlike many nursery stock certification programs in horticulture, the Nursery Production FMS is industry managed, much broader around biosecurity, and is continuously reviewed, improved and upgraded with the introduction of new technology and pest, disease and weed research.

“The aim is to efficiently deliver these services without them costing production nurseries an arm and a leg, and cropping systems get the benefit of an affordable modern, high health program supporting the planting material that they’re purchasing.”

To find more about the Nursery Production FMS, please visit:

<http://nurseryproductionfms.com.au/>

For further information, please contact Sophie Keatinge, Cox Inall Communications, on 0430 938 515 or [sophie.keatinge@coxinall.com.au](mailto:sophie.keatinge@coxinall.com.au)



Figure 3: Production Nursery (Plantation Timber)



**This communication has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.**