Abstract

Deploying New Technologies to Secure the Banana Industry †

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Abstract: Bananas are Australia's number-one selling supermarket product (in volume), with over five million of them eaten daily, all of which are grown in Australia. The 13,000 ha industry has a farm gate value of around $600 m and contributes $1.3 billion to the national economy annually. Over the last 3–4 years the industry has been under considerable financial pressure from poor prices but this has been exacerbated by dealing with major responses to banana Freckle and Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4 (TR4). Banana Freckle has successfully been eradicated from Australia but the threat from TR4 is ongoing. The Banana industry considers that R&D is critically important for successfully dealing with major disease threats and reducing their impact. The spread of TR4 has been slowed through a major control and containment program which has been underpinned by high quality research but this research needs to continue, to allow time to find long-term solutions that will safeguard the industry's ongoing viability. The role science plays is multifaceted. The challenge for horticultural industries is to include both basic and applied research that is relevant to the needs of industry, fits within the constraints of legislation and the supply chain, meets the needs of consumers and will lead to outcomes that are implemented on farms by growers. Examples of how the banana industry is meeting these challenges will be discussed in this presentation.

Keywords: Banana; Panama disease; Tropical race 4; *Fusarium oxysporum*; biosecurity