

Building on an already "substantive presence" at the Hong Kong fair in previous years, the rebranded Australian delegation is boosting its participation by around 30%.

From key commodities like table grapes and citrus through to groundbreaking non-browning avocado pulp and a new apple from the folks who bred Pink Lady, the Australian produce industry is set to make a splash at regional trade fair Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong this week.

"In reality we're a niche agricultural supplier across a wide range of agricultural products," says Horticulture Innovation Australia GM of trade, Michael Rogers.

"Something Australia does very well across all agricultural products is develop very high quality products backed by a lot of technology, research and development, presenting quality, safe, nutritious food and produce for people around the world," he says.

Rogers tells *Fresh Fruit Portal* the recently launched "[Taste Australia](#)" brand will be on show at the event from Sept. 6-8 with a 30% uptick in Australian visitor numbers and floor space compared to [last year's showing](#) with the Australia Fresh stand.

Click [here for Taste Australia's Buyer Guide](#) with details about different exhibitors.

"The expansion in the floor area and the number of people going reflects the Australian industry's commitment and enthusiasm to export," Rogers says.

"People know what they're getting from Australia. Australian horticulture is going to benefit from that reputation by presenting the new face of horticulture, focusing on those high-end premium markets where Australia can compete and demonstrate fantastic quality direct to the consumer and a consistent eating experience every time."



Hort Innovation GM of trade Michael Rogers.

The executive highlights a range of growth categories for the Australian sector that go beyond the higher-volume crops.

"Products like citrus and table grapes obviously have an established presence and have a very high proportion of Australian production exported, but some of the new growth areas are around berries," he says.

"Berries are a fantastic story in Australia, whether they be blueberries or other berries, and we're certainly seeing strong interest out of all the berry sectors around exporting into Asia.

"The other opportunity which is often overlooked is around vegetables - the Australian vegetable sector is around 30-35% of horticulture turnover in Australia with currently a very low proportion exported."

He says Australia's vegetable industry can complement domestic production in export markets, offering either "different quality, a different price point, and sometimes a completely different product".

"While some may not consider the humble vegetable, there are fantastic opportunities where Asian consumers are looking for products they can trust, that they know will be nutritious, they can see the supply chain assurance throughout the process," Rogers says.

"This can already be seen in products like carrots which are a strong export product in the vegetable sector, but recently we're seeing some fantastic growth in leafy greens and other products which traditionally people may not have seen as exportable."

From a foodservice perspective, he says the industry is also looking into how it can bring more of the "Australian food experience" to export markets.

"We've started to have conversations with the Australian native foods industry and we're looking to present some uniquely Australian horticulture options and food options to the foodservice sector, to position Australian horticulture as premium, unique, and build on all the elements around quality and consistency."

A taste of what's on offer

Few would dispute that avocados are the hottest item in the global produce industry now

and Asia is no exception, albeit from a lower base of



Fresh avocado exports to Asia from Latin America have gone through the roof in recent years, but as consumers continue to look for convenience there are also great opportunities for processed product.

Avocado pulp comes in many forms, but none are quite like that produced by Queensland-based Sunfresh.

General manager Judy Proser tells *Fresh Fruit Portal* her company is the only one in the world at the moment using [Natavo Zero Technology](#), which we profiled last year.

The Natavo process essentially switches off the enzyme that causes browning, but it does so in a natural way and is entirely different to the two predominant practices already in the industry - high pressure processing (HPP) or the use of preservatives.

"There are no chemicals and no preservatives," emphasizes Proser.

"We've only actually just commenced processing this year in April so it's a very new business for us. We're already exporting into Hong Kong and Thailand," Proser says.

One of the most novel developments to come out of the Australian produce industry since last year would be the [Bravo apple](#); the brand name for cultivar ANABP 01, bred by the Department of Food and Agriculture, WA (DAFWA).

In a statement, Nardia Stacy of Fruit West Co-operative Ltd says Bravo, marketed under the trademarked slogan "Like no other apple", is making its international trade fair debut at Asia Fruit Logistica.

"Bred and grown exclusively in Australia, BRAVO™ dares to be different and will capture immediate interest. The world's fresh food industry will be able to taste and experience this

truly beautiful apple first hand and for the first time," she says.

"A medium to large, full rounded size the fruit has a distinctive rich dark burgundy skin colour with golden sparkly lenticels over the skin surface. BRAVO™ has sweet burst of fresh spice flavour when biting through its crunchy white flesh makes it taste 'oh so different'.

She adds recent research has also shown the apple's heart-healthy credentials as a rich source of antioxidant flavonoids with direct benefits to human wellbeing.



"The alluring dark colour and vibrant white flesh, eaten whole is a natural health supplement as well as a wonderful everyday luxury to enjoy," she says.

The high antioxidant levels likely stem from the fruit's dark purple coloring, often associated with [anthocyanins](#). Another Australian fruit that has got these flavonoids in spades is the [Queen Garnet plum](#).

The cultivar's owner Nutrafruit and marketer Harrowsmiths International will be co-exhibiting at Asia Fruit Logistica for the third year in a row.

"We aim to further develop existing business relationships in China and South East Asia and establish new contacts," says Harrowsmiths sales and marketing representative Rohanna Higgins.

"We will have Queen Garnet Plums available from test plantations in France and the USA, alongside the Queen Garnet Nectar and pharmaceuticals.

"We are also working alongside Berry Yummy Marketing and their IP variety strawberries which will be on display at our booth, in addition to Blood Limes from Gondwana Native Limes."

She adds that due to lower than expected supply and high domestic demand, there were limited opportunities to export Queen Garnet plums in the 2017 season.

"We expect an increase in volume for the 2018 crop and therefore opportunity to export to select customers in key markets in Asia."

But this unique plum is not the only big stonefruit story coming out of Australia, and neither are cherries which could be on track for a **record season in 2017-18**.

Late last year the country gained access to the lucrative Chinese nectarine market, and the sector will seek to make the most of opportunities there and throughout Asia this coming Northern Hemisphere winter.



Queen Garnet plum. Photo: Benoit Escande

Cutri Fruit is one of Australia's premium stonefruit producers, and perhaps emblematic of the country's export enthusiasm across a wide range of products is its diversification into new crops.

"Our business is going through another exciting phase of growth and expansion, and this is what we'd like to share with our overseas customers and supporters," says marketing manager Nicole Cutri.

"In recent months we've taken receivership out of quarantine of some exclusive varieties and have planted these in an innovative growing manner that will allow us to move closer towards mechanisation; something we're passionate and excited about.

"We've also branched out into other commodities, planting avocados on one of our sites, meaning we can now stay working for more months of the year with our cherished buyers."

She says all varieties and commodities the company is planting now and into the future have Asian markets in consideration, and are "grown with their preferences and experienced palates in mind".

"This AFL we hope to share the excitement for the upcoming season with our buyers. The growing conditions have been superb, with high chill units received thus far.

"The trees are all looking very healthy, and it looks like the upcoming season will be a very successful one. If all continues tracking on this well, it looks like we'll be harvesting about two weeks ahead of last year, which is very good for us.

"We've got a new, very experienced exporting team to introduce to our buyers too. This is something we are very excited about and have full confidence in moving forward."

Another interesting tie-up that to be on display will be Nangiloc Colignan Farms' (NCF) joint stand with British food manufacturing and technology company Marco.

NCF's Dominic Moras says the group will be promoting the fact it has a new punnet line in place harnessing Marco's technology, and will be able to package table grapes in clamshells for the upcoming season.

"We won't have any punnets there, but we can definitely go through the concept explaining to prospective buyers of our produce that we will be able to pack to weight and not have an issue at the other end.

"We did the trials last year - in Japan there is strong interest for this coming season; we're just wanting to get more customers to have a chat to us and see if there is a spot in their stores for the clamshell."

He says the clamshell format allows stores to display their grapes more neatly on the shelves.

"Also it's a bit more secure - you don't have people handling the fruit in a clamshell," he says.

NFC grows around 1,500 acres of table grapes, Navel oranges, mandarins, lemons and also wine grapes.

"Table grapes is what we are known for but we do export citrus products, which is what we're doing now. And our main markets are Southeast Asia.

"We have Red Globe, Crimson, Autumn Royal, and we have Sweet Sapphire plantings which will be into full production in the next couple of years."

While countries like Peru have been drastically pulling out plantings of Red Globes, NFC has no intention of doing the same.

"If we do pull out of the Red Globe we replant it - our demand is increasing, mainly because others are pulling out, so at this stage we're not planning on removing our acreage of Red Globe," Moras says.

"A few years ago Red Globe was at its low, but it has come back with a vengeance at the moment. We're hoping it's going to continue.

"Who knows? In 10 years' time if there's a seedless variety is a similar size to a Red Globe you would assume that would be the end of Red Globe, but at this stage the demand - especially in Indonesia - is very high. We can't see it disappearing in the short term."

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