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Media Release

Banana growers strive for supply and price equilibrium

Banana growers have embarked on a program of strategic plant regrowth management after Cyclone Larry to try to ensure that there is a steady flow of banana supplies to the national markets from December.

Craig Allen, CEO of the Australian Banana Promotions Company said today, "Banana growers in Australia's principal banana growing area in far north Queensland are managing the nine-month plant growth cycle to schedule fruit production to prevent a flood of bananas and then another glut while we wait for the next growing period.

"However to ensure consumers have consistent access to bananas, growers have used crop scheduling to ensure consistent supplies will flow from December and continue thereafter.

"It is important to also understand that these banana growers have had no income since March, and this strategy will mean that their next incomes will trickle in rather than arrive in bulk from one harvest," he added.

Allen said, "For banana prices this will mean they fall from the inflated prices experienced over the past seven months to more realistic levels, but probably not immediately to the low levels they were before the cyclone struck. It will also mean that prices are predicted to be consistent, then falling gradually over time.

"Most people know that Cyclone Larry wiped out 90 percent of Australian banana plants in March in the Innisfail and Tully areas of Queensland.

"But what they don't know is how banana plants grow, how bananas are grown and banana crops managed," he said.

The growing cycle, from sucker to fruit harvest, takes some eight to nine months, and continues year round with minor variations within seasons.

Bananas do not grow from a seed. While a banana plant is growing it throws three or so suckers, the strongest of which will become the next banana plant after the fruit has been harvested. So as one plant is producing fruit, the next one to bear fruit is growing on the same plant.

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