



**30 November 2006**

**Media Release**

## **Christmas has arrived early for banana lovers**

Bananas are back and December will be remembered as the month that marks the end of the great banana shortage caused by Cyclone Larry.

“We are almost half way there,” said Craig Allen, Chief Executive of the Australian Banana Promotions Company when commenting about production levels.

“Prior to the cyclone devastating banana production in far north Queensland last March, an average of 400,000 cartons of Australian bananas reached national markets each week. A carton of bananas weighs a minimum of 13 kg.

“The cyclone cut production levels by 90 percent meaning only 40,000 cartons could be produced with demand well in excess of supply. These bananas principally came from sub-tropical areas as well as some less affected areas of North Queensland.

As a result retail prices hit record levels of around \$15 per kg over a series of steps and over a two-month period. Now with production heading towards the 200,000 cartons a week mark, prices are beginning to recede. Retail prices will therefore adjust as production increases.

“Right now we are at 180,000 cartons per week and consumers are beginning to see retail prices below \$8.00 per kilogram, half the record winter prices, as a result of increasing supplies.

“In July banana production reached an all time low of 40,000 cartons. By September production had climbed to 80,000 cartons and then 100,000 by October. This month production has increased to 180,000 cartons (see attached graph).

“We will see an increase in supply over the month of December with supplies back to more normal levels in late January and February.

“At any one time there will always be a variation in banana prices in stores just as there is with any fresh product, but the welcome news is that prices have fallen and will continue to be adjusted as more bananas reach the market.

“Just as prices increased as production fell after the cyclone, so too will prices adjust as production increases.

Commenting on the market, President of the Australian Banana Wholesalers, Harry Theoharous said, “Most retailers have been selling bananas at close to cost so as to make bananas affordable for their consumers.”

Allen said, 'With banana prices now at levels that make them more affordable, Australian consumers can add them back onto their shopping list as the affordable snack or nutrition boost that we were accustomed to having as part of our daily diet.

"Banana growers, who have gone without income since March, were pleased to see the Australian public supporting them by getting back to buying bananas," Allen said.

"While many will remember the cyclone, on a positive note Australian consumers will remember December as the month when some normality was restored to the banana market," he concluded.

**Enquiries**

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