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**Media release**

## Innisfail banana growers unite to fund industry crusade

With the prospect of Philippine bananas being imported into Australia, Innisfail banana growers met last night and resolved that unanimous support from the industry is required to ensure the future of grower incomes and protection of the value of their assets.

The meeting of the Innisfail Banana Growers' Association at South Johnstone Research Station was updated by Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) Chairman, Patrick Leahy, on the recent Biosecurity Australia announcement that paved the way for Philippine bananas to enter Australia subject to certain conditions.

Newly elected Chairman of the Innisfail Banana Growers' Association, Mark Nucifora said, "The entire Australian banana industry must fight to keep our country free of pests and disease that exist among banana plantations overseas.

"The industry will not survive unless it is well funded and that means every single grower committing to the banana industry voluntary levy package," he said.

At the meeting growers agreed that the industry must unanimously agree to pay the voluntary levy that is in place. This 26 cent per 13kg carton levy finances the Banana Industry Fighting Fund (5¢), the ABGC (3¢), banana promotions (15¢) and plant protection (3¢). All grower levy contributions are collected in the wholesale markets or by the ABGC.

Mark Spagnolo, Chairman of the Australian Banana Promotions Company was forthright about the need for industry support. He said, "Banana growers are far too complacent with too many fence-sitters who are not committed to fighting for their survival, but rather bludge off others who they expect to the shoulder the responsibility. In today's climate this is simply un-Australian.

"The freeloader effect must stop for us to take control of our future and the destiny of banana growing in Australia," Spagnolo said.

Chief Executive of the Australian Banana Promotions Company, Craig Allen updated growers on enormously successful banana promotions activities that have been conducted to encourage banana consumption as supplies returned to stores after Cyclone Larry.

He said, "The "Remember December" campaign followed by a heavy radio advertising schedule and now a retailer point-of-sale campaign with an accompanying competition have all boosted banana sales and more importantly, returns to growers.

The ABGC has been working tirelessly since Cyclone Larry with government and industry to ensure the ongoing viability of the industry.

The Innisfail Banana Growers' Association is intent on expanding its reach and membership along the coastal strip from the Cardwell Range to Gordonvale.

### **Enquiries**

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