



27 July 2006

Media Release

Banana regrowth strategy aims to minimise price fluctuations

Far North Queensland banana growers are strategically managing plant regrowth after Cyclone Larry to ensure that there is a steady flow of banana supplies to the national markets after October and throughout 2007.

Craig Allen, CEO of the Australian Banana Promotions Company today said, "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 a little variation 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.

"Growers in Australia's principal banana growing area in far North Queensland are managing this cycle to schedule fruit production to prevent a flood of bananas in October and then another glut while we wait for the next growing period," Allen said.

"However to ensure consumers have consistent access to bananas, growers have used crop scheduling to ensure consistent supplies will flow from October 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.

"For banana prices this will mean they fall from their heady prices at the moment 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," Allen said.

Enquiries

Craig Allen

CEO, Australian Banana Promotions Company

Tel (03) 9372 3035, Mobile 0412 735 443

Issued by Geoff Drucker, DYDX Pty Ltd Mob 0419 817 827

