

TOMATO TOPICS

**Hort
Innovation**
Strategic levy investment

**PROCESSING
TOMATO FUND**



**NEWS and INFORMATION
FOR THE PROCESSING TOMATO INDUSTRY**

ISSN 1038-3522

March 2023

VOL. 33 NO. 1

February Irrigation Tour — Necessity breeding innovation

By Matthew Stewart



Darcy Kirchofer presenting at Pine Gatta NSW

On Friday 3rd Feb, the APTRC had 39 members attend the tour and 65 members come together for the industry dinner.

Given the unique situation of Australian processing tomato growers in a global context, the phrase, ‘necessity breeds innovation’ could perhaps be the catchcry of our industry. Indeed, for our February

irrigation field tour this season, innovation was high on the agenda.

First off, the bus visited Kagome Farms ‘Jennisons’ block, where Ann discussed the layout of the APTRC screening and replicated machine trials and outlined what trials and new cultivars APTRC did and did not manage to get in this season. Ann had the site well pegged out for inspection and it gave participants a chance to see how the genetics from different breeding companies had responded to the late planting schedule. Most cultivars seemed to be performing reasonably well at this early growth stage, however it’s typically not until the demands of fruit load and weather bear down on varieties that we see the true performance of the cultivars in our environment.

We also heard from Stuart McColl of Kagome, who outlined the challenge with soil preparation and pointed out the pro’s and con’s of the different approaches to control soil borne pathogens and weeds. They found that the benefit of Metham Sodium



Hanyue and Niloofar from Melb Uni

<u>In this edition:</u>	<u>Page:</u>
January Irrigation Tour	1 & 2
Climate Outlook & Inflows	3
Storage Levels	4
US Grower Study Tour Visit	4
SLTec Business Awards	5
Screening Field Day	6
Screening Trial Notes	7 & 8
PTAB Top 25 Cultivars	9
Tomato News Extracts	10-13
Industry Updates and Events	14

was worth the wait, compared to alternative weed and pathogen control measures which had a quicker plant back timing.

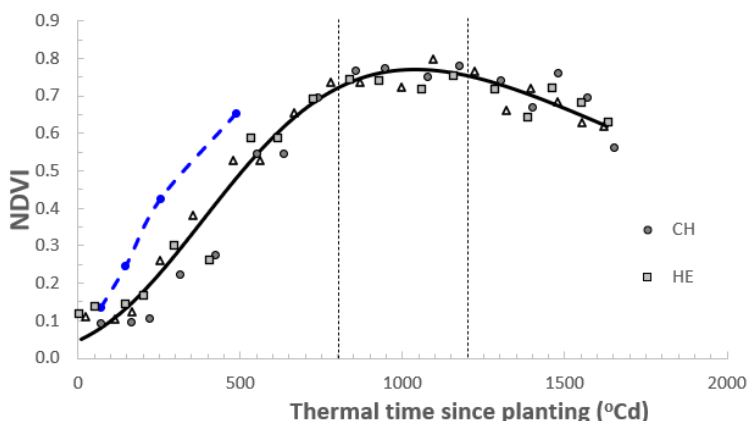
Our next stop was the 'Pine Gatta' block, north of Deniliquin, where Darcy Kirchhofer showed us processing tomatoes being grown in sand (not done for some 20 years or so in industry). This innovation, although out of the box, is grounded by a sound experience and knowledge that Kagome have accumulated over years of growing carrots and garlic on similar country.



Stuart McColl on the mic at Jennison's NSW

Darcy talked us through the process this season; how Kagome decided to plant tomatoes in sand, water them in using the overhead Centre Pivot irrigators and followed up, post-planting, by laying submains and ripping in drip lines. All of this with the assistance of Campaspe Irrigation and Netafim.

What was obvious to all present, was how at only 6 weeks post planting, the plants had achieved a noticeably large canopy.



The accompanying graph (supplied by Sam North) was produced using the IrriSAT (Weather based irrigation scheduling service) site. The measured crop NDVI (Normalised Difference Vegetation Index) confirmed our observations, that the Pine Gatta crop had a growth rate well above the best crops from the 2019-20 research study.

We will all be waiting to see how the sand grown tomatoes perform this season as hopefully it will provide a top and tail option for seasonal planting, which may not only reduce weather risk, but will also potentially expand the processing window into the future.



Members inspecting the Pine Gatta Tomato Crop

Dinner was again held at the Greens Pavilion to encourage partners and children to attend, and saw a large turnout on what was a very enjoyable evening.

Acknowledgements go to Netafim, our major sponsor each year for this Field Tour & Dinner and also to AgNVet for sponsoring evening drinks and SLTec for keeping us hydrated on the tour.

Climate Outlook

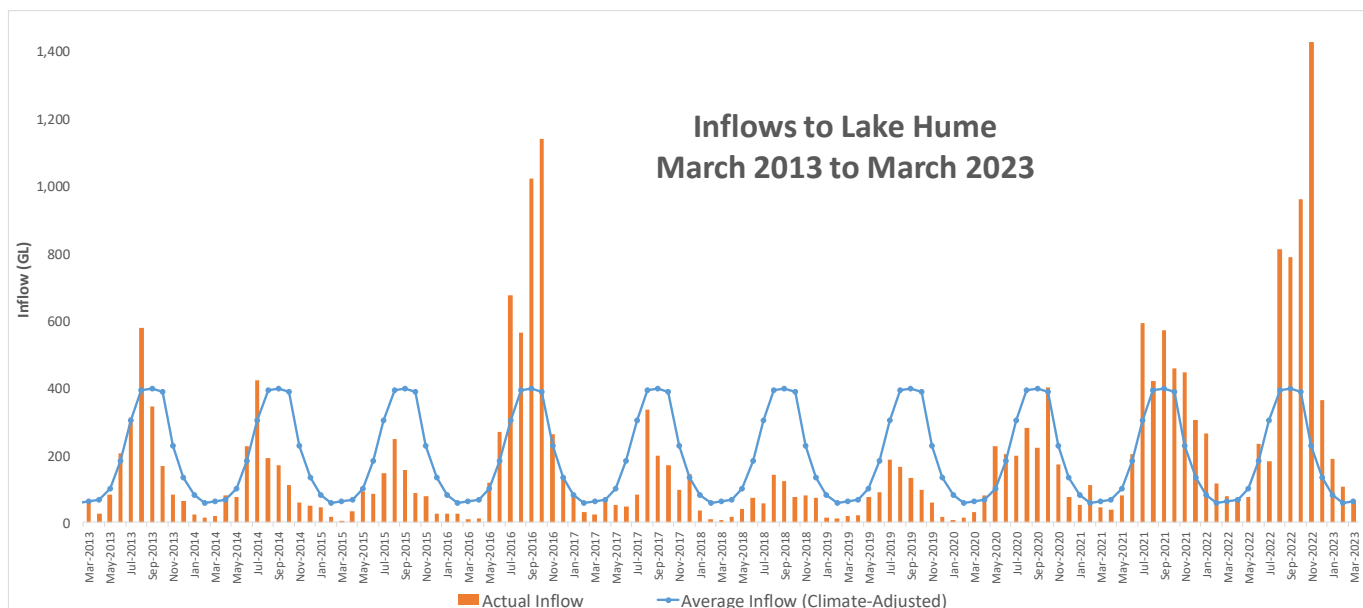
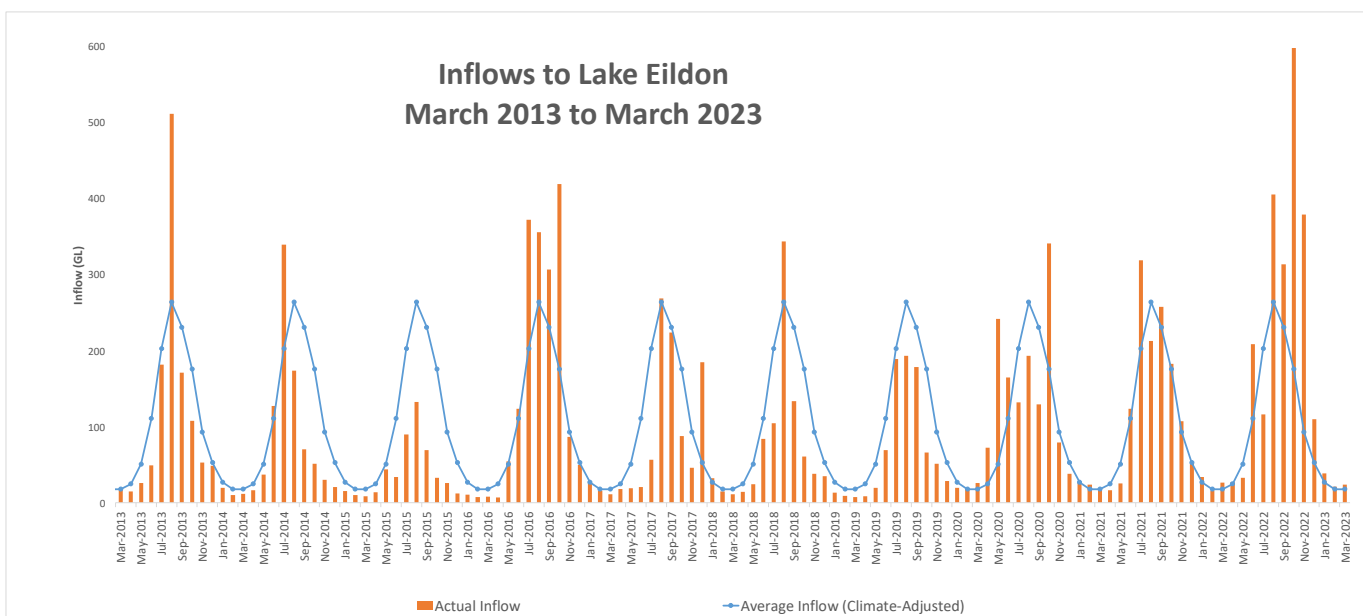
Well, it’s official. The La Niña weather event is over, and with it (hopefully) the high rainfall and cool conditions we have experienced over the past few seasons.

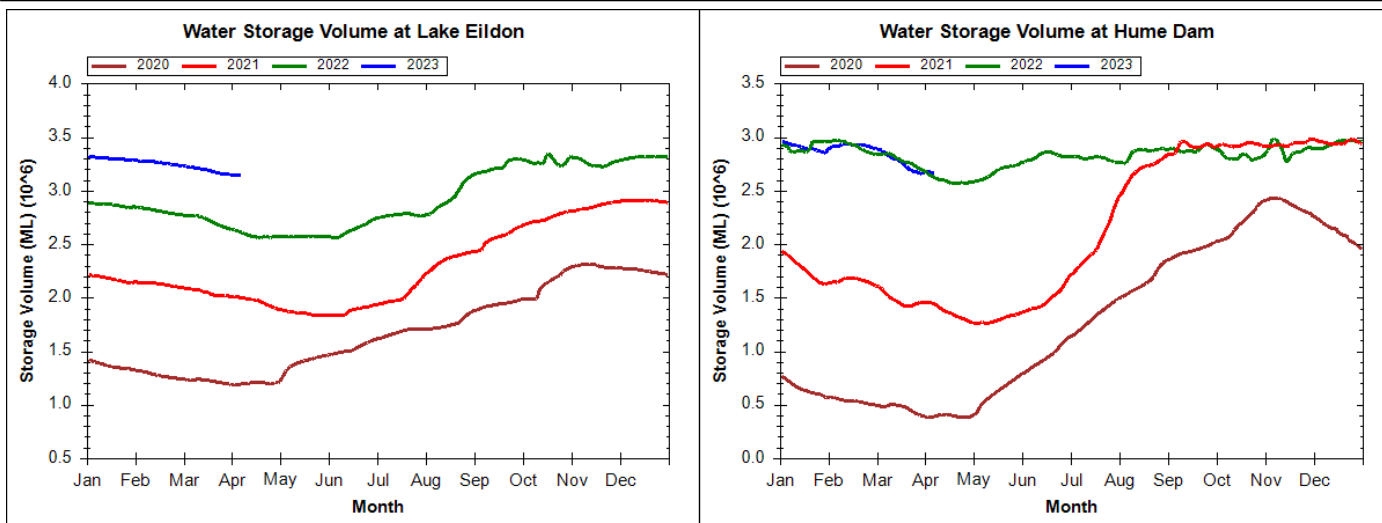
Currently, the El Niño –Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is neutral (neither La Niña nor El Niño). Oceanic and atmospheric indicators for the tropical Pacific Ocean have returned to neutral ENSO levels.

International climate models suggest neutral ENSO conditions are likely to persist through autumn. Long-range forecasts made in early autumn have lower accuracy than those made at other times of the year, but there are some signs that El Niño may form later in the year, and the Bureau has indicated that there is a 50% chance of El Niño in 2023.

This produces hotter, drier weather across south-eastern Australia.

**ENSO : El Niño-Southern Oscillation climatic system*





AusVeg brings US Study Tour to Rochester

On the 22nd February this year, we were visited by 22 guests, mostly from Oregon State USA, who were on a week long horticulture study tour. The tour was being facilitated by Danielle Parks of AusVeg.

The tour included growers, processors, agronomists and professors from Oregon State University.

Although Oregon state is not well known for it’s processing tomato growing, several members on the trip had experience with processing tomatoes and were impressed by what they saw in the Rochester growing region. Thanks to Gus Tall and Stu McColl of Kagome for helping out on the day, answering questions on a myriad of topics and sharing knowledge between the two countries and comparing their growing practices.

Later this year, a collection of Australian growers, agronomists and processors will be embarking on a similar tour to California USA with the hope of bringing back additional skills and knowledge, as well as making new connections and strengthening relationships with our industry counterparts overseas.



Gus Tall outlining to participants the growing system in Australia and the particulars of his farm operation at Wilson Rd, South East of Rochester.

SLTEC Fertilizers scoops Business Awards

SLTEC Fertilizers, a liquid fertilizer manufacturer based in Northern Victoria, was very proud and honoured to receive both the **Overall Business of the Year Award** and **Excellence in Manufacturing Award** at a gala event recently held by the Shire of Campaspe/Murray Shire.

When presenting the Excellence in Manufacturing Award, the host, Brian Nankervis, noted that the judges considered SLTEC to be an outstanding business, with a clear direction, putting in place a diverse team to work toward the continual growth of the businesses. Mr Nankervis further noted that SLTEC has a strong focus on ensuring the best outcome for their customers with fertilizer that is best fit for each customer's land and product.



The owner and managing director of the business, Jamie McMaster said the business started in 2005 with a vision to develop

fluid fertilisers for the horticultural industry and has grown to presently employ 32 people at its world class manufacturing facility in Tongala.

Although the business, in late 2021, was awarded a federal grant to rapidly expand its manufacturing facilities under the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, Mr McMaster acknowledged that the business wouldn't be anything without its customers and employees.

Mr Nankervis also commented that the judges had noted SLTEC's excellent HR practices and that the staff seemed very engaged across the various aspects of the business.

In a few frantic minutes, SLTEC Fertilizers followed up its initial award with being awarded the Campaspe/Murray Business of the Year. Mr Nankervis stated, SLTEC was a very worthy winner of Business of the Year with the Judges commending their commitment to their staff and customers, as well as their clear focus on growth and expansion for the future of the company.

SLTEC Fertilizers was very proud of these outstanding achievements which provided some tangible acknowledgement for their years of growth, product research and innovation, manufacturing development and building an exceptional team and culture.

Screening Trial Field Day—8th March 2023

At the start of March, the processors and seed reps descended upon the APTRC Screening Trial site in Thyra NSW to review Bill and Ann’s scorecard on a range of trial cultivars and discuss how the different genetics had coped with the challenging season.



Bill Ashcroft and Ann Morrison, setting the scene

The trials were promising, with several cultivars rivalling our ageing industry standards for canopy, fruit development and fruit quality.



Syngenta’s impressive BQ403

In the early cultivars, HM Pumatis and Syngenta BQ 403 both scored higher than H 1015, with the other cultivars only slightly behind.

In the mid-season trials, the cultivars Nun 507, SVTM 8840 and HM 6856 all equalled the H 3402 standard on the final scorecard. It will be interesting to see how the results look after the machine trial results are gathered and reported in the June 2023 newsletter.

Thanks to the seed companies who managed to supply us trial seed for this season and to Kagome for their co-operation on the trial site this season. Can the seed company representatives please talk with Ann (APTRC) in the next couple of months to make sure we have appropriate quantities of trial seed organised for the coming 2023/24 growing season trials.



Mark Cashin—Kagome, discussing details (centre) with Carlos Ramirez of Bayer

Field Assessment of Jennison's Trial 2022/23

Cultivar	Comments	Score /10
EARLY-SEASON OBSERVATION TRIAL		
H1015	Medium-compact vine on the bed with dark foliage. Bit of leaf roll and disease on top but not bad. Small-medium sized, firm, blocky plum-egg shaped fruit with good colour. A few dimpled and a hint of bleach. Yield quite good although some greens still (10%?). Second-early?	7
HM Encina	Medium-vigorous vine – a bit upright but on the bed with large, dark, leaves -some rolled. Good sized (some large) blocky plum-pear fruit – a few puffy, medium firmness with a bit of grey-wall and veining detracting from good colour. Good concentration but question over holding – breakdown evident at both sites. Some patches of leaf disease also. Good yield – holding so far. Again greens 10%+. Fruit quality an issue. Regarded as second early.	6.5
HM Enotrio	Medium-vigorous vine – upright and flopping over a bit. Medium sized plum-egg fruit, firm with very good colour, small core and medium yield. No bleach to speak of so good fruit but yield and vine type mark it down. Greens 10%+	6
HM Pumatis	Medium/compact vine on the bed with some leaf roll. Foliage lighter and showing a bit of disease but cover still ok. Yield and concentration good. Fruit a bit variable but mostly medium egg-plum fruit, firm with good colour although a little bleach and shoulder discoloration noted. A few dimpled and yellow-eye too. Pretty good compared with others for early yield.	7.5
Syngenta BQ390	Vigorous/medium vine with dark foliage showing less disease than surrounds. Firm egg-pear shaped fruit of good size but a bit puffy. Medium colour with some core. Total yield looks ok but many (30%?) greens – looks later. Hence very little foliar disease or breakdown.	6
Syngenta BQ403	Medium-vigorous vine on the bed still providing reasonable cover. Medium leaf colour with a bit of disease (speck) evident. Firm blocky egg-plum shaped fruit, good colour and concentration relative to others (<10% green). Yield also good – so rates well for early production.	8

Cultivar	Comments	Score /10
MID-SEASON OBSERVATION TRIAL		
SVTM 9334	Medium/vigorous vine a bit floppy. Medium/dark foliage providing good cover in the absence of mite damage. Small-medium round-plum fruit – good set and yield. Medium firmness and colour ok. Some bleach and heat damage in exposed fruit but most holding. Fruit size an issue here.	6
HM Aprix	Medium-compact vine – small plants with small, dark, rolled leaves. Medium blocky eggs, firm with good colour. A few dimples. Yield medium only, although ok for plant size. Greens maybe 15%. Double row?	6
HM 6856 (Adenda)	Medium vine, low and on the bed, with small dark leaves showing little sign of disease and providing good cover. Fruit medium sized blocky egg-plums. Very firm with thick walls, good colour although a bit of shoulder bleach. Some greens still. Yield ok.	7
H 3402	See above. Larger vine and fruit size evident in these plots.	7

Cultivar	Comments	Score /10
MID-SEASON MACHINE HARVEST TRIAL OBSERVATIONS		
H3402	Medium/vigorous vine – a bit ragged at this site. Fruit firm with good colour, blocky egg-plum shaped with some smalls. Good yield but greens >10%. A few bleached fruit also.	7
HM 58811	Upright medium-vigorous vine – falling open a bit - with medium/dark foliage. A bad bit of mite damage but otherwise not much foliar disease. Blocky egg-pear shaped fruit with good size (some large) and a few pointed. Very firm but a bit puffy. Colour medium only with some fence posting. Yield ok but 20%+ green.	6.5
HM 58841	Medium-vigorous vine – a bit upright and flopping. Elongated egg-shaped fruit – some with slight point. Medium colour and a bit of core and bleach. Very firm and medium size. Some foliar disease and 10%+ green.	6
HM Nava	Medium vine, a bit upright but on the bed – with dark foliage providing mainly good cover. Medium-large egg-pear shaped fruit showing just a hint of breakdown. Medium-firm with thick walls and a bit puffy with medium colour (some core). Yield ok-good but 20% green and breakdown could still be an issue as noted last season.	6
HMX 5558 (Orsorosso)	Medium vine on the bed – next to a spray row unfortunately. Medium-dark foliage. Medium-large elongated plum-egg shaped fruit, very firm but a bit puffy. Colour variable. Yield ok. Green 10% + A bit later	6.5
Nun 239	Medium-vigorous spreading vine with medium-dark foliage. Lots of green fruit still (50%). Colour average with fence posting and core. Medium sized blocky plum fruit, very firm. A few with points and some dimples. Lacking yield and a hint of breakdown. Later.	6
Nun 241	Medium-vigorous vine a bit floppy with medium-dark leaves. Fruit of variable size, very firm and a bit puffy. Medium sized blocky egg-plum fruit with average colour again – fence posting and core evident. Some smalls and only medium yield, although green only about 10%.	6
Nun 507	Medium/compact vine on the bed with good concentration and very little green. Yield ok. Medium blocky plum/egg shaped fruit. Size a bit variable, medium firmness and colour ok (small core). A bit of foliar disease but not too bad. Earlier – try in early observation.	7
SVTM 8840	Medium/vigorous vine with large rolled leaves. Few greens (< 10%) and a hint of breakdown in exposed fruit. Firm, large/medium blocky plum-egg shaped fruit. Colour ok and yield could also be good. Earlier?	7
SVTM 9008	Medium-vigorous vine opening up here and showing some bad foliar disease. Fruit very firm blocky plum-eggs, a bit puffy and small-medium (variable) size. Some bleach and colour medium only. Medium-poor yield. Not much green either. Discontinued by the seed company.	5
SVTM 9023	Vigorous vine with dark leaves, falling open. Large, blocky egg-pear fruit – a few dimpled. Very firm, medium colour and yield with a bit of bleach also. Try on older ground.	5
SVTM 9025	Medium/vigorous sprawling vine with medium foliage and a fair bit of foliar disease. Medium sized blocky plums with a few points. Very firm and a few puffy. Colour ok and medium yield. Vine opening up a bit, some bleach but not much breakdown.	6

Processing Tomato Advisory Board 2022 top 25 varieties

(Based on loads delivered between 1/7/2022 – 12/11/2022)

Company	Variety	Use	Attributes	Color	Solids	pH	APTRC
Harris Moran	HM 58841	Inter	EFH	21.8	5.21	4.45	Y
Nunhems	N 6428	Inter	F3, EFH	22.4	4.89	4.50	-
Seminis	SVTM 9013	Inter	F3	21.1	5.14	4.44	-
Harris Moran	HM 5522	Inter	Fr	20.6	5.81	4.38	-
Seminis	SVTM 9016	Thick	F3, EFH	22.1	5.07	4.41	Y
Heinz	H1662	Thick	F3, Lv	22.3	5.10	4.45	-
Orsetti	BOS 0811	Thick	EFH	20.6	5.05	4.39	-
Heinz	H5608	Thick	-	20.4	5.10	4.45	Y
Seminis	SVTM 1082	Thin	F3	21.7	5.64	4.35	-
Heinz	H1996	Thick	F3, EFS™	21.3	5.07	4.45	Y
Woodbridge	BQ 273	Early	-	21.3	5.29	4.40	-
Harris Moran	HM 4521	Inter	EFH	21.3	5.53	4.40	-
Seminis	SVTM 9014	Inter	F3	21.0	5.34	4.45	-
Seminis	SVTM 9023	Thick	F3, EFH	22.2	5.22	4.43	Y
Harris Moran	HM 7103	Early	EFH	21.1	5.57	4.40	-
Seminis	SVTM 9027	Early	F3, Lv	21.1	5.64	4.38	-
Heinz	H4707	Thick	EFS™	23.0	4.76	4.47	-
Woodbridge	BQ 403	Early	-	21.3	5.46	4.37	Y
Woodbridge	BQ 400	Early	-	20.4	5.27	4.50	-
Harris Moran	HM 5511	Thin	F3, Fr	21.3	5.66	4.47	-
Harris Moran	HM 8163	Pear	-	20.6	5.93	4.47	-
BHN Seed	BP 74	Thin	F3, EFH	21.0	5.44	4.47	-
Seminis	SVTM 9025	Thick	F3, Fr, EFH	22.0	5.41	4.31	Y
Heinz	H2015	Thick	F3	20.5	4.45	4.48	-
BHN Seed	BP 43	Thin	F3, EFH	21.4	5.46	4.47	-

(Source: <http://www.ptab.org/>)

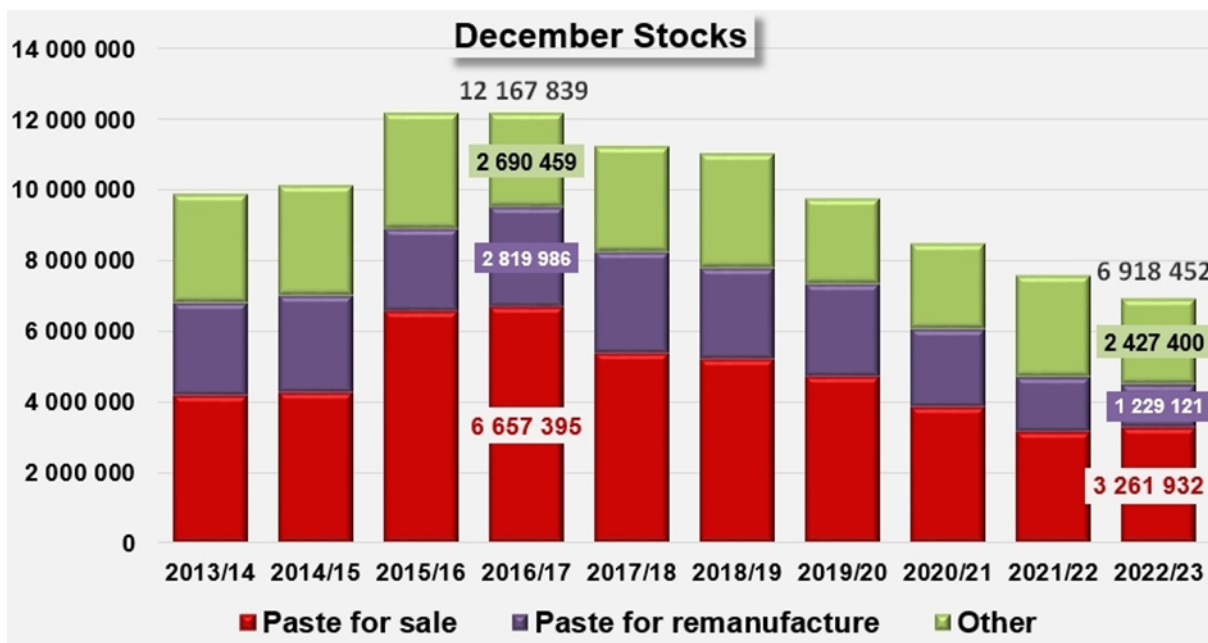
PTAB: The Processing Tomato Advisory Board (PTAB) is a quasi-governmental organization whose primary function is managing processing tomato inspection in California.

APTRC assessed varieties indicate which of the top 25 Californian varieties have been or are currently being assessed in the APTRC trial program.

Global Updates from: Tomato News

Drop in US inventories of tomato products.

According to a recent report from the California League of Food Processors, total U.S. stocks of processed tomato products, expressed in raw material equivalent, were approximately 6.918 million metric tonnes (mT) as of December 1, 2022. This quantity of products (physically present in companies' warehouses) is 640,000 mT lower (-8.5%) than for the corresponding period last year, and is the lowest level of stocks since December 1, 1998.



The drop in stocks of processed tomato products over the preceding 6 months was 4.7% higher than for the corresponding period in 2021, reaching about 6.065 million mT over the period between June 1 and December 1, 2022 – an increase of about 50,000 mT in monthly apparent consumption rate.

Nevertheless, it appears that, for the third time in 2022, the monthly rate of apparent sales over the 12 months, from December 1 2021, to December 1, 2022, remained below the 1 million short tons threshold. The annual "consumed" total of only 10.64 million mT (or 11.73 million sT), was down 4.5% from the 11.14 million mT consumed in the previous year (ie. between December 2020 and December 2021). The respective distribution between exports and domestic consumption in these results is difficult to assess precisely. However, considering that foreign sales have increased over the past three years (from about 300,000 mT exported in 2019/2020 to nearly 320,000 mT in 2021/2022), it seems likely that the slowdown is due to a decline in domestic consumption.

Italy conducts National Variety Trials

Italia Ortofrutta - National Union has carried out a "Nationwide project for the comparison of processing tomato varieties and the improvement of environmental sustainability of the crop by reducing water consumption and introducing biodegradable mulches."

The project is co-financed by thirteen Producers' Organizations (POs), which represent a total of more

than 25,000 hectares of processing tomatoes, with an annual production of more than 1.9 million tonnes, and about 1,700 member growers. It has the dual aim of testing the latest pre-commercial varieties directly in the POs' fields and increasing the environmental sustainability of the crop through the use of more environmentally friendly techniques. The project is therefore intended to be a decision-making tool and to guide POs towards the most efficient hybrids among the more recent and innovative ones in the country's various growing regions.

The research and innovation transfer activities implemented in the project were conducted collaboratively between the POs and their technicians, who work closely with the scientific managers of CREA (the Research Council dedicated to the agri-food sector). All the trials were conducted in the field, under commercial crop conditions.

The varieties compared comprised three oblong fruit hybrids (Passenger, HMC 627147 and Fantix) and six square round fruit hybrids (Aprix, Vulspot, Blend, Dobler, UG 16112 and Waller). The trials were conducted between 2021 and 2022 and across 8 provinces.

The performance of the varieties being tested was assessed on the basis of commercial yield (ripe product sent for processing as t/ha) and Brix (°Brix or optical residue). Averaged results over all sites and for both seasons are shown in Figure 1.

Climatic conditions were marked in all areas by prolonged hot and dry periods during the production cycle, particularly in 2022, with maximum temperatures frequently above 30°C, infrequent rainfall and low quantities of rain.

Overall, average total productivity recorded in 2022 remained close to that of the previous year (116 mT/ha vs. 119 mT/ha), while the commercial yield underwent an average contraction estimated at about 10%. Similarly, the quality of the fruit, especially the Brix, underwent a significant drop in the last year of testing, of about 0.5 points on average, from 5.6° to 5.1°Brix.

Fig 1 - Average results recorded in tests conducted in 2021 and 2022
Figura 1 - Risultati medi registrati nelle prove condotte nel 2021 et nel 2022

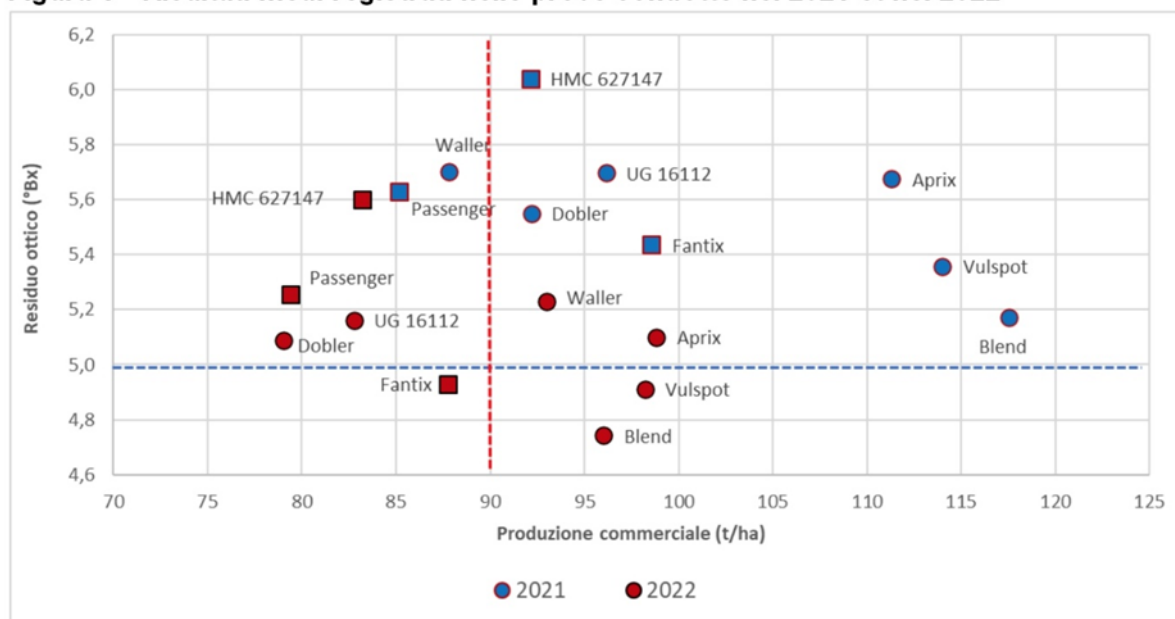


Figure 1 shows the production (commercial yield) and quality (optical residue) results for each variety obtained by averaging the values measured across all the trial fields conducted.

The varieties Blend, Vulspot and Aprix (among the round-square hybrids) stood out for their good commercial yields (on average 114 mT/ha in 2021 and 98 mT/ha in 2022). Fantix had the highest yields of the oblong varieties in both years of the trial. Across all test sites, Aprix and Fantix also showed very stable behaviour over the two-year period.

In terms of fruit quality, the oblong variety HMC 627147 stood out in both test years for its high optical residue values (6.0°Brix in 2021 and 5.6°Brix in 2022). The round-square varieties, with the exception of Blend in 2022, always gave average values above the minimum levels required by the industry (4.85°Brix). The best results, however, were achieved by Waller, UG 16112 and, to a lesser extent, by Dobler.

Note that both UG 16112 and HM Aprix have been included in Australian trials.

A New type of resistance breaking strain of TSWV identified in Hungary

Researchers from the Plant Protection Institute (Centre for Agricultural Research, Eötvös Loránd Research Network, in Budapest, Hungary) and Univer Product Plc. (Kecskemét, Hungary) have isolated and identified a new type of resistance breaking strain of tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) in Hungary. The results were published in the European Journal of Plant Pathology in February.

Sw-5b is a widely used resistance gene in tomato breeding to control tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV). In the last decades, Sw-5b resistance breaking (RB) isolates were found and identified in many locations around the world. In the summer of 2022, a new Sw-5b RB TSWV strain was recognized in a greenhouse in Hungary. In inoculation experiments, this strain was able to infect tomato plants with the Sw-5b resistance gene.

“Previously the Sw-5b RB TSWV strain was not recognized in Hungary even if it was detected in several European countries in the last decade. The origin of this strain is still in question as it is the first detection of this new mutant strain. It could have developed locally, but it is also feasible that it was introduced from another area, where it has not been identified previously. Monitoring the spread of this new mutant is of primary importance in the future” - said prof. Katalin Salánki, head of the Department of Plant Pathology, Plant Protection Institute.

Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus

If the wide range of host plants is combined with high pathogenicity, rapid adaptability, and great epidemiological potential, such *“superviruses”* can emerge that are very difficult to defend against and can only be defended by applying a complex strategy. Tomato spotted wilt orthotospovirus (TSWV) can be classified as one of these viruses.

TSWV is one of the earliest discovered plant viruses. The serious disease caused by it, spotted wilt of tomatoes, **was first observed in 1915 in the Australian state of Victoria**. The viral origin of the disease was confirmed in 1930. Today, TSWV has spread on susceptible crops on all continents, primarily vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, lettuce), ornamentals (e.g. chrysanthemums, begonias), and many field crops (e.g. peanuts, tobacco). In some cultures, it can cause yield losses of up to 50-90% and often the death of plants. The damage it causes worldwide is estimated at one billion dollars a year.

Ukraine – tomato production goes on

The story of Agrofusion, a family-owned Ukrainian business that grows and processes tomatoes, is one of resilience and determination in the face of adversity. The company started small in 2005 but grew steadily over the years to become Ukraine's leading producer of tomato paste, with exports to Europe, Asia and Africa. It was also the third largest producer of tomatoes in Europe. Already a longstanding European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) client, Agrofusion had been thriving over the past years, with plans for expansion and implementation of high-tech farming solutions to ensure the best green agribusiness solutions were met.

But like for so many other businesses, the full-scale war on Ukraine put Agrofusion on the brink of survival. By March 2022, its farms and factories in the Kherson region and in the east of the Mykolaiv region had come under enemy occupation, leaving only its farms and factory in the north of the Mykolaiv region able to continue seeding, nursing and growing tomatoes in its vast greenhouses, before processing them into paste.

However, even in the north of Mykolaiv region, things were not *“business as usual”*. Many of Agrofusion's employees there had lost their homes to shelling and decided to leave the area to find shelter and safety. It was not long before the company started facing a severe labour shortage. *“Without people to work in our greenhouses and factory, and the timely financial support from the EBRD, Agrofusion would be unable to grow, harvest and process its tomatoes. This would have an impact not just on our revenues but on Ukraine's food security as well,”* explains Olexiy Sytko, one of Agrofusion's shareholders.

To encourage its homeless workers to stay in the south of Ukraine or return home, Agrofusion decided to invest in 18 mobile homes to accommodate 30 people who could work in its greenhouses and factories and have somewhere safe and comfortable to live while continuing to support their families. But given the circumstances, resources were scarce and financing not easily available, so the company turned to the EBRD for help.

Thanks to outstanding coordination efforts from the EBRD and a generous donor contribution from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the purchase of mobile homes was made possible. As a result, Agrofusion managed to keep supporting its employees, and its business. *“Our main business goal today is to re-establish cultivation of tomatoes and production of paste as soon as possible, and we hope for the recovery of sales markets, jobs, and tax payments to pre-war levels. Our short-term plans are to make sure that the company has sufficient working capital and funds for the restoration of equipment that was destroyed by Russia's completely unprovoked war,”* explains Olexiy.

It should be noted that tomato paste exports from Ukraine during 2022 effectively dropped to zero after the Russian invasion, whereas the country exported 55-59,000 mT of tomato paste annually over the preceding three years.

WPTC Crop Update

The world processing tomato council has released its latest crop update, including the revised Australian update, indicating 1,416 ha planted for an estimated 102,950 tonnes. The update can be read in full by clicking the following link: [WPTC Crop Update March 2023](#)

New Hort Innovation Appointments for Processing Tomatoes

APTRC were recently informed that as part of ongoing changes at Hort Innovation, Mark Spees mark.spees@horticulture.com.au will now be our Industry Services and Delivery Manager (ISDM) and our go-to person for overall industry consultation in relation to investment of our Collective Industry Fund (CIF). Susie Murphy-White susie.murphy-white@horticulture.com.au will now be our Hort Innovation project manager/ process owner. Susie will receive and review our Milestone reports and help us with any project enquiries along the way.

Funding available to make Hort Connections 2023 more accessible than ever!

Hort Connections has been successful in obtaining funding from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to support grower attendance at the 2023 event. Growers will be able to apply for funding of up to \$1,000 for eligible expenses (Grower All Access Passes to attend the conference, accommodation associated with the conference, and flights).

Availability is strictly limited and applicants must provide documents to prove eligibility. Only 1 applicant from each levy paying business is permitted to access funding.

[Grower Funding | Horticulture Conference & Trade Show | Hort Connections](#)



APTRC at Hort Connections 2022—Brisbane

Note: Members of APTRC and industry are attending, so if thinking of going, get in touch and we can link up at the event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APTRC Annual Industry Forum - Friday 16th June 2023

- All day event - Moama Bowling Club - Dinner to follow - Junction Restaurant

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

This project [Australian Processing Tomato Industry Development and Extension (TM20000)] has been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited with co-investment from Australian Processing Tomato Research Council Inc. and funds from the Australian Government.

"Tomato Topics" is a quarterly newsletter compiled and edited by the Industry Development Manager, APTRC Inc., P.O. Box 547, ECHUCA, VIC 3564. **E-mail: aptrc.idm@outlook.com**

Opinions expressed in "Tomato Topics" are not necessarily those of the APTRC unless otherwise stated.