



TOMATO TOPICS

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE PROCESSING TOMATO INDUSTRY

Hort
Innovation

PROCESSING
TOMATO FUND

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APTRC FORUM: INNOVATION, INSIGHTS AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR PROCESSING TOMATOES

Moama Rich River Golf Club was once again the meeting place for Australia's processing tomato industry as 53 growers, researchers, and industry leaders gathered on May 16 for the 2025 APTRC Annual Forum.

The day was packed with discussion, data, and new ideas—all geared toward helping create a more competitive tomato industry for Australia.

An industry panel concluded the Forum, with Nick Raleigh (GoFarm), Dave Lamb (Food Agility), Brad Free (Kagome) and Hamish Lanyon (Sawers Farms) discussing and debating the hot topics of the industry and the season.

37 members stayed on for dinner and drinks after the event to continue the networking and discussions. [Continued Page 2.](#)

Virus Response Shifts Gears: From Eradication to Management

Australia's national response to the Tomato brown rugose fruit virus (ToBRFV) has entered a new phase. On 29 May, the National Management Group (NMG) officially declared the virus no longer technically feasible to eradicate. This marks a significant turning point for affected growers, with efforts now focused on managing and containing the disease rather than eliminating it. [Continued Page 4.](#)

VISITORS
PLEASE RESPECT
FARM BIOSECURITY



Kagome Australia's Brad Free says the company needed to change in order to continue to grow. (ABC Rural: Annie Brown)

RED VELVET: WHY KAGOME'S PIVOT MATTERS

Our processing tomato industry has been doing it tough in recent years. Between climatic shocks, shrinking grower numbers, and the rise of cheaper imports, it's been a challenge. But what I like to see from our Australian industry are bold moves like this.

Recently the ABC's Annie Brown interviewed Kagome CEO Brad Free to find out more. [Continued page 5.](#)



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PO Box 547, Echuca VIC 3564

A wide-angle photograph of a large group of people seated at round tables in a banquet hall. The tables are covered with white tablecloths and set with glasses, plates, and water bottles. The room has a high ceiling with white drapery and several large, ornate chandeliers. The floor is polished wood. The people are dressed in formal or semi-formal attire, and the atmosphere appears to be a formal dinner or conference.

The photograph shows a presentation in progress. A man stands at a podium on the right, addressing an audience. The podium features a sign for 'RICH RIVER' and logos for 'Gardiner' and 'Gardiner & Theobald'. Behind him, a large projection screen displays a game tree diagram. The diagram is a sequence of nodes, each labeled 'Tomato' or a numerical value. The nodes are connected by branches, some of which are labeled with values like '1/1', '1/2', '2/3', and '2/4'. The audience is visible in the foreground, seated and facing the stage.

[illegible]

1. Characterize the identity and pathogenicity of *Fusarium* spp. associated with yield decline of processing tomatoes in Australia,

2. Investigate races of *F. oxysporum* formae speciales (f. sp.) *lycopersici* (FOL) in processing tomatoes, and

3. Assess the role of different rotation crops in *F. oxysporum* inoculum buildup in the soil and impact on subsequent crop yield.

Annual APTRC Forum...Continued from page 2.

Does Hot Water Treatment Affect Seed Performance?

Another UoM project, led by Tania Zhang and Alex Fournier-Level, examined whether hot water treatment (HWT) has any lasting effects on seedling vigour. Early signs of stress in a few cultivars faded over time, suggesting that while HWT is generally safe, seed batch variation might play a role in how seeds bounce back. There is one more data set to gather before the report is finalised and distributed.

Data, Drones and Digital Twins

David Lamb from Food Agility and highlighting as our Keynote speaker, gave a tour of the digital frontier. From yield forecasting using drone imagery to in-crop water demand modelling, the message was that data is transforming how we manage farms. But Lamb reminded us; tech alone won't fix everything. It's about using these tools wisely and making them work for our systems. A parting quote was "If you're not paying for data on your farm, you ARE the data".

Water Outlook: A Mixed Bag

Water resources expert Mark Bailey painted a mixed picture for the 2025-26 season. While current storage levels are reasonable, patchy rainfall forecasts and possible rationing in parts of the Goulburn and Loddon systems mean careful planning will be critical. The risk of spill, however, is the lowest in years.

Kagome's Big Picture

Kagome Australia CEO Brad Free presented delegates a candid look at the company's challenges and exciting new directions. With increasing paste imports from China and ongoing energy cost pressures, Kagome is sharpening its focus on quality, upcycled products, and cost-saving innovations. The message: premium product and processing excellence are the way forward.



Annual APTRC Forum...Continued from page 3.

Farming's Future Workforce

A valuable addition to the forum this year was a look at AgCAREERSTART, presented by Amy Snowden, which detailed a national program connecting young Australians with real farm jobs. With strong retention and completion rates, the program is helping build the next generation of ag professionals—something the tomato industry will need as it adapts to a fast-changing future.



In Summary

Finishing with an in-depth and candid industry panel, the 2025 APTRC delivered on what it promised: a deep dive into the issues and opportunities shaping our sector. Whether it was the science of soilborne disease, the promise of smarter farming, or the pursuit of better yields through rotation and variety selection, the day offered real insights—and plenty to think about.



ToBRFV From Eradication to Management. Continued from page 1...

ToBRFV is a highly contagious virus affecting tomatoes, capsicums, and chillies. It can potentially cause deformities in fruit and leaves, leading to yield and quality losses. However, it is important to note that this virus establishes more easily in protected cropping environments. To the knowledge of APTRC and the Australian industry, no outbreaks in processing tomatoes have ever been recorded globally.

First detected in South Australia in 2024, ToBRFV has since been found in Victoria, with a concerning case in seedlings from NSW showing no direct link to other infected sites—suggesting the virus could be more widespread than previously thought.

Multiple seed lines traced back to Türkiye and Israel have tested positive for the virus, despite initially being certified disease-free.

The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has suspended acceptance of seed testing certificates from Turkish labs and is investigating offshore testing protocols.

The Australian Processing Tomato Research Council (APTRC) is heavily involved in the new response planning, working alongside state authorities and industry bodies to develop a practical long-term management strategy that supports safe but effective production and trade and provides clear guidance to growers and importers.

This includes efforts by APTRC to work alongside seed suppliers and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to review current seed testing protocols.

While this transition presents challenges, it has led to industry-wide collaboration that aims to safeguard Australian horticulture from the threat of ToBRFV, with emphasis now on trying to minimise future impacts to industry.

For the latest updates, visit outbreak.gov.au.



Red Velvet: Why Kagome's Pivot Matters. Continued from page 1...

The ABC article and accompanying 7pm news story highlighted how Kagome Foods Australia is leading the way in innovation by finding new value in what was once waste.

They're now cold-pressing tomato seeds to make oil for skincare. That same fruit that ends up in our paste, sauces and dice is now showing up in moisturisers, facial scrubs and sunscreen. And the tomato skin powder is even making its way into pet food.

This is a deliberate strategy to de-commoditise, to add value, and to support the future of growers. CEO Brad Free put it plainly: "We needed to change in order to keep growing." And that's exactly what they're doing—finding ways to recover 100% of their by-product by 2027.

Our industry has watched our grower numbers almost halve in a decade. But we've also seen the opportunities that comes from innovation and adaptability. Our industry can't rely on old models to carry us forward. What Kagome is doing gives our industry something it needs right now: new momentum.

Red Velvet is a reminder that there's beauty in reinvention—and that our industry still has plenty of opportunity left for those daring enough to find it.

To read the ABC article, please visit this [site](#).

Samplers of skincare products using tomato seed oil.
(ABC Rural: Annie Brown)

"Fourteen years ago 95 per cent of the company's revenue was driven by tomato. There wasn't much going on in other spaces. Now's it only 47 per cent,"
Mr Free said.



Matthew Stewart says processed tomato grower numbers are declining. (ABC News: Callum Marshall)

This Article by Matthew Stewart. Source: [ABC](#)

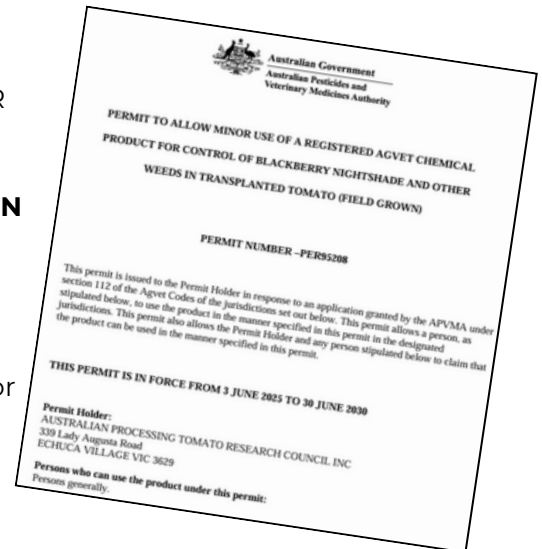
Industry Notices

The APTRC has been successful in applying for a Minor Use Permit for DUAL GOLD HERBICIDE, Containing: 960 g/L S-METOLACHLOR as the only active constituent, for:

CONTROL OF BLACKBERRY NIGHTSHADE AND OTHER WEEDS IN TRANSPLANTED TOMATO (FIELD GROWN). PERMIT NUMBER – PER95208

To view or download the full permit, click [here](#).

(As always, check with your processor and agronomist prior to any new chemical control inputs to make sure it's an allowable input for your produce and appropriate for your situation).

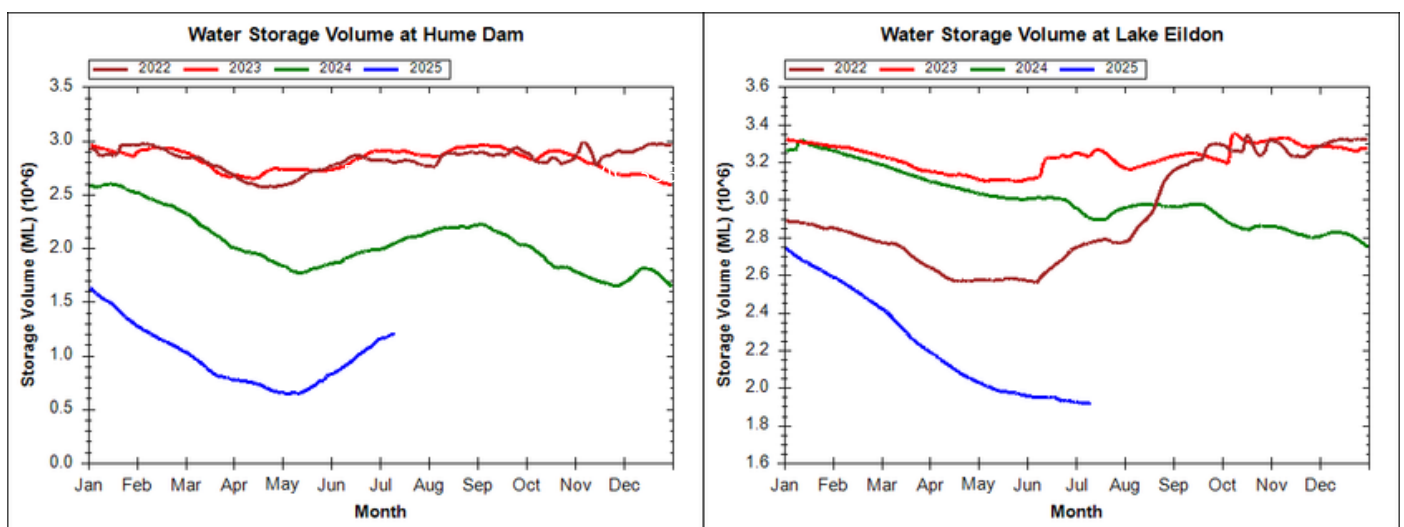


Climate Outlook

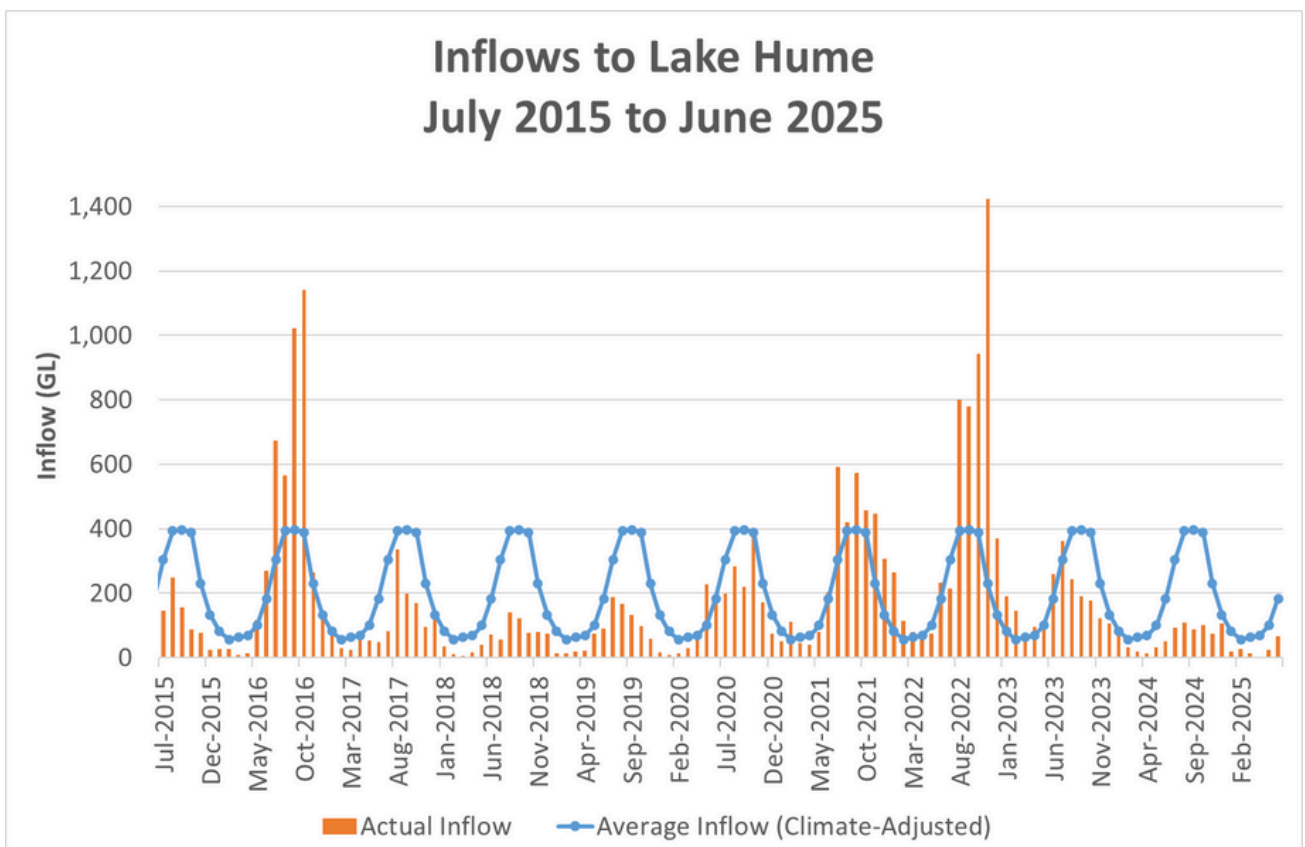
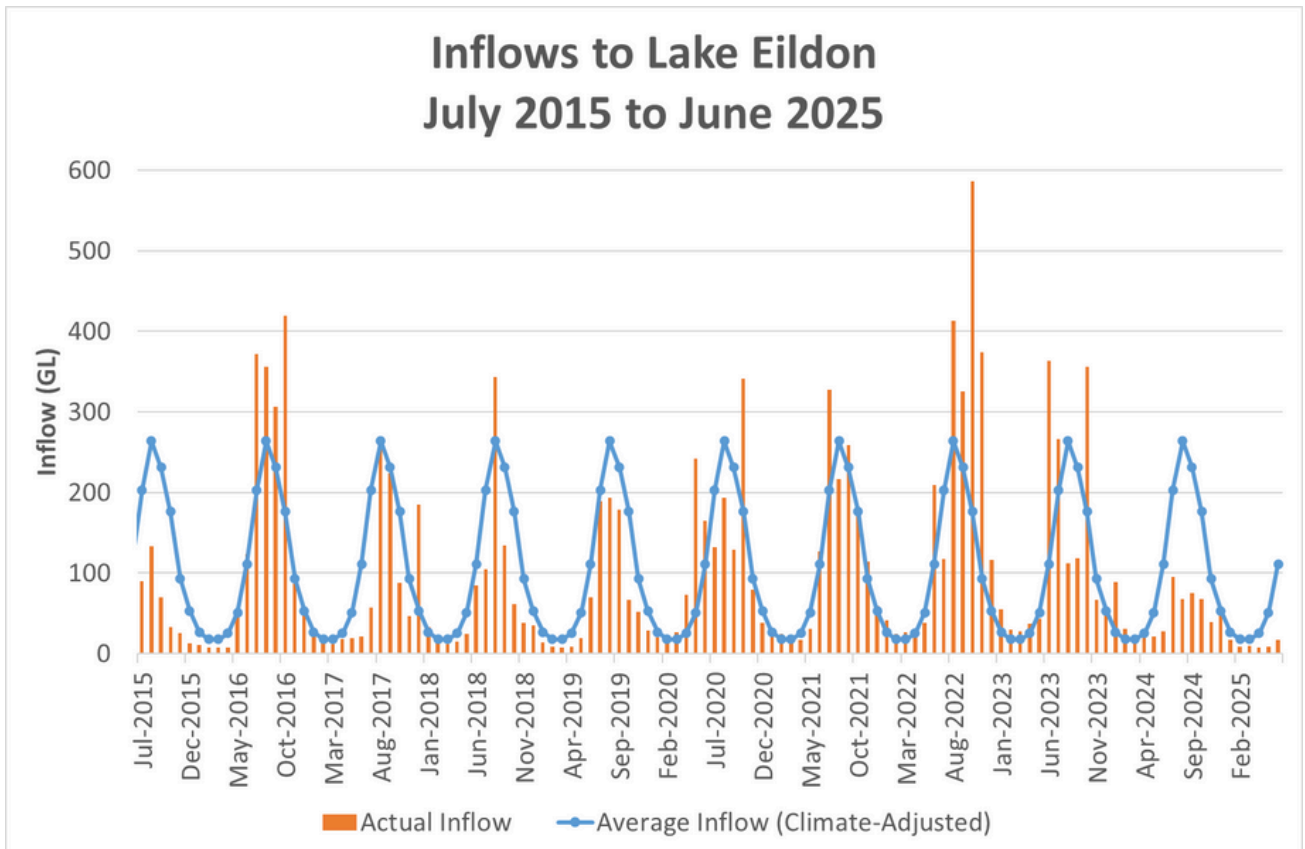
For July to September 2025, northern Victoria and southern New South Wales are expected to experience below-average rainfall and above-average temperatures, influenced by a positive Indian Ocean Dipole. This pattern typically leads to drier and warmer conditions in southeastern Australia. Daytime temperatures are likely to be higher than usual, with nights also warmer, reducing the frequency of frost events. These conditions may impact agricultural activities, particularly winter cropping and water resource management. For detailed and updated information, refer to the Bureau of Meteorology's Climate Outlooks. bom.gov.au

Source: Bureau of Meteorology

Water Storage Levels Goulburn-Murray Water



Water Inflows (Supplied by Goulburn-Murray Water)



Processing Tomato Members recognised at industry awards

AgNVet Agronomist Paul Elton Nominated for Visy Industry Impact Award Hort Connections 2025

Nomination submission below:

Paul Elton has been a cornerstone of the Australian processed tomato industry for over two decades, earning widespread respect for his unwavering dedication, deep agronomic expertise, and authentic approach to grower support.

Beginning his career in crop nutrition supply, Paul has consistently prioritised what's best for growers, treating each crop with the same care and commitment as if it were his own. His hands-on involvement, particularly evident during industry events like the annual Processing Tomato Crop Inspection Day, underscores his commitment to continuous improvement.

Paul's strong, trust-based relationships with growers, who value his consistent presence and insightful guidance. His enduring passion for the industry and commitment to excellence make him a standout figure in Australian horticulture. Year after year, through his knowledge, dedication, and hands-on approach. Even after all this time, his passion for learning hasn't faded. He's always seeking ways to innovate and improve outcomes for the growers he supports.



Matt Stewart - AUSVEG VIC & Muirs 2025 Awards for Excellence

Congratulations to Matt Stewart of the Australian Processing Tomato Research Council on winning the Cultivating Talent and Industry Awareness Award (proudly sponsored by VEG Education) at the AUSVEG VIC & Muirs.co Awards For Excellence 2025!

Matt has spent the past four years as Industry Development Manager at APTRC, where he's been instrumental in shaping the future of Australia's processing tomato industry. From coordinating large-scale tomato trials and field days to delivering insightful forums and international study tours, Matt is passionate about knowledge sharing and collaboration. His efforts have introduced better-performing varieties, fostered open dialogue across the supply chain, and kept the industry connected through the Tomato Topics digital update. A true champion of education and innovation in horticulture.



Source AusvegVic LinkedIn

Seed Industry Representative Field Day 2025



APTRC 2024-2025 Cultivar Improvement Program Trials

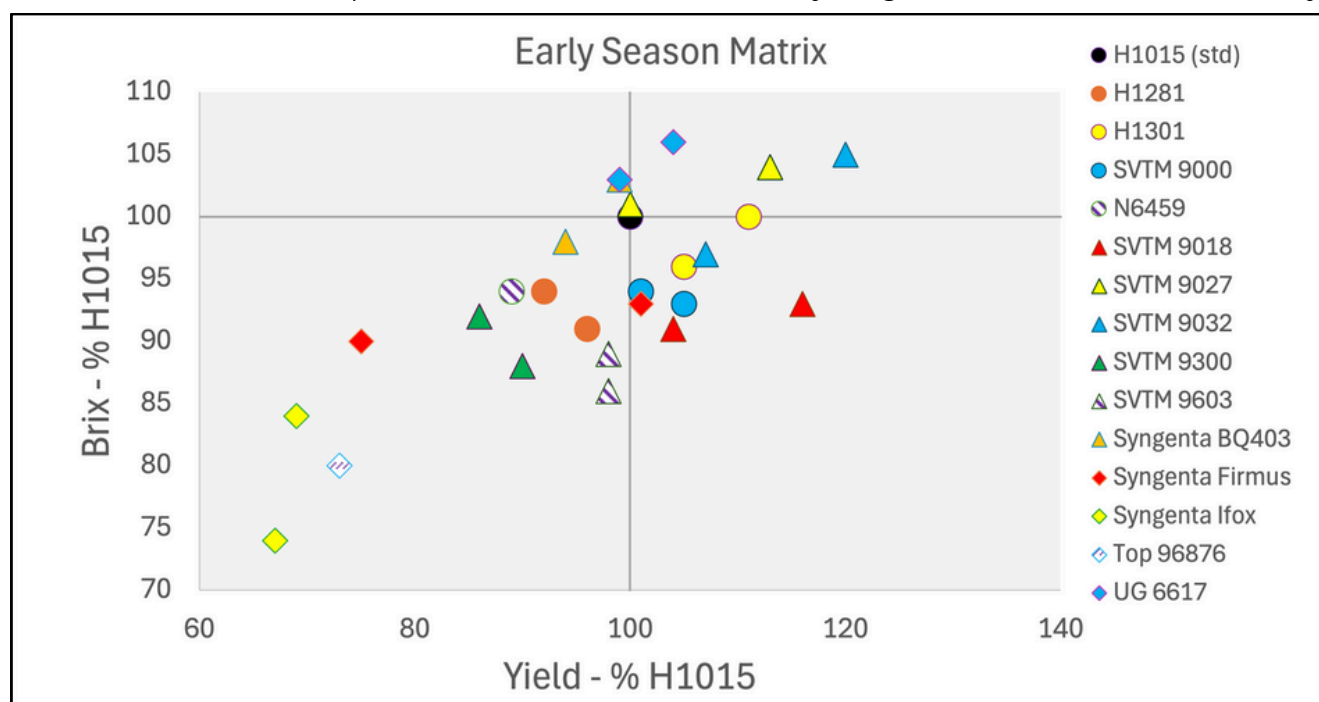
OptiAg Mark and Sarah Sargeant

In the 2024–25 season, a total of 33 tomato cultivars were evaluated through commercial harvest paddock trials as part of the APTRC Cultivar Improvement Program. The trial included 15 early-season cultivars and 18 mid-season cultivars, providing a broad assessment of performance across different growing windows.

The trials were conducted across six sites in key production regions. Early-season cultivars were trialed at Lake Boga and Boort, while mid-season cultivars were tested at Katunga, Rochester, Jennisons, and a direct-seeded site at Boort. This diverse set of environments ensured robust comparisons of yield, quality, and agronomic suitability for commercial production.

Below are the Early and Mid-Season matrix charts, which show the cultivars stacked against the industry standard on a percentage basis for brix and yield.

The Full Cultivar Report will be included in the industry magazine, to be released later this year.



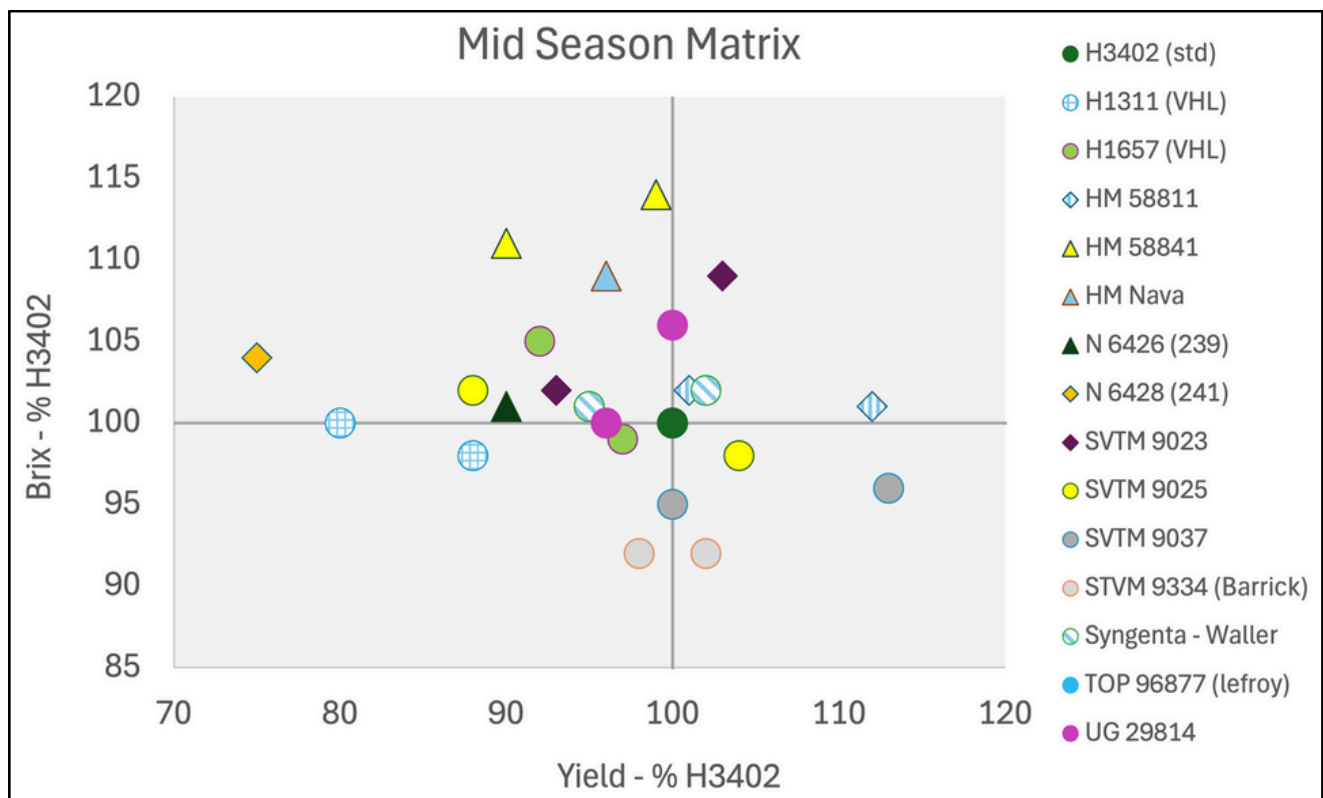
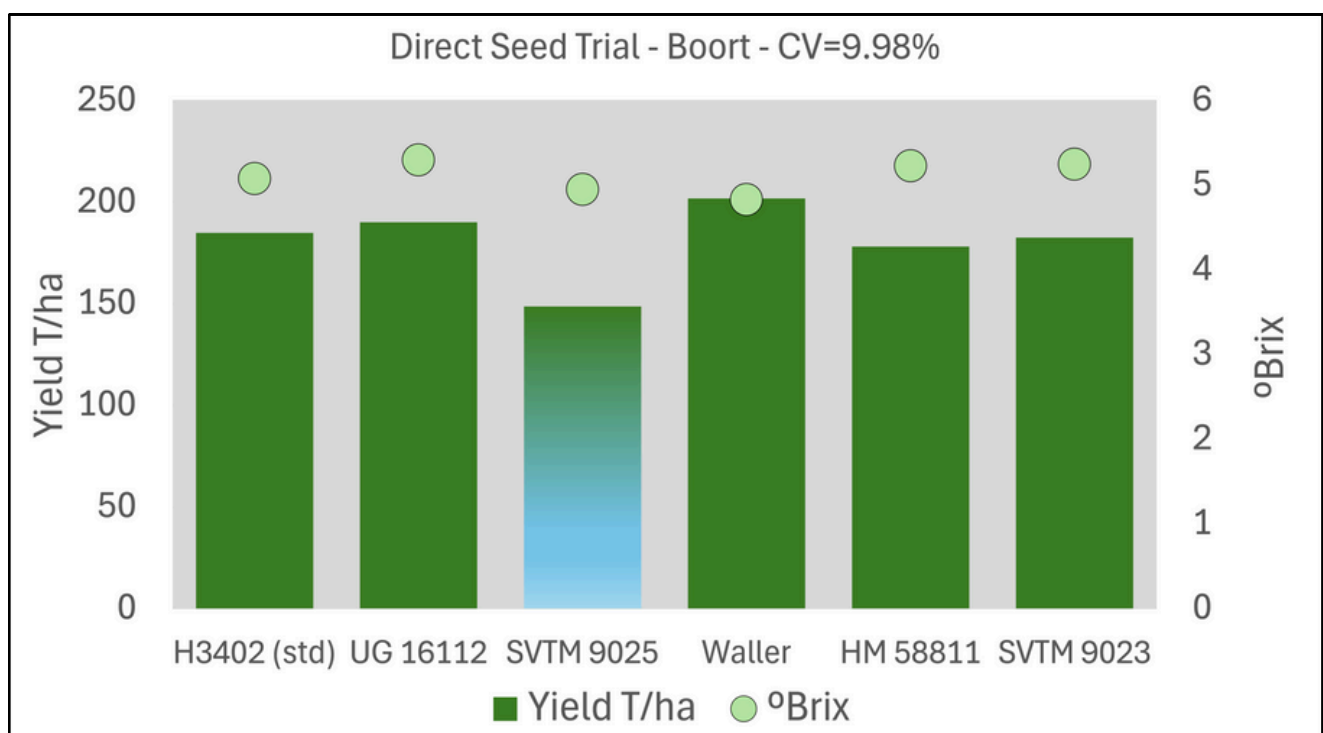


Chart below represents the only direct seed trial at Sawers farm in Boort



Tomato Cultivar Observations: 2024/25.

KEY: coloured lines for further trial –
EARLY; INTERMEDIATE; FULL SEASON

Early Cultivars: Sites at Boort (Sawers – S1) and Mystic Park (GoFarms – S2)
(Assessed 23/1/25: Boort 3-4 weeks from Harvest; MP 2-3 weeks)

Cultivar	Comments	Score
Heinz 1301 (Std)	Medium/compact vine. Lighter foliage, good cover. Firm blocky plum-egg fruit of small-medium size. Bit of bleach and core but colour ok-good. Holding and yield looks good.	6.5/6.5
Hx 1015 (Std)	Medium/compact vine. Medium foliage with some leaf roll at site 1. Medium sized blocky egg-plum fruit. Firm with good colour. Bit of bleach on exposed fruit, good yield.	8/7.5
Ifox (Syngenta)	Compact vine, rolled leaves, on bed. Bit of leaf disease but cover ok. Medium sized blocky egg-plum fruit. Good yield for vine, very good colour, firm. May stick. Split set and breakdown evident at site 2.	6.5/5.5
Firmus (Syngenta)	Compact vine with rolled leaves. Medium blocky eggs, firm with very good colour although a tad bleach. Yield?	6/6
BQ 403 (Syngenta)	Medium/vigorous dark vine spreading – might flop. Medium plum fruit, firm with good colour. Might stick. Concentration ok and looks to be holding.	6.5/6.5
SVTM 9000 (Seminis)	Medium/vigorous vine with dark foliage, good cover. Very firm blocky egg-plums of medium size – tad puffy. Good colour but good yield. Second early. (the field cv at S1)	7/6.5
SVTM 9018	Tall m/v vine with dark rolled leaves - a bit floppy. Very firm blocky eggs of good size. Good concentration, medium colour but good yield. Bit of splitting and b/d at site 2. Early.	6.5/6.5
SVTM 9027	Medium/vigorous spreading vine with med/light foliage. Medium-large blocky plum-egg fruit. Very firm with medium colour. Yield?	6/6
SVTM 9032	Medium/vigorous vine on the bed but might flop, medium foliage. Fruit medium blocky plums, very firm with medium colour. A bit puffy. Yield ok, but conc issues at S1 and breaking down at S2.	6/5.5
SVTM 9300 (Incipit)	Small compact vine with dark rolled leaves. Medium egg-plum fruit. Good colour, medium firm with thinner walls. Good yield for vine. Definitely early and may not hold too well.	6.5/6
SVTP 9603 (Eventus)	Med/vigorous vine, big at site 2, lighter foliage. Elongated pear fruit, mainly medium-large. Might shatter. Firm with medium colour and yield ok. Some bleach and split set at S2.	6/5
UG 6617	Medium/vigorous vine on the bed, med/dark foliage providing good cover. Medium/large, elongated egg-pear fruit, very firm. Medium colour, a bit puffy. Yield ok.	6.5/6
Heinz 1281	Compact vine on the bed with large, rolled leaves. Medium plum-egg fruit with excellent colour. Medium firm. Good yield for vine. Holding? Cover good at S2.	7/7.5
TOP 96876 (Lefroy Valley)	One site only (S1). Very small compact vine with rolled leaves - nearly all ripe. Medium blocky plum-egg fruit. Firm with very good colour. Yield ok for vine but cover lacking and may not hold. Might work on double row.	5.5
N 290 (N 6459)	S1 only. Medium vine a bit upright with med/dark rolled leaves. Cover ok. Medium/large blocky egg-pear shaped fruit. Very firm, medium colour and a few dimples. Medium yield only.	5.5

**Mid-season cultivars: Weeks site: Timmering (19/2),
from Katunga (GoFarm) site (10/3)
and from Jennison's site near Mathoura (19/2).**

The latter two sites had some irrigation and disease issues, so scores not shown.

Cultivar	Comments	Score
H_z 3402	Medium-vigorous low vine on the bed. Purple/light leaves on top. Blocky elongated fruit of medium size and firmness. Colour ok, very good yield, bit of bleach on top. Around 15% green when assessed. Vine floppy in places and fruit breaking down at K site although good patches rated relatively well.	7.5
HM 58811	Medium/vigorous vine on the bed, medium foliage. Medium/large fruit with medium colour, very firm blocky egg-pears – some a bit pointed. Tad puffy also. Yield ok, may be later maturing. 15% Opening up a bit but not much breakdown at K site.	6.5
9334 Barrick (Seminis)	Medium vine with rolled leaves and some purpling. Medium/small sized fruit – blocky plum shaped. Good yield, medium colour, firm. A bit of bleach and few puffy fruit. 5-10%. Earlier at both sites.	6
H_z 1311	Medium/vigorous vine, dark foliage, falling a bit to one side. Medium sized blocky eggs, very firm. Good yield and excellent colour. A few points and dimples and tad breakdown. 15% green. Fruit on the small side at K site and medium yield.	7
H_z 1657	Medium/vigorous vine with dark foliage, purple on top. Medium sized firm blocky plums with very good colour. A few dimples. Good yield. 10% Some breakdown and lacking yield at K site.	7
SVTM 9037	Vigorous ragged vine with lighter foliage. Medium/large blocky plum/eggs, very firm with some good colour. Exposed fruit bleaching a bit and it looks later (30%). Yield medium for the vine size.	6
Waller (Syngenta)	Medium/vigorous vine on the bed, medium foliage providing good cover. Medium, blocky eggs, very firm. Colour ok. Good yield with a few puffy fruit and tad breakdown. 15% (Holding?) Smaller fruit and medium yield noted for K site.	7
SVTM 9025	Vigorous spreading vine, a bit floppy. Lighter foliage and small leaves. Medium blocky plum/egg fruit, some bleached on top. Cover? A few points and dimples. Very firm, colour ok. Yield ok-good but some in the gutter. 10%	6
SVTM 9023	Vigorous vine with dark foliage – looks later. Large blocky egg-plums, very firm with medium colour. Yield looks ok-good but again some in the gutter. 15% Breakdown again evident at K site.	6
HM 58841	Vigorous spreading vine with medium/light foliage – a tad floppy. Medium-large blocky egg-elongated fruit, very firm with medium colour. A bit puffy, yield ok. Again looks later. 20% Medium yield for the large vine but not much breakdown at K site.	6
UG 29814	Medium/vigorous vine with dark leaves – some rolled. A tad floppy. Medium/large blocky plum/eggs – a few dimples. Firm with some good colour although bleach evident in some exposed fruit. Good yield. 15% Opening up with some breakdown at K site.	6.5
UG 16112	The field cultivar – not in the trial but rated for comparison. Medium/vigorous vine on the bed with a lot of rolled purple leaves and a few bleached fruit on top. Very firm blocky eggs of medium size and showing some good colour. Good yield on the bed. 10% green.	7

<u>Observation lines</u>		
Heinz 1015	Medium-vigorous vine with rolled leaves. Cover? Blocky egg-plum fruit, medium firmness but good colour. Good yield and only 5% green – so early.	7
HM 7103	Medium/vigorous, bit upright with medium/dark foliage giving good cover. A tad floppy though. Medium blocky egg-plum fruit, firm but colour medium. Good yield but a bit of breakdown evident. 10%	6
N 507	Medium/vigorous erect vine may flop. Later. Some secondary growth on top also. Medium/large blocky egg-plum fruit a bit puffy. Firm and colour ok but yield lacking for vine. 20% (concentration?)	5
HM 5511	Larger vigorous vine with finer medium/dark leaves. Medium/large blocky egg fruit, very firm, a bit puffy, medium colour. Yield medium. 10%. Old ground? Looked early with vine opening up a bit at K site.	6
HM 8268	Medium/vigorous vine on the bed (although a bit floppy in second rep and at K site) with medium foliage. Very firm medium large plum fruit. A bit puffy and medium colour. Good yield and 5% green.	6.5
N279 (N6441)	Vigorous vine with lighter foliage. Medium/large blocky egg-plum fruit – very firm, a bit puffy with medium colour. Medium yield for the vine size. 20% green so later. Falling open at K site, with breakdown and bleach evident.	5.5
SVTM 9038	Vigorous vine with medium/dark foliage and 25% green. Very firm medium/large blocky plum-egg shaped fruit. Medium colour. Yield again lacking for the vine size. Try these bigger vines on old ground.	5
N239 (N6426)	Medium/vigorous on the bed, medium foliage. Very firm, medium sized blocky egg-plum shaped fruit – some with dimple. Colour ok, tad core, medium yield. Try again. (5%)	N/A
HMX Nava	At K site only. Vine medium/vigorous on the bed. Fruit very firm, egg-pear shaped with variable size, colour ok. Yield ok but breaking down – looks early at this site. (5%)	N/A
N241 (N6428)	Medium/vigorous vine on the bed, with plum-egg shaped fruit of variable size – many small fruit at K site, better at J site. Very firm with good colour but lacking yield at K site. Looks later maturing.	N/A
TOP 96877	At J site only. Upright vine with dark foliage and secondary growth on top. Fruit of variable size, mostly medium/large blocky plum-eggs. Firm and colour ok. Lacking yield and looks later.	N/A
TOP 96878	At J site only. Medium/vigorous vine with lighter foliage flopping at this site. Fruit firm, medium blocky plums. Colour ok. Couldn't judge yield.	N/A



FOLLOWING FROM TOMATO NEWS

Vale: Cosme Argerich

It is with sadness that the Australian Processing Tomato Industry acknowledges the passing of Argentine colleague, Cosme Argerich, who died in a road accident near Mendoza on Friday 27 June, aged 70.

Cosme was a highly regarded figure within our industry—known personally by past and present members of industry and more broadly by our extended grower and research community.

As a long-time technical leader at INTA La Consulta in Argentina, his commitment to innovation, collaboration, and sustainable agricultural development resonated far beyond his home country.



Vale Cosme Argerich (Tomato News)

Our thoughts are with his family, friends, and colleagues. He will be remembered not just for his expertise, but for his warmth, generosity, and enduring support of the Australian industry.

The obituary by Sophie Colvine from Tomato News can be found here. [Obituary: Cosme Argerich - Tomato News](#)

18th ISHS Symposium on Processing Tomato - Call for Papers



16th World Processing
Tomato Congress

AND

18th ISHS Symposium on
Processing Tomato



Registration

Registration will open soon!

Submit abstracts for the world's premier processing tomato symposium.

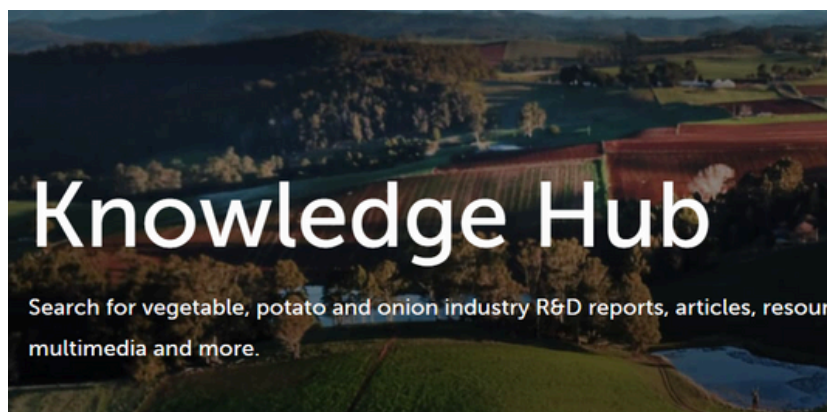
The Organizing Committee would like to invite you to take part in the 18th International Symposium on Processing Tomato by sending an abstract to present your research orally or by poster during the event. This influential Symposium is a unique platform within ISHS symposia, allowing researchers and people working in the industry to meet, discuss and find solutions together.

The Symposium will be held in parallel with the 16th World Processing Tomato Congress with a full schedule of oral and poster sessions, from Monday 8 to Wednesday 10 June 2026, including some joint sessions with the congress.

The Symposium will focus on addressing key scientific questions and issues related to the entire industry, from field (production for industrial purposes, applied ecophysiology, agronomy, biotic and abiotic stress resistance, genetics applied to industrial food systems) to fork (organoleptic and nutritional food quality, smart quality control processes, healthy food, high quality cultivars).

Abstracts must be submitted online before Thursday 15 January 2026. [Click here](#) for more information.

FOLLOWING FROM AUSVEG



Knowledge Hub

Search for vegetable, potato and onion industry R&D reports, articles, resources, multimedia and more.

The Knowledge Hub

The Knowledge Hub, housed within a streamlined AUSVEG website, is the largest online repository of technical information for the Australian vegetable, potato and onion sector. It contains more than 3,100 resources from more than 1,600 research projects (and growing).

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the vegetable research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

[READ MORE](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

VIC: National Renewables in Agriculture Conference and Expo

This event brings together farmers, agriculture and energy consultants, peak bodies and Government representatives to share stories of on-farm renewables, their business case and discuss what's driving the transformation of energy use in agriculture.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

When: Wed 23 July

Where: The Capital Theatre, Bendigo

Future Ag - Agri Technica

FutureAg Expo is Australia's premier trade fair for agricultural machinery, innovation, and sustainable farming solutions.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

When: 6-8 August

Where: Melbourne Royal Showgrounds

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

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"Tomato Topics" is a quarterly newsletter compiled and edited by the Industry Development Manager, APTRC Inc.,

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