



TOMATO TOPICS

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE PROCESSING TOMATO INDUSTRY

Hort
Innovation

PROCESSING
TOMATO FUND

ISSN 1038-3522

December 2026

VOL. 35 NO. 4



APTRC Industry Field Day Boort and Lake Boga

The APTRC Boort and Lake Boga Industry Field Day was held on 10 December 2025, which provided growers, researchers and industry partners with an opportunity to see current on-farm practices and discuss emerging issues in processing tomato production. A total of 56 people attended the field component, with 46 joining the evening dinner.

The first stop was Savers Farm, where Hamish Lanyon, Farm Operations Manager, outlined his experience using the pre-emergent herbicides Reflex and Dual Gold and his current trials in the processing tomatoes this season.



With
Reflex



Without
Reflex

The trials demonstrated strong reductions in weed pressure and indicated there is significant scope to further consider these products within tomato weed management programs in the coming seasons.

The discussion was supported by Len Ibbotson, Technical Services Lead – Horticulture at Syngenta, who provided additional technical insight on the day.





The group then visited Michelle and Graeme Lawrence's farm, where the focus shifted to seasonal management.

Graeme outlined their current production program and demonstrated their new plant growth and soil moisture monitoring system, highlighting how real-time data is being used to support irrigation decision-making.



The third stop was at David Chirnside's farm, where David and Nick O'Halloran (Ag Vic) discussed the installation and first-season use of a pressure-compensated drip irrigation system. They outlined how the system is being monitored and managed, and shared early observations from its performance under commercial conditions. Early indications showed extremely uniform pressure and distribution across the monitoring site.

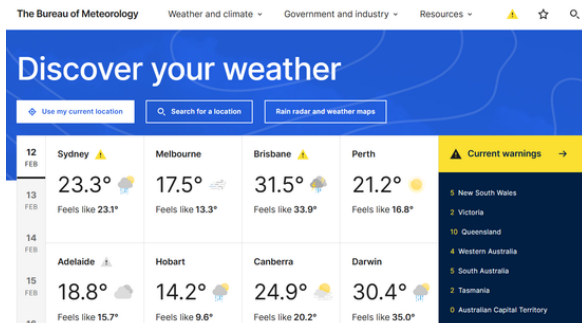
The final field visit was to GoFarm, where Tom Farmer spoke about his third-year tomato crop, which appeared to be performing very well. Discussion focused on crop establishment, season progression and learnings from successive years of production.

The day concluded at the Mystic Park Hotel, where attendees enjoyed dinner, drinks and informal networking, rounding out a highly valuable and well-attended industry event.

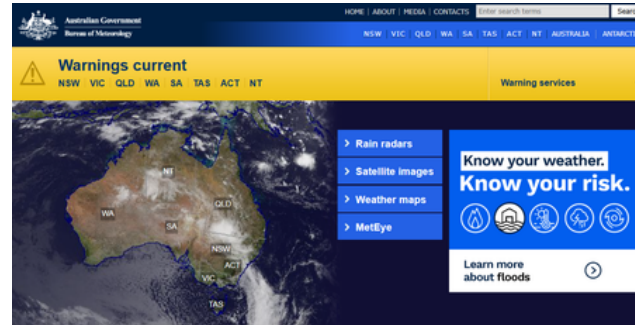


New Look for BOM Online — Old Site Still Accessible

The new Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website is now live, however if you're having difficulty navigating the new BOM website, please find below a link to view the BOM in the previous format or click the 'new' or 'old' graphic below: <https://reg.bom.gov.au/>



New Site



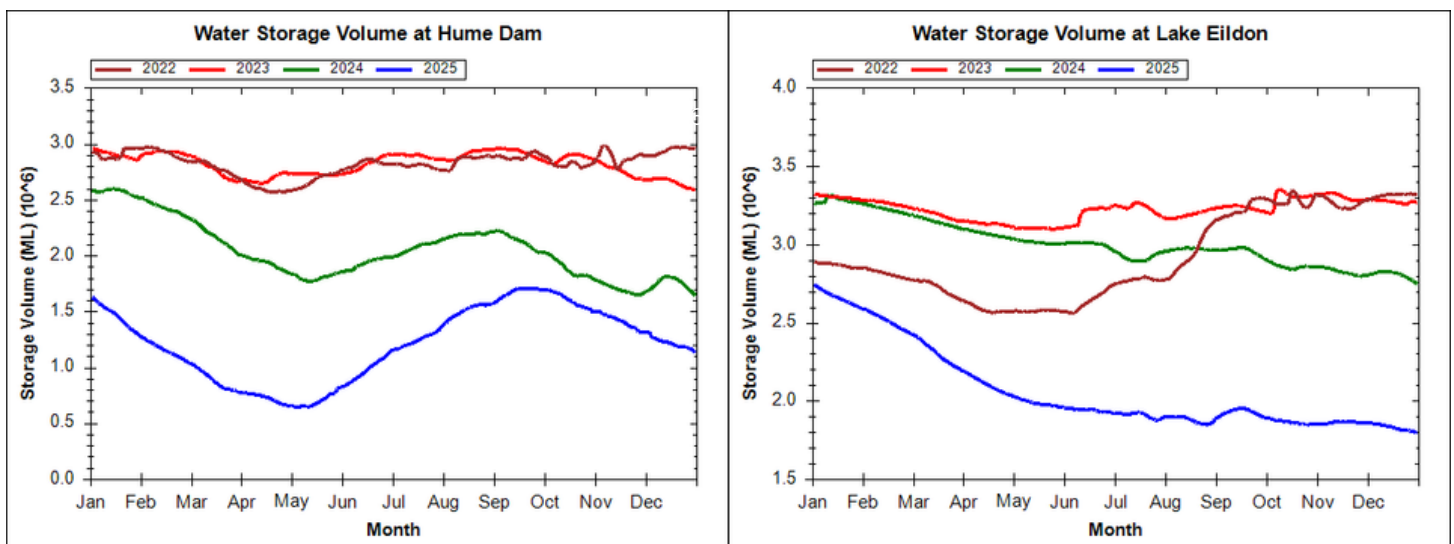
Old Site

Climate Outlook

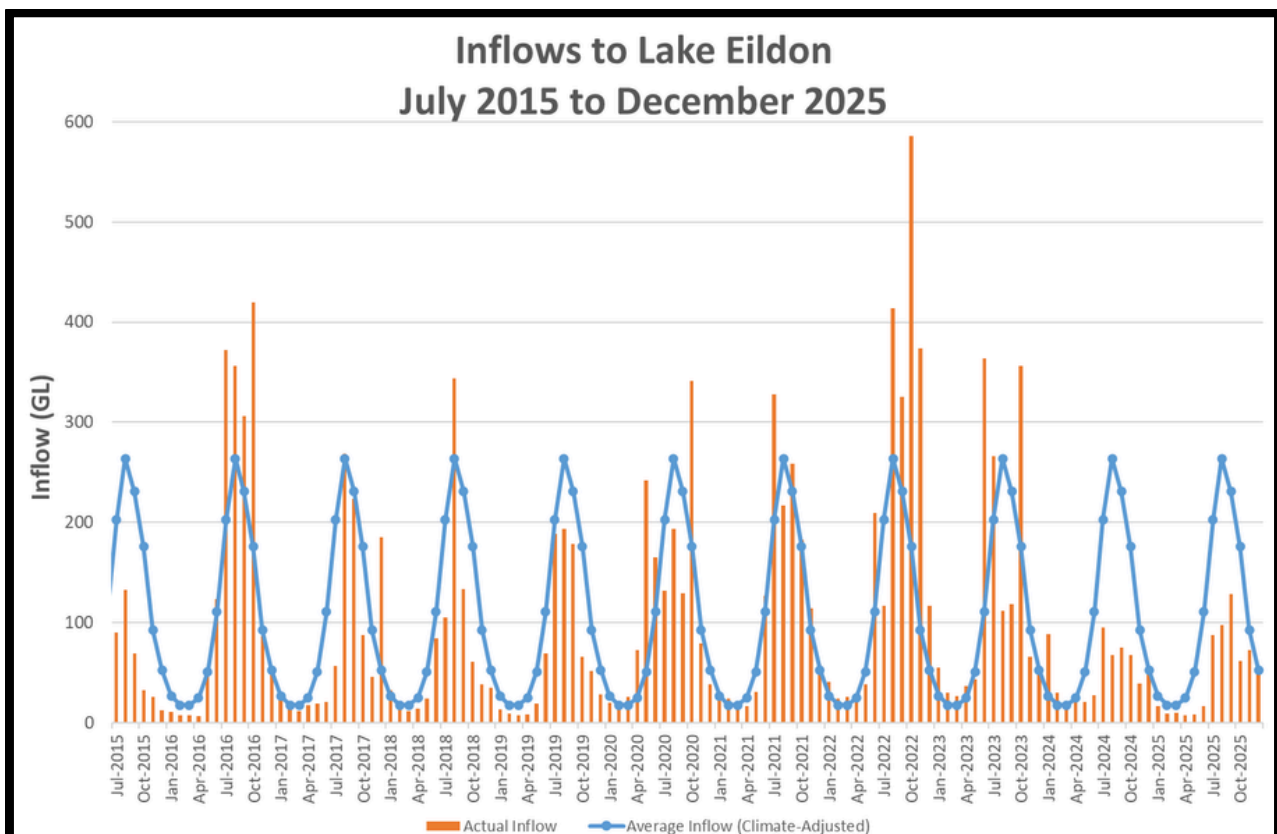
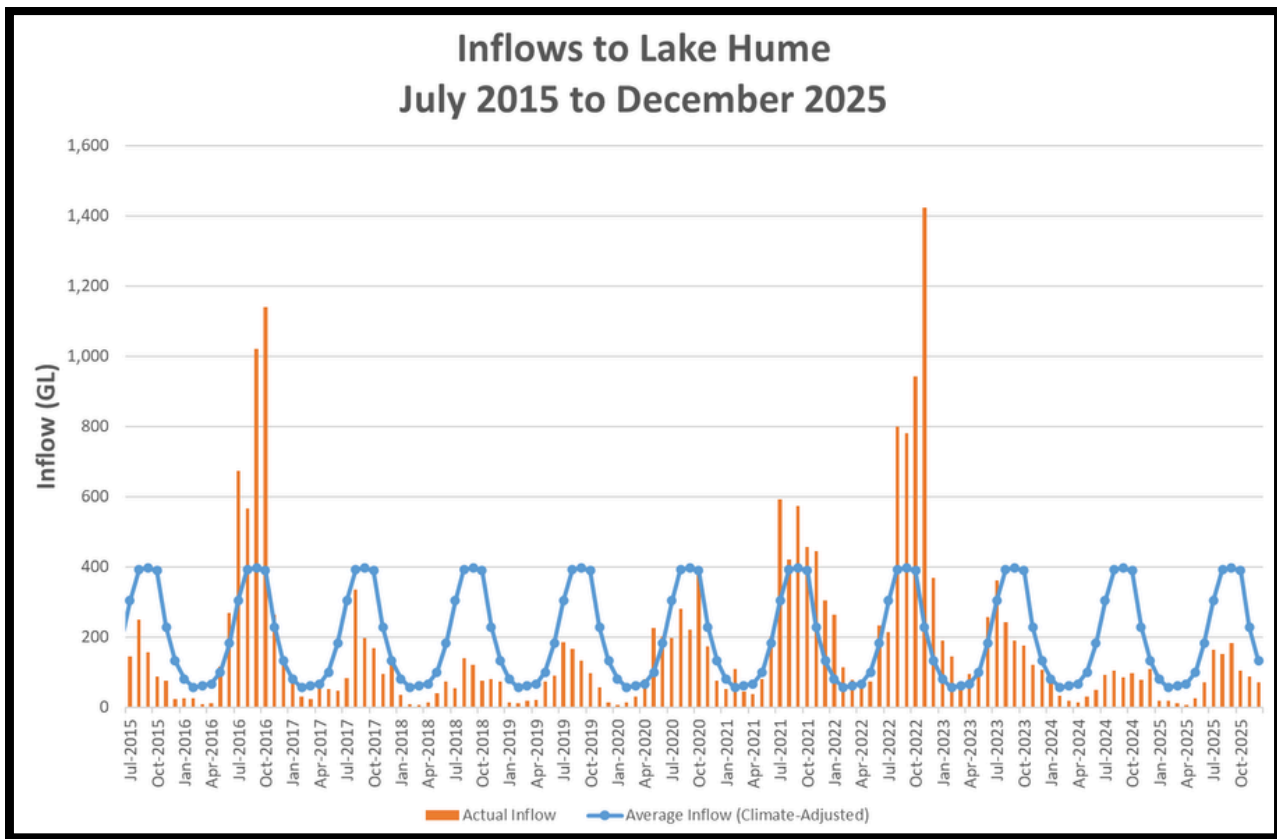
Rainfall is likely to be below average for much of southern Australia, with autumn rainfall likely to be below average (60–80% chance) for parts of southern and inland areas, including northern Victoria and southern New South Wales, with the drier than average signal strengthening toward the end of the outlook period. Maximum temperatures are very likely to be above average (more than 80% chance) across most of the region, with an increased chance of unusually high maximum temperatures (over 50% chance). Minimum temperatures are likely to very likely to be above average (60% to over 80% chance), with lower chances closer to 50% in some inland parts of south-eastern Australia. Sea surface temperatures were among the warmest on record and are forecast to be warmer than average across much of the Australian region, providing increased moisture and energy that can enhance the severity of rain systems. La Niña is easing, with a neutral ENSO state favoured through to at least late autumn, while the Indian Ocean Dipole is neutral and expected to remain neutral until at least the end of autumn 2026.

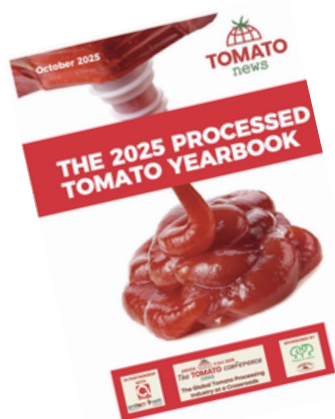
Source: BOM

Water Storage Levels Goulburn-Murray Water



Water Inflows (Supplied by Goulburn-Murray Water)





FOLLOWING FROM TOMATO NEWS

The 2025 Processed Tomato Yearbook which was distributed during the tomato news conference at ANUGA is now available on the Tomato News Website at: <https://tomatonews.com/yearbook/>

The tomato of the future may not need a plant

Source: Tomato News, Sophie Colvine

Biologists from Utrecht University present vision for plantless fruit production



In a preliminary study, it proved possible to let these small tomatoes continue growing without a plant.

According to the researchers, it should also be possible to grow tomatoes without a plant from the very beginning (photo: Utrecht University).

Biologists from Utrecht University and Wageningen University & Research present a vision for plantless fruit production, published in Trends in Biotechnology. In a preliminary study, it proved possible to let small tomatoes continue growing without a plant, and the researchers state it should also be possible to grow tomatoes without a plant from the very beginning.

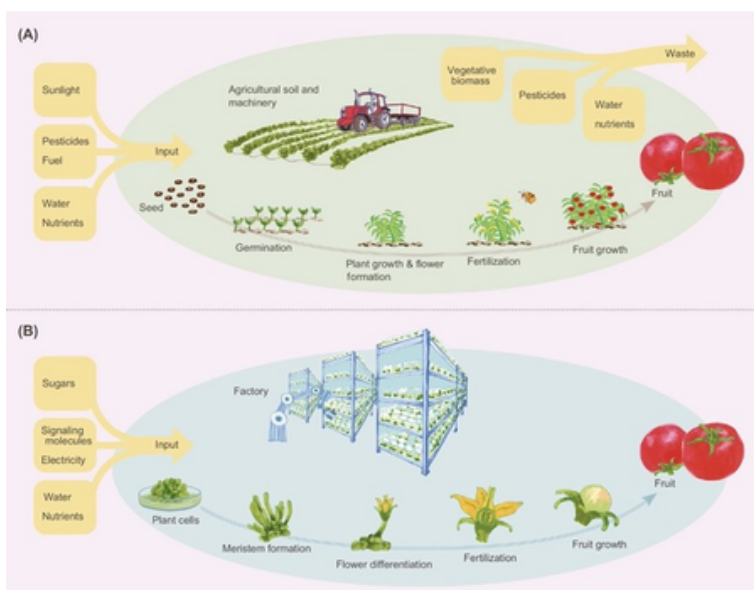
The process starts with a seed or a piece of leaf that, when exposed to the right signals, develops into a flower bud. The flower can be pollinated or artificially induced to initiate fruit development.

Instead of drawing energy from sunlight, the plant-free fruit grows in a carbohydrate-rich nutrient solution.

"If we can produce fruits in factories rather than in fields, we could shield part of our food supply from the impacts of climate change," says Lucas van der Zee. "It would also mean that we need far less land to grow food."

While individual steps have been described earlier in scientific literature, the authors bring them together for the first time in a single theoretical framework. Researchers remain optimistic but stress the concept is still at an early stage: the first fruits remain small, production is far from sustainable, and environmental benefits can be offset if ordinary sugar is used.

One potential solution is CO₂-derived acetate. Alongside technical issues, the researchers raise social and ethical questions around how food is made, ownership, access to technology, and the role of farmers and breeders. "We believe that it is important that people have a say in how their food is produced," Van der Zee says.



Research: Minimal heat effect on postharvest losses

California's \$1 billion processing tomato industry is highly efficient and likely will be able to withstand higher temperatures and traffic congestion with minimal postharvest losses, according to research conducted at the University of California, Davis. The research, published in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics, analyzed 1.4 million truckloads of tomatoes transported from thousands of farm fields to processing facilities between 2011 and 2020.



"It's rare that we find an example where climate change is expected to have a negligible effect," said Sarah Whitnell, who led the research as a postdoctoral scholar at UC Davis and is now at University of Western Australia, Perth.

"Ultimately, the supply chain is a well-oiled machine. The losses are relatively small, and while temperature does increase them, it's not by a huge amount."

Researchers matched each truckload to California state highway traffic data and hourly temperatures, which ranged from 48 degrees to 108 degrees Fahrenheit. They compared truckloads of tomatoes from the same field and same growing season: for example, one travelling at 5 a.m. when temperatures are cooler and traffic is light with one travelling at 5 p.m. when the opposite is true.

Optimal conditions: Cool weather and traffic
The best-case scenario was when cool temperatures coincided with heavy traffic. The worst-case scenario was hot temperatures combined with heavy traffic. When it's hot, slow traffic speeds cause trucks to spend more time at damaging temperatures.

"If you have this magic scenario where temperatures are cool but there is traffic, you actually have the lowest losses," Whitnell said. "This is because faster speeds cause vibrations that can increase damage in fresh produce." Comparing best- and worst-case scenarios, the share of soft, split or squished tomatoes doubles from about 1% to 2%. This equates to modest losses, the researchers also found.

The findings show that California's processing tomato industry is highly efficient and could be a model for others, said senior author Tim Beatty, who is chair of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UC Davis.

"Most supply chains aren't nearly as efficient as the California supply chain, so what this says is if you're a very efficient supply chain, you can mitigate the losses associated with climate change," Beatty said. "It says that adaptation is possible to really reduce loss past the farm gate." Industry relationships made research possible. Eighty-four cents of every farm dollar is generated after the product leaves a farm, but most climate change research has focused on how growing is affected. This research looks at that second stage and was possible because of comprehensive public data and detailed transport, tonnage and quality data supplied by industry, Beatty said.

"We know very little about the effects of climate change once product leaves the farm gate," he said. "I think this paper is one of the very first to actually tackle that."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative supported this research.

Reference: Postharvest losses from temperature during transit: Evidence from a million truckloads. Sarah C. Whitnell, Timothy K. M. Beatty. American Journal of Agricultural Economics. 18 October 2025.

Full article at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.70019> (charge)

Source: UC Davis.

Photo: Tomatoes leave a field in Firebaugh, CA after harvest (Hector Amezcua, UC Davis)

Biosecurity Matters

Tropical root-knot nematode (*Meloidogyne luci*)

Current situation

- Tropical root-knot nematode (*Meloidogyne luci*) is a plant pest that has been detected in Victoria.

Response activities

- Further investigations are underway to better understand the situation and potential movements.
- Tropical root-knot nematode is unlikely to be technically feasible or cost beneficial to eradicate due to:
 - difficulty in sterilising soil where the pest is established.
 - multiple detections across Victoria that suggest the pest is likely already established.
 - likelihood that tropical root-knot nematode has been established in the areas where it was detected for quite some time.

About the pest

- Root-knot nematodes are plant pests known to be economically important pests of a wide range of plant species globally, including tomatoes.
- Tropical root-knot nematode can spread with propagation material, soil and machinery.
 - Harvested above-ground fruits and vegetables for consumption are not considered a risk for spread.
- It damages plants by affecting their root system, which becomes distorted by the development of several galls and the lack of fine roots.



- Root-knot nematodes are generally difficult to control and eradicate.
- The [APVMA PubCRIS](#) database has a list of nematicides registered for several of the hosts of this species including tomatoes, nursery stock, pastures, wheat, barley, oat, sorghum and maize.
- *Meloidogyne luci* is a member of the same genus as the established root-knot nematodes (*Meloidogyne javanica* and *Meloidogyne incognita*) previously recorded across Australia including a very similar host range.

Biosecurity and reporting

- To keep exotic plant pests and diseases out of Australia, follow Australia's strict biosecurity rules.
- To reduce the risk of plant pests and diseases coming onto your farming property, implement good biosecurity measures and manage risk pathways. This includes practices such as managing visitors to your farm, ensuring footwear, tools and vehicles coming onto the property are free of soil and plant debris, and sourcing clean planting material.
- There are no known export or domestic trade implications for this pest.
- It isn't known if trade conditions will change due to change in pest status for *Meloidogyne luci*.

Tomato potato psyllid

What we know

• Tomato potato psyllid (*Bactericera cockerelli*) is a tiny sap-sucking insect that attacks a range of plants in the Solanaceae family including potato, **tomato**, eggplant, capsicum, chilli.

• This plant pest was first found in Western Australia in 2017 where it's now established. In 2024 there was a detection in a glasshouse on Victoria's Bellarine Peninsula.

• Agriculture Victoria put restrictions in place on the Bellarine Peninsula to contain it. However, in October 2025 the psyllid was found in a Melbourne resident's backyard.

• Further surveillance is ongoing, but it has been determined that the psyllid has spread across greater Melbourne.

• There have been no detections in production nurseries or commercial fruit and vegetable production facilities, apart from the initial infected premise in Victoria, which has been subject to biosecurity controls.

• Adult psyllids resemble small, winged cicadas. They feed on leafy parts of plants, causing leaf curling, yellowing and stunting.

• The psyllid can spread a bacterium called *Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum* - also known as CLso.

• Psyllids collected across Melbourne are being tested for the bacterium, and have all been negative.

• The psyllid can be dispersed by the wind, the movement of infested plant material, and contaminated clothing, tools and equipment.

What we're doing

• Following enquiries from APTRC with biosecurity authorities regarding Tomato Potato Psyllid (TPP), there are currently **no accreditation requirements** for NSW growers receiving nursery stock from accredited Victorian nurseries, with accreditation obligations applying to the consigning nurseries only. In addition, Victoria has **no current restrictions** on industry vehicles or equipment moving between Victoria and NSW.

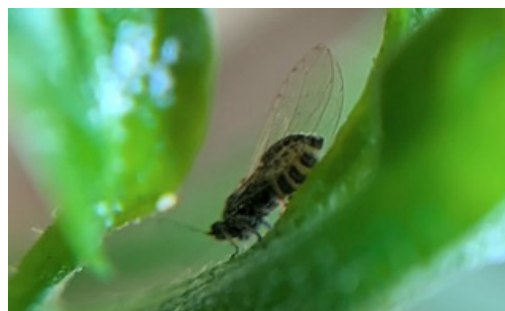
What you can do

• Growers should implement and maintain hygiene and inspection protocols on their property to minimise the risk of tomato potato psyllid entering.

• If you suspect your plants are being damaged by Tomato potato psyllid, you need to report it to Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881, especially if it's found outside of Western Australia and Victoria.

Find out more

- AUSVEG has free resources available for download from their website, ausveg.com.au, including a
 - o [Tomato potato psyllid monitoring guide](#)
 - o [farm biosecurity manual](#)
 - o [Fact sheet and FAQs](#).



Tomato potato psyllid (TPP) adult on a chilli plant.



Tomato potato psyllid eggs laid at the end of a short stalk on a leaf.



UPCOMING EVENTS

APTRC Annual Processing Tomato Forum - 2026

Put it in your calendar - hear the year in review and latest developments in the processing tomato sector.

When: Friday 29th May, 11:00am start

Where: Rich River Golf Club, Moama NSW

Included: Delegates dinner to follow at RRGC.

16th World Processing Tomato Congress and 18th ISHS Symposium on Processing Tomato

When: 2026 - June 7th - 11th (Congress and ISHS), June 10th - 12th (Post Congress Tour)

Where: Monterey, California ([Registration now open](#)).

Hort Connections 2026

When: June 1st - 4th 2026

Where: Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia

Registration: <https://hortconnections.com.au/registration/>

Early Bird Registration Closes Wednesday 20 March.

AgriFutures - Evoke Ag

Connect to the world of agrifood innovation.

When: Feb 17th - 18th 2026

Where: Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

Registration: <https://www.evokeag.com/>

Riverine Plains soils: formation, properties and use

Kagome's Aaron Kirchhofer and Stuart McColl and APTRC's Matt Stewart represented the tomato industry at a two-day Riverine Plains Soils workshop on 2-3 December 2025. The event, delivered by Sam North through the Soil Science Australia, combined technical presentations with an extensive field tour examining key soil types, salinity, sodicity and landscape processes across the Riverine Plains. The workshop provided valuable insights into soil mapping, management strategies for irrigated production, and the geomorphic origins underpinning our regional production systems.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

This project [Australian Processing Tomato Industry Development and Extension (TM20000)] is 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.,. Opinions expressed in "Tomato Topics" are not necessarily those of the APTRC unless otherwise stated.