



TOMATO TOPICS

NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE PROCESSING TOMATO INDUSTRY

Hort
Innovation PROCESSING
TOMATO FUND

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Field Tour shows industry looking outward, testing hard and backed by a community mindset

The 2026 APTRC Field Tour & Family Dinner brought together one of the strongest industry gatherings of recent years, with 56 members joining the bus tour and 108 industry and family members attending the evening dinner.

Sponsored by Netafim and I.K. Caldwell, the day began on Friday 16 January at the Kagome Australia carpark in Echuca before the group travelled by bus to Coolabah Turf, Echuca then GoFarm at Yalca.



Lessons from outside the tomato industry

The first stop was Coolabah Turf, where co-founder Suzie Shearer, COO Scott Spedding and farm manager Shanon Ferres hosted the group. Suzie gave an open account of starting the business, managing it while raising a family, and the recent sale to Australian Turf.

Scott outlined the company's future direction, including its early adoption of autonomous tractor technology through Sabanto.

Shanon demonstrated the autonomous unit cutting grass and explained turf harvesting with a live demonstration.

The visit also showed Coolabah's field-based cultivar development, which has clear parallels with the processing tomato industry's own approach to in-field cultivar evaluation.

APTRC thanks the Coolabah Turf team for its time, expertise and candid discussion.





Since the field day, there has been significant industry interest in the autonomous tractor concept - hear more about on this at the APTRC forum on May 29th. (Click [Here](#) to book your spot at the Forum Now).

1st time Ever - Rootstock/Scion Grafting Trials on Display at GoFarm



After lunch at Coolabah, the group travelled to GoFarm's Yalca site, hosted by manager Mark Fulton.

There, members inspected the APTRC cultivar trials and the industry's first ever replicated grafted processing tomato trial site. The grafted trial was established through a cooperative effort between APTRC, OptiAg, Kagome, Bayer/Seminis, Withcott Nursery and GoFarm.

The Yalca visit replaced the planned stop at Gus Tall's Kagome Timmering farm, where trial pegs and signage had been set out the previous day. However, an overnight violent hailstorm and rain event left the site inaccessible and badly damaged.

Thanks go to Stuart McColl and Gus Tall for their early morning reconnaissance, Mark Fulton for making the GoFarm site available at short notice, and Mark and Sarah Sargeant for racing from Coolabah to Yalca to set up the replacement trial demonstration signs.



"The cultivar and grafting trials have now been harvested, with results to be released in the winter edition of Tomato Topics"



Family dinner reinforces the industry's community base

The day finished with a family dinner at the Wharparilla home of Kagome General Manager of Operations Chris Taylor, his wife Ellie, and their boys Lewis and Ted. With local catering from Two Tarts and premium local wines from the Kennedy family, the evening delivered a relaxed and social close to the day.

APTRC sincerely thanks Chris and Ellie Taylor for hosting and all the extra jobs that come with it. Also, thanks to the many impromptu volunteers who helped set up food, pick up rubbish, pack up and add to the community atmosphere for which the industry is well known.





2024/25 Industry Magazine: Trials, Insights and Season Review

Have you seen our research and reporting industry journal from last season yet?

If not, it's worth a look. It captures the full picture of the 2024/25 season — from crop performance and trial outcomes to field days, research updates and industry insights — along with contributions from across the supply chain.

If you missed it, you can read it [Here](#)



Climate Outlook

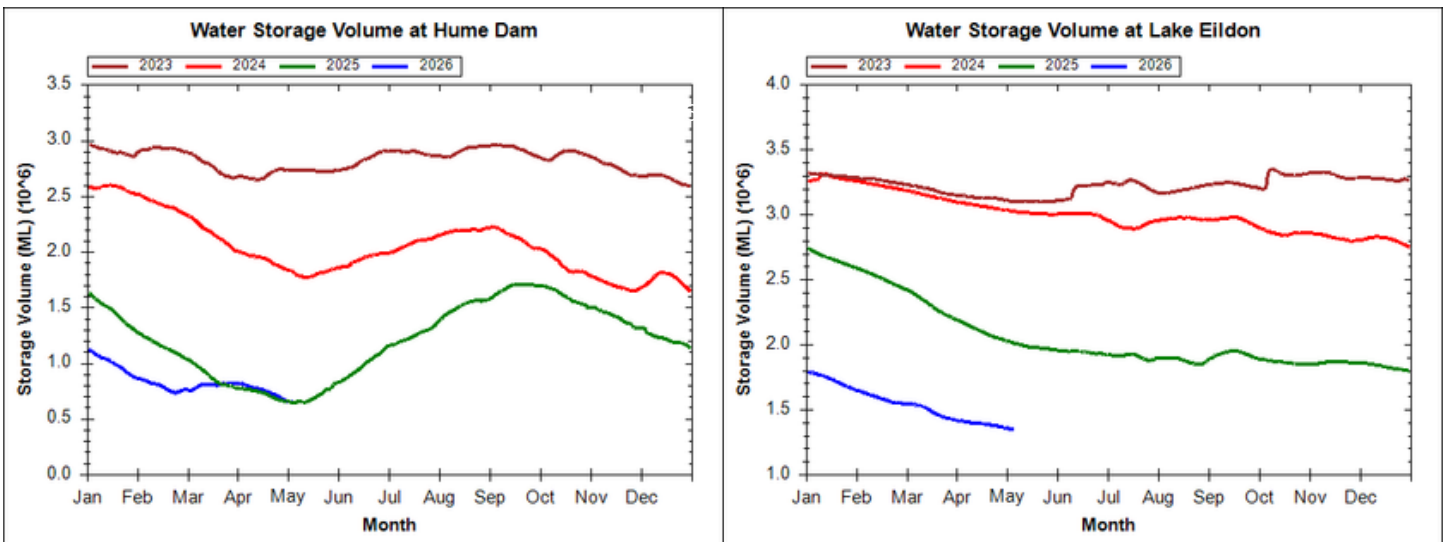
Rainfall from May to July is likely to be below average (60% to 80% chance) for parts of eastern Australia, including northern Victoria and southern New South Wales, with roughly equal chances elsewhere.

Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be above average (60% to greater than 80% chance) across most of the region, with an increased chance of unusually high maximum temperatures (over 50% chance) and unusually high minimum temperatures across Victoria and parts of New South Wales.

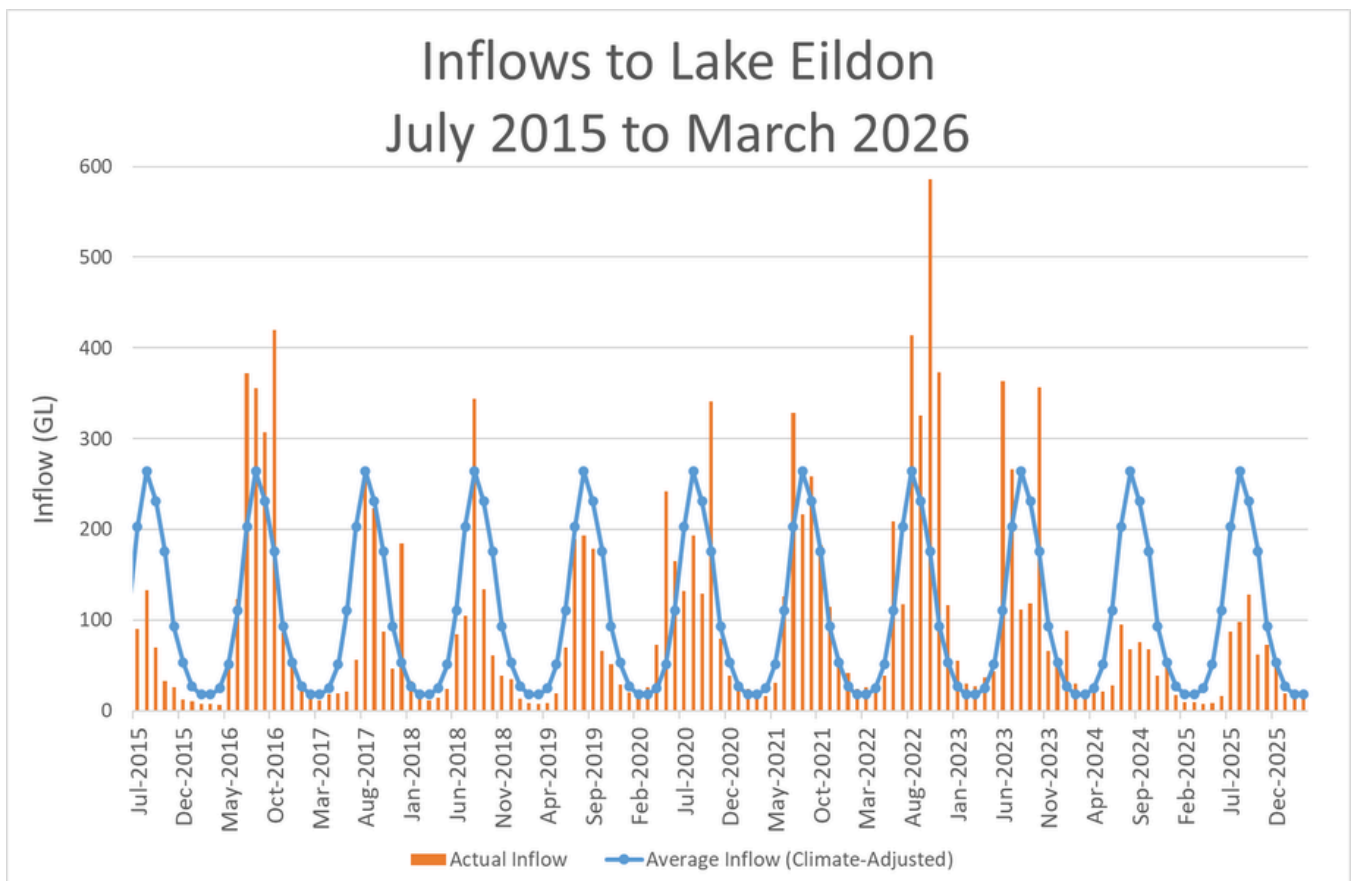
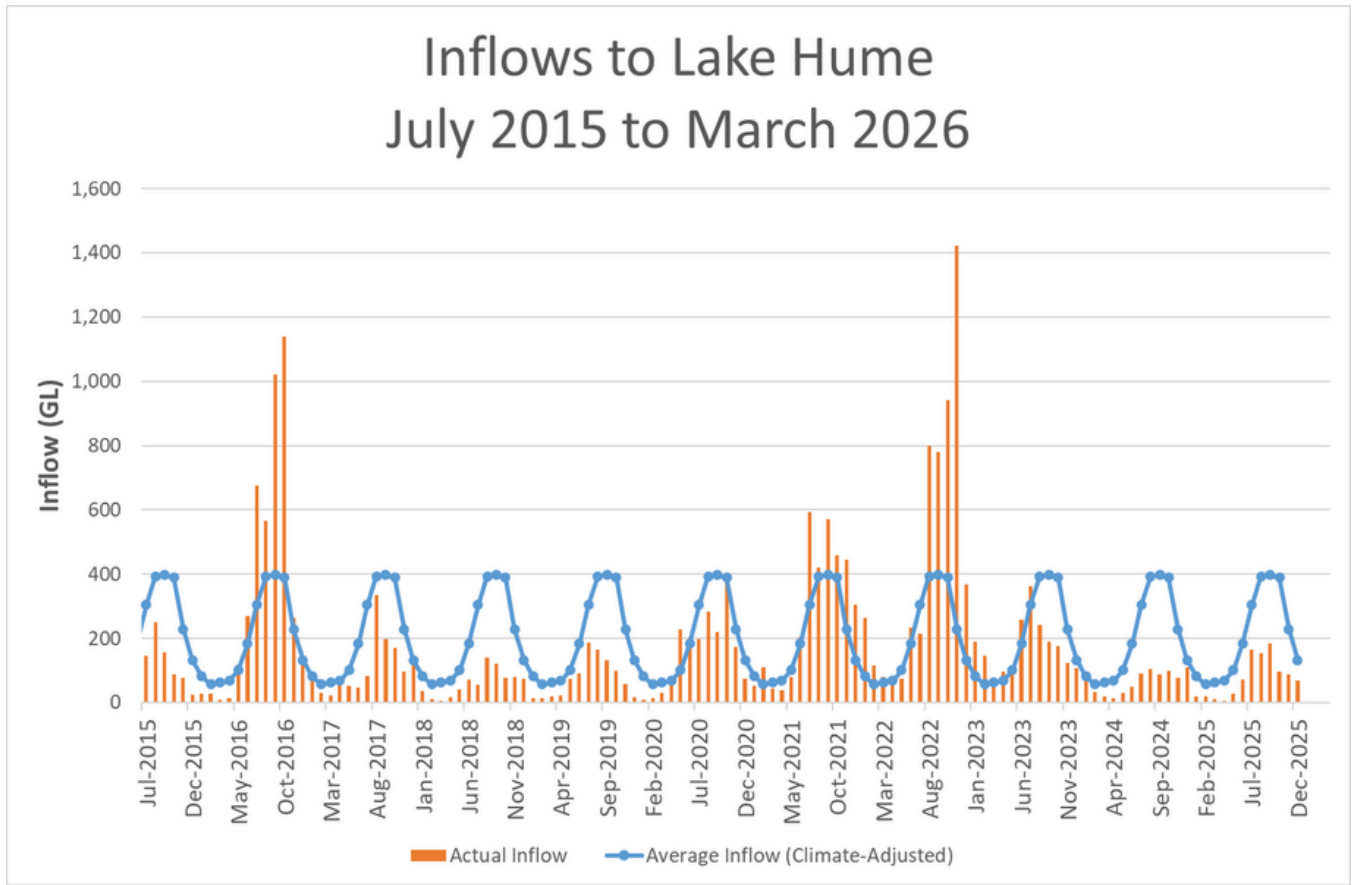
Sea surface temperatures are warmer than average around much of Australia, especially along the New South Wales coast, increasing atmospheric moisture and energy and raising the potential for more intense rainfall and weather systems. The El Niño–Southern Oscillation is neutral, with a shift to El Niño possible this winter.

Source: BOM

Water Storage Levels Goulburn-Murray Water



Water Inflows (Supplied by Goulburn-Murray Water)



Processing Tomato Advisory Board 2025 top 25 varieties

| Company | Variety | Use | Attributes | Solids | Colour | pH |
|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------------------|--------|--------|------|
| Harris Moran | HM 8237 | Inter | V, F3, N, S, Fr, EFH | 5.1 | 21.1 | 4.4 |
| Heinz | H 2016 | Thick | V, F3, N, P, S | 4.8 | 20.1 | 4.42 |
| Heinz | H 1996 | Thick | V, F3, N, S, EFS | 4.9 | 20.3 | 4.49 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9016 | Thick | V, F3, N, S, EFH | 5.1 | 21.1 | 4.41 |
| Harris Moran | HM 8268 | Inter | V, F3, N, S | 5.4 | 19.4 | 4.46 |
| Harris Moran | HM 58841 | Inter | V, F2, N, S, EFH | 5.4 | 20.5 | 4.47 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9023 | Thick | V, F3, N, P, S, EFH | 5.2 | 21.2 | 4.45 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9027 | Thin/Early | V, F3, N, S, Lv | 5.5 | 20 | 4.38 |
| Harris Moran | HM 61P5522 | Inter | V, F2, N, S, Fr | 5.6 | 19.5 | 4.39 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9037 | Thick | V, F3, N, P, S, Lv, EFH | 5.1 | 21.4 | 4.43 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9019 | Thin | V, F3, N, P, S | 5.3 | 22.2 | 4.33 |
| Harris Moran | HMX 61P7103 | Thin/Early | V, F2, N, S | 5.3 | 20.1 | 4.4 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9032 | Thin/Early | V, F3, N, P, S, Fr, Lv | 5.3 | 20.6 | 4.32 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9041 | Thick | V, F3, N, P, S, EFH | 5.1 | 21.2 | 4.43 |
| Harris Moran | HM 8163 | Inter | V, F2, N, S | 5.7 | 19.3 | 4.54 |
| Nunhems | N 6428 | Inter | V, F3, N, P, S, EFH | 4.9 | 21.2 | 4.51 |
| Nunhems | N 6434 | Inter | V, F3, N, S | 4.9 | 21.7 | 4.53 |
| Seminis | SVTM 1082 | Thin | V, F3, N, S | 5.4 | 21.1 | 4.39 |
| Heinz | H 1776 | Thick | V, F, F2, N, P, S, EFS | 5 | 20.2 | 4.38 |
| Heinz | H 1662 | Thick | V, F3, N, S, Lv | 5 | 21.5 | 4.52 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9036 | Inter | V, F3, N, P, S, Lv, EFH | 5.2 | 21 | 4.48 |
| Heinz | H 2015 | Thick | V, F3, N, P, S | 4.5 | 19.5 | 4.5 |
| Heinz | H 4707 | Thick | V, F, F2, N, P, EFS | 4.8 | 21.8 | 4.47 |
| Seminis | SVTM 9034 | Inter | V, F3, N, S | 5.6 | 20.1 | 4.48 |
| Heinz | H 5608 | Thick | V, F2, N, P, S | 4.9 | 19.7 | 4.41 |

(Sources: [PTAB](#), [TS&L Variety Guide](#))

Attributes: V - Verticillium Wilt F - Fusarium Wilt Race 1 F2 - Fusarium Wilt Race 2 F3 - Fusarium Wilt Race 3 N - Root-knot Nematode P - Bacterial Speck S - Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus Lv - Powdery Mildew FR - Fusarium Crown Rot EFH - Extended Field Holding EFS - Extended Field Storage

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

Top 25 Californian varieties which are listed in our proposed 2026/27 APTRC cultivar trial program are [highlighted in blue](#).

GM purple tomato cleared for Australian shelves

Genetically modified tomatoes will enter Australian fresh produce aisles within months, following regulatory approval for the Purple Bliss variety — a first for a whole GM food grown and sold domestically. Approved by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and Food Standards Australia New Zealand, the tomato has been engineered using genes from the snapdragon flower, delivering its distinctive deep purple colour alongside elevated antioxidant levels and a sweeter flavour profile.

Victoria-based marketer All Aussie Farmers is driving the rollout, with managing director Travis Murphy positioning the fruit as a premium, tightly controlled launch.

“I’m not a tomato eater... but I can eat these purple tomatoes. They’re beautiful,” he said.

Melbourne is slated as the first market mid-year, with supply managed end-to-end through the company’s wholesale operations to protect quality and returns to growers.



Initial production will come from a Queensland grower recovering from hail damage.

The approval marks a shift in Australia’s GM landscape, where most modified crops — such as canola — are not consumed in their original form. Victorian Farmers Federation president Brett Hosking framed the decision as part of a broader alignment between science and agriculture.

“We’re starting to realise that science and food production work hand in hand.”

However, experts caution against expecting a rapid expansion of similar products. Joseph Pegler noted strict regulatory settings will likely limit any immediate surge in nutritionally modified GM crops.

“This doesn’t mean we’re about to see a large influx.”

The commercial test now shifts to consumers, with industry watching closely to see whether novelty and claimed health benefits translate into sustained demand.

Source: ABC Rural, Timu King

Original article: [HERE](#)



The 2024/25 Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook is out!

Currently in its 12th edition, the Handbook’s data speaks to the strength and resilience of Australia’s horticulture industry.

It provides a comprehensive insight into 75 horticultural products including fruit, nuts, vegetables, nursery, turf, and cut flowers.

Visit Hort Innovation to access the Handbook today:

[Hort Innovation | Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook](#)

Bio-fortified tomato targets liver disease in emerging nutraceutical push

A bio-fortified tomato formulation is positioning the crop firmly in the nutraceutical space, with new research indicating potential in tackling **Metabolic Associated Steatosis Liver Disease** (MASLD) - a condition which may lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer if not managed.

MASLD affects millions, but drug treatments are often costly, inaccessible, and can carry liver toxicity risks.

Developed by Janus Pharma (Italy), the patented Lycoprogen (European Patent No. 3 052 113) process combines spray-dried tomato with olive wastewater extract, enhancing antioxidant activity and reducing liver fat accumulation in laboratory studies.

The approach mirrors protective effects associated with the Mediterranean diet, offering a potential low-risk alternative to conventional treatments.

For the processing sector, the development signals a shift in value—from commodity ingredient to functional health product.

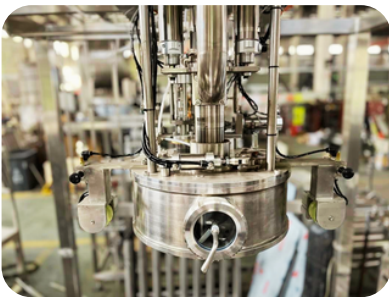


The formulation could become a “dietary tool” in the global fight against liver disease.

Source: Tomato News

Original article: [Here](#)

EU packaging rules threaten aseptic bag trade



A looming EU packaging rule change could have major implications for the global processing tomato trade, with industrial aseptic bags at risk of being shut out of the European market from 2030.

Under the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, all packaging — must meet recyclability standards. Current aseptic bags, are considered at high risk of being classified as “not recyclable”.

The issue is significant because aseptic bags underpin international trade, providing up to 24 months shelf life and allowing product to move across seasons and markets.

Industry groups warn that alternative bag structures are unlikely to deliver the same shelf life or be available at commercial scale in time for the 2029 filling season. A separate EU-only bag format would also add cost and complexity, potentially discouraging non-EU supply.

The Aseptic Bag Manufacturers Association is now pushing for aseptic bags to be recognised as recyclable through an industry-led recycling framework by 2028.

Failure to resolve the issue could disrupt EU supply chains and trade flows for processed tomato products.

Source: Tomato News / Aseptic Bag Manufacturers Association.





UPL Australia are offering a GAXY® product Master Class

UPL invite tomato industry members to join their masterclass, designed to give growers and agronomists practical science-backed insights to using their GAXY® 100% cold-pressed *Ascophyllum nodosum* filtrate. They will be hosting two online sessions on Thursday, 21st May, at the following times:

Morning Session: **9:00 AM**

Afternoon Session: **3:00 PM**



How to Register: To secure your place, simply click [HERE](#).



Thanks to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, levy-paying fruit, vegetable and nut growers can apply to AUSVEG for Grower Funding.

Are you a levy-paying Australian fruit, vegetable or nut grower planning to attend Hort Connections 2026? You can apply for a reimbursement of up to \$1,250 for interstate growers or \$750 for South Australian-based growers to assist with attendance, flights and accommodation.

To Apply: Click [HERE](#)

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 RRG. Click [HERE](#) to book your place now.

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.

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.

