



# National Cherry Conference 2024

## 31 July to 2 August, Hobart

### Speaker Program V1



**Communication and Extension**  
for the Australian Cherry Industry



Department of  
Primary Industries

Hort  
Innovation **CERRY**  
FUND



**Cherries**  
The Victorian Cherry Association

**Fruit Growers**  
Tasmania



## Welcome to Cherry 2024

Hello Cherry Conference Delegates,

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), in collaboration with Hort Innovation and Cherry Growers Australia, is thrilled to announce the National Cherry Conference in 2024 (Cherry 2024). This 3-day event is being held from 31 July to 2 August 2024 at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart, Tasmania.

Cherry 2024 will bring together cherry growers, supply chain partners, state industry associations, service providers, research and development agencies, and government representatives from around Australia.

It brings me great pleasure to present our presenter line up, one that will be sure to inspire and encourage new ideas in the Australian cherry industry. We bring together speakers from all around the world to present on topics including improving cherry quality, canopy training systems, new export markets and the newest research and development.

On behalf of the conference committee, I would like to express my gratitude to our keynote speakers, presenters, sponsors, and all those who have contributed their time, expertise, and support to make this conference a reality. Your dedication and commitment have been instrumental in ensuring the success of this event.

We look forward to seeing you at Cherry 2024 – The National Cherry Industry Conference.

Jessica Fearnley

Conference Convener

0437 284 010

[jessica.fearnley@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jessica.fearnley@dpi.nsw.gov.au)







## Day 1 – Export Workshop

Time	Activity	Who
8:30 am	Registration and trade show	Exhibitors
9:30 am	Welcome	Alison Jones
9:45 am	Export requirements for 2024–2025 season	Patrick Ulloa
10:15 am	New market potentials in India	Yemee Fernandes
10:45 am	Morning tea	
11:15 am	Irradiation for export and domestic markets: new developments	Ben Riley
11:45 am	Austrade’s market insights for the Australian cherry industry	Phil Georgios
12:15 pm	2023–24 export summary: how did we fair?	Wayne Prowse
12:45 pm	Lunch and trade show	
1:45 pm	AgVic Cherry Hill Traceability Project	Caroline Barrett
2:15 pm	Australian cherries international competitiveness	Panel discussion
2:45 pm	Afternoon tea	
3:30 pm	CGA Industry meeting	TBA
5:00 pm	Welcome reception	Everyone

**Brought to you by the Cherry trade development project 2022–2025 (CY21001)**





## Day 2 – National Cherry Industry Conference

Time	Activity	Presenter
9.00 am	Welcome	Brett Fifield, Hort Innovation
9.15 am	Improving cherry quality in and out of the orchard	Juan Pablo Zoffoli Guerra
10.15 am	The newest cherry training systems	Ronald Vermeulen
11.00 am	Morning tea	
11.30 am	Positioning Australian cherries in the domestic and international market	Tristan Kitchener
12.00 pm	Hort innovation marketing	Gillian Riley
12.30 pm	Australian cherry in domestic wholesalers	Panel discussion
1.00 pm	Unitech sponsor talk	
1.10 pm	Lunch and trade show	
2.00 pm	Extension and Communication for the Australian Cherry Industry	Gita Ricca
2.20 pm	Narrow orchards project	Ian Goodwin
2.45 pm	Nitrogen efficiency in cherry	Nigel Swarts
3.30 pm	Northern Italy growing systems	Dugald Close
3.55 pm	Cherry maturity and consumer nutrition	Nadine Hoelzel
4.15 pm	Managing calcium in cherries under protective covers	TBC
4.30 pm	Why is cherry research important?	Panel discussion
5.00 pm	Close	



## Conference presenters

### **Alison Jones – Welcome from the Cherry Growers Australia President**

Alison grew up on the family farm in Wandin and picked cherries from an early age. She loved the camaraderie of working with people and still does today. It is a buzz that makes coming to work enjoyable, regardless of what you are doing! She studied to be a secondary Art and Craft teacher. However, wanted to work in the industry first so worked in design and sales in the textile industry in Melbourne and Sydney. Missing the family business in Sydney she returned to the family, cherries, and Wandin Valley Farms. In 2016, Alison became the CEO of Wandin Valley Farms. She is proud of what we do and the industry Wandin Valley are involved in. They produce a product that is fresh, flavoursome, healthy and creates excitement all bundled in with Christmas and Summer! In 2024, Alison was elected as the President of Cherry Growers Australia and is excited to open our National Conference Export Workshop.



### **Patrick Ulloa – Export requirements for the 2024–25 season**

Patrick Ulloa is a fresh produce specialist with many years of experience in quality management, food safety, and postharvest. His long trajectory in the industry has allowed him to develop a broad perspective of quality and food safety systems at all levels of the supply chain. He has worked in almost every link of the supply chain, including seed marketing, research, production, industry development, wholesale, and retail. He has worked for important organisations such as Agriculture Victoria, Coles, Costa, and Driscoll's. Patrick is currently working on the Cherry Growers Australia's trade development project, which includes exploring export development opportunities and export regulatory compliance support for the cherry industry.





## Conference presenters

### **Yemee Fernandes – New market potential in India**

Yemee has held senior commercial roles in several publicly listed companies such as Fairfax, Universal Music Australia and LexisNexis. Over 15 years, Yemee has worked in maintaining and creating partnerships with a range of industries from FMCG through to digital innovation. Some of her former clients include American Express, McDonald's, Unilever, Virgin Mobile and Coco Cola.

Born In India, Yemee moved to Australia in 1998 and has detailed insight into the Indian business landscape. When travelling back to visit friends and family, Yemee saw an opportunity to bring premium food and beverage products from Australia to India to meet that growing consumer demand.

She co-founded Four Pillars Trading Australia with teams in both Australia and Mumbai to support Australian businesses navigate the complexities of the Indian market and deliver on ground operational support.

She continues to work with the Australian Macadamia Society and Ricca Terra Wines.



### **Ben Reilly – Irradiation for export and domestic markets: new developments**

Ben is the fresh produce business manager for Steritech, Australia's phytosanitary irradiation provider. He brings a practical yet commercial approach to biosecurity and market access development and optimisation, helping establish effective solutions that stand the test of time. Over 80 Australian-grown crops now use phytosanitary irradiation as a biosecurity treatment for interstate and export trade.







## Conference presenters

### **Phil Georgios – Austrade’s market insights for the Australian Cherry Industry**

Phillip is Austrade's Australian-based global leader for the horticulture sector. In this role, he works collaboratively with industry and exporters to explore trade opportunities and promote Australian capability in priority international markets. From this, he has a strong understanding of the exporter's journey to market and the benefits of global trade for the Australian economy and exporters alike.

Phillip has been with Austrade since 2015, working across the agrifood, technology and tourism sectors. He has previously held roles in transport regulation and as a negotiator of Australia's bilateral air services agreements.

Phillip holds a Bachelor and Honours degree in Commerce and Marketing from Deakin University. In his spare time, he enjoys travel, having a hit of cricket with his son, and overindulging on Australian cherries during the summer.

At the 2024 National Cherry Conference, Phillip is looking forward to sharing market insights and his firsthand experiences with cherry growers who are focused on sales growth in both established and emerging export markets.



### **Wayne Prowse – 2023–24 export summary: how did we fair?**

Wayne Prowse is the Director of Fresh Intelligence Consulting. With a strong background in export marketing and analytics across FMCG, horticulture industries and government, Wayne established Fresh Intelligence in 2011 to help clients make sense of evidence-based trade data for strategic decision making. He is particularly interested in how global trade trends and disruptions affect Australian fresh produce export opportunities. Wayne will explore Australian and global cherry trade trends, insights and opportunities.





## Conference presenters

### **Caroline Barrett – AgVic Cherry Hill Traceability Project: the findings so far**

Caroline Barrett is currently the Program Manager for Traceability at Agriculture Victoria, moving to Director of Primary Industries at GS1 Australia later this year. Caroline has led the Agriculture Victoria traceability pilot trials in cherries, citrus and table grapes. Caroline chairs the Working Group for the Agriculture Victoria \$15 million Transforming Traceability Program. With a background as a veterinarian and previous roles in meat and seafood (PrimeSafe) and FMCG (Mars Corporation), Caroline has wide primary industries and food sector experience.



### **Brett Fifield – Welcome address**

Brett Fifield joined the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australia's horticulture industry, Hort Innovation, as CEO in 2022. Passionate about delivering impact for Australian growers and the horticulture supply chain, Brett is committed to listening and ensuring Hort Innovation's priorities align with the horticulture sector's opportunities and challenges.

Before joining Hort Innovation, Brett was the Deputy Director General, Infrastructure, Investment and Business Development, and a member of the Executive Leadership Team at the NSW Department of Primary Industries in Orange. Growing up on a mixed farm near Wagga Wagga NSW, Brett began the early part of his career as a rural journalist and has since gained more than 20 years' experience in agriculture, including 10 years in senior executive roles working across agriculture, biosecurity, food safety, fisheries, policy and cabinet, business performance, communications and engagement.







## Conference presenters

### **Juan Pablo Zoffoli Guerra – Improving cherry quality in and out of the orchard**

Juan Pablo Zoffoli Guerra is a professor of Postharvest physiology and technology at Facultad de Agronomía e Ingeniería Forestal, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He has spent his career researching fresh fruit conservation and post-harvest handling. His work has enabled fresh fruit exporters to increase their productivity by using new technologies such as modified atmosphere when shipping fresh fruit to distant markets. In parallel with his work to strengthen the storage capacity of fruit, Zoffoli is also striving to increase resistance to physiological disorders such as internal browning due to prolonged storage times. He has developed practices and non-destructive protocols that can be applied at an early stage to ascertain the fruit's degree of risk of developing a particular disorder.



### **Ronald Vermeulen – The newest cherry training systems**

Ronald is a Senior Fruit Consultant from The Netherlands with over 30 years' experience working in horticulture industries. He specialises in cherry pruning, nutrition, crop protection and canopy management systems. In his presentation Ronald will discuss the newest cherry training systems being used around the world.





## Conference presenters

### Matthew Evans – Master of Ceremonies

Matthew Evans is a food writer, farmer, television broadcaster and chef. Based in Southern Tasmania, Matthew lives and works on Fat Pig Farm, a mixed holding where he tends a garden, makes cider, fattens the namesake pigs and tries to entice milk from two full-cream dairy cows.

Matthew's farming journey has been the focus of 6 series of 'Gourmet Farmer' on SBS, and he's presented 2 documentaries, 'For The Love of Meat' and 'What's The Catch'.

Matthew is the author of over a dozen books on food, including the authoritative ethical meat manifesto '*On Eating Meat*' and his latest cookbook '*The Commons*'.

He's an advocate for open, fair, accountable food and farming systems and has pushed for honest labelling so we can all enjoy sustainable seafood.

His latest book, '*SOIL*', is a hymn to the remarkable and underappreciated bit of earth that gifts us life. It is a swashbuckling tale of soil that arms us all with the knowledge and respect to care about its health.

Matthew Evans speaks passionately about the myriad ways that food and farming can frame the future, including food security, soil health and the sequestration of carbon through regenerative methods. His farming choices are underpinned by a drive for high ethical standards for the land, for the animals, and for the community that drives it all. Fat Pig Farm regularly hosts educational programs teaching ways to make farming more sustainable, ethical, productive and conscious.





## Conference presenters

### **Tristin Kitchener – Positioning Australian cherries in the domestic and international market**

Tristan is an ex-retailer, having previously held senior positions with Sainsbury's (UK) and Coles supermarkets, and is now a management consultant providing advice and support along the grocery value chain, from major retailers through to manufacturers and primary producers. He has a focus on fresh foods and was previously the Group Merchandise Manager for Fresh Produce at Coles Supermarkets.

Tristan has his own consulting business, Kitchener Partners Pty Ltd, focused on providing strategic and advisory support. Increasingly, Tristan assists businesses in understanding the implications of the changing retail and consumer environment and helps identify solutions to key business challenges. Tristan is a strong advocate for supply chain members collaborating more closely to better understand and meet the needs of the consumer. He believes that this can be most effectively achieved by transferring learning from other markets and sectors.



In addition, Tristan has recently assumed the role of Course Director for the Produce Executive Program, a longstanding industry-led course that has been in operation for 25 years. He is also an Operating Partner for ROC Partners, a private equity business with over \$5 billion invested in Australian agriculture. Tristan is also a part-owner of Agricultural Networks, a packer, marketer and distributor of fresh cherries to domestic and international markets, located in Orange, NSW.

Tristan also manages and operates the Harmonised Australian Retailer Produce Scheme (HARPS) on behalf of the major grocery retailers in Australia (ALDI, Coles, Costco, Harris Farms, Metcash (IGA) and Woolworths) and Hello Fresh, Marley Spoon and McDonald's. HARPS is a retailer-led scheme designed to assist with compliance with food safety, legal and trade requirements for suppliers of fresh produce.

Tristan is a regular speaker at industry conferences and appears as a sector expert in shows such as Switzer Daily on Sky Business TV. He works with a range of businesses, including major and independent retailers, manufacturers, private equity firms, state and federal government and other SMEs. Tristan's formal qualifications include GAICD, MBA, MPhil (Horticulture Management) and BSc (Hons) in Biological Sciences.





## Conference presenters

### Gillian Reilly – Conference

Gillian is a brand strategy, marketing and communications leader with more than 20 years of experience gained in NZ, Australia and Europe. Having worked in marketing and comms agency teams, she's built successful brands and developed new products in local and global roles. She has been with Hort Innovation for 2 years, leading teams to deliver high-impact marketing campaigns across 23 different industries across horticulture to drive consumer demand in Australia and our export markets.



### Gita Ricca – Essential communications for all cherry growers

Gita Ricca is an accomplished professional with a proven track record of excellence spanning 15+ years. With a diverse background in government, travel, events, media, and digital marketing, she brings a wealth of experience to the project.

Gita's expertise lies in communications, marketing, sales, and managing relationships. Throughout her career, she has consistently achieved remarkable results by developing and executing successful strategies while leading teams with finesse. She is skilled in creating and implementing cutting-edge digital marketing campaigns that drive brand awareness, generate leads, and boost sales.

Adept at content creation, copywriting, and social media management, Gita has successfully built strong communities and fostered meaningful audience engagement.

Her ability to stay updated on the latest trends and emerging technologies ensures that she delivers meaningful and relevant campaigns.

With her dedication to delivering exceptional results, digital marketing expertise, content creation skills, and social media management abilities, Gita is well-positioned to drive growth and success for Cherry Growers Australia.





## Conference presenters

### Ian Goodwin – Narrow orchard systems

Dr Ian Goodwin is the Research Leader of Horticulture Production Sciences in Agriculture Victoria based at the Tatura SmartFarm. Ian has over 40 years of experience in horticulture research and innovation, with a focus on intensive production systems, crop water requirements and climate challenges. In recent years, Ian has led a team studying sun damage, colour development, tree physiology, crop regulation and water relations in bespoke research orchards, including the Sundial Orchard and the Agrivoltaics pear experiment. The new Narrow Orchard Systems (NOS) project will establish dedicated research orchards to investigate productivity and fruit quality in nectarine, apricot, plum, apple, pear and cherry. Trees will be planted at 2 m row spacing in narrow cordon-trained hedgerows using a range of rootstocks and canopy heights. Ag tech (e.g. autonomous machinery, sensing crop performance) will be tested, evaluated and demonstrated as a key component of the NOS project.



### Nigel Swarts – Nitrogen efficiency in cherry

Dr Nigel Swarts is head of Horticulture at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture. He is interested in tree physiology and specifically tree crop nutrition. Nigel leads collaborative projects on nitrogen management in tree crop production systems and is currently supervising six PhD students. Nigel has a background in conservation biology and natural resource management with research focusing on rare and endangered orchids from across Australia. He has a strong track record in the field of orchid conservation with two highly cited review articles and a book published in 2017.





## Conference presenters

### Dugald Close – Northern Italy growing systems

Dugald Close, former Centre Leader for Horticulture and now Deputy Director for Research and Global and Professor in Horticulture at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture at the University of Tasmania, has worked in nursery, native horticulture, trees on farms, and wine grape and fruit production horticulture for over 20 years with a focus on plant ecophysiology for yield and quality. Current interests include water, nutrition, and carbohydrate ecophysiology, including post-harvest science, as well as focus on growing systems and plant secondary chemistry of wild and crop species for plant extracts and essential oils. Dugald enjoys teaching horticulture at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at TIA and working with industry for practical outcomes.







## Industry tours

Time	Activity
8.00 am	Depart Hobart for Huon Valley
8.30 am	Protective covers in cherries
10.00 am	Huon Valley Packhouse tour
11.00 am	TIA research trials – in field discussion
11.30 am	Lunch – The Apple Shed and guest speaker Andrew Smith
1.30 pm	Return to Hobart

### Andrew Smith – 4th Generation Orchardist

Managing Director of R&R Smith Organic Apples and Director of Willie Smith's Organic Cider.

From racing yachts in the UK and years working and learning in European orchards, I returned to Tassie at twenty-two to take on a challenge that would come to define me - saving the family farm.

For me, the decision to go organic was the only way and in 1998 that's what we did.



Department of Primary Industries

Department of Regional NSW



# National Cherry Conference 2024

