



By Chris Komorek

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Teaming up in fight against TR4



Government and industry in Queensland agree to jointly fund, govern and deliver programme to prevent spread of TR4

A new management board to oversee the Panama TR4 programme in the Australian state of Queensland has met for the first time, heralding the start of a unique government-industry partnership to help protect the future of Australia's A\$600m banana industry.

The Queensland state government and Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC) has agreed to jointly fund, govern and deliver the Panama TR4 programme for the next four years. The agreement will run until 30 June, 2023.

ABGC director and programme board member, Andrew Serra, said the ABGC had secured the support of banana growers to proceed with the jointly funded and delivered model to ensure the best possible protection to the national banana industry.

"Panama TR4 remains one of the greatest, if not the greatest, challenge facing our industry," said Serra.

"The collaborative efforts of growers, government and researchers have been

able to limit the spread of this disease since 2015, but the work needs to continue to protect the livelihood of our growers and the wider industry," he added.

The first case of the disease was discovered in 2015, with the most recent detection - the fourth in Australia - [confirmed in February, 2020](#).

Minister of agriculture for Queensland, Mark Furner, said the new collaborative arrangement would provide equal decision-making responsibilities on the board to ensure the programme continued to be effective and run efficiently.

"In 2019, the Queensland government committed a further \$12.089m from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2023 to control and contain Panama TR4 in Queensland's banana production areas," outlined Furner.

"The ABGC will begin co-funding the programme this year through grower levies, eventually contributing 50 per cent of funding for the programme in 2022/23.

"As a partner in this unique arrangement, the Queensland government is committed to the banana industry, which is an economic powerhouse in Far North Queensland," he noted.

Department of agriculture and fisheries' (DAF) Malcolm Letts will serve as the chair of the board, which will include ABGC's Stephen Lowe, Andrew Serra and Jim Pekin, and DAF's Mike Ashton and Lynne Turner as board members.

The board's first meeting was conducted using video link technology due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The board will meet quarterly and report all key decisions and deliverables to growers.