Future Orchards Business Development Group (BDG) Update

Dec 2014

Dear Grower or Industry personnel

Welcome to the first BDG update of the 2014/15 year. You are receiving this newsletter as a previous active contributor to the APAL Future Orchards program. This could have been in a number of forms including:

• Monitor Block grower 2006-2008
• Orchard Business Analysis participant 2008-2014
• Focus Orchard 2012-2014
• OrchardNet subscriber 2008-2014.

Through all of these projects, we have captured the bulk of the orchard data within the online database called OrchardNet (to access go to http://www.hortwatch.com/orchardnet). If you have received this newsletter you should already have an OrchardNet subscription but if not or you can’t remember, please get in touch with us to set it up (adrian.stone@agfirst.co.nz). Remember the cost of the annual subscription is funded by the Future Orchards project so there is no cost to you other than your own time.

This year there is a new HIA/APAL project running alongside Future Orchards called the “Pomefruit Data Project”. This project has many facets with one component to predict the regional and national crops in 2015 (including fruit size). To be able to do this we need to build the number of growers and the area monitored to make the OrchardNet dataset as robust as possible. This means we’re looking for new growers and looking to our established BDG network to either provide or enter some basic orchard data. As with all grower projects we commission, we have set up a win/win so that you as the grower get as much out of participation as the “industry good function”. Your local Front Line Advisor (FLA) is driving this project on the ground, so if you need any support please get in touch with them (FLA Data project team are shown in the table at the end of the document).

OrchardNet has many new features which we encourage you to logon and view, however two of the most significant at this time of the year are:

• The ability to track and manage a blocks productive performance
• Track and benchmark fruit growth rates
Productive performance

When entering this data we would like you to enter the blocks previous 2 years production and then enter an estimate for 2015.

Previous analysis of the production data within OrchardNet has shown good improvements in Australian productivity over time as shown in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1 AU Gala Productivity (gross kg/ha)

Royal Gala productivity of all blocks that have been monitored has increased from 20 t/ha to be currently averaging 35 t/ha. Upper quartile blocks are currently averaging 60 t/ha. Where do your blocks sit in comparison?
A similar trend is showing with Pink Lady types with production prior to 2006 averaging 20 t/ha. The current Australian average is 50 t/ha with the upper quartile averaging over 80t/ha.

OrchardNet will plot your blocks performance against the regional and national average by year and by tree age. It will also help you define the sweet spot where each of your blocks are optimized to make max $.

**Fruit sizing**

Last year the number of blocks using the fruit sizing component alone reached 365 which meant the district and national averages were very robust and made for good comparisons. This year the organized growers are already on the case with currently 150 blocks being actively fruit sized. We want to try and reach 500 blocks this year so please get on board and use the service.

In the following four figures (Figure 3-7) we show the national averages of the 2 biggest volume varieties, Gala and Pink Lady. Data in to date shows Full Bloom dates to be approximately one week later than last year and 4 days later than 2012~2013. Fruit size for both varieties is very similar by date to the previous 2 years but up when compared Days after Full Bloom (DAFB) is larger. This indicates fruit growth rates have been quite good in the early part of the season but harvest may be slightly later.
Table 1 Average Full Bloom Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pink Lady</td>
<td>28/9/2011</td>
<td>6/10/2012</td>
<td>1/10/2013</td>
<td>10/10/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gala Strains</td>
<td>7/10/2011</td>
<td>12/10/2012</td>
<td>8/10/2013</td>
<td>16/10/2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Figure 3 AU Gala fruit size by date
Fruit Size Report
AU 2015 Gala DAFB

Fruit Size - Diameter (mm)

![Graph showing fruit size growth over days after full bloom with different lines representing various averages and target diameters.]

Figure 4 AU Gala fruit Size DAFB
Fruit Size Report
AU 2015 Pink Lady DATE

Fruit Size - Diameter (mm)

chart by amCharts.com

- National Avg 2015 (Type - Pink Lady)
- National Avg 2014 (Type - Pink Lady)
- National Avg 2013 (Type - Pink Lady)
- Target Diameter - Pink Lady - 186 g (100 ct)

Figure 5 AU Pink Lady Fruit Size by date
How do your blocks compare? Rather than try and interpret these graphs why don’t you get on board? We’d love to see as many growers as possible using the service.

When you do monitor your fruit size and compare it against national and regional trends, if you see a problem with growth rate you can do something about it. Possibilities include:

- If you haven’t thinned Pinks yet you should do it ASAP and maybe lower your fruit number targets if your size is behind.
- If you have already thinned but size is not looking good, consider a second thin in January.
- Look at water and fert inputs. Are they enough to drive performance?
• Consider the use of Retain to extend your growing season.
• Get your marketing team ready for smaller fruit size.
• Make the call whether you will go for short, medium or long term storage and ensure you have the colour and maturity parameters to fit.

To be able to participate with any of the projects discussed please either contact our OrchardNet administrator (Adrian.stone@agfirst.co.nz) or contact your local Front Line Advisor (details below)

All States: Jesse Reader, jesse.reader@agfirstaustralia.com.au, 0419 107 245
VIC (Northern): Tony Filippi, ido@fgv.com.au, 0400 795 539
VIC (Southern): Jabbar Ali Khan, fido@fgv.com.au, (03) 5825 3700
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AgFirst would like to take this chance to wish you all a very Merry Xmas and a bountiful 2015 harvest.

Regards

Ross Wilson

AGFIRST Horticultural Consultant