

# WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT OUR CROPS



Stone fruit and table grape grower Paul Mobilio at his property in Coomealla, NSW.

Sunraysia fruit growers say working together is the key to reducing Queensland fruit fly (QFF) populations across the region.

Over the past several years, as QFF detections have increased within the Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area, growers have implemented effective control strategies to ensure they can protect their crops and meet the requirements of their customers.

Stone fruit growers Michael Tripodi and Paul Mobilio said QFF could be managed, but it was important all growers were doing something.

“We need to work as a community, and as a collective of growers, to make sure we’re doing the best job we can to control fruit fly on our properties, and to let each other know if there’s something new to be aware of,” Michael said.

“We have to be more caring about each other, because if a couple of us aren’t doing the right thing then that’s all it needs for an outbreak – and then of course it spreads and it’s a lot harder to control.”

Paul grows peaches, nectarines, apricots and table grapes on a 112-hectare property in Coomealla, NSW.

Growing in an area with a QFF problem has concerned Paul in the past, but by baiting “religiously” he hasn’t had any problems.

“When it started building up in the area, we were pretty worried because it can absolutely wipe you out – stone fruit especially,” he said.

“We’ve always been pretty proactive as it’s in our interest to keep the numbers down – we have to protect our export markets.”

Michael, who grows more than 100 hectares of stone fruit – peaches, plums, apricots and nectarines – in Lake Boga, Victoria, has also learned the importance of weekly baiting.

“Three years ago, I got a bit complacent and we had a bit of a fruit fly problem,” he said.

“Since then, we haven’t missed one. Right through the season we do a bait spray every week religiously, spraying alternate rows of our orchard.”

Michael said he was using the most effective method of fruit fly control, which also posed the least danger to natural predators.

“In the early days we thought we had to go in with a really nasty insecticide, but we found it was very costly, while bait spraying is pretty cheap,” he said.

“Our business has done a 360 and now we do integrated pest management and try to look after our beneficial insects – the predators to the nasties.”

Paul also believes bait spraying is the best option for growers who want a good quality, cost effective program.

However, as he supplies customers in Tasmania and South Australia, Paul follows the ICA-21 pre-harvest treatment and post-harvest inspection of approved host produce procedure.

“To go into any pest free areas this is the protocol you have to follow, but if you’re not going into any of these markets and you just want to protect your livelihood, baiting is the way to go,” he said.



Stone fruit grower Michael Tripodi at his property in Lake Boga, Victoria.



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