

Export information night

A GROWER information night will be held next week promoting avocado exports from the Tableland.

Sunfresh is Australia's top grower-owned marketing business and its success with avocados has led to the expansion of its range to include other tropical fruits such as mangoes, lychee, citrus, custard apple, persimmon, low-chill stone fruits and strawberries.

"We deliver more than 500,000 cartons or trays of fruit into every major market in Australia each year on behalf of our members," Sunfresh grower liaison officer Evan Heidemann said.

"Our innovative thinking and focus on the future of Australia's horticulture industry has seen us involved in a collaborative project to trial controlled atmosphere storage for the export of avocados to Europe."

Mr Heidemann said there was a need for a packing service for small growers.

Primary Industries Minister Tim Mulherin said through targeted market research and training of importers and retailers, there was now a focus on ensuring quality avocados were delivered to consumers worldwide.

"Last year Sunfresh and the Bligh Government successfully delivered the first commercial sea containers of Queensland avocados to the UK and Thailand, with fruit arriving in perfect condition," Mr Mulherin said.

"This achievement was the result of post-harvest trials and market development work conducted by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, which illustrated the viability of shipping product to these markets.

"Since then, Sunfresh has significantly contributed to the major growth in Australian avocado exports to Thailand over the past three seasons."

■ **The grower information night will be held on December 2 at the Mareeba International Club at 7.15pm for a 7.30pm start. RSVP by December 1, ph: 0437 020 140.**

Sting in Asian honey bee tale



Destruction of Asian honey bee nests will continue, according to Primary Industries Minister Tim Mulherin.

NO decision had yet been made on the future of Asian honey bee eradication programs, according to Primary Industries Minister Tim Mulherin.

Mr Mulherin attacked Opposition claims the program was under question as being factually wrong.

"In June and July of this year we employed additional casual staff to gather information about Asian honey bees," Mr Mulherin said.

"Staff were told at the time

that this was short-term casual employment.

"They were helping to determine the extent of the pest bee problem so that a judgement can be made on whether eradication is possible.

"That information has been gathered and is being considered by national funding partners.

"Last week 40 casual staff were notified that their roles had come to an end.

"Twenty of these workers

have expressed interest in another Biosecurity Queensland eradication program which has some vacancies.

"Asian honey bees are not as active during the wet season when conditions are less favourable for them.

"There will still be sufficient staff to respond to public reports and destroy any confirmed swarms or nests.

"As with any displaced worker in Queensland – we are doing everything we can to

assist these workers in gaining alternative employment or accessing support to transition to new roles.

"We are also providing counselling services where needed, jobs forums and workshops."

Sacked staff told the *Advertiser* earlier this month they believed job cut could put the eradication program at risk, leaving northern agriculture exposed to the bee and to a mite it carried.

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