

Grower case study — CY16004 Export readiness and market access

Grower	Mike Oakford
Location	Woodstock, Tasmania
Area planted	4 hectares

What was the research about

Over the 2016-17 to 2018-19 seasons, CY16004 *Export readiness and market access* (delivered by Cherry Growers Australia (CGA)) worked to develop an export culture in the cherry industry by equipping growers with the skills and resources to capitalise on evolving market access opportunities into lucrative protocol markets. The project delivered many initiatives, including annual export workshops to support the grower and packhouse export registration process, crop monitoring, standard operating procedures to support compliance, and industry representation for market access requests.

Mike Oakford, a cherry grower from Woodstock, Tasmania talks about how the program has helped him to realise his ambition of exporting into lucrative protocol markets.

Why did you start to export cherries and how did you get started?

“Our initial opportunity assessment when getting into cherries pointed to there being plenty of demand for them in export markets. Since developing our orchard in the early 2000’s, export was always an aim from the start.

We initially began to understand the export requirements from meetings and communications delivered by the CGA. It was at this time that we also started participating in the Freshcare assessment process, which has been helpful in extending to the other assessment and recording keeping aspects for registering our property to export cherries.”

Have you been exporting to protocol markets?

“We are registered to export into China and Thailand. Being a smaller grower, we are guided by the advice of our packhouse and those are the markets that are bringing us the most success. For a time we exported into Japan and South Korea, however shifts in market expectations have seen us focus more closely on China and Thailand – which included the 2016-17 to 2018-19 seasons.”

How has the cherry export development program helped you export into protocol markets?

“The export registration workshops which usually occur in August or September have been really beneficial for us, because we’ve got to hear from all of the major parties involved, which continues to help our understanding of how all the different parts link together and what it takes to achieve successful registration. Facilitation of the workshops in a group setting was very valuable to help make sense of the requirements, such as keeping records for our spraying program and for troubleshooting. The group approach ensured that everything that we learnt was done in a way to keep it simple.

One of the challenges that we were facing was around how to navigate our current spray program to ensure that we would meet the MRL (maximum residue level) requirements for our focus export markets. Accessing agronomists through the program’s facilitation was very beneficial to tap into their expertise and advice. This was also the case for hearing about the MICOR (Manual of Importing Country Requirements) database, which has been useful to check what the importing requirements are so we can plan around them.”

What have been some of the benefits of exporting into protocol markets?

“The returns that we achieve through the export pathway into protocol markets are higher than what we would otherwise get through the domestic market. The margins available has seen us always strive to export as much fruit as possible. Our registration has also motivated us to get on top of our harvest efficiencies to ensure we can meet the

timeframes for when our packhouse requires product for export. There were times where it was a challenge to get the fruit off fast enough, meaning that we would miss out on getting more volume out to export. We've now put more effort into the timing of our picking activities."

What does the future hold for your business in terms of cherry exports and market access?

"We definitely want to maintain our focus on export. As a family business, we are looking towards succession planning and the types of investment we might need to make to ensure that we can become a more reliable export supplier into the future as it is really worthwhile for us."

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Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture. For more information visit www.horticulture.com.au.

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