

Applied case study — TG17000 Market development & Maintenance

Stakeholder	Phillip Brancatisano (Export Sales Manager)
Business	The Grape House, Euston, NSW
Planted area	530 Hectares of Grapes and Citrus
Varieties	Menindee, Flame, Thompson and Crimson Seedless, Red Globe, Autumn Royal plus same Varieties in Organics
Sales channels	Grow, pack and market on farm, currently exporting 95% of produce

What was the research about

Between 2017 and 2020, project TG17000 conducted activities for Australian table grape export market development and support. Activities included providing information and assistance to key stakeholders facilitating market access, trade missions, hosting inspectors and contributing to discussion around protocol change. Many activities were conducted with table grape growers that facilitated export registrations and built the industries capacity to comply with export protocols.

Below, Phillip Brancatisano, Export Sales Manager for The Grape House in NSW talks about his involvement in TG17000, why the project was important and how it changed his business.

What was your involvement in VG17000? How did it change your business?

“During the project period, my role as export sales manager at The Grape House Group had me focused on growing our export book – as an individual grower this can be challenging. Through VG17000, Jeff Scott built the profile of Australian grapes and successfully increased demand for our (Australian) produce, this allowed businesses like ours to grow our exports.

As part of VG17000 I attended trade missions to several countries including South Korea, Vietnam, Japan & The Philippines. On the first trip in 2017, I happily accepted the invitation to attend a trade mission to Asia – there was myself and one other grower. By the last trip in 2019 there were about 10 growers on the mission to Asia with Jeff Scott.

My involvement in the project included attending trade missions where we met with stakeholders involved in the importation of Australian Table Grapes. We attended trade fairs such as Asia Fruit Logistica, went through protocols, met buyers and aimed to provide practical input with any market development issues.

With the general increase in demand for Australian table grapes as a result of the project and the contacts I’d gained for buyers, over the project period our export business doubled from approx. 500,000 boxes of grapes to about a 1 million. As a business we have realised the price premium by shifting our produce from domestic to export markets.

The project also gave me a greater understanding for the underlying reasoning behind compliance protocols. This understanding has meant that I am far more picky when it comes to buyers – if we are going to strive to achieve the highest possible quality produce on this end, I want to know that the quality is going to be maintained until it gets to the consumer.”

Why was the project important?

“Even if we hadn’t been involved directly in the project, our business would have benefited from the increased demand in Australian table grapes. However, I think being involved has sped up (and potentially increased) the benefits. The increased knowledge of export markets and protocols combined with the exposure to new customers has been invaluable.

I openly tell other growers how helpful it was to be involved in the project. For me it really highlighted how important it is to get to know your customer. But the project has increased industry communication about this type of thing, as growers we ask each other about different customers, ‘are they good to deal with,’ ‘what contract terms should we be using’ etc. As exporters trade terms are very important to reduce risk.”

What is the biggest challenge with exporting Australian table grapes?

“My biggest challenges are shipping lines and schedules always changing or cancelling without any notice.”

Is there a part of the project that could have been improved?

“I still think that growers need to be involved in the drafting / review of export protocols to ensure practical and deliverable guidelines. Some of them are simply not achievable. For example, the NZ in-transit protocol only allows for a 0.6 degree fluctuation of 1 degree in temperature – the cold storage facilities naturally fluctuate more than that - the protocol just doesn't work and should never have been written that way.”

Do you have any final recommendations for farmers considering adopting the innovation?

“If you are interested in exporting, talk to Jeff Scott at the Australian Table Grape Association (ATGA), he is a wealth of knowledge. The project (TG17000) developed plenty of industry resources and tools to support export market access – use them. Talk to other growers and most of all, make sure you know your customer.”

Photos of trade delegation meetings in ASIA as part of TG17000 (supplied Phillip Brancatisano)



TG17000 Market development & Maintenance was funded by Hort Innovation, using the table grape research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. This case study was developed as part of MT21015 Horticulture impact assessment program 2020-21 to 2022-23, funded by Hort Innovation, using research and development levies from across horticulture, and contributions from the Australian Government.

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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