



Speech By  
**Hon. Bill Byrne**


**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Agriculture Industry**

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (9.55 am): It is great to be back in the House representing agriculture for the people of Queensland! The Palaszczuk government recognises the strong contribution that the food and fibre sector has continued to make to the Queensland economy. Previous AgTrends forecasts have highlighted impressive growth in the value of production in Queensland over the past two years. This is growth that was achieved during, and in spite of, a record drought.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BYRNE:** That is good news. The latest AgTrends forecast indicates that the value of Queensland's primary industry commodities for 2016-17, both at the farm gate and for gross value production and first-stage processing, is on target to grow by six per cent. The total value for 2016-17 is now forecast to be \$18.55 billion, which is a full 15 per cent greater than the average over the last five years. I would like to take the opportunity to highlight some of the star performers in the sector.

With regard to Queensland's avocado producers, for example, strong demand for avocados has kept wholesale prices at a premium and our growers have responded accordingly. The GVP for avocados for 2016-17 is forecast to be \$225 million, which is 49 per cent higher than DAF's final estimate for 2015-16. The GVP for Queensland mandarins is forecast to grow by 30 per cent; mangos by 23 per cent; and macadamias by 17 per cent.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks for that interjection. Indeed, the forecast for macadamias is \$140 million, which is 97 per cent greater than the average over the last five years. The contribution from our macadamia growers comes despite a slightly lower wholesale price this year. The GVP growth is due entirely to higher production levels, and it is not just AgTrends' forecast that underlines the strength of the agricultural sector. Today I can inform the House that the latest overseas merchandise export statistics confirm the remarkable success of our cotton growers. In the year to September 2016 the value of cotton exports for Queensland has soared by 90 per cent, from \$406 million to \$770 million. Hallelujah!

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BYRNE:** It is great to see the enthusiasm from those opposite. I am simply stating facts here—and very positive facts, I might add. On behalf of the government I would like to thank cotton growers for their efforts. Queensland cotton is clearly in demand overseas, but the 90 per cent leap in cotton export values is eclipsed by—guess what—chickpeas. Queensland producers have risen to the challenge of increased demand for chickpeas overseas, driving a 176 per cent rise in export values to the year to September. This is fantastic news. Queensland chickpea exports are worth \$649 million, up from \$235 million in one year.

No-one in the Palaszczuk government would pretend that our producers do not face some challenges. Inevitably, some sectors are doing it better than others, but Queensland agriculture as a whole is clearly in fine fettle. This government will continue to support our farmers and growers with the inevitable and invaluable contribution they will make to our economy.