

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 660
Asked on Thursday, 19 April 2007

MR LAWLOR asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

Will he advise details on the progress of the establishment of a viable cocoa industry in North Queensland?

ANSWER:

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) continues to support industry development across a wide range of Agricultural industries by providing support and innovation to existing industries and assisting the development of new industries.

Cocoa has been identified as a potential industry for growers within North Queensland, and with the support of Cadbury Schweppes, DPI&F has coordinated the import of cocoa seed from Papua New Guinea to conduct trials to ascertain the economic viability of cocoa in North Queensland.

Cocoa trials started in 2000 on two one-hectare plots of land, one at Mossman and another at DPI&F's South Johnstone Research Station. This initial trial indicated that from a growing perspective, cocoa would perform in the North Queensland environment, resulting in yields of up to three tonnes per hectare of dry bean a year.

By world standards, it appears the possible yields are commercially acceptable.

The research phase of the cocoa industry was supported by Cadbury Schweppes Australia and the Rural Industries and Development Corporation in conjunction with DPI&F.

In early April 2007 DPI&F released 2 000 cocoa seedlings to growers in the Ingham and Innisfail districts aiming towards a final release of 10 000 cocoa seedlings, to further test the viability of the industry.

At the moment as DPI&F nears completion of the trial phase of the cocoa project, the commercial phase of the project has just begun.

Other developments are the continuing recruitment of cocoa growers within the Mossman district by Cocoa Australia which has invested in production and processing technologies since 2005. Cocoa Australia has partnered with Mossman Sugar Mill in the establishment of suitable cocoa processing technologies.

In the lead up to the completion of the initial research project by the end of June 2007, DPI&F is producing a "Cocoa Growing Guide for north Queensland" that will include the findings and experience gained from the work.

DPI&F has worked across the supply chain, directly involving processors to achieve results. Especially satisfying to DPI&F is that cocoa can be introduced in the many areas directly affected by Cyclone Larry, giving those producers an alternative industry to rebuild.

These developments in the Cocoa industry demonstrate DPI&F's ability and commitment to build the Queensland economy through the introduction of viable alternate primary industries for Queensland, and provide further evidence of DPI&F's focus on Profitable Primary Industries for Queensland.