

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 522

Asked on 16 April 2008

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

QUESTION:

How will the development of new macadamia nut varieties benefit Queensland's growers and consumers?

ANSWER:

The macadamia nut is Queensland's fastest growing tree crop industry. With extensive plantings in the Bundaberg/Childers region and interest in the Emerald, Fitzroy and McKay regions, Queensland will soon pass northern New South Wales for nut production.

The world price is currently at \$1.50 per kilogram nut in shell, down from \$3.65 in 2005. The industry yield average is only 3.7 t/ha and this needs to be lifted. This average yield, combined with a low price, makes the profitability of the industry challenging.

The rapidly growing almond industry in southern Australia is a directly substitutable nut on the world market and is more productive in kernel recovery on a per hectare basis at this time.

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries scientists have indicated that the theoretical yield potential for macadamias is 14 t/ha and that is the target we should be aiming for to ensure Queensland's macadamia nut industry is competitive.

Macadamias are a relatively underdeveloped crop that has not benefited from long term breeding and selection. Queensland has the only significantly advanced breeding and regional testing program in the world. New hybrids under test show promise of a 30% lift in yields. Additionally, the industry does not have high performance clonal rootstocks like more heavily researched tree crops such as apples and citrus.

By breeding and selection of higher yielding varieties with improved nut quality and high yielding clonal rootstocks we can make this Australian native nut world competitive in the state of Queensland.