

Question on Notice

No. 172

Asked on 26 February 2019

MRS D FRECKLINGTON ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the arrangement with the Japanese Government to allow Japanese melon farmers to grow and export melons from Queensland with Australian and Queensland Government support—

Will the Minister advise the (a) total amount the Queensland Government is spending on infrastructure, wages and in-kind staff time, (b) number of Queensland farmers that will be engaged in the project and (c) expected date when Queensland farmers will be able to start growing and exporting this variety of melon to Japan?

ANSWER:

A Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) exists between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) to undertake collaborative projects of mutual benefit.

By participating in the MoC, the Palaszczuk Government is establishing another avenue for Queensland producers to improve their understanding of the Japanese melon market; appreciate the fruit characteristics that are prized in the Japanese market; and model the growing practices used by Japanese growers to successfully meet consumer demands. While Queensland melon producers already have access to the Japanese market, it has struggled to deliver the consistent high quality produce demanded by consumers.

A state of the art retractable roof greenhouse is being constructed at the Ayr Research Station at a cost of approximately \$250 000. This is not being done at the behest of Japanese melon growers. Rather, DAF has a well established research program with Queensland's horticulture sector to improve production and farming systems which has included extensive work on protected cropping systems. The investment in a new greenhouse reflects DAF's commitment to improve the horticulture industry's productivity and climate resilience through access to cost-effective protected cropping systems suited to subtropical and tropical environments.

Under the MoC, MAFF will pay to lease a portion of the greenhouse for its projects and will fund any research undertaken by Japanese companies at the site. The Palaszczuk Government is not directly supporting Japanese melon growers to export melons from Queensland, and DAF is not undertaking research trials directly with, or on behalf of, Japanese growers.

DAF will use the greenhouse for research into various commodities. This research will be undertaken in conjunction with local industry stakeholders and will provide an opportunity for local growers to see first-hand the techniques and technologies applied to protected cropping in greenhouse structures.

Through the MoC, there will be an opportunity for local Queensland producers to gain valuable insights around the cropping systems and specific product attributes that Association of

Southeast Asian Nations markets are seeking in terms of their food requirements. It is too soon to say exactly how many Queensland growers will be engaged in projects of this sort, nor when they will start to realise the benefits in the form of increased exports.

Queensland producers will benefit through collaboration and research and, by continuing to build our relationship with this important trading partner, eventually being able to take advantage of the counter seasonal production cycles of the northern and southern hemispheres, and grow their exports to Japan.