

Question on Notice

No. 183

Asked on 18 February 2020

MR S STEWART ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise on any additions in Biosecurity Queensland's arsenal to assist banana growers in the fight against the spread of Panama TR4?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

Since Panama disease tropical race 4 (Panama TR4) was first detected in Far North Queensland, the Queensland Government has worked with the banana industry and the community to contain the disease to three confirmed farms in the Tully Valley. This collaborative approach has contributed to Queensland having one of the most successful control and containment strategies in the world.

With a fourth banana farm in the Tully Valley recently confirmed as having Panama TR4, Biosecurity Queensland has added seven temporary positions to assist growers in the fight against the spread of Panama TR4. These positions are dedicated to supporting the affected grower to manage the biosecurity restrictions placed on the property, and to protect the banana industry from disease spread.

Thanks to the grower's pro-active approach and having good on-farm biosecurity measures already in place, the business resumed trading within four days. This is a significant outcome and positive reinforcement for banana growers that continued trading with Panama TR4 is possible.

The Palaszczuk Government recognises that the banana industry is one of the region's main economic contributors and biggest employers. To date, the Government has committed over \$42 million to managing Panama TR4.

Amongst the many initiatives, this funding has supported the development of a formal collaborative agreement between the Palaszczuk Government and the peak industry body, the Australian Banana Growers' Council. This agreement will ensure the continued delivery of the Panama TR4 Program in Queensland until June 2023. This will give industry an opportunity to shape the future of the response and make key decisions on how the disease will be managed going forward.

The funding has also supported research and development projects to help the industry manage the potential impacts of the disease over the longer term. Queensland is leading a suite of research partnerships with industry, the Federal Government, universities and growers, undertaking world first research to improve our collective knowledge of best practice banana production in the presence of Panama TR4.

While there is no simple cure for Panama TR4, our research has greatly improved our understanding of the disease, and the strategies industry can use to reduce the impact of Panama TR4 on production. Other research has a longer-term focus, such as the identification of banana cultivars that are resistant to Panama TR4, suited to the Australian production system and appealing to consumers.