



**CAIRNS
CONVENTION
CENTRE**
PASSION IS IN OUR NATURE

AGRIBUSINESS FACT SHEET

Agricultural land in the Cairns region occupies 10,000 square kilometres, or 47% of the region. With abundant fertile land and water supplies, conditions are ideal for a wide variety of crops to thrive.

Renowned throughout the country as being an exceptional producer of quality fruit, smaller boutique farmers also produce vegetables. FNQ Growers, the Far Northern region's peak representative body for fruit and vegetables has forged a partnership with Growcom, the Queensland's peak industry body for horticulture and a strong advocate for the state's multimillion-dollar horticultural industry.

By joining Growcom, members of FNQ Growers can have access to an extensive range of products and services including specialised industrial relations advice, on-farm services, and news and information that will aid in the long-term success of their businesses.



JOE MORO,
PRESIDENT, FNQ GROWERS

“The future’s very bright for growth of the agriculture industry in the Far North. Some of this will be on the back of the new irrigation projects, whilst some will be based on the diversity and the ability of our farmers in the Far North to look at crop diversification.”



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Innovation in Agribusiness



Patented Technology

The region is also home to innovation in agribusiness. Founded in 2014 by Krista and Rob Watkins, Evolution Industries aims to convert waste streams into top products. Having developed custom solutions from design, fabrication and product development, their business has revolutionised Australian Agriculture. The company uses their patented food technology Nutrolock™ a natural, organic process that transforms raw product into powder form in a fast, efficient process.

Cost Savings

Evolution Industries' commercial factory mechanically processes green bananas. From peeling, separation all the way to drying with the Nutrolock™ process, this highly successful method has enabled major leaps in processing costs and delivered a superior grade product from what was previously, unsaleable or waste produce.

Locking in Nutrition

As well as green bananas, Evolution Industries uses their Nutrolock™ process for turning sweet potato, broccoli, pumpkin, green beans, mushrooms, carrots and beetroot into powders. These can then be used for many purposes, such as improved gut health. The powders have been proven to lock in nutrition 20-50% higher than conventional food processing techniques.

KRISTA WATKINS,
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF
EVOLUTION INDUSTRIES

“We were the first company in the world to create flour from bananas. We’ve made some significant scientific discoveries, particularly in the world of resistant starch and prebiotic fermentable fibres.”

 07 4042 4200

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Aquaculture

A Thriving Business

Cairns is a key commercial fishing port in Queensland. It is the fourth largest home port for the Commonwealth Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery and a home port for the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery. The diverse range of wild-caught species in this region include prawns, barramundi, coral trout, Spanish mackerel, tuna, crabs and lobster. The East Coast Trawl Fishery is the largest of Queensland's commercial fisheries operating in the region targeting mostly prawns, but also harvests bugs, squid, and other species.

Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture

Research within the Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture (CSTFA) based at James Cook University in Cairns, focuses not only on the aquatic and aquaculture systems that produce food, but also the industries and communities that utilise them.

Multidisciplinary collaborations between researchers provide the synergies to address substantial research problems in a way that individual research groups cannot. CSTFA provides research outputs for sustainable food production to local, state, federal and international resource managers, both in government and in the private sector. Thus, making them a key player in helping secure aquatic food production in the tropics for future generations.

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Boosting Local Economy

Agribusiness contributes \$2.4 billion to the Cairns regional economy each year with the Far North region home to 7% of all farm businesses in Queensland.

Going for Growth

The value of the Atherton Tablelands agricultural sector increased by 45% from 2015 - 2019 according to the 2019 Tablelands Agricultural Profile produced by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF).

Avocado Capital

The Tablelands is now Australia's largest avocado growing region and is now the Tablelands most valuable crop, worth \$173 million, doubling its value in four years and overtaking the banana industry for the top spot.

As well as bananas, the region also farms mangoes, avocados, pineapples, lychees, sugarcane, tea, oranges, lemons, strawberries, coffee and watermelon, to name just a few.

Agritourism has also become popular with many visitors to the region enjoying local produce at coffee plantations such as Jacques and Skybury in Mareeba. It is estimated that between 80 – 90% of all coffee grown in Australia, is grown in Far North Queensland.

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