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of Atherton & Mareeba

Future of agriculture bright for region

THE promising future of agriculture in the Mareeba and Tablelands region will proudly be on display at this year's Rotary FNQ Field Days.

Mareeba District Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association president Joe Moro said the industry continued to expand and had an enviable reputation across Australia.

"Agriculture is the backbone of the local economy," he said.

"A lot of industries and businesses survive off the spending that occurs from the gross domestic value of agriculture on the Tablelands.

"It's always been an exciting industry."

A 2015 report by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries found the gross value of production for agriculture across both the Mareeba and Tablelands shires reached more than \$550 million in 2014-15.

The report found the top three industries were bananas (\$91 million), avocados (\$83 million) and mangoes (\$51 million).

Mr Moro said avocados in particular had the potential to become the region's highest value crop over the next year.

"With expansion of avocados and the size of the trees that have been planted, I wouldn't be surprised if that industry cracked \$100 million in 2016-17," he said.

Citrus and sweet potatoes are also making a comeback in the region, while blueberries are an example of new crops making inroads.

"You've also got a wide range of tropical crops continuing to expand from dragon fruit all the way up to papayas," Mr Moro said.

"We have one of the most diverse growing regions in the world."

With Field Days providing the perfect platform to promote agriculture across North Queensland, Mr Moro said farmers could look forward to seeing the latest and greatest developments in the industry.





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“I’m hoping Field Days will reveal some of the new technology now being used, such as robotics and drones,” he said.

“That’s really making inroads into agriculture. It’s early days yet but the technology jumps there are phenomenal.”

Underpinning those technological advances is the economic flow-on effect agriculture produces in the region, with Mr Moro pointing out just how interconnected the industry really is.

“Agriculture spends a lot of money within the region. You’ve got all your suppliers, transport companies and even the water business – it has a flow-on effect right through the local economy,” he said.

“A number of local businesses are known as agri-businesses because of the fact they provide assistance or supplies to the agricultural industry.”

About 16,000 people passed through the gates at Rotary FNQ Field Days in 2015, with all indications pointing to a repeat of that number this year.

Mareeba Tyrepower, MSF Sugar and Mareeba Mazda are the major sponsors of Rotary FNQ Field Days 2017.

A biennial event, Rotary FNQ Field Days will be held between Wednesday May 24 and Friday May 26, 2017 at Mareeba’s Kerribee Park.

ENDS

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For more information on Rotary FNQ Field Days, visit www.fnqfielddays.org.au

