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LATEST NEWS

FIRST MANGOES OF SEASON PICKED AND PACKED AT MANBULLOO

SEPTEMBER 29, 2016 | MIKE QUINSEE



The first mangoes of the season have been picked and packed at Manbulloo farm, where workers will be harvesting over the next eight weeks.

The Katherine mango harvest usually begins a couple of weeks after Darwin's, which

started to gather pace about two weeks ago with 11,552 trays already dispatched to market.

Quality manager Scott Ledger explained the farm's isolated location allowed Manbulloo Mangoes to mature ahead of other orchards in the Katherine region.

"We actually mature around the same time as Darwin," he said.

"It's a real asset of this orchard [that] because of its local microclimate, the fruit matures about 10 to 14 days before any other farm in the Katherine area.

"We've got about 42,000 trees here at the farm – 80 per cent of them are Kensington Prides and 20 per cent are the R2E2 variety.

"We will be picking KP's through to mid-November and R2's for another two weeks after that."

Over the last five seasons Manbulloo has averaged between 200 to 300,000 trays of Kensington Prides and 52,000 trays of R2E2s per year.

Mr Ledger said the large quantity of early "matured" fruit indicated this year would

be no exception, with the first boxes of Kensington Prides being delivered to Brisbane on Thursday.

“This season the mango trees will flower at four different times, so the fruit we’re picking here is from the first flowering; there will be three flowerings following that,” he said.

“Once we’ve done this early pick, we then start again and go back around the orchard picking the second, third and fourth flowering.

“This means we can maximise the eating quality of the fruit by picking at the right maturity, we can work our way around the whole farm and pick them at their optimum stage.”



Art of mango picking

Mr Ledger said farm workers were only picking mature mangoes in the first harvest that looked plump with a red blush showing on the fruit.

“When we come and pick, we’re not picking for fruit size,

we're picking for maturity," he said.

"The mango needs to be nice and plump; as the mango matures on the tree, the cheeks of the mango swell out and right at the end of the mango, it becomes quite rounded.

"Also, the green colour of the mangoes lightens and we start to see some blush on the fruit."

Mr Ledger said picking was the most critical stage of the farm's operation and the time when mango quality could be most "When the fruit is picked, they snap the stem off [and] spurt sap comes out. If that gets on the fruit, it can actually cause what we call sap burn," he said.

"So when they're picked, we have mango wash running to deactivate the sap from causing burning.

"When you pick the mangoes, the skin is also very sensitive to starching and rubbing and you won't actually see that damage for one to two days.

"My job as quality manager is to make sure all steps, from harvesting right through to delivery, are using best practice."

Grading for highest quality

Mr Ledger said Manbulloo Mangoes were packed on site, with the first mangoes expected to arrive on Brisbane supermarket shelves by next week.

“We grade, sort and pack the mangoes into cartons ready for transport to our ripeners in various destinations around Australia before they prepare the orders for Coles distribution centres,” he said.

“We’re sorting the mangoes for visual quality [and] for defects on the mangoes, the most common of which is wind rub or blemishes on the fruit.

“We train our staff to grade to the Coles spec. The fruit that’s outside that spec will get packed into a 10kg volume pack that will be sent to our wholesalers around Australia.”

compromised through sap burn or scratching.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-29/first-mangoes-of-season-picked-and-packed-at-manbulloo/7884786>