



Greenlife Industry Australia

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Lowes TC leaps into QBAN accreditation

Production of high-quality banana planting material plays a crucial role in supporting the Australian banana production industry. Purchasers of banana planting material and regulatory authorities require assurance that plants purchased and moved between biosecurity zones meet an industry standard, and that appropriate steps have been taken to minimise the risk of introducing serious pathogens into the banana production environment.

This is where the Quality Banana Approved Nursery (QBAN) Scheme comes in.

QBAN is the Australian banana industry's scheme to provide clean planting material to banana industry members, but accreditation for this cannot be attained until a producer first achieves NIASA Banana Nursery Stock Specification, a process recently completed by New South Wales tissue culture supplier, Lowes TC.

Founded by Greg and Margaret Lowe over 25 years ago, the commercial tissue culture specialists have grown from its humble beginnings into a business which employs 50 staff and produces around 100,000 plants per week.

As a supplier of high-quality clonal stock, NIASA accreditation has kept Lowes TC on top of its game according to general manager, Natasha Marocik.

"We've always been devoted to following best management practices, having implemented strict plant health procedures long before achieving NIASA accreditation in October 2020," she said.

"Whether it be the strict disinfestation protocols for planting equipment, work areas and growing areas, or the identification of pests and pathogens, Lowes TC has always been a leader in implementing biosecurity practices. In fact, achieving certification was an incredibly simple process given we were already adhering to best management practices, with only some fine-tuning to processes required.

"Ultimately, having an industry backed accreditation means that we have peace of mind that our best management practices are based on decades of mutual experiences and scientifically-driven outcomes.

"Being NIASA accredited has also reinforced the importance of best management practices to our entire business and has created a more detailed structure to our current system, providing support and confidence to staff that we are adhering to the industry standards."

Additionally, with the banana industry facing a unique set of challenges including specific pests and diseases like Panama disease, Bunchy Top virus, banana weevil borer, the NIASA Banana Nursery Stock Specification provides a solid balance between general plant production standards and specific banana industry practices.

For businesses like Lowes TC which operates across many different sectors of horticulture, it provides additional assurances to customers that they understand their sector.

"We are a contract service propagator and we only grow to order. With NIASA and QBAN certification we can give our clients the peace of mind that our stock has been propagated with the banana industry and its unique challenges in mind," said Ms Marocik.

With NIASA and QBAN accreditation in place, it provides a platform for Lowes TC to focus on innovation as it progresses the automation of high health clonal plant propagation.

High health plants are in high demand for the way they promote improved plant pest biosecurity and management at both the individual business level and from a national perspective. Clean, uniform and true-to-type plants also improve the bottom line for growers by reducing input costs, plant losses, labour costs and by producing more uniform and higher yields per plant.

In order to meet the growing demand for tissue culture generated planting material, Lowes TC is investing heavily in technology that will make tissue culture techniques more affordable and reliable and with tissue culture available to more growers the industry will benefit from less disease, more uniform plants and improved bottom line.



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According to Ms Marocik, the accreditation journey for Lowes TC is about building a foundation for higher value work.

“But in order to innovate, you need the assurance that you have the fundamentals right, and that’s exactly what QBAN certification via NIASA Banana Nursery Stock Specification provides”, she said.

For more information on the NIASA BMP Guidelines head to:
<http://nurseryproductionfms.com.au>

Requirements for QBAN accreditation

A business must firstly attain compliance to the NIASA BMP Guidelines and the NIASA Banana Nursery Stock Specification and once accredited, then apply to ABGC for QBAN accreditation. To be eligible to apply to ABGC for QBAN accreditation, the production nursery must:

- Be NIASA accredited with Greenlife Industry Australia;
- Implement the requirements specified within the NIASA Appendix 16 – Banana Nursery Stock Specification;
- Be found at audit to have implemented the procedures within the Appendix to a Satisfactory standard;
- Demonstrate this through the provision of a NIASA Banana Nursery Stock Specification accreditation certificate; and
- Upon meeting these QBAN requirements, apply for accreditation under the scheme as below.

For QBAN Accreditation Applications and Enquiries Contact ABGC

Upon achieving the above requirements, apply directly to ABGC for QBAN Accreditation. For further information, call ABGC (07) 3278 4786 or send an email to info@abgc.org.au to receive an application form and to obtain the QBAN terms and conditions.