



# Queensland's Cut Flower Industry

## The Queensland Cut Flower Industry

Queensland is the north eastern state of Australia at 22 ° latitude, 146° longitude.

### Growing Regions

Production of cut flowers in Queensland occurs throughout the state and is limited by the prevailing climatic and growing conditions and access. The major growing areas include

- South-east Queensland.
- Central Queensland
- Far North Queensland

These growing areas surround the towns/cities (listed from south to north)

- Toowoomba
- Redlands Shire (near Brisbane)
- Sunshine Coast
- Gympie
- Mackay
- Rockhampton
- Emerald
- Mareeba (near Cairns)

### Flower varieties

The types of flowers grown within this industry can be included into 4 main categories:

- Traditional Flowers,
- Australian Native Flowers and Proteaceae,
- Tropical Flowers
- Foliage.

### Industry Statistics

Accurate statistics for the cut flower industry have been very difficult to obtain, a problem shared with many other Australian States. Official Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) information is extremely inaccurate.

Australia's gross cut flower production was estimated in 1996 as \$300M and retail production as \$350M (Floriculture Summary, 1995/96 – Australia, FECA). A conservative estimate of the gross value of the Queensland cut flower industry in 1998 was:-

- Farm gate production - \$30M. The industry, especially native flower production, is recognised as continually expanding.
- Retailers (florists etc) - \$40M - \$45M.

However, a survey conducted by FAQI and Department of Primary Industries provides a more accurate estimate of the Queensland farm gate value which is now \$132M.

A phone survey of the amenity industries in Queensland (eg turf, nursery, cut flowers, landscape etc) was conducted in late 2001 by Amenity Horticulture Industry Development Council (AHIDC) members including FAQI. This should provide more accurate estimations when results of the latter exercise become available.

Based on current knowledge and communication with the different sectors, it is estimated that 9000 people work within the Queensland industry. This is made up of :-

- Approximately 900 cut flower producers representing jobs for over 6000 people (owners and employees),
- Well in excess of 400 allied trader businesses (excluding florists) throughout Australia support the Queensland industry representing over 1000 employment positions, and
- Over 700 florists and retailers operate in Qld providing over 2000 jobs.

### Industry Characteristics

The Queensland cut flower industry is characterised by:-

- A large number of very small growers including hobby farmers and broad acre farmers seeking to diversify,
- Businesses ranging in size from small family-run businesses to very large multi-million dollar businesses that employ over 50 staff per enterprise,
- About 800 growers identified in 2000 as having started or in the process of production in Queensland,

- At least 700 florists businesses active in Queensland (more florists are in business around the state than there are post offices).

Consumption for flowers in Australia is AUS\$25 per capita which is relatively low compared to AUS\$36 in USA and \$AUS\$61 in Holland.

### Markets

Cut flowers are produced for both the domestic market and export markets and marketing activities vary between crops. For example, in a 1999 Queensland grower survey it was found that about 95% of growers with their major crop being traditional flowers sold 100% of their crops on the domestic market. About 26% of growers of mostly native major crop did so. Conversely, 31% of native major crop growers sold 100% of their crop overseas but none of the traditional major crop growers did so.

More information is available by:-

- Accessing *FAQI Fact Sheet No 2.2* - Marketing Queensland cut flowers
- Accessing *FAQI Fact Sheet No 2.3* - 1999 Queensland cut flower industry growers survey, and/or
- Contacting either domestic or exporting marketing agents through the *FAQI Contacts Database* and other information sources listed in *FAQI Fact Sheet 1.5*,
- Contacting DPI *GrowSearch* for relevant publications (+61 7 3824 9555).

### Types of Cut Flower Enterprises

The choice of how production is undertaken depends on the variety of cut flower grown, the control of flowering required, location of farm, resource availability, market requirements and individual business and personal situations. Cut flower enterprises involve **different combinations** of the following:-

#### *Growing method*

- Field-grown cut flowers, or
- Cut flowers grown in pots or other containers.

#### *Shelter*

- Cut flowers grown under structures – mostly plastic tunnels, or
- Cut flowers not grown under any artificial shelters.

#### *Product handling*

- Picking, sorting, packing and distribution of their own cut flowers,
- Picking, sorting, packing and distribution of a combination of cut flowers grown by both themselves and purchased from other growers, or
- On-selling their product to other businesses who undertake the above-mentioned activities

#### *Enterprises*

- Almost solely undertaking cut flower production (approx 30%), or
- Mixed enterprises [eg other primary production activities undertaken to provide income including other agricultural product production in the field (eg livestock, fruit and vegetables, broad-acre production) or potted plant (nursery) production].

Although there are many exceptions, the majority of traditional cut flower varieties are grown in containers under shelter where climate controls can be applied, whereas most Australian natives and tropical cut flowers and foliage are mostly grown in the field without shelter.

### Employees and their tasks

Staff are, in some cases, employed to undertake the following activities.

- Managers - people employed to manage farms and some or all other processes involved
- Administration staff
- Staff who plant, weed, and maintain the cut flower plants
- People employed to harvest and process the cut flowers - picking, applying postharvest treatments, sorting, and packing.

Almost staff, excepting some administration staff, undertake activities both in the shed and in the growing areas (field or under growing structures).

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