

Increased Demand and Prices for Australian Table Grapes



Consumer acceptability hit a five-year high for Australian table grapes with increased demand and prices - just one year after Delytics helped the industry put new maturity standards in place.

A three-year project led by Delytics on behalf of the Australian Table grape Association (ATGA) increased the demand and value of table grapes by ensuring they are liked by the majority of consumers.

The project *Table grape supply chain quality 2017-2020* (TG17002) was a strategic levy investment in the Hort Innovation Table Grape Fund. It was funded using the table grape research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

Retail monitoring carried out over the 2019/20 season recorded the highest consumer acceptability in five years with an overall consumer acceptability of 79%. This was a 20 percentage point increase from the 2016/17 season, the year before the project started.



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The retail monitoring was supported by Nielsen Homescan data, which showed increased consumer demand and prices over the same period. The Nielsen Harvest to Home report for the 52 weeks to 1 December 2019 recorded an average 10.1% increase in volume for Australian table grapes and an associated 5% increase in price. Following Covid-19, table grape sales volume dropped by only 0.4%, compared to an all fruit volume drop of 3.3%. Over the same period, dollar sales increased by 5.7%, despite a slight drop in sales volume, marking a 6% increase in price.

The increased demand and prices delivered by this project achieved a key outcome in the Hort Innovation Australia Table Grape Strategic Investment Plan.



Delytics Managing Director, Mark Loeffen (right) with grower Glenn Pearmine, who recorded the best prices in nine years.

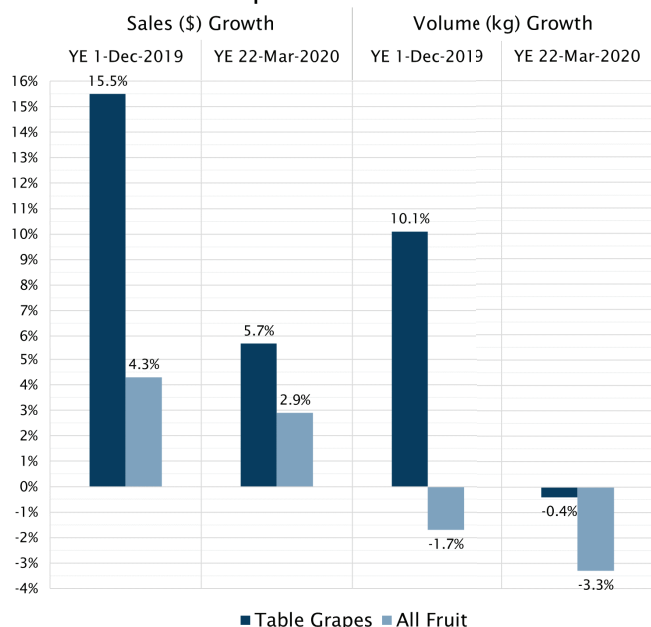
Horticulture Innovation Australia General Manager, Data and Extension, Dr Anthony Kachenko says, “Delytics’ very adaptive and inclusive approach resulted in a quality outcome, and helped industry pivot their thinking. Their work certainly made a difference and was very well received.”

Delytics’ analysis of the maturity monitoring data collected during the first two seasons of the project helped the industry agree on a minimum retail acceptability of 80% and the minimum maturity standards required to deliver that.



“Delytics added huge value to our industry...”

Table Grape Sales & Volume Growth



Jeff adds, "From an export point of view, importers will always pay a high price for good quality mature fruit. Table grapes are now the largest exporter by value of all fresh fruit out of Australia. Over the past 12 months our export sales have gone from \$555 million to a record \$623 million."

Jeff views the new maturity standards as a win-win for the entire industry and grower, Glenn Pearmine agrees. Glenn owns Gleniecy table grape vineyard in Emerald, Central Queensland.

Prior to using the Delytics system included in the project, Glenn harvested his fruit over three or four picks, with much of it immature. This was evidenced by prices dropping within a week after the initial new season surge. After adopting the new standards in late 2019, Glenn picked 90% of his crop in the first pick followed by a small clean up pick - and prices stayed strong the whole season.

The new standards were formally announced by the ATGA in October 2019, with full supply chain adoption set for the 2020/21 season.

ATGA CEO Jeff Scott says, "Delytics added huge value to our industry by transforming the raw monitoring data into easy-to-read graphics that highlighted immaturity over a four-month period of harvest. Their analytical skills gave us the tangible evidence we'd been looking for, for 10 years, to help us decide the evidence-based minimum standards needed for growers to harvest their fruit at the optimum maturity. We want our grapes to provide a consistently good eating experience, throughout the whole season. The increased consumer demand already achieved by this project supports previous research showing that consumers will buy more fruit when they are confident it will taste good."



"... we got a more consistent pick and the best prices we've had in nine years."

Glenn says, "It gave me a tool to manage my vineyard based on maturity levels. Last year [before the new standards] we picked over an eight-week period and this year we picked over a two-week period. That's a huge big difference. By just holding off for an extra week before we picked we got a more consistent pick and the best prices we've had in nine years."

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