



Consumer acceptability at five-year high

The Australian table grape industry recorded its highest rate of consumer acceptability in five years for 2019–20.

Efforts to improve quality and consumer acceptability paid off for the industry, with retail monitoring recording an overall result of 79 per cent, just shy of the industry's 80 per cent benchmark.

The result comes at the completion of *Table grape supply chain quality 2017–2020*, a three-year project to increase demand and consumption of Australian table grapes, funded by Hort Innovation using the table grape research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

Project lead Delytics Ltd used its extensive experience in crop quality assurance to work alongside the ATGA, stakeholders, Kitchener Partners and Rudge Produce Systems Ltd, to establish a minimum maturity standard, which will be implemented fully from the 2020–21 season.

"We have been privileged to lead this exciting project and are very pleased

with the results to date," Delytics managing director Mark Loeffen said.

"By working together towards a common goal, the Australian table grape industry has laid a solid foundation through this project that will add value through the whole supply chain, from growers to consumers."

Delytics previously worked with Citrus Australia to implement quality standards and improve consumer acceptability.

"One of the major supermarket chains is of the firm view that strong sales, repeat purchases and category growth are directly linked to the development and implementation of the Australian Citrus Quality Standards," Citrus Australia CEO Nathan Hancock said.

Mark said Delytics' experience from working with Australian fruit industries, like citrus, "has shown that with continuing industry adoption and goodwill, consumer acceptability can remain at very high levels on an ongoing basis."

As reported in the *Vine's* February 2020 edition, early results of 82.9 per cent exceeded the target acceptability. Monitoring for the project – which will be completed by June – concluded in

April, with the average of 79 per cent more than 10 per cent higher than the previous season.

ATGA CEO Jeff Scott said the ATGA was really excited about announcing the industry maturity standard last October.

"It has been the culmination of three years of cooperation of growers with on-farm maturity testing, cooperation from the major supermarkets and consumer acceptability preference," Jeff said.

"While this season has been a transition year to adherence to the industry maturity standard, next season it will become compulsory. With the support again from the supermarkets all growers will produce mature fruit that reaches the industry standard.

"Going forward, there will be an ongoing project with Hort Innovation to maintain the grower uptake of the standards and provide assurance and support to the major retailers at DC level for continued monitoring of the standards." ❖

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CONSUMER INSIGHTS SHOW MARKET ROBUSTNESS

Table grapes were ahead of the pack for the year ending 22 March 2020, recent data reveals.

Data released by Nielsen recently for Hort Innovation's Harvest to Home website further supported the results of the Australian Table Grape Association project *Table grape supply chain quality 2017-2020*, which showed a marked increase in consumer acceptability since the industry established national maturity standards last year.

Market overview

Sales of table grapes by dollar increased by 5.7 per cent for the year ending 22 March 2020, compared to 2.9 per cent growth for total fruit. Table grapes were rising fast for the year ending 1 December 2019, at 15.5 per cent for dollar sales and 10.1 per cent for volume, but growth then

slowed, and even declined by 3.3 per cent for total fruit, while table grapes fared better at 0.4 per cent decline, indicating a robustness in the market despite challenging environmental factors.

Buyer behaviour

Household buying behaviours varied, with average annual spend increasing to \$49.10 for the year ending 22 March 2020, up on \$3.40 on the previous year, while average weight purchased and percentage of buying households remained steady.

State of play

Western Australia grew the most, with 21.3 per cent sales growth by dollar, and 7.6 per cent for volume.

Who buys our table grapes?

Small scale families led repeat purchasing, with an average spend of \$60.13, 11 buying occasions and 9.8kg

purchased annually.

The insights provided in both these and the maturity project monitoring show outcomes detailed in the *Table Grape Industry Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)* are being achieved.

Specifically, one of the SIP outcomes was "demand-building strategies and increased prices for Australian table grapes supported by improvements in product quality", demonstrated by the growth and steadiness of the market and increase in consumer acceptability. ❖

See page 20 for more insights and graphs.



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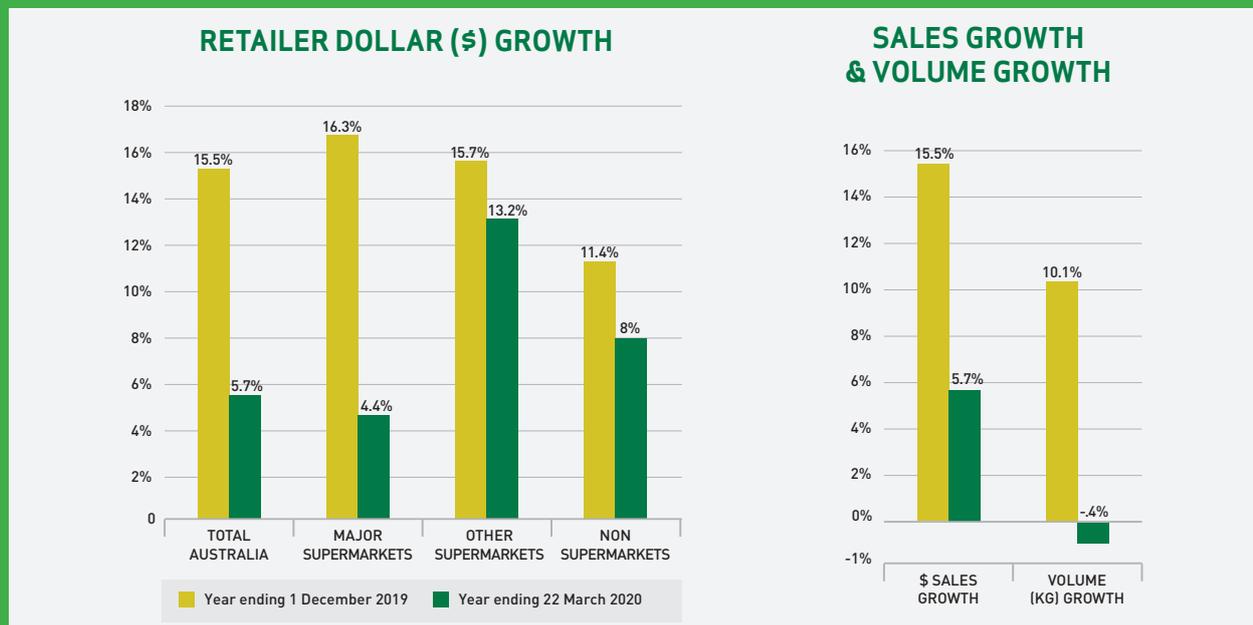
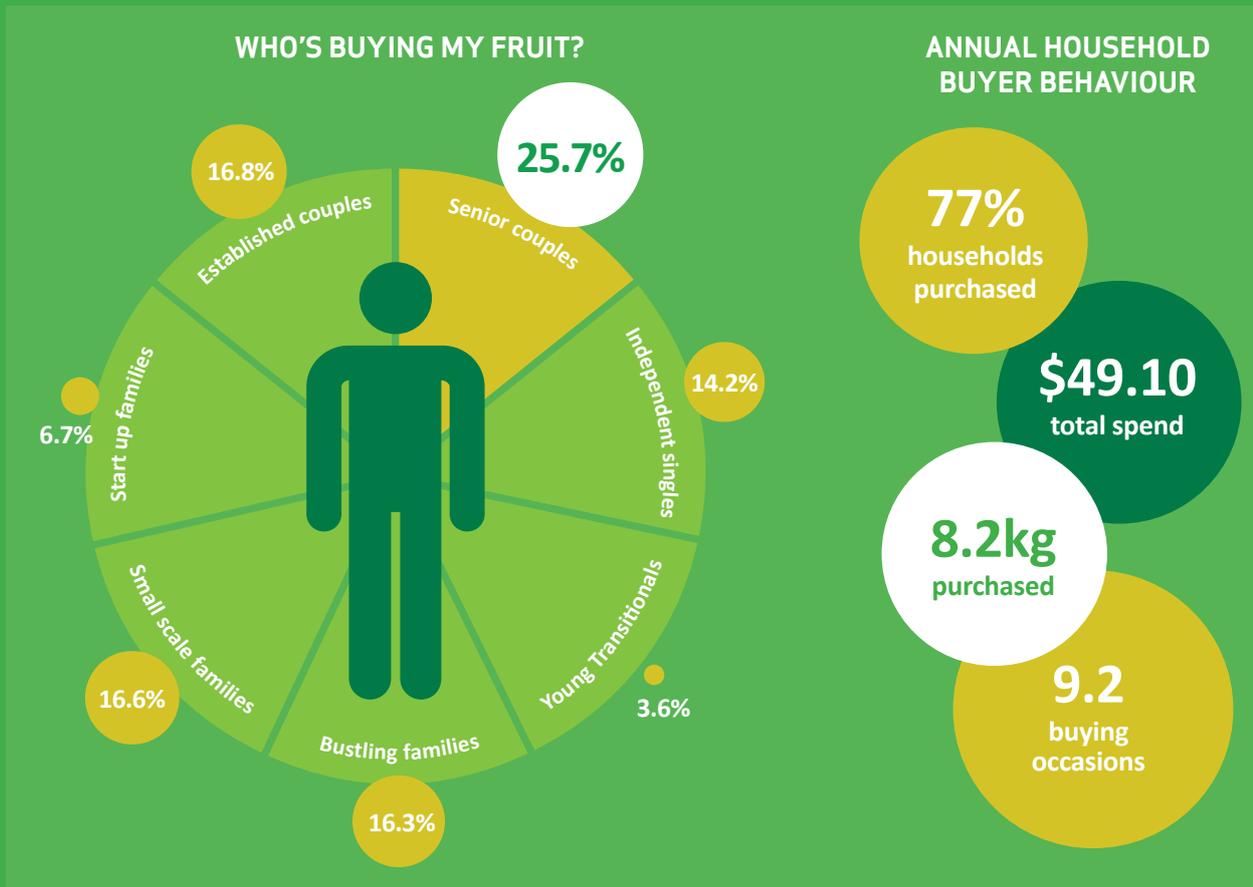
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Consumer behaviour at a glance

Table grape domestic market insights provided by Nielsen Datascan via Hort Innovation's Harvest to Home project.



Source: Nielsen Datascan via Harvest to Home