



## Native food crops - frequently asked questions

### Introduction

There is a strong interest in the potential of Australian native food plants for commercial cropping. Potential growers often ask a similar range of questions, which this publication attempts to address. Further information can be obtained from specific-crop Fact Sheets in this series, as well as the Fact Sheet '*Native Food Crops – Sources of Information*'.

### What is the market demand like for native food crops?

The demand varies from crop to crop, however for the core range of plants that the industry is focussing on the demand is generally good, with the main constraint on market growth being a shortage of supply. However, for plants outside this core range the market demand is less certain, and may range from good to non-existent. For any crop, potential growers should discuss likely market demand with buyers before proceeding.

### How much money can I make from growing these crops?

For some crops there are guidelines available as to possible yields and sale prices, which can be used as a basis for budgeting gross returns. These guidelines are largely 'best-bet' scenarios, in that they are usually based on a limited amount of experience and assume a 'fair average' level of management and environmental conditions and moderate cultivated and wild-harvest supply.

However, the costs of production and resulting net returns are more difficult to assess, given limited experience and the variation that could occur from area to area, environment to environment and manager to manager.

### Can I grow these crops without irrigation?

Many native food crops will grow without irrigation, particularly when rainfall is similar or greater than that experienced by the plants in their native area. However, the fact that the aim of cultivation is to maximise yield and achieve product quality targets (not just grow plants), and that the incremental gains from irrigation normally outweigh the costs, means that in most cases irrigation is both an advisable and profitable activity if water is available.

### Can I irrigate with saline water?

Some crops, such as quandongs, are known to tolerate highly saline water without showing obvious signs of distress. However, the ultimate effect on growth rates and yields is not well understood. Potential growers who are planning to irrigate with saline water should be prepared for possible adverse effects.

### Is my property suitable for growing native foods?

Property suitability depends on the interplay of many factors, including regional and site climate, soil physical and chemical characteristics, aspect, slope and water quality. Some initial crop/site screening can be undertaken by examining the broad environmental requirements of individual species. Beyond this, a site inspection by an experienced consultant is recommended to adequately assess property suitability.

## Further information

Further information on native crops is contained in the other publications in this series:

*Australian Native Citrus – Wild Species, Cultivars and Hybrids*

*Bush Tomato/Desert Raisin Production*

*Miscellaneous Native Food Crops – Davidson and Illawarra Plums*

*Miscellaneous Native Food Crops – Herbs and Vegetables with Potential in SA*

*Mountain Pepper Production*

*Muntries Production*

*Native Food Background Notes*

*Native Food Crops – Frequently Asked Questions*

*Quandong Production*

*The Native Food Industry in SA*

*Wattleseed Production*

These fact sheets are also available for download from the CSIRO/RIRDC Native Foods Website at <http://www.cse.csiro.au/research/nativefoods/> and PIRSA website [www.pir.sa.gov.au](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au) or from the national PrimeNotes CD.

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