



REGIONAL PROFILE

The Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, the original home of macadamias, is the perfect location to grow the crop. It boasts some of the most fertile soils in Australia, which have been formed by volcanic activity many millions of years ago, and has good annual rainfall.

Over the past 25 years the horticultural industry in the region has shifted away from the traditional crops of bananas and vegetables to embrace macadamias as well as other crops such as avocados, coffee, tea, bush foods, herbs, bamboo, lychees and a range of tropical fruits.

The Northern Rivers was for many years the biggest producer of macadamia nuts in Australia, however, in 2016 it was overtaken by the Bundaberg region. Despite this, macadamias remain important to the local economy and there are 490 growers who produce and an estimated 40% of total industry production.

It is also a region where there is a commitment among many growers to the natural environment, which is expressed in good environmental practice and recognition, as well as protection and regeneration of rainforest remnants that used to form part of the Big Scrub rainforest.

The macadamia industry is one of the major horticultural economic contributors to the villages and towns of the Northern Rivers with the hub being Lismore, a city of 45,000 people.

Employment on farm, with processors and indirectly through the range of support service providers, is complemented by the economic benefits created by purchase of farm machinery, fertilisers and other goods to maintain and expand production.

What the macadamia industry means to the Northern Rivers

Growers

Many of the Northern Rivers macadamia farmers are small landowners who have entered the region and the industry from other walks of life. While many farms are long established and still producing good annual returns, the expansion of the industry in the Northern Rivers area is limited. As a result, the industry has spread recently into the Clarence Valley near Grafton, and a small number of growers are establishing plantations on the coastal floodplain near Ballina.

Processors

The Northern Rivers region has five processing plants, which process nuts from growing regions around Australia:

- Agrimac Macadamias & Macaz International, at Alstonville
- Macadamias Direct at Dunoon
- MPC (Macadamia Processing Company) at Alphadale, near Lismore
- Pacific Farm Services at Brooklet, near Bangalow.

Local business

The macadamia industry injects many millions of dollars directly into the economy of the Northern Rivers. Servicing the macadamia industry provides employment and revenue across a wide range of support businesses, such as that of Ongmac trading.

Innovation

The macadamia industry has a reputation for innovation right through the production cycle. As an example, in 2016, MPC installed a state-of-the-art, log 5 pasteurisation unit to meet worlds' best food safety standards. It has also upgraded its drying facility to greatly improve its energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. This facility is the largest of its type in the world.

The region's macadamia industry at a glance

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Trees planted: | 3,036,000 |
| Total area under canopy: | 9,700 hectares |
| Total growers: | 490 (approx.) |
| Number of processors: | 5 |
| Tonnage: | 19,250 tonnes in-shell (2016) |
| Farm gate value: | \$110 million (from 2016 tonnage @ \$5.45) |
| Factory gate value: | \$128.5 million |
| Retail value of N Rivers production: | \$230 million |