

Grower profile

James Wringe and Gary Quick



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Name James Wringe and Gary Quick
Location Kirup
Property size 550ha
Enterprises Tomatoes

James Wringe in the tomato crop.



BY HAYLEY WILSON
VEGETABLESWA

James Wringe and Gary Quick have been in partnership growing tomatoes on their Kirup property for 25 years.

James and Gary both have separate properties of their own on which they both farm beef cattle. James is a fifth generation beef farmer and his family have been on their original farm since 1862. Gary is a third generation farmer.

The property that they are growing tomatoes on now originally was an orchard that his parents had bought in 1972.

After his father had run the orchard for ten years, James then saw the opportunity to grow tomatoes as the land had water and was flat ground compared to surrounding areas. James then went into partnership with his neighbour Gary. Since then, what started off just being a side project in the quieter time for beef cattle, has rapidly expanded into a thriving business.

They started off with basic infrastructure on the property and have extended the packing shed numerous times and over the years have nearly doubled the amount of tomato plants they have. Cool rooms, computerised grading equipment, a packing machine and picking machines have all also been added to the property with the growth.

Being located down south, James and Gary have the advantage of the cooler climate and heavier soil. However, their growing season is shorter than other regions. This also means that keeping full time staff can be an issue. James said, "there's no problem finding labour initially though as everyone wants work when there are continual hours."

They start planting in mid-October and finish in mid-December. In the early plantings they sometime need to battle leaf fungus but that depends on the weather in each year.

James said that new technology has vastly improved their business in a variety of ways. It has made packaging the produce more convenient and their computer colour grading system has made sizing and colouring more accurate and uniform. James also said that the new varieties and chemicals that have become available to the market, have made it easier to control pests and they do not have the sort of problems that they had in the past.

He said, "It is hard to tell how technology has affected our labour requirements", as the business has expanded as continuously as technology has improved.

Having a picking machine rather than staff picking into buckets has made a big difference as it keeps the labour happier and keeps fruit in the shade. James and Gary have implemented picking straight into one bin rather than into crates which cuts out the double handling of the produce.

James said, "Over the years we have learnt from our mistakes and then made improvements.

The banning of Dimethoate and review of Fenthion has been a setback for Wringe and Quick James said.

Gary and James enjoy the opportunity to travel to Queensland which they have done a few times to visit other growers to see their different growing practices and look at different machinery. James said, "We are always happy to share information to help other growers and we don't keep any secrets."

They both agree that it is rewarding to see a good product at the end of the day and also gratifying to know that the consumer is happy with their produce. James said, "It is frustrating though that the extra work and cost that goes into producing a quality product is not always reflected in the returns."



He said "not knowing what you are going to get for your produce is also frustrating and never knowing when tomatoes are going to be in over supply."

James feels that there are always doors opening for growers and he would encourage more people to enter the industry if they are prepared to be dedicated, put in long hours and are committed to doing Quality Assurance.

When James isn't working he enjoys spending time with his family and travelling. 

