



## Evaluation of banana varieties in the no Australian subtropics

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The banana industry is the largest single horticultural industry in Australia with annual farm gate value of about AU\$500 million. Bananas are grown in both tropical and subtropical regions and approximately 12,900 hectares of banana are under cultivation. Cavendish (AAA) account for over 90% of the domestic fresh market, the remaining being largely made up of Lady Finger (AAB). Although the subtropical banana industry is small in area (1,100 ha) and accounts for 5% of production, it has the largest number of growers accounting for 50% of the farms. Fusarium wilt is the main disease threat with Race 1 widespread and TR4, while now regarded as endemic in the Northern Territory, has recently been found on a single farm in a major banana production region in north Queensland. Yellow Sigatoka is also widespread and its control adds significantly to production costs. Through an industry funded Banana Plant Production Program, varieties obtained from overseas breeding programs and promising local selections are being evaluated for their agronomic performance and disease resistance in field sites located in both the tropics and subtropics. The results from these trials will be presented with special emphasis to their performance at our Race 1 subtropical screening site at Duranbah, New South Wales. A distinct local selection of Goldfinger (AAAB) marketed as 'Little Gem', a FHIA-18 (AAAB) selection and better cold adapted Cavendish are showing promise in the trials. Research into post-harvest practices and consumer evaluation trials are necessary before final commercial release.

**Palabras Clave:** banana varietal evaluation, agronomic performance, disease resistance, Fusarium wilt resistance, cold tolerance