

FRUIT, VEGETABLES, TOBACCO

Orchard and Tropical Fruit

Fruit growing occupies about 100 000 ha or only about 0.5% of the total cash crop area (Table 12). However, the value of production per hectare is high so that fruit contributes nearly 10% of the total crop value. Fruit growing is markedly concentrated in a number of small areas where local conditions are particularly suitable.

The area under fruit has declined in the last few years (see Table 12), particularly where the bulk of the production was exported (for example, apples in Tasmania and peaches and pears for canning in Victoria)—see also Table 13. This has been largely due to the decline in Australia's share of the British market since that country joined the European Economic Community. Domestic demand for fresh fruit has remained steady while demand for fruit juices has increased.

Table 12. Fruit, Grapes, Vegetables and Tobacco Australia ('000 ha)

Crop	1950-51	1965-66	1975-76	1979-80
Fruit	111.0	127.0	100.0	98.0
Grapes	55.0	57.0	70.0	70.0
Vegetables	118.0	117.0	106.0	106.0
Tobacco	2.6	9.5	9.2	7.5

Note: Fruit and grapes include areas not yet bearing.

Sources: As for Table 11.

Although the distribution of fruit growing is very patchy, a broad, climatically induced pattern exists. Temperate fruit, mainly apples but including pears, plums and cherries, are grown in moister areas of the cooler southern coastal regions and hill and tableland country extending, in eastern Australia, as far north as the Stanthorpe area of southern Queensland. In these uplands, frosts at flowering time are a danger so orchards are generally located on slopes with good air drainage to minimise this hazard.

The main apple growing areas are in the Huon Valley (Tas.), around Donnybrook (W.A.), in the Adelaide Hills (S.A.), around Batlow and Orange (N.S.W.), and in the Stanthorpe area (Qld). The best climatic conditions for apple growing are in Tasmania, where tree densities and yields per tree are twice those of the Stanthorpe area, at the northern extreme of commercial growing. The area around Young (west of Goulburn, N.S.W.) has the largest concentration of cherries and prunes.

Further north, on the warmer central coast of New

South Wales, oranges and other citrus fruit are grown between Sydney and Newcastle.

Further north again the frost-free climates of the coasts of northern New South Wales and Queensland allow the cultivation of tropical fruit, of which bananas and pineapples occupy the largest area. Bananas are predominantly grown in New South Wales, which had 4900 bearing hectares in 1975-76, while smaller areas (700 ha around Brisbane and 1000 ha around Innisfail and Cardwell) are grown in Queensland. Pineapples are virtually restricted to Queensland in localities with a northerly aspect and highly fertile, well-drained acidic soils. Most of the 3800 bearing hectares in 1975-76 were concentrated in the Yeppoon area near Rockhampton, near Gympie and between Nambour and Brisbane. Avocados, pawpaws and mangoes are also grown in this coastal region but occupy very small areas.

The relatively large areas of orchard fruit along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers in the much drier

south-eastern inland are completely dependent on irrigation. Here oranges and other citrus fruit, peaches, apricots and pears are the main fruit. Much of the citrus fruit is grown for juice making while most peaches, pears and apricots are canned, particularly the peaches and pears grown around Shepparton in the Goulburn Valley of Victoria.

Grapes

In contrast with other fruit, the area of grapes has increased over the last two decades due to increased domestic wine consumption (see Table 12). Recently about two-thirds of the production has been for wine making, one-third for drying and less than 3% for table use.

The largest concentrations of vineyards are in the Murray and Murrumbidgee irrigation areas. Most of the dried grape production of sultanas and currants is concentrated around Mildura (Vic.) and in other

Table 13. Orchard Fruit ('000 trees)
Trees bearing and not yet bearing for 1975-76 (States) and 1979-80 (Australia only)

Crop	AUSTRALIA (a)							1975-76	1979-80
	Qld	N.S.W.	Vic.	Tas.	S.A.	W.A.			
Citrus—									
Oranges	219	2 426	669	..	1 460	284	5 059	5 532	
Lemons and limes	43	366	132	..	136	43	720	651	
Mandarins	224	147	58	..	80	47	556	n.a.	
Grapefruit	24	143	70	..	92	16	346	n.a.	
Pome—									
Apples	1 099	1 293	1 167	1 380	583	994	6 520	6 113	
Pears	116	205	1 212	61	169	90	1 853	1 601	
Stone—									
Peaches	136	477	822	2	346	61	1 844	1 570	
Plums incl. prunes	141	419	127	3	73	73	835	n.a.	
Apricots	48	89	223	29	394	16	798	718	
Cherries	1	323	145	7	61	8	544	n.a.	
Nectarines	46	42	48	2	25	10	172	n.a.	
Other Types (b)	247	135	223	..	799	15	1 417	n.a.	
Area of all orchard fruit incl. edible tree nuts (hectares)	11 500	25 500	20 700	3 600	16 400	6 900	84 600	81 600	

(a) Includes very small numbers and total areas published for the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

(b) Includes avocados, custard apples, figs, mangoes, olives and almonds, macadamia nuts, walnuts but not quinces (pome fruit—Australian total, 8 000 trees in 1975-76).

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics—Fruit Statistics, Australia: Season 1975-76 and Fruit: Australia: 1979-80.

