

Top of the Range Tomatoes

Introduction

Top of the Range Tomatoes grows premium vine-ripened truss tomatoes in Australia's most advanced and largest glasshouse facilities. Located in the NSW town of Guyra high in the Northern Tablelands, the 2 x 5 hectare state of the art glasshouses are perfectly situated to harness the best growing conditions nature can offer. The quality of the fruit produced has set new standards in tomato consistency in the industry, and the country town of Guyra has received a welcome boost to its employment, spirit and real estate values.

At Top of the Range Tomatoes our commitment to effective management of the supply chain and clear understanding of customer requirements was such that these were the drivers behind the selection of our site in Guyra. The location was identified as being exposed to the ideal climate for growing premium quality truss tomatoes year-round in a controlled glasshouse environment due to its cool summers and high winter sunlight levels. Our product is grown and packed in state-of-the-art facilities and is then placed under temperature and humidity control to best stabilise the ripening process before being loaded for delivery (in temperature controlled transport). The product is then delivered to our customers in pristine condition allowing a minimum of 3-4 weeks shelf life as a consequence of our commitment to absolute minimum times between harvest and consumer purchase.

Guyra, a small rural community of approx 2500 people is situated on top of the Great Dividing Range in Northern NSW. It was until the late 1960's mainly an agricultural support town but as farm efficiencies improved, employment declined significantly. In 1996 the major employer (Guyra Abattoir) closed down and some 20% of the town's



workforce was lost as families moved out of the town. Businesses closed, shops became vacant, unemployment rose further and real estate values plummeted. Guyra was on the ropes. In 2003 the Council implemented a strategic plan to improve the appearance of the town, to bring in new and upgraded services to the community and market the town as a great place to visit, live and conduct business in an attempt to reverse the declining trend in the town's growth. Already in excess of 70 jobs have been directly created.

Top of the Range Tomatoes has broadened the economic base of the region bringing with it social sustainability. We employed local people and where possible use local businesses. It has lifted the town to another level, seeing the personal wealth of many residents increase due to the resulting land boom. There have been new and expanding businesses in town providing much needed employment. Guyra has experienced a strong growth in population, an increase in applications for construction and residential subdivisions and all this

TOP OF THE RANGE TOMATOES

has brought a major turnaround in both economic prosperity and community confidence. Guyra is now booming and is the envy of many rural towns with new diverse industries and businesses setting up their operations locally.

Guyra's cooler climate meant we could build with glass instead of the more common plastic giving us better light transmittance without the heat build up of warmer climates. Using the latest technology available benefits both the crop and the operation of the glasshouse. Temperatures are able to be controlled to 0.1°C accuracy via a computer which controls many aspects of the glasshouse climate, and a shade screen is used to both protect our plants where necessary and also to provide extra insulation in colder weather. A fogging system increases humidity in dry weather, but also cools the glasshouse during rare warm days. Carbon dioxide levels are controlled as well as irrigation, fertilisation, acidity and heating. The glasshouse uses a fully automated transport system that takes tomatoes into the packing shed, to final inspection and stacks the finished pallets without any manual handling saving time and potential injury risk. Additionally the rails that carry the trolleys also double as the heating system. This provides employees with a safe, comfortable way of performing crop maintenance.

The glasshouse provides us with a way to eliminate the risks posed by weather. This is the ultimate means of control of destiny in fruit and vegetable production. The control allows us to realise our vision of producing great tasting, visually appealing fresh tomatoes with a consistent quality year round. Controlling the weather comes at a price though. First there is the structure that protects the crop from wind rain and hail. Then there is the protection against frost through a



heating system. In case of failure, the heating, irrigation and power systems all have back ups so that the crop won't be affected.

We have developed an in house disease risk management system which describes what to do in case our monitoring shows that disease is present. In addition we developed a hygiene protocol which minimises the risk of introducing disease through visitors and employees. Weekly scouting for pest and disease ensures that nothing gets out of hand

before controls can be applied.

Great facilities and processes are nothing without great people. At Top of the Range Tomatoes we inspire development of our people by encouraging and recognising good character. It is our motto to hire for character and train for skill. From recruitment, to staff development, to our management philosophy, the emphasis on good character is evident at all levels. Character has been defined as the qualities built into an individual's life that

TOP OF THE RANGE TOMATOES



determines their response, regardless of circumstances. Because of this our employees will strive to achieve their best not because it is what they have been taught but because it is in their nature to do so. Therefore character determines success. The cornerstone of our character based philosophy is the Character First program. Using Character First we hold presentations every month exploring one of forty nine character qualities and how that quality benefits us not only in our work but also in our lives. Also, employees are formally recognised individually for demonstration of good character.

What is critical to our future vision is exactly that which has sustained us over our history – our commitment to excellence achieved through the development of people with passion and exceptional character and our desire to have a positive effect on the communities in which we function. It is our steadfast objective that we aim to be at the forefront of those realms in which we operate by constantly raising the bar upon our own service levels to our customer base and dedicating ourselves to the adoption of the latest technology. It is the hiring of people of integrity which has always been a key facet to our growth and the development of

these same people who are absolutely passionate about their roles. It is this passion melded with our focus upon good character as a business ethos that provides us with the confidence that we will continue to remain at the apex of our chosen pursuits.

It is our resolute approach to our internal 'Northbound Train' principles which complement our dedication to proper supply chain management. These principles are centred around acceptance of nothing short of 100% actual results in our service performance targets of Delivery on Time, Order Acceptance, Customer Satisfaction, Production Performance and Administration Accuracy. These targets were selected because they matter to our customer so consequently they matter to us. Our business culture created by our people is such that we not only aim to meet customer requirements but we aim to exceed them through continuous improvement in all aspects of the supply process - maintaining an effective cold chain so as to enable our product to end up on the consumer's plate in perfect condition is our only accepted outcome.

