

Rice flower information kit

Reprint – information current in 1997



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This publication has been reprinted as a digital book without any changes to the content published in 1997. We advise readers to take particular note of the areas most likely to be out-of-date and so requiring further research:

- Chemical recommendations—check with an agronomist or Infopest www.infopest.qld.gov.au
- Financial information—costs and returns listed in this publication are out of date. Please contact an adviser or industry body to assist with identifying more current figures.
- Varieties—new varieties are likely to be available and some older varieties may no longer be recommended. Check with an agronomist, call the Business Information Centre on 13 25 23, visit our website www.deedi.qld.gov.au or contact the industry body.
- Contacts—many of the contact details may have changed and there could be several new contacts available. The industry organisation may be able to assist you to find the information or services you require.
- Organisation names—most government agencies referred to in this publication have had name changes. Contact the Business Information Centre on 13 25 23 or the industry organisation to find out the current name and contact details for these agencies.
- Additional information—many other sources of information are now available for each crop. Contact an agronomist, Business Information Centre on 13 25 23 or the industry organisation for other suggested reading.

Even with these limitations we believe this information kit provides important and valuable information for intending and existing growers.

This publication was last revised in 1997. The information is not current and the accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed by the State of Queensland.

This information has been made available to assist users to identify issues involved in marketing rice flower. This information is not to be used or relied upon by users for any purpose which may expose the user or any other person to loss or damage. Users should conduct their own inquiries and rely on their own independent professional advice.

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Rice flower

Integrating production and marketing

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Information contained in this publication is provided as general advice only. For application to specific circumstances, professional advice should be sought.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Queensland has taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the information contained in this book is accurate at the time of publication. Readers should make appropriate inquiries to determine whether new information is available on particular subject matter.

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Key issues

Rice flower, a native of the east coast of Australia, is cultivated for its cut flowers in all states of Australia. In 1996 half a million stems were harvested for export to Japan, other Asian markets and the United States. Australia's volumes are well short of the quantity needed for major exports, and the opportunity exists to extend the production season, particularly to take advantage of lucrative markets in November and December in Japan. Australia currently lacks competitors in the August to October supply period to the northern hemisphere.

However, Australian growers need to consider other countries with the potential to export rice flower. Some of these have relative advantages such as proximity to markets, low labour costs or superior technology and/or marketing skills. Chile and Peru are of particular concern in the United States market and Israel and New Zealand in the Japanese market.

Farming rice flower, or any other wildflower, requires a combination of crop management skills, business acumen and consumer focus. Production choices need to be driven by the needs of the market. Choosing and building on good business relationships is crucial to market success.

In Japan, the main market, rice flower is seen as a novel and interesting focal filler flower, with a pleasing shape, texture and colour. Japanese buyers can be prepared to pay high prices for quality long stems. Other overseas markets are more price sensitive and rice flower competes with a diverse range of fillers in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the United States.

For all export markets rice flower must be harvested at the correct stage of maturity, graded to an Australian standard, packed correctly, cooled with forced air cooling and kept refrigerated through subsequent handling procedures. Achieving the standard involves varietal selection, good crop management, correct timing of harvest maturity and proper postharvest handling.

Profitability can be enhanced by containing costs, adhering to product standards and using sound and sustainable production techniques. An example budget demonstrates that a staged planting of rice flower on a four year rotation could average a net return of \$10 244 per hectare per year. Cumulative cash flows improve with lowered plant deaths and high average net market prices, but only if these can be achieved without escalating costs.

On the Australian market rice flower is regarded as a low priced filler flower, competing in spring with a plethora of other flowers. The Australian market is small and the greatest potential for volume sales is through export.

Overseas markets present a special challenge, as prospects for good returns go hand in hand with higher levels of risk. Transaction risks, product spoilage, low returns for product and wild card risks can be encountered. The marketing chain consists of multiple 'customers', all with their own perspective; satisfying their individual needs is made more difficult by increased geographic and cultural separation. Growers with a genuine concern for the performance of their flowers at the consumer level need to take a whole systems approach, monitoring not only the product and the market, but what is happening in the distribution chain. A concern for product quality, customer service and attention to administrative details distinguishes business-like growers from others.

