

Lalli Farms

CASE STUDY

Property Snapshot

Lalli Farms enterprises bought the property at Wells Crossing four years with the specific intention of getting into new berry varieties to be able to tap into a rapidly growing consumer demand. The property is perfect for this type of operation, providing flat country with the right climate. Currently just under half the property is occupied by blueberry production, with one hectare dedicated to a new variety of blackberry.

Location: Wells Crossing, between Grafton and Woolgoolga, mid north coast NSW

Size: 40 hectares

Enterprise: Berries

"Removing the vegetation from one section of the property will unlock massive opportunities not just for me, but for the whole district.

Nick Lalli, owner
Lallil Farms



Challenge

Nerinderjeet (known as Nick) Lalli has been growing blueberries on the NSW mid north coast for 17 years. For the past six years, he has been looking to move into new varieties, specifically a thornless, winter-harvested blackberry. These berries are being trialled all over the world and Mr Lalli has travelled to the US and Mexico as part of his research into the variety.

Mr Lalli has been planning an expansion and diversification of his berry production for six years, including working alongside the firm that is importing the new blackberry variety. The berries need a particular sub-tropical climate including the right amount of light, water and being a winter crop, a certain number of relatively cold days.

The expansion plans for Lalli Farms requires the removal of vegetation on the property to allow for the establishment of a number of large poly tunnels. for growing the berries. Inside these tunnels, variables including soil moisture, temperature, fertiliser and light are electronically monitored.

Approval has been provided through a Part 5, Division 4 Certificate under the **Equity** provisions in the Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018 to remove vegetation from 5.3ha of land while actively managing 10.7ha of land as an on-site and in-perpetuity set aside or conservation area.

Fact file:

- New varieties of blackberries provide secure employment and harvest opportunities during the traditional 'off season' (Winter).
- Selecting a property with the right climatic and rainfall characteristics was critical to success.
- Removal of vegetation on 5.3ha to construct new poly tunnels was offset with the establishment of an offset site of 10.7ha to be managed in perpetuity for conservation outcomes.
- The expansion will see an investment of \$1.5 million and engage local contractors and suppliers to plan and execute the project.

"it took me a long time to find this unique property and now I can expand it under the legislation, it's great. It gives me the 100% certainty I need to plan for the future of this property and my children's future."

Nick Lalli, owner Lallil Farms

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Work undertaken

Under the Equity provisions, 5.3 ha of native vegetation will be removed and new poly tunnels constructed to establish a new blackberry production enterprise.

Mr Lalli is expecting to invest around \$1.5 million on the expansion, much of which will be spent locally through contracting of local mid north coast firms to undertake vegetation removal and construction of the poly tunnels.

On-ground achievements

The expansion will create new jobs. As an estimate, Mr Lalli says on his one ha trial section of the new blackberry variety he employs around 16-20 casual staff. The expansion of another 5.3 ha of this variety will generate additional jobs as well as secure year-round employment for existing staff on Lalli Farms to do picking, pruning and general maintenance. The new blackberry variety fruits in the 'off-season' of the other berries on the farm, ensuring enough work to retain workers for all 12 months.

The 10.7 ha set aside area will maintain tracts of Needlebark Stringybark-Red Bloodwood Heathy woodlands on sandstone of the Lower Clarence bioregion. The set aside area is in good condition with some weed incursion on the edges. Mr Lalli will actively manage the set aside to control weeds and participate in wild dog programs, in conjunction with Local Land Services.

A section of the set aside has been chosen specifically because it provides a corridor to large tracts of heavily timbered country on adjoining properties to the north and south.

