



planfarm

PARTNER WITH PLANFARM

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Industry benchmarking tailored for you



National Vegetable & Onion Benchmarking Program

Project Manager
Stephanie Carstairs

The most important lesson gained from recent vegetable industry benchmarking data is the value of targeted spending – directing funds into areas that either generate income or create savings elsewhere in your business.



planfarm
www.planfarm.com.au

Planfarm is a Farm Management Consulting business specialising in tailored management accounting practices and farm advisory services.

Profit reporting | Cashflow budgeting | Feasibility analysis | Enterprise analysis | Industry benchmarking | Finance broking | Succession planning



This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the Vegetable and Onion research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture. Project number MT22009.

The more profitable businesses in the dataset all share this disciplined approach; they deliberately invest in activities that generate more revenue or create savings through improved efficiency, with labour management being their most effective lever.

If you are one of the many producers across the country feeling the pinch you do have options, but it is important to understand your business numbers and gain a sound understanding of what reserves remain within your business.

The Level Up Hort program offers vegetable and onion levy payers an individual consulting service as well as business benchmarking which is designed specifically to guide business decision-making and make your hard-earned money go further for you. The confidential one-on-one advisory and the benchmarking go hand-in-hand to achieve better outcomes for vegetable businesses

What the Season 2025 data is showing

A snapshot of the data in December 2025 indicated continuing margin decline for many vegetable and onion businesses nationwide. It showed that, on average:

- Profitability (EBIT) \$/ha is expected to decline for 2024/25.
- Return on Assets Managed (ROAM) % is expected to decline.
- Some businesses continue to remain profitable.

This provides an early warning that vegetable businesses and industry could be trending downwards, supporting anecdotal comments and AUSVEG data that some are considering leaving the industry.

It is important to note that some businesses remained profitable, and the strength of the benchmark dataset centres around what we can learn from these businesses. The common element is that these business managers maintain an intrinsic view of their business by:

- Focusing on the internal control measures first
- Collecting and using data within their business
- Engaging external professionals to provide insight into areas of business improvement
- Aiming to continually improve their internal efficiencies (particularly labour), and
- Ensuring every operating dollar spent either drives income generation or a cost saving elsewhere in the business.

Financial Metric (average of the dataset)	2023	2024	2025 forecast
Profitability (EBIT \$/ha)	\$2,907	\$4,233	↓
EBIT Margin (%)	2%	7%	↓
ROAM (%)	3%	2%	↓
Labour costs as % of income (%)	40%	36%	↑

What does this mean for you and the vegetable industry in Queensland?

There are many reasons why it is important for us to share these benchmark learnings, regardless of whether you participate in the program.

Firstly, a strong set of industry benchmark data supports individual businesses in working towards better decision-making and business improvement as it provides a set of standardised business measures against which you can compare your own business performance. To use the fuel gauge analogy, you can then gauge how much “fuel” you have in the tank, where you are wasting fuel, where you need to increase fuel use to drive your business further, and where you can create savings so that you can go the distance.

Secondly, the dataset reports on high level industry trends which provides insight into the state of the industry and with longitudinal data, allows forecasting for the industry to predict what may lie ahead. These insights contribute to improved transparency and shared understanding across the sector, helping inform research priorities, extension activities, and broader industry discussions.

In essence, the benchmark dataset shines the spotlight on which cost activities businesses (and industry) should be focusing their attention, the individual consulting service provides a vehicle for individuals to look at the numbers within the context of their own business and address which areas are holding their business back, or where opportunities may lie.

Strength in numbers

For this program to be effective, it requires strength in numbers. A larger dataset strengthens the value of the insights and ensures the benchmarks genuinely reflect local production and business conditions.

It can be hard to pinpoint how benchmarking helps, because each business is different, but having clear business numbers gives you confidence, direction, and awareness of your financial position. The “fuel gauge” for your business, it supports better decisions, highlights opportunities, and shows where your money can work harder. The program can add value through:

- Improved cashbook coding accuracy
- Reassessed business structure strategy
- Reset goals using results
- Review labour cost efficiency
- Numbers confirmed business instincts
- Validated price movement trends
- Linked paddock performance to profit



Get in touch

The Level Up Hort program is delivered through a partnership between Planfarm and RMCG, offering growers tailored consulting and industry benchmarking. If you'd like to understand how the program can support your business, contact our Queensland consultants Maria Fathollahi, (Central and North) **0427 889 638**, James Beveridge (South) **0414 289 122**, or www.leveluphort.com.au