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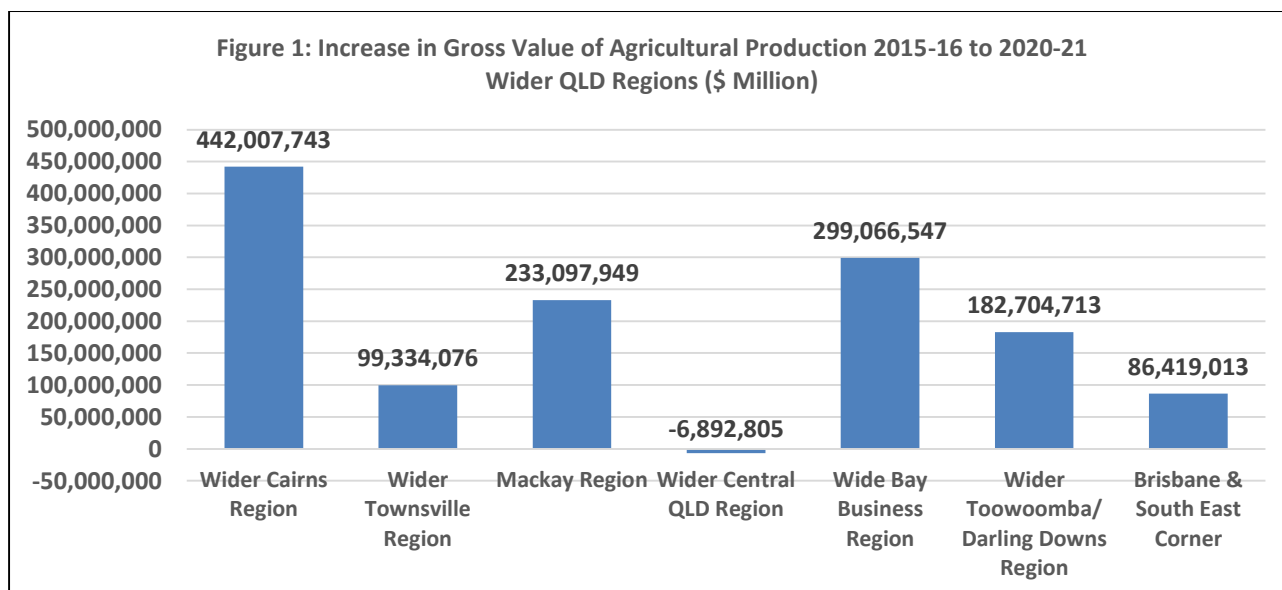
AGRICULTURE LEAPING AHEAD

Article For Connect FNQ Magazine

Latest agriculture production statistics available indicate that the Cairns/ Tropical North Queensland region's value of production has been leaping ahead and leading the State and the North.

Leading the State

Over the five years 2015-16 to 2020-21, the Cairns/ Tropical North Queensland region topped increases in gross value of agricultural commodities produced by a substantial margin with a total increase of \$442 million according to latest available Australian Bureau of Statistics figures. This represented a growth of 21% on the 2015-16 figures. Next highest growth was in the Wide Bay/ Burnett region at \$299 million and Mackay region at \$233 million (see Figure 1).



Source: Cummings Economics from Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The Cairns/ Tropical North Queensland region includes the tropical coast, Tablelands, Peninsula/ Torres and Gulf areas.

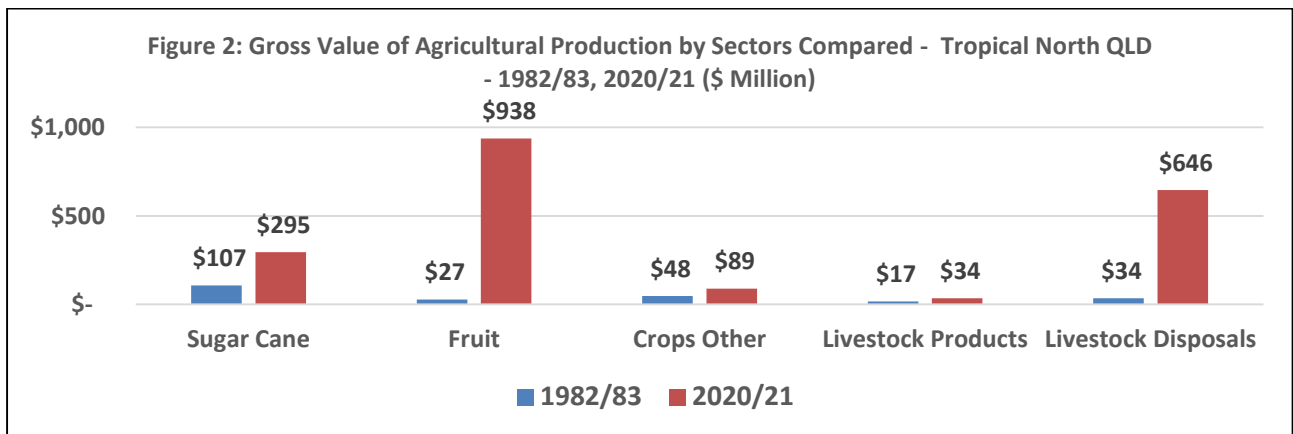
Ten-Fold Growth Since 1982-83

The five-year growth comes on top of over 30 years of solid growth of the sector that has seen value of production in the region grow almost ten-fold since 1982-83 when value of production was recorded in the region at \$233 million. Average annual growth over the years calculates at 5.82% per annum. Taking into account inflation, 'real' growth works through at 2.5% per annum.

Horticultural & Livestock Production Lead

Particularly strong growth has been in fruit production that has recorded an average annual growth of 10% per annum to rise from a mere \$27 million in 1982-83 to just short of \$1 billion in 2020-21, replacing sugar (that accounted for 40% of the region's value of production in 1982-83) as the largest agricultural sector in the region. Fruit now accounts for almost half (47%) of the region's gross value of agricultural production. Not only does the Cairns region now lead the State in fruit production but it has moved into third place nationally and if grape production for wine is deducted, into second place.

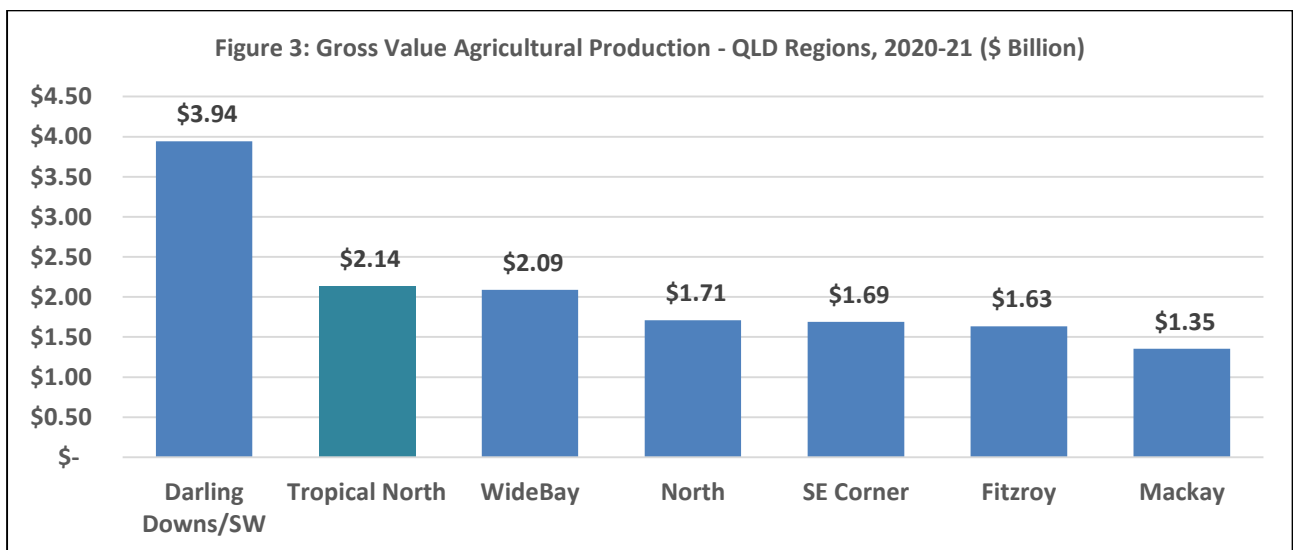
The other major growth sector has been livestock disposals (mainly beef cattle), that has grown from \$34 million in 1982-83 to \$646 million in 2020-21.



Source: Cummings Economics from ABS Agricultural Statistics.

Second in Total Value Queensland Regions

As the following Figure 3 illustrates, the Cairns/ Tropical North Queensland region in 2020-21 recorded the second highest total value of agricultural production behind Darling Downs/ South West Queensland.



Source: Cummings Economics from Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The Cairns/ Tropical North Queensland region recorded a value of agricultural production equal to the State of Tasmania and North Australia as a whole recorded a value equivalent to the State of South Australia (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Gross Value of Agricultural Production – 2020-21

Area	\$Bn
Tropical North Queensland	\$2.14 Bn
Tasmania	\$2.11 Bn
Northern Australia	\$7.72 Bn
South Australia	\$7.68 Bn

Source: Cummings Economics from Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Infrastructure Investment in This Region Pays Off

Old views about the potential for agricultural production in the Northern/ Tropical Australia areas are clearly proving outdated. The Cairns/ Tropical North Queensland region accounts for about a quarter of Australia’s water runoff and there are very large areas of good alluvial, volcanic and other soils still to be developed.

Investments in roads and water infrastructure is paying off and needs to continue.

This growth has contributed heavily to the strong population growth recorded in Cook, Mareeba and Tablelands Local Government Areas identified in the last Census. This growth also contributes strongly to the progress of Cairns as the region’s hub servicing capital city.