

**ESTIMATES COMMITTEE**  
**Question Taken on Notice**

**Date:** 16 June 2016  
**Subject:** Panama Disease in Bananas  
**From:** Mr Gerry Wood MLA, Member for Nelson  
**To:** The Hon Gary Higgins MLA, Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries  
**Agency:** Primary Industry and Fisheries

Committee:.....

Paper No: S.3.....Date: 16 / 6 / 16

Tabled By: Higgins

Signed: [Signature]

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**Number:** 5.2

**Question:** Provide an update on where DPIF is at with new banana varieties resistant to Panama disease and the GM (genetic modification) program for bananas.

**Answer:** New bananas resistant to Panama Disease

The department has recommenced the planned evaluation of 27 imported banana cultivars with various levels of Tropical Race 4 Panama disease. These plants were moved into the NT as tissue cultured material in February 2016 onto the Katherine Research Station which is located outside of the Banana Freckle red zone, for growing up.

Last week (8 June 2016) 648 plants were planted on to Coastal Plains Research Farm for evaluation against the Tropical Race 4 pathogen. This work will continue for approximately 24 months.

Following the outbreak of Tropical Race 4 in north Queensland in November 2014, staff from DPIF worked with Queensland banana researchers to develop two new research projects to fast track strategies to minimise the impact of the disease on the Australian Industry. The Queensland Government invested \$2.1 million (M) over four years, the NT Government contributed \$300 000 into this project and both these amounts have been matched by Horticultural Innovation Australia, to establish a \$4.5M project over four years.

The three major objectives of the project are:

1. Implement a mutagenesis breeding program and establish a clearer understanding of the mechanisation of Tropical Race 4 resistance;
2. Improved production systems to minimise the development of the disease; and
3. Increased adoption of farm biosecurity practices.

The department is a major partner in this research project in each of the key objectives, including leading Objective 1.

Within 15 months, there will be over 3 500 bananas on Coastal Plains Research Farm for screening for resistance, and in collaboration with the new owners of Darwin Banana Farm, which will have a large cropping systems project on its property. The department will receive approximately \$1.5M over the four years of the project.

### GM Program for Bananas

Genetically Modified (GM) Bananas – These are part of a commercial agreement between Queensland University of Technology and Lamana Banana – part owners of Darwin Banana Farm. DPIF has no involvement in this project.

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