



Young's cherry season

Young, the Cherry Capital of Australia, is experiencing a pre-Christmas boom, with the annual cherry picking season in full swing and the 60th National Cherry Festival planned for December 4-6.

The cherry harvest begun in late October in the Hillston district 350 kms west of Young (where picking was completed mid November), before moving into the Hilltops region around Young.

The recent spell of hot weather has accelerated the cherry harvest in Young and districts, with harvest expected to be completed on the northern side of Young by mid December and fruit from orchards around Kingsvale and Wombat expected to be picked by early in the new year.

The recent weather has also impacted on the fruit set and growers are seeing a lighter harvest than earlier predictions.

Ian Hay, who with his wife Arna owns Cherryhaven Orchards, said that the season will wrap up sooner than

expected.

"Whilst the fruit quality is good, there have been some heat effects on the cherries which will see an earlier finish for most growers.

"We will then move on to harvesting other stone fruit like plums, peaches and nectarines which should carry on to the end of February," said Mr Hay.

The reputation of the Young district for producing quality fruit continues to be a plus for growers and a proactive marketing campaign continues to see benefits.

"There is always strong market demand for our cherries," said Mr Hay.

This year the number of fruit pickers had also increased dramatically.

"We have many overseas people, especially from France, South Korea, Japan and China joining with Australians in helping harvest the cherries.

"It is still a labour intensive industry and the benefit of having these workers in the district to the economy of Young is enormous.

"The town really gets two Christmases each year," said Mr Hay.

In fact accommodation in Young's caravan park and on district orchards, where many 'tent cities' exist, is fully booked out for the cherry season.

"The internet has certainly opened up information on the cherry season around Young and many more people have contacted orchardists seeking work.

"There has been an oversupply of pickers this year," said Mr Hay.

Young's 60th National Cherry Festival will be celebrated in the town from December 4-6 with a huge program of events scheduled.

Along with regular bus tours and tourists, the Young district is a hive of activity leading up to the festive season, with local business houses reaping the benefits.

Young is known as the Cherry Capital of Australia and no-one can dispute this fact at this time of the year.