

Batlow Co-Op



AT A GLANCE

2.1 A GOLDEN INNOVATION

Batlow Co-Op is developing a variety of apple that will be a favourite in lunch-boxes all over Australia.

2.2 LOCAL PRODUCE

You can be guaranteed that every Batlow Co-Op apple has come from the famous apple-producing region.

2.3 Q&A

Coles is supporting innovation at Batlow Co-Op through its ongoing commitment.

2.4 AT THE CORE

More than 100 registered growers, all from the Batlow region, produce a staggering 1,500,000 cartons of apples each year.

MRI scan detects a better ‘crunch’

New technology ensures Batlow apples are as crunchy as you’ll find anywhere in Australia.

Batlow Co-Op’s business development manager Bruno Muscatello attributes this to not only the altitude and climate, but also to the careful attention paid by growers looking after their orchards, and a world-class grading and packaging process.

“We’ve invested heavily in the latest technology to ensure a constant premium quality,” says Bruno.

“Our advanced handling methods are worlds apart from the old hand-packing regimes of previous decades and our technology is world-leading. In fact I would say we are pioneers in this area.”

Batlow Co-Op’s technology includes new infra-red technology that allows the Batlow Co-Op to not only scan the quality of the apple’s exterior, but also look inside the apple.

“It’s sort of like an apple MRI,” says Bruno.

“Not only can we instantly discard any apple that may not be quite right on the inside, we can also grade the quality of the apple’s density.

“In a way, it allows us to grade our apples on a ‘crunchiness scale’.”

The technology complements the natural advantages of Batlow’s apples. Located at the base of the Snowy Mountains, the region’s high altitude and crisp air provide the ideal conditions for the sweet flavour and crisp bite found in every Batlow apple.

A ‘golden’ new variety

Among the orchards in Batlow, situated 70 kilometres west of Canberra, grows a variety of apple that is sure to find its way into fruit bowls and lunch-boxes throughout Australia.

The Greenstar is an innovative cross between the widely known Granny Smith and Golden Delicious varieties.

This sweet-eating green apple has one quality that is sure to delight Australian mums looking to give their kids a healthy snack – it is anti-oxidising. That is to say, it doesn’t go brown, after you cut it.

Bruno is excited by the prospects of the new variety.

“The Greenstar will be the perfect apple for kids’ lunch-boxes,” says Bruno.

“Not only does the anti-oxidising quality of the appeal maintain a fresh appearance, but it is also has a delicious sweet flavour.”

Another new variety in development that excites Bruno is the Kanzi.

“Kanzi is a fresh red apple that is a cross between a Gala and a Braeburn.

“It has a unique sweet-sour flavour that is a hit in Europe and no doubt the home-grown variety will be hugely popular in Australia.”

The Big Apple Batting above its average

For a town with little more than 1,000 people, Batlow plays a big role in Australia’s apple industry.

About 50 growers in the region supply 1.5 million cases of apples each year, representing approximately 10 per cent of Australia’s apple crop.

Batlow’s proportion of the Australian apple market will soon be reflected by Coles, which has plans to increase the proportion of apples it takes from Batlow from less than three per cent to nearly 10 per cent.



Batlow Co-Op grower Greg Mouat at his apple orchard

BATLOW CO-OP: BY THE GROWERS, FOR THE GROWERS

Greg Mouat, his wife and three sons and are a second-generation apple growing family.

Greg's parents purchased the current orchard site, 'WYOLA', in 1926 and Greg has been growing Batlow apples for 30 years – Red Delicious, Braeburn, Pink Lady, Sundowner, Granny Smith and Greg's favourite, Fuji.

"The Co-Op places value on professionalism and duty of care to principles of co-operation, with aspirations of co-operative growers to produce premium quality apples," says Greg.

THIRD GENERATION APPLE GROWER

Michael Smart and his wife Sharon (a third generation orchardist) have been growing apples at 'Tingara' for 30 years.

The property was originally a soldier settlement block and was purchased from Sharon's family in 1980.

During this time, the orchard has grown from four hectares of apple trees to now more than 25, growing Red Delicious, Fuji, Royal Gala and Pink Lady varieties.

"We enjoy the fresh air, great water, lots of space and quiet nights," says Michael on life in Batlow.



Batlow Co-Op grower Michael Smart at his apple orchard

A little bit about Batlow...

Batlow is famous for apples. So much so, the town's main landmark is 'The Big Apple'.

Located 70 kilometres west of Canberra at the foot of the Snowy Mountains, Batlow boasts the perfect climate for growing premium quality apples.

"The soil and climate provide ideal conditions for growing apples," says Batlow Co-Op's business development manager Bruno Muscatello.

"And the altitude at which they're grown makes them nice and firm."

The town's orchards have been vital to the region's economy for more than 120 years. For a small town of 1,000 people it produces nearly 10 per cent of Australia's apple crop.

Since 1922, the Batlow Co-Op has played a crucial role in ensuring the success of the local apple industry.

In the years preceding World War I, there was a push towards the primary industries and farming, with governments

encouraging growers to market produce in a more effective and united method.

Batlow growers had already achieved the benefits of unifying as a group and as the number of orchards grew, the Batlow Co-operative Cool Stores Company was established.

The Batlow Co-Op is still proudly owned by the growers of Batlow. The Co-Op employs many local residents and actively supports the community.

The Batlow apples brand represents growers, community and premium quality apples.

"Batlow Co-Op represents everything we look for from our growers," says Greg Davis, Coles General Manager of Fresh Produce.

"They are passionate about the quality of their product and they continue to make significant investments in ensuring both a consistency of quality and supply, along with research into new varieties and sustainable methods of production."



The importance of the source

Batlow's home-grown advantage

"Locally grown is BIG," says Batlow Co-Op's business development manager, Bruno Muscatello.

"If you look at what's happening in markets overseas, there is little doubt that customers are paying more and more attention to where their food comes from."

With the issue of apple imports looming large with Australian apple growers, it is something Bruno believes local growers should be talking about.

There are so many reasons why a Batlow apple tastes so good – our climate, our soil, our location and the care and investment we put in post-harvest," says Bruno.

"We're proud of the quality we produce and we've no doubt that pride translates to consumers when they buy top quality fruit that is locally grown.

"Every apple that bears the Batlow Co-Op sticker is 100 per cent from the Batlow region."

Always staying one step ahead

Maintaining the high quality associated with the Batlow brand gets more complex by the day.

The Batlow growers and the Co-Op's horticulturalists continue to find new and improved ways of not only growing their apples, but also controlling pests and minimising damage to crops.

Advances in technology over recent years have led to non-chemical means of controlling moths. This technology involves the use of small dispensers placed in the trees which emit synthetically-produced female pheromones to confuse the male. This disrupts the mating cycle and controls the pest.

Widely used in Batlow, this breakthrough has completely changed the ecology of the orchards, allowing naturally-occurring beneficial insects to survive and control other pests.

"It is achievements such as this that contributes to the pride the Batlow Co-Op has in its effort to provide consumers with a safe product grown under an environmentally-sustainable system," says Bruno.

Advances have also occurred once the apples are grown and picked.

"We employ a specialised washing, grading, packing and storage system that sets the Australian standard," says Bruno.

The methods of the Batlow Co-Op and its growers have developed over its nearly-90-year history and continue to grow.

"Like any trade secret, we have a few things we keep to ourselves," says Bruno.

"But we've no doubt that when you try one of Batlow's delicious varieties, you'll taste it for yourself."

Coles is the only supermarket chain in Australia to stock Batlow's world famous apples.



AT THE CORE

1,500,000

The approximate number of cases of fruit the Batlow Co-Op produces each year.

12

The number of commercial apple varieties grown by the Batlow Co-Op.

50+

The number of growers with the Batlow Co-Op.

88

The number of years the Batlow Co-Op has been in operation.

100

The percentage of Batlow Co-Op apples grown in the Batlow region.

1 The number of apples a day required to keep the doctor away, according to an old proverb, given new life in a new apple industry ad campaign.