



## Potatoes – Narrandera NSW

Menegazzo Family | ‘Dellapool’, Narrandera NSW

Riverina potato grower, Jason Menegazzo, has improved tuber quality, pack-out rates and shelf life since switching to a biological nutrition program delivered through his centre pivot irrigation system.

Jason manages the family farming company, G.M. Menegazzo and Company, which grows 200ha of irrigated potatoes in rotation with mixed cereals, canola, sorghum and rice in a mixture of soil types at ‘Dellapool’, near Narrandera.

The potatoes – mostly Atlantics and Sebagos – are grown mainly under contract to processors and wholesalers on the eastern seaboard.

The family has farmed at Narrandera since 1974, when Jason’s father, Gerald, moved his potato enterprise from Deniliquin in search of more suitable soils and water.



*Jason Menegazzo.*

Both father and son became intrigued by biological farming techniques after reading books by well-known biological farming advocates, Gary Zimmer and Arden Anderson. “They sparked our interest in that whole approach to nutrient management,” Jason said.

“We contacted Narrandera company, BioAg, and started using their fertilisers and practices four years ago.

We now use a combination of biological and conventional techniques, whichever works best in a given situation.”

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Anton Barton of BioAg pictured here with Jason Menegazzo

BioAg's solid and liquid formulations not only provide a rich source of plant-available nutrients but also introduce beneficial microbes into the soil to produce a living, healthy and balanced soil for optimum plant and livestock productivity.

One of the company's key products is *BioAgPhos*<sup>®</sup>, a reactive phosphate rock treated with a proprietary microbial culture to make it biologically active.

About one third of its phosphorus content is available immediately for plant use, while the remainder is slowly digested by the micro-organisms and added to the nutrient reservoir in the soil.

The improved soil microbial activity is also claimed to help unlock phosphorus, calcium and sulphur already in the soil, leading to long-term benefits in soil structure and fertility.

In a typical potato crop, *BioAgPhos* and lime are applied pre-plant using a belt spreader and incorporated by sowing.

After the plants have emerged, *BioAg Soil & Seed*<sup>™</sup>, a liquid culture that encourages rapid germination, root development and soil microbial activity, is applied through the irrigation system.

The centre pivots are also used later in the growing season to apply *BioAg Balance & Grow*<sup>®</sup>, a liquid foliar treatment that feeds growing crops and pastures and improves soil microbial activity.

Jason said tuber quality had improved with the move to biological farming, although yields had remained the same. "Shelf life is better, pack out has improved, and we're not getting the breakdown we used to," he said. "The plants seem healthier and healthy plants are more resistant to fungal diseases. Soil structure has improved and we're seeing more worm activity, although this could be partly due to the elimination of livestock and pasture rotations over the same period." Potatoes are planted in January-February for the winter harvest and in spring for the summer harvest.

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