

# potatoes

australia

December 2010 / January 2011

## Des Jennings

A passion for potatoes

**Malcolm Jackman**

Taking Elders  
back to the top

**Curbing Root knot nematode**

Tackling one of the industry's silent killers

**Convention update**

MasterChef's Callum Hann and  
football legend 'Dipper' announced

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# potatoes australia

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## FRONT COVER:

Des and Stuart Jennings  
Thorpdale, VIC

Photo by: Will Churchill

## John Brent AUSVEG Chairman

As we approach the end of yet another incredibly busy year, it's important to look back over the achievements of 2010.

The year has seen many changes at AUSVEG, not least of which was the move to improved offices in Glen Iris, which will better accommodate the growing needs of the organisation.

The Convention in May this year was also a huge success. Around 650 delegates attended the four-day event, with a very positive response from attendees including many growers, suppliers and industry service providers.

Looking forward, the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and National Awards for Excellence is approaching very quickly, and as we announced last issue, the event is set to kick off on

Thursday 14 April at the five star Sebel-Citigate Hotel in Brisbane, before drawing to a close on Saturday 16 April.

Next year we are expecting between 800-1,000 delegates and exhibitors to attend the event, as interest continues to grow.

AUSVEG has confirmed that AFL Legend Robert DiPierdomenico will be the MC for the second year running and other notable guests will be announced in the coming weeks.

The Sebel-Citigate Hotel in Brisbane, overlooks King George Square and neighbours the imposing Brisbane City Hall. Nestled in the heart of the city, it boasts 438 luxurious guestrooms, ensuring that when not busy at the Convention, guests can rest in absolute comfort with their families.

AUSVEG hopes that next

year's event will encourage growers to get away for the weekend with their families, with the aim that the event will be both highly informative, family-friendly as well as entertaining.

We have recently announced that MasterChef finalist Callum Hann will attend as part of the VISY Luncheon, cooking with local produce, and further announcements concerning the Convention program will be made very soon, so keep an eye out on the AUSVEG website ([www.ausveg.com.au](http://www.ausveg.com.au)).

I would like to wish everyone a very safe and Happy Christmas with their loved ones. With the bushfire season nearly upon us, I would also like to encourage everyone in rural areas at risk to take every caution necessary to ensure that you and your families are safe.

Enjoy the Christmas period and I hope 2011 is a prosperous year for all of you.



John Brent  
Chairman  
AUSVEG

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For more information email: [hortifocus@ruralco.com.au](mailto:hortifocus@ruralco.com.au)

## Richard Mulcahy

### AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

Last month I was pleased to be invited to be the keynote speaker at the Rabobank Grower Evening in Thorpdale, Victoria.

This event saw around 60 industry representatives attend and those growers that I spoke to expressed their enjoyment of the evening.

Being given the opportunity to attend events like these and speak to growers about the issues of most concern to them is a valued part of my role as the CEO of AUSVEG.

In my presentation at the grower evening, my main focus was on the issue of imports.

The ability to feed ourselves as a nation in the future continues to be a pressing concern, particularly when you consider our increasing reliance on international suppliers.

With Australia importing \$555 million worth of vegetable products for the financial year

ending June 30 2010, the balance of trade in vegetables is still negative at \$306 million for the 2009-10 financial year. This means that we imported \$306 million more in vegetables than we exported.

This is a worrying trend for the country, as cheap imports continue to flood the market, forcing local growers to compete with products from countries such as China, New Zealand and the United States, which are able to undercut our market due to much lower costs of production.

AUSVEG has been particularly vocal about the threat of potato imports from New Zealand in the wake of the Zebra Chip epidemic that has devastated the potato industry in that country and the risk that this poses to the Australian industry.

We are pleased with the support received from the Australian Greens, particularly

Deputy Leader, Senator Christine Milne, who has been very proactive in taking steps to ensure that Australian potato growers have a voice at the highest political level.

AUSVEG's media presence has continued to grow, as public affairs activities have increased in recent times.

Imports received significant coverage in the Murdoch press in mid-November, with the *Herald Sun*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Courier Mail* and *Adelaide Advertiser* all featuring articles addressing the fact that local growers are suffering at the hands of cheaper imports.

In each of these, I have gone on the record emphasising that Australian growers can meet the necessary production demands of the Australian market, and that it is unacceptable that local growers are undercut by foreign produce often produced to lower standards and under

questionable conditions.

On a lighter note, I hope that everyone has a safe and happy Christmas and New Year break.

I look forward to an enjoyable and productive 2011.



Richard J Mulcahy  
Chief Executive Officer  
AUSVEG

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## Editorial

In this edition of *Potatoes Australia* we have featured two key industry figures. Our cover story features Des Jennings with his son Stuart at his farm in Thorpdale, Victoria.

Mr Jennings is the Chairman of the Victorian Potato Growers' Council (VPGC) and is heavily involved in many areas of the potato industry around the state. Having been on the farm for his entire life, we felt he was a very worthy figure to talk to and introduce to his fellow growers around the country.

Also featured in this issue is

Elders CEO Malcolm Jackman.

Mr Jackman has been at the head of the agribusiness giant since 2008 and has already seen it through some particularly tough times, with a vision and persistence that growers can certainly associate with.

With the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence fast approaching, along with exciting news about the event, there is a rundown of the awards up for grabs, and a nomination form to fill out for

anyone you know who is worthy of taking home one of the annual awards. Nominations for awards close on 4 March next year, so be sure to send them in early!

Our regular readers may notice a new feature on page 29. In each edition of *Potatoes Australia* and *Vegetables Australia* we will be profiling young growers from around the country. We believe it is important to give recognition to the young people in the industry. If you know of any young growers who should be profiled in either magazine, feel free to contact us


via email to [andrew.mahony@ausveg.com.au](mailto:andrew.mahony@ausveg.com.au).

Also included in this edition of *Potatoes Australia*, you will find the yearly wall planner that should provide an easy reference of the key industry dates in 2011, as well as the Potato Industry Annual Report compiled by Horticulture Australia Limited. The Annual Report details the projects undertaken in the potato industry over the course of 2009/10, many of which have been covered extensively in *Potatoes Australia*.



# Malcolm Jackman

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A passion for potatoes

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# 'Dipper' and set to headline

Sporting personality, Robert DiPierdomenico, and celebrity chef, Callum Hann, and Awards for Excellence.

Growers should set aside 14-16 April, as the industry gears up for the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention.

The Convention will be the must-attend event of the year, and will be held in the heart of Brisbane at the impressive five star Sebel-Citigate Hotel.

Back by popular demand to emcee the Convention is footballing great, Robert DiPierdomenico. After a rousing job at the 2010 Convention, 'Dipper' is set to have all in attendance in raptures once again.

In a great coup for the Convention, MasterChef star, Callum Hann, will be a fresh face and feature in a special 'celebrity chef' luncheon. The luncheon will be sponsored by AUSVEG's newest strategic partner, VISY Fibre packaging, and will also showcase fresh vegetables produced by local

growers from south east Queensland.

Hann was the show's youngest contestant and captured the hearts of millions of Australians with his honesty and genuine love for cooking. He will be a major drawcard for the 2011 event.

MasterChef is credited with re-invigorating the food industry in Australia and placing an emphasis back on fresh produce and home cooking.

Both of these aspects can only be a positive for the vegetable industry and will be highlighted when Hann takes to the stage at the Convention.

## Momentum building

Preparations are well underway for the Convention, which will build on the momentum

generated from the hugely successful 2010 event.

At the time of writing the AUSVEG Convention Trade Show is 50 per cent full and with four months until the Convention, spaces are in hot demand after a sell-out show this year.

An initial list of speakers set to appear at the 2011 Convention has been announced and are indicative of the high quality event which AUSVEG strives for. Impressive names already confirmed include Malcolm Jackman, CEO of Elders, who will outline how he plans to

reinvigorate the iconic Australian company; Ian Macleod, Managing Director of Peracto and expert in succession management; and Tony Abbott, Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia, who has provisionally confirmed his attendance. Invitations have also been sent to the Prime Minister and the Hon. Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture.

AUSVEG CEO, Richard





# Callum Hann 2011 Convention

are set to light up the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and

Mulcahy, said that the 2011 event would surpass the high standard set at this year's Convention.

"We were overwhelmed by the support of Australian vegetable and potato growers on the Gold Coast and are determined to deliver another Convention that provides opportunities and information that will help our growers in their businesses," he said.

"We are designing a program that will ensure that

the weekend will be both informative and entertaining, with a strong social component to allow growers and industry members an extensive networking opportunity."

## Perfect location

Mr Mulcahy also spoke highly of the Sebel-Citigate Hotel which he said was the perfect venue to hold such an event.

"With the city centre and Brisbane's major attractions at its doorstep, The Sebel-Citigate Hotel is an ideal location for the event," he said.

"We needed a venue that could accommodate a massive Convention but also be

welcoming to each and every guest, and of course family-friendly."

Already a number of leading agribusinesses have recognised the opportunity to support an event that will truly benefit the entire industry and draw a huge number of growers from right across Australia.

"Elders, DuPont, Syngenta and Bayer CropScience return as the Convention's leading partners, with Toolpak Engineering, VISY, Dow AgroSciences, Williames, Peracto, Boomaroo Nurseries and Terranova coming on board to support the event," Mr Mulcahy said.

## Awards for Excellence

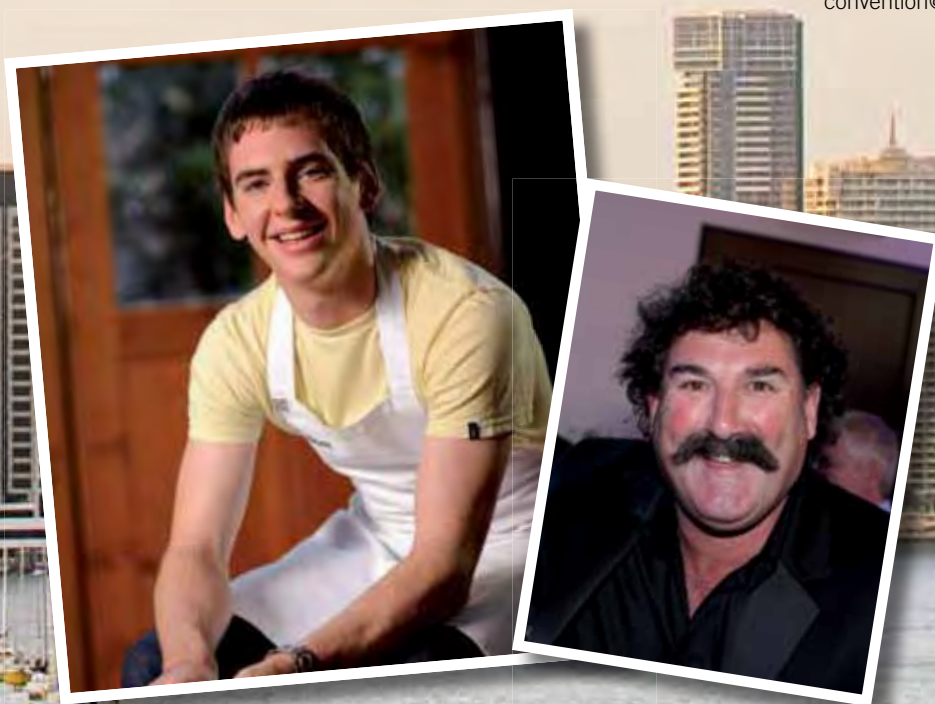
The National Awards for Excellence will also be a highlight of the Convention. As it was

in 2010, the industry's night of nights will be held in a gala dinner on Saturday, 16 April and salute winners across a number of categories.

The night will recognise the hard work and achievements of individuals and businesses that have been leaders, embraced innovation and helped to progress the vegetable and potato industries.

There will be ten awards up for grabs, with two new awards introduced for this next Convention. The new awards include the Rising Star of the Year Award and Environmental Award. More details are available over the page.

Growers who are interested in receiving a convention brochure, companies wishing to display at the trade show, or businesses wishing to become partners of AUSVEG should call (03) 9822 0388 or email [convention@ausveg.com.au](mailto:convention@ausveg.com.au).



# 2011 National Awards for Excellence

The 2011 National Awards for Excellence will be held on Saturday, 16 April and will highlight the hard work and achievements of our industry's most successful growers, researchers and businesses across the supply chain. This event is set to be a highlight of the AUSVEG National Convention.

## Nominations are being sought in the following categories:

**Grower of the Year** Proudly sponsored by



*(Open to all vegetable and potato growers)*

- 1) Vegetable/potato grower is outstanding across all aspects of vegetable production, including growing, environmental management, staff management and product quality.
- 2) Grower is innovative, challenges convention and implements efficient practices (such as integrated pest management, minimising wastage, water conservation, precision agriculture, technology advances, and value-adding to product).
- 3) Grower actively contributes to broader industry (such as participating in international R&D tours, industry committees, forums, conferences or field days).

**Young Grower of the Year** Proudly sponsored by



*(35 years of age or less as at 16 April 2011)*

- 1) Vegetable/potato grower shows excellent business acumen and innovation and has applied it on-farm and in the wider farming community when practicable.
- 2) Grower demonstrates a high level of commitment to the industry, possibly illustrated through involvement in off-farm activities, participation as a member of industry groups/committees or in community activities (such as Landcare).

**Industry Impact Award** Proudly sponsored by



- 1) Individual/business has had a positive impact on the vegetable/potato industry through means such as innovation, research, or irrigation/water management techniques.
- 2) The impact has resulted in a significant contribution to best farm practice.

**Industry Recognition Award** Proudly sponsored by



*The miracles of science™*

- 1) Individual has provided overall service to the industry on a local, state or national level over a long period of time.
- 2) Individual is pro-active in advancing the industry.
- 3) Individual uses their leadership skills for the greater good of the industry.

**Rising Star of the Year Award**

*(35 years of age or less as at 16 April 2011)*

- 1) Individual who displays exceptional commitment and passion towards the horticulture industry.
- 2) Individual who contributes actively towards the organisation and/or management of a farm/company.
- 3) The nominee must not be an owner or proprietor of the business.
- 4) Individual who exceeds in every aspect of their position.

**Productivity Partner Award** Proudly sponsored by



- 1) Business has developed a new solution directly benefiting growers through improving their productivity, for example through reducing costs or environmental impact.
- 2) Business has significantly contributed in a positive manner to the Australian vegetable/potato industry.
- 3) Business has shown commitment to improving the industry's productivity.
- 4) New practice has delivered tangible, measurable results.

**Researcher of the Year** Proudly sponsored by



**Bayer CropScience**

- 1) Researcher has track record of research or extension work that has advanced the industry offering long-term industry benefits.
- 2) Researcher actively communicates research outcomes and encourages uptake of outcomes on-farm.
- 3) Researcher contributes research or extension work that advances the reputation of Australian science internationally.

**Innovative Marketing Award**

*(Implementation within the last three years)*

- 1) Individual/business has created an innovative marketing solution, process or program.
- 2) Individual/business has created new market opportunities for vegetables/potato products.
- 3) Innovation has had significant impact on the industry and has potential for long term positive effects through sales, awareness, reach, etc.
- 4) Innovation has delivered tangible, measurable results.

**Women in Horticulture**

- 1) Female industry member has demonstrated outstanding ability and success in their chosen field, whether it is growing, research and development, farm management, or otherwise.
- 2) Individual is pro-active and has shown commitment to achieving success in the industry.
- 3) Has a reputation for mentoring women in horticulture.

**Environmental Award**

- 1) An individual who has demonstrated a commitment to implement sustainable farming practices on-farm
- 2) An individual who has developed an innovative solution to meet an environmental challenge on-farm
- 3) An individual who has shown leadership in promoting environmental issues in the local and wider community

**Please note individuals or companies can only be nominated for a maximum of two categories.**

**Nominations close on 4 March 2011.**

# Nominations now open!

Nominations for the AUSVEG 2011 National Awards for Excellence are now open. To nominate yourself or someone you know in any of the categories listed, please fill in the form and return to the address listed below.

Nominations close on 4 March 2011.

## Nominee details:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Organisation/Farm name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominated award: *Please note only a **maximum** of two categories can be selected per individual/business.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's contribution to industry (additional information may be attached):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Nominator details: (your details)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Organisation/Farm name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (mobile) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return nomination form to:

Post: AUSVEG Ltd  
PO Box 2042  
Camberwell West VIC 3124

Tel: (03) 9822 0388

Fax: (03) 9822 0688

Nominations close on 4 March 2011.



Potato growers and friends enjoying the evening



AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy addressing the issue of imports

# AUSVEG CEO addresses Thorpdale growers

AUSVEG CEO, Richard Mulcahy, was the keynote speaker at the Rabobank Thorpdale Grower Evening in mid-November.

The evening involved around 60 growers and Rabobank Rural Manager, Tom Treptow, emphasised the positive reception from the growers in attendance.

"They thought it was a very good evening and well worth the effort," Mr Treptow said.

Mr Treptow said that having Mr Mulcahy give the keynote speech was an integral part of the evening.

"He certainly provided the emphasis and thrust to the

evening with the topic on imports that he described. He was really well-received."

Mr Mulcahy addressed growers about the issue of imports into Australia, saying that it is vital that our local food production is able to support us moving forward.

"Another risk involved in an increasing level of imports is the danger of becoming a country that relies on others to produce our food," Mr Mulcahy said.

"If we were to rely on one country to produce one particular type of vegetable, for example, then we might find that if the country was to suffer from civil unrest that their

exports could dwindle down to almost nothing," he said.

Mr Mulcahy also emphasised the role that AUSVEG has in looking after the interests of growers around the country.

"AUSVEG continues to be a critical body in the process of ensuring that the voices of growers around the country are heard," Mr Mulcahy said.

"We will continue to represent and share the concerns of growers, as we have to date."

A number of the actions taken by AUSVEG include liaising with politicians and various organisations, alerting them to the problems faced by growers; campaigning about these

issues publicly; and making submissions to national and international inquiries.



AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy talks with grower Les Horsfield

## AUSVEG Chairman re-elected

The AUSVEG Annual General Meeting, was held in mid-November with Chairman John Brent re-elected unopposed.

AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent was re-elected for another term at the AUSVEG AGM held on 15 November.

The meeting, held in Brisbane, saw Mr Brent retain his position unopposed.

Mr Brent said that he was looking forward to his next term in the role, and that the last year has seen AUSVEG take some important steps forward.

"AUSVEG has successfully stepped into the political arena, increased its media profile and

its financial position within the past 12 months, following the appointment of CEO Richard Mulcahy in April 2009," Mr Brent said.

Mr Brent (pictured right) is the owner of Bunny Bite Foods in Boonah, Queensland, which is a family-owned business that has been operating for over 10 years.

Dr Elizabeth Duncan has been re-elected as Deputy Chair of AUSVEG and Chair of the Audit Committee.

## Potato event announced

A Potato Summit will be held in conjunction with the AUSVEG National Convention in April, to consider key issues in the potato industry.

AUSVEG have announced a Potato Summit to be held in conjunction with Potatoes New Zealand.

The summit will be a one day event coming off the back of the AUSVEG National Convention.

The Summit will be held on Sunday 17 April and will include presenters from both Australia and New Zealand speaking on key issues affecting the industry

such as Zebra Chip disease complex, pests and diseases and the Potato R&D program. A more detailed program will be released in the coming weeks and all potato growers are encouraged to attend.

This event is also an ideal opportunity to exchange ideas and meet with your counterparts across the Tasman Sea.

# Spud binge man can taste the finish line

Chris Voigt—the man making international headlines for his two-month potato diet—has once again returned to ordering non-potato dishes from restaurants' menus.

In his first Australian interview, Chris Voigt, Executive Director of the Washington State Potato Commission, spoke to *Potatoes Australia* just days before his potato; only diet came to an end. He was enthusiastic about eating a normal selection of foods once again. He said he had been surprised at the level of media interest.

In order to raise awareness of the health benefits of potatoes, Mr Voigt ate nothing but potatoes for sixty days straight, from the beginning of October to the end of November this year.

"I wasn't expecting this at all, it has surprised me quite a bit," Mr Voigt said.

"I had the gut feel that we might have some media interest in this, but my expectations were pretty low."

He has certainly had to adjust since early October, with media interest building to the point where he is giving between six and eight interviews a day, all around the world.

"I'm not sure why it got picked up everywhere or why there's so much interest in it, but it certainly was surprising for me,"

he said.

The response from people in the industry was also something Mr Voigt was not expecting.

Not only has his mailbox seen an influx of letters of support, but the postman has also had to deal with regular potato deliveries to his door.

"I don't think I've needed to pay for potatoes since the first week of the diet," he said.

"People have just been Fedexing me boxes or packages of potatoes, wanting me to try different things."

Among the varying recipes

he's come across, one in particular stands out.

"The strangest thing I've had was potato juice. That wasn't too exciting."

When asked if he would try the juice again, he was understandably succinct.

"No, it was bad," he said

The decision of what to eat when the clock strikes 12 on 30 November is one that needs no deliberation.

"Probably whatever is in arm's reach," he said.

## Infrared to help grade spuds

In an Australian first, infrared cameras will be used to assist washing and grading potatoes.

The South Australian Potato Company's Mount Barker facility will be the recipient of the machines.

The new technology, priced at just over \$150,000, is said to greatly improve the accuracy in grading the size and quality of the product, according to company spokesman, Julian

Carbone.

"The new infrared digital cameras will take a much clearer and sharper photograph of each and every potato, allowing the system to make an extremely accurate determination on the potatoes size and quality," said Mr Carbone.

Potato production will continue to be monitored by quality control staff who will ensure the cameras are operating as expected.

A workshop will be held in December next year to provide the industry with a forum to share experiences of the new technology.

The project was supported by a \$77,135 (excluding GST) grant under the Australian Government's Regional Food Producers Innovation and Productivity Program.

3.



1. Potatoes being assessed by machines fitted with infrared cameras



2. Workers manually assess quality of potatoes

3. The infrared camera used to grade potatoes

## Editorial by Tony Windsor MP Chair of the House of Representatives Regional Australia Committee and Member for New England



Source:  
[www.tonywindsor.com.au](http://www.tonywindsor.com.au)

With all the debate and argument surrounding the release of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan, I think we can all agree on one thing: we have a problem.

I'm hoping we can also agree on another thing: we have an opportunity.

As Chair of the new Regional Australia Committee's inquiry into the impact of the proposed Basin plan, I'm asking for your help to tackle this problem and find a solution which will equally benefit the rivers and communities in Australia's food bowl.

I encourage everyone with

an interest in the impact of the proposed Basin plan to take the opportunity this inquiry presents, to tell Parliament how these changes would affect you, and to put forward your ideas on ways to improve the health of the river system without damaging the communities which depend on it.

Along with the irrigators and environmentalists, I'm hoping for submissions from individuals with specific knowledge of their part of the river, and from those with ideas on how we can increase water efficiency, contain the losses, reduce consumption and be more cost-

effective in managing the water.

We'd also like to hear from those with ideas about helping communities through these changes, so they're not seen as a negative, but as a positive.

I believe that if this parliamentary committee can come up with recommendations where there is general consensus, then we can play a very important role contributing to the final plan which the Minister will deliver to Parliament in a year or so.

I think we can all agree on something else too: this is a very big challenge. But I'm hoping that by listening to you and your

community and getting input from all sides of the debate we can be part of an agreeable, sustainable solution.

To make a submission to the inquiry, e-mail your thoughts to [ra.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ra.reps@aph.gov.au), write to the Committee Secretary, Standing Committee on Regional Australia, PO Box 6021, Parliament House, Canberra 2600 or fax to 02 6277 4773. For more information see [www.aph.gov.au/ra](http://www.aph.gov.au/ra) or call 02 6277 4162.

## Michael Penna appointed to IAC

New member with two decades of experience in the potato industry set to be a valuable asset to the Processed Potato Industry Advisory Committee (IAC).

Michael Penna has been appointed to the Processed Potato IAC.

Mr Penna is currently Vice Chairman of Queensland and New South Wales Crisping Growers Group and has been

actively involved in the industry over the last 10 years.

Throughout his career he has received numerous grower awards, particularly from the Smith Pack Group, with his farm having been contracted with

Smiths for 30 years.

The Queenslander grows potatoes on the same land that his grandfather and father both farmed.



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# History of the spud

Native to the Andes Mountains of South America, potatoes reached Europe by the 16th century, and date as far back as 4,000 B.C. Over thousands of years, more than 5,500 varieties have been cultivated. Many different varieties of potatoes grow in Australia today, after first arriving with the First Fleet in 1788. They have since grown into an important part in the average Australian's diet.

Today, within Australia, all states grow significant quantities of potatoes, with the southern states producing the highest amount. In 2008-09, South Australia was the largest producer at 383,221 tonnes (worth more than a quarter of

a billion dollars in production value), followed by Tasmania 278,361 tonnes; Victoria 255,483 tonnes; Queensland 97,590 tonnes; WA 88,504 tonnes and NSW 75,372 tonnes.

In 2008-09, potatoes were sown on about 32,500 hectares to produce around 1.18 million tonnes, yielding on average about 36 t/ha. Total production value for human consumption in 2007-08 was estimated to be more than \$650 million (fresh potatoes and potatoes for processing).

It was estimated by the mid 1990s that Australians ate their way through about 63-68 kg of mash, chips, crisps or bake each year, however, this number

may be declining due to the increase in popularity of lower carbohydrate diets.

Worldwide, the potato is very popular due to its versatility and relative ease of production, being used in pies, soups, stews, mashed potato, fries and potato chips.

This ease of production meant that potatoes were heavily promoted in Ireland in the mid 1800s to support subsistence farming, offering the highest valuable yield per unit of land. Between 1845 and 1849, the great potato famine struck in Ireland due to potato blight.

Over a million people are estimated to have died as a result of disease and starvation, with the former believed to be

the main cause of death.

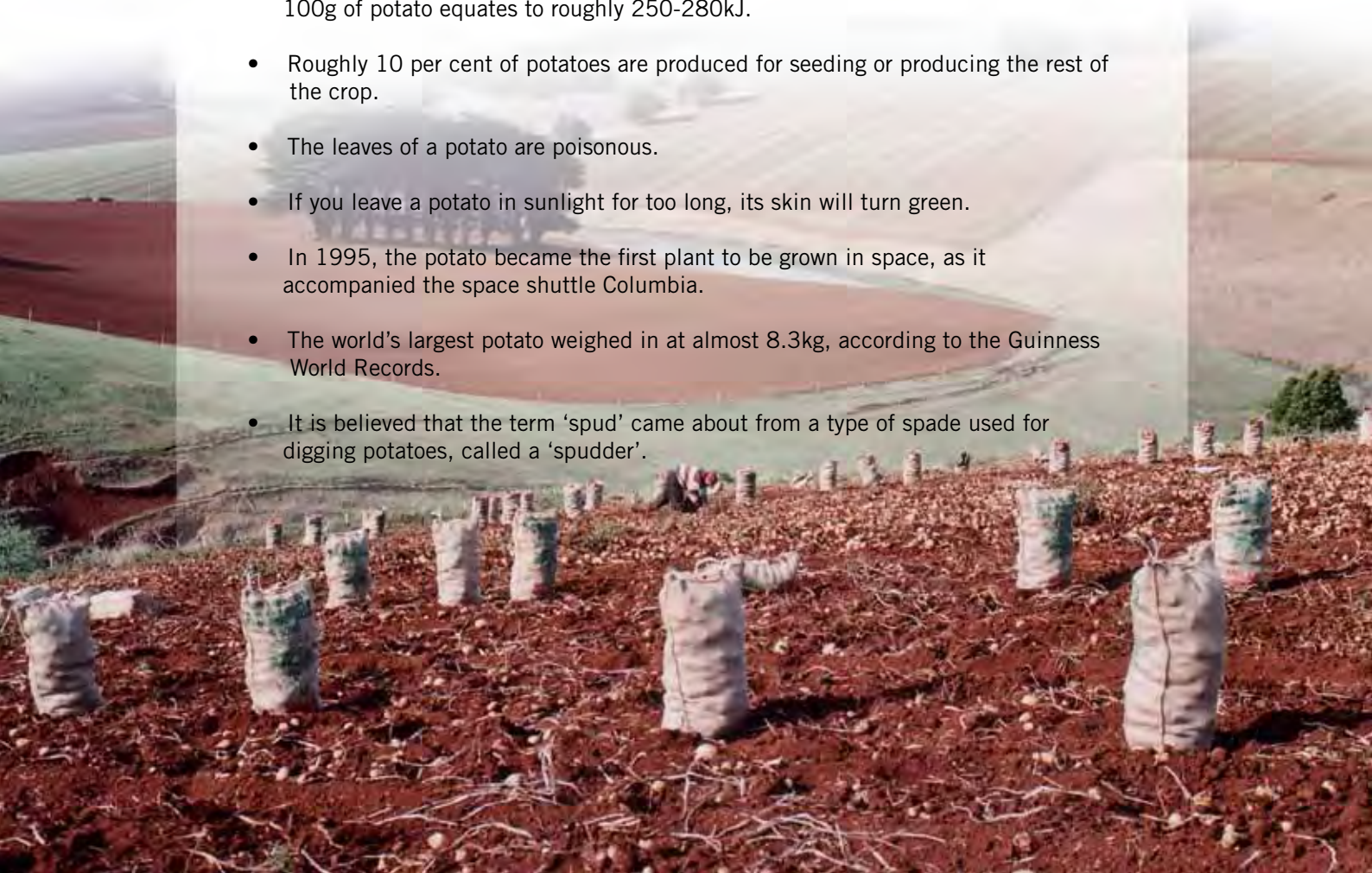
An effective fungicide to combat the blight that devastated Ireland was not found until 1883 by Alexandre Millardet, a French botanist.

Different varieties of potatoes have been introduced, allowing the product to grow almost anywhere in the world. So enduring are potatoes that they will grow in most types of soil. While they prefer a moist soil, it was their adaptability and ruggedness that impressed the original growers in the Andes Mountains.

*Thanks to the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) for information sourced in this article.*

## Interesting Facts

- There are over 4,000 different varieties of potatoes, with over 3,000 found in the Andes alone.
- The nutritional value in potatoes is significant. Rich in potassium and Vitamin C, 100g of potato equates to roughly 250-280kJ.
- Roughly 10 per cent of potatoes are produced for seeding or producing the rest of the crop.
- The leaves of a potato are poisonous.
- If you leave a potato in sunlight for too long, its skin will turn green.
- In 1995, the potato became the first plant to be grown in space, as it accompanied the space shuttle Columbia.
- The world's largest potato weighed in at almost 8.3kg, according to the Guinness World Records.
- It is believed that the term 'spud' came about from a type of spade used for digging potatoes, called a 'spudder'.



# A Passion *for Potatoes*

With the constant change in season bringing new challenges that could wear any man down, one might think that a lifetime of farming would be too much for anyone. However, to speak to Des Jennings—a seed potato grower of the Thorpdale community in south eastern Victoria—you see a man with passion for his job and a love for his farm, writes Andrew Mahony.

Approaching the Jennings' farm, we are greeted by the bark of a dog and a smile that is only dwarfed by the size of the tractors and sheds in the background. Des Jennings welcomes us and introduces us

to his son Stuart who puts down a tractor part to shake hands.

We are shown around the sheds, inspecting the cool room that houses thousands of potatoes, all in big bins and ready to be planted.





With one of the busiest times of the year fast approaching, irrigation and crop management will be keeping the Jennings' busy in the coming weeks. Fortunately, the marvels of modern technology make life much easier on the land.

Mechanisation has seen the improvement in tractors, with many now controlled by computers and equipped with GPS technology alongside pivots that "can do so much in such a short time." According to Mr Jennings, this highlights the changes made to farming over the last few decades.

When Mr Jennings' father was farming in the 1950s—around the time he built the house that Mr Jennings and partner Pauline currently live in—potatoes were planted and picked by hand out of the ground and loaded into 66 kilogram bags.

"When I started growing potatoes, that's what we were picking up," he says.

"They used to do it tough, digging them by hand."

Overcoming adversity is

something that all farmers are familiar with. Technology may make it easier to pick potatoes out of the ground, but the job always has its challenges.

"As time goes on the

“ I tend to work on the theory that it's not the hours you work, it's what you do in the hours you work... some people achieve in eight hours what others will take 12 to do. ”

commitment gets bigger, and the dedication's got to be better and greater," Mr Jennings says.

"The knowledge has got to be better and greater, and it just gets tougher and tougher."

The Potato Cyst Nematode

(PCN) outbreak provided farmers across the country with a big challenge that would not be ignored.

First found in Australia in 1986 in Western Australia, PCN

reached Victoria around 1991.

Mr Jennings was active in calling for rational action on PCN before it had a calamitous effect on both the industry and the state.

As Chairman of the Victorian Potato Growers' Council (VPGC),

Mr Jennings had his hands well and truly full during the PCN outbreak, as much of his work involved calling for extra funding and support to deal with it.

"As Chairman of the VPGC, we had to try and get solutions and ensure growers weren't victims of circumstance, because it wasn't their fault that they got PCN," he says.

"I fought bloody hard to get money allocated towards PCN.

"I could see that PCN was going to cause a market access problem in Victoria eventually.

"It seemed that the history of it showed that it was just going to keep popping up.

"Like I've said all along, what we wanted was to manage PCN in Australia, that's the first thing. In order to manage PCN, you have to find it.

"If you don't look for it, you don't find it, and you'll never manage it without proper surveillance."

The biosecurity associated with the PCN outbreak required that potatoes from any farm within 20 kilometres



of the affected area be inspected before they were dispatched.

The problem with this, according to Mr Jennings, is that the 20 kilometre figure is arbitrary and fails to look at the nature of PCN.

"It doesn't look at the science; it doesn't look at the pest," he says.

"If it's a fruit fly or something like that, it can fly 20 kilometres."

"But PCN has to be carried by human beings. It doesn't fly, it doesn't walk, it doesn't run. It's got to be carried."

Mr Jennings says it was more likely that PCN would be carried between two farms 100 kilometres apart if a farmer was travelling from one to the other,

than if two farms were within a few kilometres of each other, but no-one was picking up soil on their shoes, for example, and depositing it at the other.

For Mr Jennings, it has been a gradual process to reach the role as Chairman of the VPGC. His work as a seed grower saw him attend committee meetings of the Gippsland Seed Growers, before becoming Chairman.

As a seed grower, Mr Jennings is also a member of Seed Potato Victoria, one group that he has high praise for, believing it is a bit more grower-oriented than some others.

"You'd probably say Seed Potato Victoria is one of the most effective potato groups anywhere in Australia," he says.

"Simply because we have regular meetings, we're properly funded, we've got an executive officer."

"If you can get the right people there, you can make things happen."

Despite all of the off-farm commitments, Mr Jennings enjoys working on the farm the most.

When asked what his favourite thing about farming is, his response is preceded with a smile.

"You're your own boss, I

suppose. But you're not," he says with a laugh.

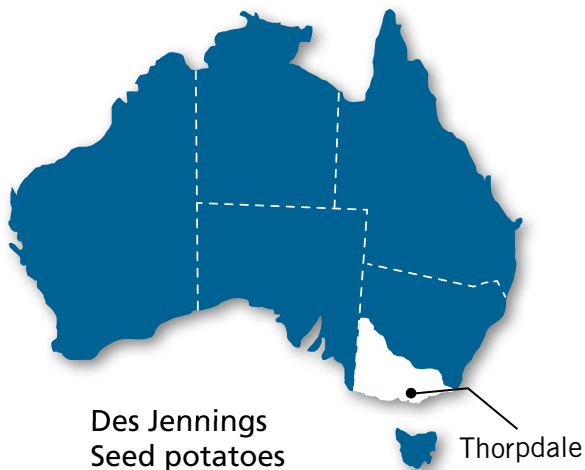
With a 7.30am start each day, he lives by the notion that quality over quantity is the most important.

"I tend to work on the theory that it's not the hours you work, it's what you do in the hours you work," he says.

"Some people achieve in eight hours what others will take 12 to do."

"It's not so much the hours, it's what you achieve in a day."

## Grower Information



**Grower:**  
**Crop:**  
**Region:**

Des Jennings  
Seed potatoes  
Thorpdale,  
south eastern Victoria

**Farm Size:**  
**Other:**

500 acres  
Chairman of the Victorian  
Potato Growers Council (VPGC),  
Fresh Potato IAC member



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# Ask the industry

with  
Scott Mathew



Scott Mathew, Technical Services Lead from Syngenta

Spray applications and fungicide applications are important considerations for growers in managing pests and diseases. Scott Mathew answers your questions in this edition of Ask the industry.

## Question: Why are fungicide applications prior to row closure so critical?

Answer: Primary infection of target spot generally occurs on the older, lower leaves which can generally be associated with lower or declining levels of N (and other associated elements P, K, Mg, Ca and S) and it is for this reason that applications of a target spot fungicide before the rows close is essential for disease control.

## Question: What makes for a good result from an application of a pesticide?

Answer: There are several factors that make for successful spray application. That is choosing the correct product, applying at the optimum time, using the recommended dose and achieving the required spray coverage of the target. The first point goes without saying, however, the remaining three points can be very much tied back to spray application and in effect the ability to transfer the required chemical dosage to the target surface from the spray nozzle in a manner that delivers good efficacy against the target pest and avoids spray drift or off target damage.

## Question: How do growers evaluate the different nozzle technologies available, or if your current nozzles are achieving adequate coverage?

Answer: Water-sensitive paper can be placed in various sections of the canopy (upper and lower leaves as well as inner and outer canopy) and is a quick and effective way to measure coverage and critically, spray penetration into the canopy, particularly to lower leaves where diseases such as Target Spot can initiate. Results are easily observed and necessary changes can be made instantaneously to ensure better results.

Adoption of new technology, particularly in the form of spray application has some significant benefits, however, don't rely on others to do the work for you. An investment in time by setting up your own demonstration trial can pay significant dividends in the future.



Figure 1: Water-sensitive paper showing spray coverage and pattern from different nozzles. Adjustment to water volumes and nozzle orientation can improve coverage and spray penetration, whilst reducing potential for spray drift.

## Ask the industry

For more information or to ask a question, please contact your local Syngenta Territory Manager, the Syngenta Advice Line on 1800 067 108, or visit [www.syngenta.com.au](http://www.syngenta.com.au)

OR email *Potatoes Australia*:  
[andrew.mahony@ausveg.com.au](mailto:andrew.mahony@ausveg.com.au)

Please note that your questions may be published.



# Taking

It's no secret that Elders, so synonymous with regional Australia, almost didn't survive a tumultuous period in 2009. For Mr Malcolm Jackman, only 12 months into his reign as Chief Executive Officer, it was a fight he and the 170-year-old organisation couldn't afford to lose.

While Mr Jackman admits there is still a long way to go, the former officer with the New Zealand Navy, is confident that a change of philosophy, along with becoming fixated on their core business, and empowering the Elders workforce, are the pillars that will return the organisation to the preeminent name in agribusiness across Australia.

Born and raised in New Zealand, it has been a long journey to the position of CEO of one Australia's most quintessential companies.

After 15 years in the Kiwi Navy—a period in which he completed a BSC in Pure and Applied Mathematics and an Accounting Degree—Mr Jackman entered the business of recruitment. Climbing the ranks and working in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, he ended up at the helm of Manpower, one of the biggest names in recruitment globally.

From there it was on to CEO of equipment hire specialist,

Coates Hire, and then finally in 2008 to the position of CEO of Elders, or what was known then as Futuris Corporation.

Mr Jackman said changing the name from Futuris to Elders was part of the overall objective to refocus the core strategy of the organisation and concentrate on its agribusiness.

"Part of the strategy of turning the company around was to make Elders the core business, so it felt logical to go back to the Elders name," he said.

"There is no denying the organisation was in trouble and part of the philosophy to turn that around was to get very fixated on what our core strategy is and that meant focusing back on agribusiness."

The next step according to Mr Jackman was to simplify the organisation and revert to a more owner/operator structure.

On a personal level, and something that vegetable growers can certainly relate to, is Mr Jackman's 'work from sun up to sun down' philosophy, and doing whatever it takes to get the job done.

"Life is not a dress rehearsal, and at the end of the day, as the boss, you have to put in whatever it takes," he said.

"Saying that, I also have a very simple philosophy of delegating as far down the organisation as you possibly can."

# Elders *back to the top*

Elders CEO, Malcolm Jackman spoke with David O'Neill and *Potatoes Australia* about his vision of returning one of Australia's oldest and most respected companies back to its former glory.

"I believe that everybody in the organisation should understand what they are responsible for and what they will be held accountable for."

Mr Jackman said workers had to then question whether they had the authority or ability to execute what they were being held accountable for and take ownership of their individual role.

"It's about empowering people to get on and do the job, and making sure from our end, they have the authority to be able to act this way," he said.

While empowering the workforce is a critical element to the company's revival, with upwards of 4,000 staff spread across almost 400 locations, Mr Jackman said this was easier said than done.

"The difficulty is when you are running a large distributed branch network. How do you get someone out at Derby, or here at Pakenham, or in Port Lincoln to have the same mentality?" he asked.

"Empowering people and making them responsible for what they do on a day-to-day basis, that's the trick to getting this organisation working well again."

Mr Jackman admitted that over the past decade, the organisation had not been managed as effectively as it

should have.

"The question was how do we turn Elders into a modern organisation, how do we take advantage of our size but keep the autonomy at the front end and have people accountable for what they do?" he asked.

We then posed the billion

Jackman said.

"We have people who have worked in this business for 40 years or so, and they come with different values and different views on life, to the generation Y workers we employ."

"We have 50-odd trainees with an average age of 18, and we

"I've had phone calls from growers who tell me their family has been dealing with Elders for more than 115 years on the same property," Mr Jackman said.

"We need to build on that. The loyalty that our customers have shown has taken us through the tough times, and there have been plenty. But I have to admit that we haven't been as good at repaying that loyalty with our performance; our service hasn't been as good as it should be."

"What we do on a day-to-day basis needs to improve and I think we can deliver on that."

While the recent problems that plagued the organisation have been significant, Mr Jackman explained that the company, in its 175-year history, had overcome numerous challenges that posed a threat to its survival.

"We were nearly finished last year when we had to go through the recapitalisation and the old girl does need a bit of nursing back to good health. But we've faced tough times before and we will not give up until Elders is back to where it should be, as the preeminent brand across all disciplines in agribusiness in Australia."

While there is no quick fix or an overnight solution, with Malcolm Jackman at the helm, Elders have a no-nonsense leader and a man seemingly born for the job.

“ We will not give up until Elders is back to where it should be, as the preeminent brand across all disciplines in agribusiness in Australia. ”

dollar question to Mr Jackman; a question the Elders boss has most likely answered every day since taking over: What was his vision for the company and will it turn the organisation around and drive it forward?

"At the end of the day, the business is all about people, particularly in such a big distributed branch network," Mr

have something in the order of 60 people over the age of 65, so we need to treat different people in different ways and get the culture right."

Mr Jackman also spoke of the need to repay the faith and loyalty of the growers in all agriculture sectors who have stuck by the company over its long and illustrious history.

# Grower groups

In an effort to increase business skills of growers in Tasmania, grower groups, writes Andrew Mahony.

The grower groups project was established in 2007 after an incident in late 2005 that saw many local growers struggling to remain competitive. Simplot Australia, responsible for some 80 per cent of potato production in Tasmania had lost a major contract with McDonald's, resulting in problems for growers in the state.

As a result of this, the Vegetable Industry Taskforce was formed, allowing Simplot to review what actions were necessary to increase business skills support to growers—particularly those who suffered as a result of the lost contract. Grower groups were then established as a way of providing support through activities and workshops.

The frequency of meetings varied, with some meeting regularly, and others only when it was entirely necessary.

Project Leader, Donna Lucas, said that the despite their hectic

schedules, the involvement shown by growers was a pleasing sign.

"We were happy with the amount of interest shown by growers in the project," Ms Lucas said.

“ The greatest benefit to come from the group has been improved communication throughout the supply chain. ”

"More than half of Simplot's growers have been involved in the project at some level, and almost all growers read the SpudNews newsletter."

One of the key outcomes of the project is improved communication between all

parties involved in the process, according to Ms Lucas.

"The greatest benefit to come from the group has been improved communication throughout the supply chain, from seed producers to

levels of conflict and difficulty were lower than usual during the latest round of price negotiations in August; a sign that the grower groups have had a positive effect on the industry.

The grower groups were established by Simplot, and run by field officers, whose role was to coordinate events including field days and discussion group meetings.

According to Ms Lucas, the field officers played an important role in the success of the groups.

"They are the link between the processor and the grower," she said.

"Growers have commented about how important it is to have a good field officer."

In preparation for the grower groups, field officers undertook training in numerous activities including newsletter publication, which included how to write articles for newsletters and newsletter design; a two-day leadership course at the Simplot Head Office in Melbourne; and

harvester contractors, and from growers to agronomists."

It is hoped that this increased communication between all parties will help the industry overcome any problems in the future.

The project revealed that the

## The key activities of the groups are featured below

- 'Potato Futures' – Annual workshops
- Business skills training
- Specialist seed grower workshops/future directions annual workshops
- Harvester future directions annual workshops
- Water management planning
- Sharefarming and land leasing workshops
- Controlled Traffic Farming and GPS workshops
- Deloraine Grower Group study tour to USA and Europe 2008
- Seed grower group study tour to Scotland and Europe 2009
- 'SpudNews' grower newsletter



Matt Ryan with a group of growers at Bridport, Tasmania

# reach out

across the island state have been meeting over the last three years,

a one-day workshop to produce the Field Service strategic plan.

## Outcomes of the project

Increasing crop profitability and overall business performance through increased awareness of technology available, was seen as a key outcome that was achieved.

One way of measuring whether the outcome had been achieved was investment in a centre pivot irrigator by a number of growers, established at a demonstration site.

It is estimated that the technology can pay itself off within one year.

On top of this, Ms Lucas said that since the conclusion of the project, numerous growers have made improvements in the way they use water on their properties.

"Growers have reported that they now have implemented changes to their irrigation practices including water budgeting, using irrigation scheduling equipment and

using less water," she said.

"We can infer from this that there are improvements in farm water use efficiency."

The second outcome of the project was to have participation of all potato growers in the Potato Grower Business Groups.

All growers received the SpudNews publication that provided readers with project outcomes, as well as workshop and training opportunities.

Over 100 growers were involved in a more hands-on role, attending the grower groups, in particular the annual industry review workshops, 'Potato Futures'.

The third outcome was to develop a five-year strategic plan for the future of the Tasmanian potato industry. The 2007-2012 plan for the Tasmanian Vegetable Industry is currently under review by the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association.

Another outcome to come from the project was that a number of growers have been

referred to TAFE and adult education courses to learn more about computers and the internet.

According to Ms Lucas, in the future, there will be more growers looking to become familiar with online technology.

"Some growers use the internet extensively, while others prefer to communicate and receive information via telephone or hard copy," she said.

"I think the level of internet usage will increase, especially now with improved technology for electronic communication in the field."

Despite the project having been officially completed, grower groups and 'Potato Futures' are planned to continue, as well as a possible study tour of the United States in 2011 for one particular group.

The project was funded by HAL using National Potato Levy funds with matched funds from the Australian Government,

and financial support of Simplot Australia - Tasmania.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- Groups established to help growers improve business acumen and develop planning skills.
- Improved communication throughout the supply chain greatly increased as a result of the grower groups.
- It is hoped that growers will see improvements to their bottom line as a result of the skills developed and knowledge of technology that can improve the efficiency of their farms.



For more information contact:

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RDS Partners

Email: <donna.lucas@ruraldevelopmentservices.com>

Phone: (03) 6231 9033

Project number: PT07016



Michael Coote directing a group of growers at Bridport, Tasmania



# Combined effort hopes *to beat the nematode*

The word 'nematode' is one that growers are all too familiar with, while crop yield losses are something that growers face constantly. Root knot nematode is one culprit responsible, writes Andrew Mahony.

One of the silent killers in the potato industry is Root knot nematode. Very tough to identify, the nematode has in the past caused significant yield losses for growers.

A new project aims to curb the rate of effect of nematodes on vegetable and potato growers around the country.

A large part of the study, led by Dr Frank Hay of the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) in association with other research organisations around the

country, will be looking into a range of alternatives to combat the problem.

"The study is all about trying to develop options," Dr Hay said.

"Some of those options might be chemical, and some of those options will be non-chemical as well."

According to Dr Hay, it is important that the industry develops alternate non-chemical strategies, which is part of the reason why this project has come about.

"It's a bit of an insurance strategy," he said.

"If those (chemicals) are no longer available, it's going to be a lot more difficult to control all of those pests and diseases with just the one shot."

"Growers are going to have to get a lot more information and become a lot savvier about controlling them."

With chemical options slowly being limited, it is believed that issues arising from nematodes will increase.

The reason for this is because

current fumigation practices may in fact be masking the effects of nematodes according to Dr Hay.

"As pressure is put on the profits that growers might expect from growing potatoes, they'll be looking for cost savings," he said.

"If they can't use as many chemicals as they have in the past, then we might expect to see a few more nematode issues arising."

The study, is hoped to provide results by April 2011 and will be set up in three important stages,



beginning with a pre-plant test.

Stage 1. The pre-plant test will involve DNA testing developed by the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), built on the work conducted in Australian Potato Research Program 1 (APRP1).

Soil samples will be taken by SARDI to identify which species of Root knot nematode are present, and how many there are prior to planting.

More research will be undertaken to understand the correlation between the amount of nematodes "prior to planting and marketable yield, and the influence of agronomic factors on this relationship."

Stage 2. The second stage of the process involves developing management options for controlling nematodes.

Potato and vegetable fields will be studied to determine how many Root knot nematodes are present and how different nematodes impact on different regions.

The aim of this is to see how yield and quality are affected, as well as how the history of, and what is grown on each paddock affects the nematode influence.

As a result of these studies, growers in different regions will be provided with "lists of suitable crops and green manure or break crops for control of specific species."

Additionally, the susceptibility of the major potato varieties to

particular species of Root knot nematode will be assessed to determine which potatoes are affected by which types of Root knot nematode.

Stage 3. The third and final stage of the process involves the development of a web-based

have as much information as they can about those pests and diseases to be able to control them," he said.

Dr Hay is confident that come April 2011, the program will provide some good news for growers.

“Growers are going to have to get a lot more information and become a lot savvier about controlling nematodes.”

booklet providing in-depth details on nematodes and how to manage them. This proves to be an important step, as there is currently no comprehensive information package about nematode management on the market.

Dr Hay said that in order to control pests and diseases, growers needed information.

"As growers move further towards IPM strategies, or different pests and diseases, it's more important for them to

"The program has been going for just over a year now, and the initial part of it was for SARDI to develop more species-specific DNA soil tests," he said.

"They're making good progress along those lines, building on what they did in the APRP1 program."

TIAR is working in conjunction with numerous state organisations including SARDI, DEEDI, DAFWA, Biological Crop Protection, Crop Protection Research and Plant & Food NZ.

According to Dr Hay, they are all happy to be involved in the process.

"I think they were very keen," he said.

"It's taken quite a while to get a national nematode project going in vegetables and potato crops."

"Hopefully we'll develop a lot of good management strategies for growers as a result."

This project was funded by HAL using the National Potato Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

- A country-wide effort using the help of numerous state-based organisations is underway to help manage the ongoing threat of nematodes.
- The project aims to find alternatives to avoid chemicals being overused and causing issues further down the track.
- It is hoped that by April 2011, results from the project will be published



For more information contact:  
Frank Hay  
University of Tasmania  
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Phone: (03) 6430 4907  
Project number: MT09067



Comparing grasses and legumes with different capacities to host Root knot nematode. Courtesy: Graham Stirling

# McCain cultivar evaluations ongoing

On the lookout for improved French fry potato varieties, McCain has completed trials, with several varieties placed into tissue culture, writes Andrew Mahony.

In the search for improved French fry potato varieties, evaluations to date have seen eight varieties placed into tissue culture with the eventual possibility of joining the French fry range.

The one cultivar that has been named is the 'Mirridong'. It has been developed from the Australian breeding program and trialled in three states with commercial volumes, and is to be phased out as it exhibits significant seed and storage rot issues.

There are currently 11 other potato varieties being considered, however, none of these currently have individual names.

Scott Clelland of McCain foods said that the majority of these are still in a developmental stage.

"We have eight in tissue culture," Mr Clelland said.

"Three of those are going to be grown as mini tubers this year, and there's another five that are in tissue cultures for planting next year."

McCain is hopeful that, although these varieties are not yet developed, they will provide possible alternatives with higher yields and reduced input costs.

New varieties of potatoes are required because of common problems found in some current French fry varieties.

These problems vary, and include common disorders such as misshapen tubers, second growth and hollow heart.

Diseases and viruses also create problems for varieties, with some suffering from Target spot, Common scab, Powdery

scab, Pink rot, Rhizoctonia, Late blight, Potato leaf roll and Tomato spotted wilt virus.

The process involved in choosing varieties for commercial production is long and lasts for numerous field generations.

Field experiments were conducted in four states around the country, including: Dunnstown near Ballarat, Victoria; Mingbool near Penola, SA; Berrigan, NSW; and Forthside Research Farm, Tasmania.

The new lines in this batch of varieties spent three field generations at Toolangi centre, before being given the approval to be in replicated district variety trials. In order to maintain an even playing field for different varieties, the seed is produced, harvested and stored in conditions that remain the same.

There are numerous characteristics that plots are assessed for during the growing season. These include emergence, vigour, maturity and pest and disease susceptibility.

At harvest, tuber characteristics such as colour, texture, shape, distortion, eye characteristics, size and evenness and storability are

assessed.

Mr Clelland said that with the trials having concluded, the next stage in the process was to choose which varieties will be planted next.

This project was funded by HAL using the National Potato Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- The 'Mirridong' variety is to be phased out of the French fry range.
- Eight potato varieties are currently in tissue culture, with three to be grown as mini tubers this year and five currently in tissue culture to be planted next year.
- McCain hopes that the current batch of varieties will provide possible alternatives with higher yields and reduced input costs.

**i** For more information contact:  
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 Phone: +64 2 7248 6549  
 Project number: PT09043

“McCain is hopeful that, although these varieties are not yet developed, they will provide possible alternatives with higher yields and reduced input costs.”



# New Australian-bred fresh potato cultivars for commercial release

As part of the ongoing National Potato Breeding Program, Tony Slater of the Department of Primary Industries Victoria details two new cultivars ready for release.

Agriculture Victoria Services (AVS), the commercial arm of the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPIV), is calling for expressions of interest from all capable commercial entities in the fresh potato industry for an exclusive Australian licence to one or two new fresh potato cultivars.

The fresh potato cultivars were developed from the previous fresh National Potato Breeding Program, which was funded by DPIV, Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) and levy-paying fresh potato growers. Each of the cultivars has been evaluated at Thorpdale by the Victorian Fresh Potato Evaluation Group and also in South Australia.

The 'evaluation and exploitation licence option' rights on offer, provide the opportunity for the final market-oriented evaluation of one or both of the cultivars, with a view to maximising the commercial uptake of the new cultivars.

The two outstanding new cultivars are currently known by the codes 04-194-01 and 04-172-06.

## Cultivar 04-194-01

This cultivar is the standout of this evaluation group, exhibiting a superior yield to Sebago and Coliban in all trials. The mainly medium to large tubers are oval to short oblong and thick, with shallow to moderately deep eyes and a shallow heel. It has a good bright, white to cream, smooth skin colour that maintains a good bloom. It has

a specific gravity of 1.069 (dry matter of 17.8%), with good boiling results, no after-cooking darkening or sloughing. It is not suitable for crisping, but should fry and roast well. The plants have a mid season maturity.

The cultivar is PCN susceptible and Common scab has also been observed. This cultivar is suitable for both brushed and washed markets, and is better than cultivars currently in the market.



Cultivar 04-194-01

## Cultivar 04-172-06

This cultivar has a reasonable yield for a mid-early season maturity. As this cultivar has a short dormancy, it could be used for double cropping. The mainly medium-sized tubers are round and thick and have a bright cream, smooth skin. It has a specific gravity of 1.073

(dry matter of 18.6%) and good multipurpose cooking results, with reasonable crisping colour, no after-cooking darkening or sloughing, which will make it ideal for boiling or roasting.

This cultivar is PCN susceptible but Common scab has been observed. This cultivar is suitable for both brushed and washed markets.

## Maximising returns

The main commercialisation aim

maximise grower adoption of the cultivar(s) in the future.

All licence applications must be received by **Thursday 17th February 2011**. The information brief detailing the descriptions of the cultivars, application requirements and licensee selection criteria can be obtained through Agriculture Victoria Services, by contacting Terina Ogden (terina.ogden@dpi.vic.gov.au).

These two cultivars represent the last public commercial release of potato cultivars from the National Potato Breeding program by DPIV in Australia.

If you are interested in the development of a new cultivar from the Australian Potato Breeding Program for your market, please contact Tony Slater (0408 656 021) for information on the process.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- New cultivars developed for the National Potato Breeding Program.
- 04-194-01 picked as the standout cultivar.
- Final two cultures for release to come from the National Potato Breeding Program (NPBP).



For more information contact:

Tony Slater

Victorian Department of Primary Industries

Email: <tony.slater@dpi.vic.gov.au>

Phone: 0408 656 021

Project number: PT03006

of HAL and AVS is to maximise returns to the Australian fresh potato sector by ensuring maximum grower uptake of the cultivars.

Licences will be offered based on a plan submitted for each cultivar which will detail an applicant's evaluation and commercialisation capabilities and their proposed strategy to

# APVMA refutes 'dangerous' pesticides identification

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is a federal government authority in charge of the registration and assessment of pesticides and veterinary medicines.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has recently hit back at claims made by the National Toxics Network (NTN), who were commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to identify the most dangerous pesticides registered in Australia.

In a statement, the APVMA said that the criteria used by the NTN did not adequately address what constitutes a dangerous chemical, with over 120 active constituents that have been approved in Australia featuring on the list.

To identify the pesticides, the NTN used the following criteria:

- Prohibited in the European Union.
- Identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as hazardous to varying degrees.
- Flagged by various regulatory authorities as a potential carcinogen.
- Flagged by various regulatory authorities as an endocrine disruptor.

Addressing the point about being prohibited in the European Union (EU), the APVMA said that two-thirds of active constituents that were in use when an EU review of

pesticides began, were never actually assessed in the study for health or environmental issues.

Many manufacturers pulled out because they were relied upon to financially support the costly review process.

According to the APVMA, "The commercial return from sales of these chemicals was insufficient to support this investment."

The NTN study paired those that withdrew from the review with those that failed the assessment, therefore increasing the overall number of failures reported.

"What NTN/WWF has done is to lump together those that were withdrawn from the assessment and those that failed the assessment and claim they were all prohibited because of human health and environmental concerns," the statement reads.

The statement also explains that many of the chemicals claimed to be prohibited in Europe are in fact used not only in some parts of Europe, but also in other countries around the world, most notably the United States, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

The second criterion raised by the APVMA focuses on pesticides identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as hazardous.

“Provided label instructions are followed and the user has the necessary training, products with hazardous active constituents can be used safely.”

Whilst the APVMA admits that the criterion has merit, it notes that products are registered by regulators and that sufficient controls are in place to limit the use to safe levels.

"Provided label instructions are followed and the user has the necessary training, products with hazardous active constituents can be used safely," the statement reads.

This is much the same for the final two criteria listed above. The APVMA emphasised the important role that regulators play in deciding what pesticides become available to growers.

"Classification of a chemical as a potential carcinogen or endocrine disruptor is not an accurate measure of its danger to end users," the APVMA said.

"The approved uses of a chemical product, when used according to label instructions, may present none of these dangers."

The APVMA stressed that there are currently numerous processes in place to ensure that chemicals currently on the market are open to review, ensuring the use does not exceed unsafe levels.

It's also stated that importance needs to be placed on sensible use of chemicals, rather than draconian laws to completely weed out their use.





**Name:** Andrea Hawkes

**Age:** 26

**Location of farm:** Boneo, VIC

**Potatoes farmed:** We do fresh, gourmet potatoes that range from Kipflers, Royal Blues, Ranger Roughies, as well as mainstream white varieties that include Sebago and Exton.

**Role in company:** Everything from planting, to picking, to packing and sales.

**How did you get involved in the industry?**

Family.

**Do you plan to continue farming?**

Yes, it's good. It's flexible and works well with everything else I'm doing.

**Describe your average day.**

It varies depending on what time of season it is. At the moment, there's no harvesting, but we're fairly busy doing planting at the moment. One day I can be on the back of a planter, the next day cutting seed.

**What's the best thing about your job?**

It's good to work with family. It's nice dealing with customers; I really enjoy dealing with customers and getting to meet new people.

**How do you think younger people can be encouraged to start farming?**

I think because it is fairly flexible time-wise; you don't have to be out there constantly. I've done the 9-5 thing and it's not as much fun. I'd rather be outside. It can be good for young people when they leave school, as many don't excel at their

academic subjects, and can feel a bit lost and don't know where to go.

Farming is also a good option for people that are a bit more hands-on. They get to use their brains as well, because it's not all just luck!

**If you weren't farming, what would you be doing?**

Probably riding racehorses, having raced for seven years when I was younger.

**Do you read Potatoes Australia?**

Yes, I usually flick through it.

**After being on the NZ Growers' Tour earlier this year, how valuable do you think trips like this are to the industry, as well as individually?**

I found it really good. We have quite a small farm here and we're very specialised in our field, so it was really good to go over there and see other farms. We went to a lot of the packing centres as well and that was very interesting. It was a big eye-opener to expose people to what else is around. It was good to see a farm as it is operating and compare how you run things to how they run things, and you can bring stuff away from that and implement it in your business.



# Q&A Young Grower Andrea Hawkes

*New feature*



# WA self-accreditation potato industry

Dale Spencer of the Department of Agriculture and Food WA speaks about how



Virologist Roger Jones and Senior Administration and Seed Inspector Dale Spencer examine potato plants for Potato leaf roll virus.  
Photo courtesy of Dale Spencer

After some uncertainty in the 1980s that saw the Western Australian ware potato industry dangerously close to folding, due to poor yields resulting from high levels of virus in some seed, the industry now looks to be well and truly back on its feet.

Dale Spencer, Senior Seed Certification Officer at the Department of Agriculture and Food in WA (DAFWA) said that the industry has recovered well since being on its knees for a number of years.

The main culprit was Potato leaf roll virus, which is spread by aphids during summer and infected crop foliage and tuber stocks.

Although it does not kill the potato plant, the virus curls as well as discolours new leaves, and it severely reduces yields.

“The ware potato industry was having problems mainly with Potato leaf roll virus, and it was rampant within the ware-growing industry to such an extent that the industry looked

like it was almost going to fold,” Mr Spence said.

“It was making it uneconomical for growers to continue on because of low yields.”

“The Department of Agriculture and Food in WA (DAFWA), together with Western Potatoes, as it was known then, introduced the certified seed scheme rules as a result of high levels of Potato leaf roll virus in ware crops in WA.”

Since then, the industry has moved forward with the help of DAFWA after an overhaul in the standard of seed that is certified for sale. In doing so, they helped ensure that Potato leaf roll virus has been reduced to a level that is not as catastrophic as once before and made the industry viable again.

“From every grower’s generation two (2) crop, we take 350 leaf or tuber samples at random grown in the seed schemes and have them tested for the Potato leaf roll (PLRV); for virus X; for virus Y; for virus S; and Tomato spotted wilt virus



# system stars, as ware on the improve

the ware potato industry has taken positive steps forward, writes Andrew Mahony.

(TSWV),” he said.

“There are five main viruses we see as exotic to WA that have been almost eliminated due to this testing.”

At the heart of the seed certification program is an accreditation system that affords growers the opportunity to participate in inspecting and certifying their own tubers in line with the standards required for domestic and interstate markets.

The accreditation process involves industry participants, such as seed growers and exporters that pack product, completing a short theory and practical examination enabling the business to certify that the quality of their product meets the seed scheme standards.

The cost of the course that includes training and accreditation fees will pay for itself over time, particularly with the cost of tuber inspections performed by a regulatory body almost non-existent.

“We give the applicants a

small manual and take them through both a practical and theory-type training arrangement, and that takes two to three hours,” Mr Spencer said.

“If they’re successful in that, it gives those accredited seed outlets the ability to incorporate

make life easier for growers and exporters, speeding up the exporting process, and just as importantly, improving the bottom line.

“Growers today are looking for ways to cut the costs and to be more efficient in exporting their product,” Mr Spencer said.

program, it appears that the reception from growers is a positive one.

“I’m getting encouraging feedback. We’re only into the first year, but there are more people putting their hand up,” Mr Spencer said.

“Growers today are looking for ways to cut the costs and to be more efficient in exporting their product.”

the accreditation into existing quality assurance arrangements allowing them three years accreditation to do their own tuber inspections.”

The system is designed to

“If they’re sending big quantities of product through the season, it’s saving them money.”

Despite only being early days for the Seed Works accreditation

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- WA ware potato industry close to folding in the 1980s.
- Seed certification program allows growers to save time and money to inspect their crops for domestic and interstate markets.
- Positive response from growers about the system.

**i** For more information contact:  
Dale Spencer  
Department of Agriculture and Food WA  
Email: <dale.spencer@agric.wa.gov.au>

# The final word on Tasmania's TPP workshops

Workshops play an important role in spreading information around the growing supply chain, with an aim to strengthen the industry moving forward, writes Andrew Mahony.

Over the course of three weeks in July, Tasmania was provided with three workshops focussing on the Tomato-potato psyllid (TPP), with one each in the north west, north east, and southern regions of the Apple Isle.

Each workshop featured a host of guest speakers from both Australia and New Zealand, and aimed to meet a set of six clear objectives that included informing local potato and vegetable growers about the dangers of the Tomato-potato psyllid.

The New Zealand guests spoke about the devastating effects that the TPP, as a host of liberibacter (the cause of Zebra Chip) has had on the industry in

their country.

Many in attendance found the NZ guests very worthwhile, as they not only gave a good account of what the Zebra Chip disease has been like to deal with as a grower, but they also showed the way crops were affected and the symptoms to look out for.

The first of the six objectives set out in the project was *to increase awareness of the risks associated with the Tomato-potato psyllid to the Australian vegetable industries (in particular the Tasmanian potato industry).*

Leader of the project, Frank Mulcahy, said that the initial level of knowledge was quite limited.

"There were various levels of knowledge there, but most people didn't know very much at all," Mr Mulcahy said.

The majority of those in the workshops stated that their awareness of the risks had increased, with a very large majority from the Scottsdale location indicating that their awareness had been greatly increased.

The second objective was *to increase preparedness of industry (particularly potato and tomato) for possible incursion and establishment of the psyllid in Australia.*

A number of growers expressed their concerns about the preparedness of the industry and ability to act in a crisis. A

group of those that attended the Granton seminar in the southern region were particularly vocal about this. However, a majority of those who responded to the questionnaire did believe that the industry's preparedness had increased thanks to the workshops.

The third objective was to *expose Tasmanian growers, researchers, agronomists and contractors to New Zealand expertise and research to date.*

This objective was met, as a significant cross-section of the industry attended at least one of the workshops. The four New Zealand presenters spoke to a range of attendees, including growers, researchers, agronomists and service providers.

They spoke about the impact Zebra Chip had on their production of potatoes, and the amount of devastation caused by the disease.

According to project leader Frank Mulcahy, it was important to get growers who had suffered through Zebra Chip to speak to local growers.

"That was the basis of the program, really, to have farmers who have had to fight this thing, that have suffered the pain, to come and relate to the growers here," Mr Mulcahy said.

"I think that's why they were pretty successful. They're at the same level as the farmers are and are able to relate in real terms and real dollars as to how it's hurt them."

The fourth objective in the project was to *strengthen*





### networks between New Zealand and Tasmanian vegetable industries.

Throughout the course of the workshops, some good networks have been built with various sections of the industry, including growers, the processing industry and other supply chain members.

Other activities the visitors took part in included visiting growers and touring processing facilities at Ulverstone, Tasmania.

The fifth objective was to *develop communication links between industry stakeholders (e.g. processors, growers, researchers, and AQIS) and across industry e.g. tomato and potato.*

Much like the last objective, networks were established between various attendees, including government entomologists and researchers who have contacts and information within both Tasmania and New Zealand.

“ Networks were established between various attendees, including government entomologists and researchers who have contacts and information within both Tasmania and New Zealand. ”

And finally, the last objective was to *identify key issues for Tasmania.*

Three of the key issues identified during the workshops were:

- The awareness of TPP amongst potato growers has definitely increased, as well as the awareness amongst other vegetable growers. This is something that has generally not been the case up until now.
- The reaction time of the industry, and the possibility of TPP already being present in Australia. If TPP is found here, the financial effect would be catastrophic.
- Due to the fact that TPP impacts mostly on the French fry processing industry, Tasmania—as a processing-heavy potato industry—would be greatly affected if TPP was

to enter Australia.

In the survey following the workshops, those in attendance were asked to provide an overall rating, with almost all rating the workshops as good or excellent. Of the 29 people who responded, 10 rated the workshops as excellent, while 17 said they were good.

Over the course of the three workshops, there were 80 local growers in attendance, with 138 people altogether. The most highly attended workshop was the one held in Ulverstone in the north west, with 40 growers and 40 non-growers attending. Scottsdale in the north east saw 32 growers and six non-growers, whilst Granton in the south saw eight growers and 12 non-growers.

This project was funded by HAL using National Potato Levy funds with matched funds from the Australian Government, and financial support of Simplot Australia - Tasmania.

## History of TPP and Zebra Chip

- Zebra Chip was first reported on potato fields of Saltillo, Mexico in 1994.
- It was reported in Texas, USA in the early 1990s, but not identified until 2000.
- Guatemala reported Zebra Chip after 2000.
- New Zealand's first suspected case occurred in May 2008.
- While Zebra Chip in potatoes is not dangerous to consume, the discolouration that appears means that infected potatoes are unsellable.
- Symptoms of the disease are similar to those found in many other potato/tomato disorders. These include: yellowing of foliage, and leaf cupping and narrowing, aerial tubers, shortened internodes and regrowth from the base of the plant.
- Tuber symptoms include severe vascular discolouration, as well as a characteristic pink blush at the stem end.
- The carrier of the disease is the Tomato-potato psyllid. It is a small, 2mm-long flying insect that behaves like a whitefly and flies out of bushes when disturbed. When inspected up close, it somewhat resembles a much smaller version of a cicada.
- AUSVEG has repeatedly stated that it could be catastrophic for the Australian potato industry if the government allowed New Zealand to export potatoes into Australia as is currently being considered.

TPP fact sheets were included in the last edition of *Potatoes Australia*, but if any reader would like another copy, please contact Andrew Mahony by email on [andrew.mahony@ausveg.com.au](mailto:andrew.mahony@ausveg.com.au) or call 03 9822 0388.

The fact sheet is also available on the AUSVEG website [www.ausveg.com.au](http://www.ausveg.com.au).

### THE BOTTOM LINE

- Awareness of TPP amongst potato growers in Tasmania has increased as a result of the seminars.
- New Zealand growers provided valuable insight into the issues they've faced, having battled with TPP.
- Key networks built between Tasmanian and New Zealand growers, allowing for more open communication.

**i** For more information contact:  
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Phone: (03) 6429 6108  
Project number: MT09095

# What's on

5-7 January 2011

## Potato Expo 2011

**Where:** Rio Las Vegas Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, United States

**What:** The POTATO EXPO is the largest conference and tradeshow for the North American Potato Industry, offering educational programming covering the most important issues facing the potato industry, and numerous networking opportunities with key decision makers.

**Further information:** [www.potato-expo.com](http://www.potato-expo.com)

8 January 2011

## Bass Coast Summer Agricultural Show

**Where:** Wonthaggi Recreation Reserve, Wonthaggi, Victoria

**What:** Annual Wonthaggi show, featuring garden and farm produce exhibitions and competitions; showjumping; rides and live entertainment to name a few.

**Further information:** [www.basscoastagshow.org.au](http://www.basscoastagshow.org.au)

9-11 February 2011

## Fruit Logistica

**Where:** Berlin, Germany

**What:** The leading international meeting place of the fresh produce trade. Over 2,000 companies from across the entire fresh produce value chain will be present in a single location – including global players as well as small and medium-sized suppliers from all around the world.

**Further information:** [www.fruitlogistica.com](http://www.fruitlogistica.com)

8-18 February 2011

## 2011 Grower Study Tour to Germany and The Netherlands

**Where:** Germany and The Netherlands

**What:** AUSVEG to host a tour of Germany and The Netherlands for growers. The tour is set to visit numerous farms and tourist attractions.

**Further information:** Phone: (03) 9822 0388 or email [elizabeth.cox@ausveg.com.au](mailto:elizabeth.cox@ausveg.com.au)

18-20 February 2011

## Seymour Alternative Farming Expo

**Where:** Seymour, Victoria

**What:** Seymour's own outdoor farm machinery supermarket, the expo will have more than 450 exhibitors present the world's best agricultural technology for a general audience of 45,000 visitors including farming professionals and members of the general public.

**Further information:** [www.seymour-expo.com](http://www.seymour-expo.com)

▶ 14-16 April 2011

## AUSVEG National Convention 2011

**Where:** Sebel-Citigate Hotel, Brisbane, Queensland

**What:** The largest single gathering of vegetable and potato growers of the year, once again featuring the annual trade show that promises to be bigger and better than last year.

**Further information:** Phone (03) 9822 0388 or email [convention@ausveg.com.au](mailto:convention@ausveg.com.au)



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