

vegetables australia

January/February 2014

**The Hon.
Barnaby
Joyce MP**

**Meet the
Minister**

**Matt and Kate
Zagami**
Young growers

Colin Houston
We have a solution

**Phung Tran and
Linda Do**
Success in the lucky
country

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AUSVEG Chairman and CEO messages



Geoff Moar

AUSVEG Chairman

With the 2013 election and its tumultuous lead-up now relegated to history, the stage is set for the Abbott Government to forge on with its mandate in 2014. From the perspective of our industry, the promised White Paper on Agricultural Competitiveness is a key component of that agenda. It is therefore pleasing to note that in early December, the Department of Agriculture released the Terms of Reference for this looming examination of the issues facing the sector.

Food security and the improvement of returns at the farm gate will be among the focuses of those compiling the document, which Federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has stated will also address strategies for the generation of jobs and economic growth in one of Australia's key export industries. The Minister's comments are heartening also in the context of his stated desire to put 'more dollars into growers' pockets' in an interview contained in this edition of *Vegetables Australia*.

While the talk surrounding the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper is promising, AUSVEG is eager to urge that the document does not discount the importance of Research and Development as a major contributor to our industry. Given the multitude of challenges faced by the sector, if horticulture – the fastest growing sector in the Australian economy – is to remain competitive, it is paramount we remain at the cutting edge of farming practices globally.

Another key focus of the White Paper must be access to labour, particularly if the

vegetable industry's \$3.5 billion annual contribution to the \$10 billion horticultural sector – and Australian economy more broadly – is to continue growing.

Having already canvassed growers about the red and green tape issues they would like to see addressed, AUSVEG can assure growers it will work closely with the Federal Government during the preparation of the White Paper.

Speaking of things ahead, the 2014 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence at the Cairns Convention and Exhibition Centre from June 19 to 21 is now just a few months away. For the latest updates on Convention preparations, or to book your places, please go to www.ausveg.com.au/convention.

Geoff Moar
Chairman
AUSVEG



Richard Mulcahy

AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

In the face of cheap overseas imports and increasing input costs from labour, utilities and other overheads, it is becoming increasingly tough for Australian vegetable growers to compete. Given these mounting pressures, it is now more important than ever that those involved in the growing and production of vegetables come up with creative solutions to maximise their profits and ensure their businesses remain viable in to the future.

In the lead-up to the 2014 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence to be held at the Cairns Convention and Exhibition Centre, AUSVEG is pleased to announce a Produce Innovation Seminar is scheduled to go ahead in tropical north-Queensland. On Thursday 19 June 2014, prior to the Convention, the event will feature Australian and international industry leaders presenting on innovative ways to enhance the value of our produce in an increasingly tough market.

Expressions of interest for the event are now welcome and levy-paying vegetable growers can apply to have their associated travel and accommodation costs covered. I would encourage all of those who are serious about the future of their businesses to attend, as the seminar will undoubtedly pave the way forward for Australian vegetable growers. To express your interest in the Produce Innovation Seminar please contact AUSVEG on (03) 9882 0277 or convention@ausveg.com.au.

The New Year also means it is now just a few short months

until the 2014 Convention gets started in Cairns from June 19 to 21. I urge all those associated with the vegetable industry to book their places now for what is again set to be a landmark event for the industry.

With export tipped as a key area for possible growth in the Australian vegetable sector, AUSVEG has welcomed the announcement that the Federal Government has finalised a free trade agreement with South Korea. While it is Australia's potato growers who are set to gain most via the elimination of tariffs in to South Korea for their product, the deal is also expected to benefit other commodities including, carrots, tomatoes and vegetable juices. Overall it is hoped the FTA will increase the value of produce exported to South Korea, which in 2012-13 was calculated to be \$7.4 million of vegetables, including \$6.3 million of potatoes.

Richard J Mulcahy
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**FRONT COVER:**

The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP

Photograph by John McRae

Editorial

With the Federal Department of Agriculture having released the Terms of Reference for the White Paper in to Agricultural Competitiveness, Australian vegetable growers look set to become a whole lot more familiar with the Coalition Government and its policies in 2014. In an effort to facilitate that process, an interview with Federal Agriculture Minister, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, has been included in this edition of *Vegetables Australia* (page 26). During a wide-ranging question and answer session, Mr Joyce discusses his views on the sector and his priorities within the portfolio. Growers may also take heart from the fact one of his key stated aims is to put 'more dollars' in their pockets.

Elsewhere in this edition, we visit the impressive T&C Do & Son growing operation in Woodridge, north of Perth (page 14). From humble beginnings, Phung Tran Do and his wife Linda, have gradually built up their family business to the point where they now

supply significant quantities of vegetables, including spring onions and broccoli, to the major retailers as well as markets.

Meanwhile, young growers Matt and Kate Zagami provide their take on the industry and discuss the challenges of running a successful growing operation while raising a young family (page 22).

In the field of Research and Development (R&D), we explore the delivery of nutritional information via the recently-launched Veggycation website (page 38) and examine recent work on soil health systems in Queensland and New South Wales. Wraps of the Young Grower's (page 30) and Women's Grower (page 28) Study Tours are also featured.

In EnviroVeg developments, Tasmanian grower Colin Houston discusses his approach to sustainable farming (page 20) and EnviroVeg News (page 18) examines the benefits of having an Environmental Policy.



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The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP



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T&C Do & Son



9

Strengthening international ties

TOP SPEED
PROTECTION AGAINST POTATO MOTH



Veggie bites

Facts & figures...

509

The total number of products containing pumpkin as an ingredient launched globally in the last 3 months, according to the Project Harvest October 2013 report.

9

The number of days respondents expected cauliflower to stay fresh, as recorded by the Project Harvest October 2013 report.

\$51 million

Total value of carrots and turnips exported to Japan in 2012-13, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

70%

The percentage of additional food, measured in calories, that will be needed to feed an expected global population of 9.6 billion in 2050, according to the United Nations sponsored World Resources Institute.

10.3

The number of times capsicum was consumed per month by respondents surveyed for the Project Harvest September 2013 report.

99%

The percentage of surveyed Australian men and women who ate vegetables on a daily basis, according to the *Health at a Glance* 2013 study, conducted by the OECD.

\$3.7 billion

The gross value of production for the Australian vegetable industry is expected to reach over \$3.7 billion in 2013-14, according to new forecast data released by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES).

35%

The percentage Australian frozen vegetable exports have fallen by since 2009-10, as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Strengthening international ties



AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy welcomes Israeli Ambassador Shmuel Ben-Shmuel (centre) as AUSVEG Chairman Geoff Moar (left) and Deputy Chairman David Addison (right) watch on.

As part of ongoing efforts to represent the interests of Australia's 9000 vegetable and potato growers, AUSVEG recently hosted a delegation from Israel, in a bid to bolster the already-strong business relationship between the two countries. High-profile attendees at the reception, held at the Peak Industry Body's Melbourne headquarters in November, included Israel's Ambassador to Australia Mr Shmuel Ben-Shmuel and Mr Avshalom Vilan, of the Israeli Farmers Federation, who joined senior AUSVEG representatives including CEO Richard Mulcahy and Chairman Geoff Moar.

Mr Jonathan Zadka, Regional Counsellor to the Pacific Islands from the Embassy of Israel and retired AFL legend Robert DiPierdomenico, who has played a key role in encouraging reconciliation between Israeli and Palestinian youths through

sport, were also in attendance.

While Australia and Israel might be half a world apart, Mr Mulcahy said the two countries had much to offer each other, particularly given a shared reputation for innovation and the water supply issues faced by both nations. He added many Australian growers who had visited Israel on study tours had been taken with the advanced horticultural practices employed there.

"They were all very impressed by the entire country, not just the Israeli farming activities, but the history, the entire experiences. I know many of them had never been before and they all came back very enthusiastic about their experiences," he told the gathering.

Ambassador Ben-Shmuel also spoke about the scope for cooperation between the two nations. "Since its inception,



Photographs by Luka Kauzlaric.

Israeli Ambassador Shmuel Ben-Shmuel with Robert DiPierdomenico.

even before that, Israel has dealt with the issue of agriculture. It is part and parcel of the Israeli history and the Israeli culture and the Israeli psyche. We have to deal with very harsh conditions because there has been a lack of water in Israel for many many years," he said.

"In that sense Israel has done tremendously well and there is now a good culture. Israel is one of the leaders in the world in

terms of agriculture innovations. There has been a lot of talk of agricultural developments, the need to organise agriculture in Australia and the issue of lack of water so I think that there is potential for a lot of coordination between Israel and Australia."

Mr Vilan also spoke of his desire for ongoing co-operation between agricultural innovators in the two countries.

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Biosecurity brief



with Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene

IN THIS INSTALMENT OF *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA'S* SERIES ON BIOSECURITY, AUSVEG BIOSECURITY ADVISOR, DR KEVIN CLAYTON-GREENE DISCUSSES PLANT HEALTH AUSTRALIA, HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ORGANISATION AND HOW GROWERS CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT ITS WORK.



Can you tell us about Plant Health Australia, and your involvement with them in the field of biosecurity?

Plant Health Australia (PHA) is an incorporated body that has a primary role of overseeing, and acting as a liaison between the government and industry. The funding is split in three ways – a third state governments, a third federal government, and a third funded by industry. Industry contributions are based on their relative size. The biggest contributor is by far the grains industry, and then we [the vegetable and potato industries] are the next biggest. PHA has two general meetings for members per year whereby information is shared. The meetings canvas issues related to the Deed, which is a legal contract that AUSVEG is a signatory to. PHA is tasked with looking after the Deed, which is an instrument by which the government works out how to manage pest incursions. That's why it's there and it's vested within PHA. PHA also has other roles relating to plant health and biosecurity, but that's their prime role.

Could you please elaborate on the Deed and precisely what it does?

It's an instrument that was developed between the government and private industry, which sets out a mechanism for how pest incursions will be managed in this country. So, for instance, eradication campaigns will be funded when there is an incursion of an exotic pest which can be eradicated. The Deed sets up a whole protocol based around that. Industries contribute by signing up to the Deed. By signing up to the Deed there's a thing called 'owner's reimbursement cost'. What that means is that if there is an incursion and you have a crop which is affected – so say for example you have to pull your trees out – you will be entitled to compensation. That compensation is determined by a fairly complex process but that comes under the Deed. The Deed establishes and lays out all the protocols and the ways in which this happens. Industries that have not signed up to the Deed are not eligible for owner re-imburement.

What was discussed at the most recent PHA meetings and industry forums you attended in Canberra recently?

So there are two general meetings per year and the most recent was in late November. At this meeting, there was

discussion about issues relating to the Deed that might need clarification, whether there are any changes that might need to be made, and agreement on said changes. It is important to note that no change can be made to the Deed unless all parties agree. Discussions are facilitated in a general plant forum where the industry representatives discuss issues relating to biosecurity and plant health. They discuss issues they think might be helpful to raise with Plant Health Australia, as well as with the government signatories.

How do outcomes of these meetings guide the direction of industry and industry groups?

They come back to the Peak Industry Bodies for ratification. Really, it frames our (vegetable industry) response to how we deal with pests and diseases. So, for instance, we have a potato biosecurity manual and we've got a vegetable industry biosecurity manual and there's also a national framework for R&D being developed with biosecurity. The biosecurity manuals list all the pest threats faced by the industry and ranks them according to their likelihood of entry and impact. Whilst this may not sound particularly exciting it all becomes extremely important

should we have an incursion. My own role in the process is to provide the technical guidance for the Peak Industry Body – in this case AUSVEG.

In general, how aware are growers of biosecurity issues and the work done by organisations like Plant Health Australia?

I'm not sure, because it can be quite difficult to understand and it is an extremely complex area. So people are aware of it but often it is the case that biosecurity only becomes an issue for somebody if it either stops them producing or affects what they can do either as importers or exporters to either interstate or overseas. For people who do want to know more about it, I would suggest going on to the PHA website (www.planthealthaustralia.com.au) and having a look. There are a lot of one page information sheets and other items that might give one a bit more of an idea of what they do.



Biosecurity manuals are available through the Plant Health Australia website: www.planthealthaustralia.com.au. Email: info@ausveg.com.au Project Number: VG11013



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Opportunities for an Aussie-grown taste of Asia

NEW RESEARCH HAS REVEALED A GROWING APPETITE FOR ASIAN VEGETABLES WHILE CAPSICUMS AND BABY SPINACH ARE PROVING MORE POPULAR THAN BRUSSELS SPROUTS, RACHEL WILLIAMS WRITES.

Politicians often talk of the Asian century and it seems that our culinary curiosities are moving in the same direction. The latest Project Harvest Wave Report, coordinated by Colmar Brunton, and funded by Horticulture Australia (HAL) using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government, highlights the growing popularity of Asian vegetables in our diets.

Consumer research suggests that the main triggers for buying Asian vegetables are that they are easy to cook with, cook quickly, are healthy, and taste great. The report said, among consumers, Asian vegetables had relatively high levels of importance, endorsement and interest in new types. There was also a higher level of future purchase intent by customers, compared to all commodities tracked to-date – a positive for Aussie farmers wanting to capitalise on the trend.

“Previous waves, including this, also indicate that there is an increasing trend towards cooking Asian cuisine,” the report stated. “In contrast to this, the only Asian vegetable launches in Australia were instant soups. This suggests that there is an opportunity for new product launches that include Asian vegetables as a key component.”

Asia is also deemed a growing export market, with shipments of vegetables to South East Asia rising over the past five years. “Exports to Indonesia alone have increased from \$6 million to \$11 million over the past few years. In Asia, Australian vegetables are known for their high quality,” the report said.

Broader findings

Other vegetables to be investigated as part of the September research were Brussels sprouts, capsicum and

baby spinach, while the October report focused on pumpkin, cauliflower, carrots and beans. The trends are determined at a global and regional level. However, it seems that most families would identify with the findings when they take a look in their fridge.

Brussels sprouts

For parents who struggle to get their children to eat Brussels sprouts, there’s confirmation you are not alone. The vegetable had lower levels of importance and endorsement among consumers. On average, respondents purchased them three times a month and consumed them six times a month. Barriers stopping people from loading up their shopping baskets with Brussels sprouts include that they are seasonal and relatively expensive (when out of season), and limited availability.

Capsicum and baby spinach

In comparison, respondents bought capsicums once a week and consumed them more than twice a week, on average. Producers appear to be reacting to capsicum’s growing popularity – with 4802 global product launches containing capsicum in the past three months.

Baby spinach was also deemed a growing opportunity for growers – trends indicated that convenient, healthy baby food is a growing market and an opportunity exists for baby spinach and other nutrient-rich vegetables. “There were 69 global baby spinach products launched over the past three months. In Australia there were eight products, seven of which were baby food,” the report said.



Beans and carrots

When it comes to beans, key comparisons with the first wave of research indicate there was a decrease in the average weight of purchase and a significant increase in the number of consumers indicating they were not versatile, with price also a factor. Colmar Brunton researchers suggested that the industry consider promoting pre-prepared, ready-to-cook beans, highlighting cooking time to promote more regular use and consumption.

Carrots, on the other hand, were considered good value for money and were purchased on average 3.9 times a month and consumed 14.5 times a month. However, there appears to be a barrier to future sales growth - the feedback from consumers was that they felt they had already consumed enough. "Point of sale material should match recent trends seen in the potato industry, whereby different varieties and types are associated with different cooking styles," the report suggested.

Cauliflower and pumpkin

Cauliflower purchases at specialist retailers had grown

since the first wave of research, however, they did not have high levels of importance or interest – and were below the project averages. Cauliflowers were purchased on average 3.2 times a month and consumed 8.5 times. "There is a desire amongst consumers for the ability to purchase smaller portion sizes," the report said. "Consider selling cauliflower in smaller floret format, as well as whole or half portions."

Pumpkins had high levels of importance, satisfaction, endorsement and interest in new types.

Compared to the last wave of research, there was an increase in the average price per kg and significant increase in Queensland Blue awareness. But the authors suggest the vegetable needs an overhaul when it comes to promoting its versatility, decreasing wastage and further increasing variety in meals.

In general, the report stated that a key goal of the vegetable industry is to increase consumers' vegetable repertoire and consumption. "This could be achieved with increasing vegetable freshness and quality, which should drive consumer satisfaction," it concluded.



THE BOTTOM LINE

- Colmar Brunton has been commissioned to conduct a monthly on-line tracking project following specified vegetables across a three year period.
- The research is collated with both desktop research and in the field market research to explore the trends of each vegetable commodity.
- Asian Vegetables are growing in popularity with Australian consumers but some traditional vegetables need a rebrand when it comes to promoting their versatility.



AUSVEG: (03) 9882 0277
Email: info@ausveg.com.au
Project Number: VG12078

Fertile ground in the lucky country



Photographs by Chris Kershaw.

AFTER ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA FROM VIETNAM MORE THAN 30 YEARS AGO, PHUNG TRAN AND LINDA DO HAVE BUILT A SIGNIFICANT OPERATION AT WOODRIDGE, NORTH OF PERTH, IN A TRUE REFUGEE SUCCESS STORY.

From a start growing just small amounts of cucumber, spring onion, zucchini and parsley on about 10 acres in 1985, years of dedicated hard work has converted T&C Do & Son in to a significant business concern. The once humble

husband and wife operation has grown incrementally over the years – first to 20 acres, then to 150 acres and, most recently, to the point where 250 of its 600 acres in holdings are under irrigation at any given time.

With that expanded land mass

has come an expanded range of products, and production. The Dos now grow significant quantities of vegetables including broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, celery, silverbeet, spring onion and English spinach, and supply both major retailers

as well as local markets. “For example, we grow 120,000 lettuces a week and with broccoli, from March until the end of November, we grow 120,000 per week as well. It’s a big amount,” says Linda. “About 15 per cent or 20 per cent is for the markets

and then about 80 per cent is for Coles and Woolies.”

The set up

With their farm producing such volumes, the Dos have invested heavily to ensure they have the facilities to package and distribute their vegetables. So far, this has included commissioning their own fleet of refrigerated trucks, spending on ice-making equipment and modern machinery, and investing in a state-of-the-art packaging facility.

“We have an area to wash and cut and the whole area is very clean,” says Linda. “It is very efficient and we can produce a lot. In one day we can pack maybe 1000 crates of something like spring onions, which is something like 20,000 bunches a day. We are very proud that we can do that volume in one day and that the quality is very good and they last a long time.”

A quality product

Considering the rigorous quality demands of the major retailers, as well as a heartfelt pride in their own product, the Dos have taken steps to ensure their vegetables are well above scratch. This has included following guidelines for the assessment of new land as well as soil testing and water quality checks. Staff also follow stringent quality-control procedures.

Linda says while dealing with the challenges of the Australian environment hasn't always been easy, proof of the business' commitment to quality can be seen in its produce. “We try very hard to be clean here and we do

a good job. The quality control people often come here and have a good look at how we deal with the environment for the future,” she says.

“In Australia, we have problems with flies everywhere. We work very hard to control it and we work very hard with environmental horticulturalists to make sure it's clean. We work together and we have done very well.”

Expansion

Despite the already impressive scope of their business, Linda says there is always room for expansion. With that in mind, the Dos have been gradually attempting to bring more land online, using organic waste from their operation.

“After we harvest, with the waste from things like spring onions and broccoli, we take it to the back of the property,” says Linda. “We have about 100 acres which we haven't developed because there is a lot of wood and rocks in there. So we bought a big excavator to dig holes and every day we place all the waste in the truck and fill up the hole and cover it up with sand. We hope to develop all of the empty land so we're thinking about developing in to the future.”

Against the odds

Though a formidable operation now, T&C Do & Son's success hasn't come without a fair dose of hard work. All the more impressive, is the couple's lack of formal training and their ongoing desire to succeed.

“When we came here we were refugees trying to make money so we started the farm,” says

Linda. “Now my husband has been growing for 30 years and he is not a university student and his English isn't great but he can read and write quite well. So every year he reads a lot of books about horticulture and that is how he learned to grow things.”

“When we first started we made a lot of mistakes but they

learn from the mistakes and it has become a very good growing farm. It was trial and error.”

“Now it's been 30 years and we're still working hard. We have to do it and always have to be here working hard to look after the business. If we don't the business won't go so well.”





Future generations

With the couple having three children together, it might be reasonable to believe the family operation will be passed on to the next generation. Not necessarily says Linda, who admits she encouraged her offspring to pursue careers away from the slog of farming. Nevertheless, she concedes the lure of the family farm could be too hard to resist in the years ahead.

“I want to see a good future for the industry,” she says. “My daughter is a doctor, and she says ‘Maybe when you retire, I can take over the business’. So the children are interested but I tell her farming is very hard work and being a doctor might be better. But they say it’s boring because all you do is stay indoors and talk to sick people. They love coming to the farm because they can stroll around outside and be on horses and motorbikes and enjoy the fresh air and the green. So we’ll see what happens when we retire.”

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Ask the industry



with Scott Mathew

SCOTT MATHEW, TECHNICAL SERVICES LEAD AT SYNGENTA, DISCUSSES THE ISSUES AROUND SEED GERMINATION AND PLANT ESTABLISHMENT.

With the varied weather conditions experienced across Australia in late spring and leading in to early summer, I have been receiving numerous calls around improving plant establishment in the field, which is an ideal follow-up to the last edition's article that discussed seed orders and/or storing seed on farm.

What are some of the issues you could face as a grower when trying to establish your vegetable crop?

There can be many causes for poor plant establishment or 'weak seedlings'. Some of these causes could include things like soil compaction and crusting, soil insects, soil diseases affecting seeds or seedlings, waterlogged soils, fertiliser injury, planting the seed too deep, not taking into account the germination percentage labelled on the seed, and/or herbicide injury.

Firstly, the most important requirements for seed germination are heat and moisture - the amount and duration required by different vegetables vary. As a general rule, germination temperatures should be constant at 21°C to 27°C. Also remember as a guide, the time to germinate doubles for each 10 degrees the temperature drops below the ideal temperature.

Water is essential as it triggers a series of chemical reactions within the seed and softens and weakens the seed coat. Most seeds will germinate in a wide range of

soil moisture conditions, however, if heat and moisture are not provided frequently (as required), the viability of the seed is affected. In some cases, the seed will not germinate or early vigour will be greatly affected.

Sweet corn, as an example, is a warm-season, frost-sensitive crop with a preferred growing season temperature of 15–32°C. Your planting time should be strongly influenced by the temperature of the soil at sowing depth, which should be at least 12°C and increasing at 9:00 AM. Ideally, however, soil temperatures should be between 15°C and 35°C, with a minimum for super sweet corn of 14–16°C. For a quick check with sweet corn, if you dig up low vigour seedlings and the seed are disintegrated and there is darkening at the mesocotyl attachment, this means that the seed has deteriorated prematurely and the full content of the food reserves in the seed were not available during seedling development.

Poor establishment can also be due to diseases that cause damping off. These are sometimes referred to as 'root rots'. The most common soil-borne diseases in horticulture include: pre and post-emergence damping-off (for example: *Fusarium*, *Pythium* and *Rhizoctonia* species), or root rot (for example:

Phytophthora).

As seed is a living organism and the seed size and germination percentage can vary from season to season, it is always better to work out the desired plant population (plants per hectare) rather than the seed rate (kilograms per hectare). Reduced plant establishment could also be the result of getting seed that has a lower germination percentage than you have used previously. Seeding rate should always be calculated by using the information provided by seed suppliers on the label tags on seed bags.

As an example, the ideal plant population for sweet corn will depend on the cultivar and growing conditions, but typically ranges from only 35,000 plants per hectare under marginal conditions to 50,000–70,000 plants per hectare for heavily fertilised and well-managed irrigated crops.

When looking at sweet corn as an example, each kg contains approximately 4,500 – 9,000 seeds, but this will vary on variety. For example, SU types (e.g. Jubilee) varieties tend to be around 5,000 seeds/kg, SH2 (e.g. Overland, Garrison) tend to be 7,500 seeds/kg (range 6,500 – 11,000) and the SH2 varieties tend to have less seed vigor than SU varieties.

An example, the table below highlights how important it is to vary the seeding rate depending on the germination percentage expressed on the label.

Seeds/kg	Germination % (on the label)	Seed that will germinate (under ideal conditions)	Targeted planting density/ha	Required seed (kg) to achieve the desired plant density
5500	80%	4400	50000	11.36
5500	85%	4675	50000	10.70
5500	95%	5225	50000	9.57



For more information or to ask a question, please contact your local Syngenta Territory Manager, the Syngenta Advice Line on 1800 067 108, visit www.syngenta.com.au or email *Vegetables Australia*: info@ausveg.com.au. Please note that your questions may be published.

EnviroNews

www.enviroveg.com

Developing an Environmental Policy

AS PART OF THE RECENTLY-LAUNCHED ENVIROVEG PLATINUM SCHEME, GROWERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO HAVE AN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN PLACE.

An Environmental Policy is a great way to communicate the environmental priorities of a business with staff and external customers, and can be used in a number of ways in business promotions, such as by posting on a company website.

Companies throughout the world are under increasing pressure from consumers to demonstrate their environmental and social responsibility, so an Environmental Policy is a great way to show that a business is proactive in documenting and reviewing their environmental impacts.

Why do I need an Environmental Policy?

An Environmental Policy demonstrates a commitment from management of a business towards the environment and that they have considered its importance with respect to their business. Think of it as similar to a mission statement, a summary of how environmental management fits within your business priorities – why it matters, what you have achieved and your goals for the coming period.

AUSVEG have developed a template in the EnviroVeg Platinum Induction Package to develop your Environmental Policy, accessible at www.ausveg.com.au. Think of an Environmental Policy as a



promotional opportunity to recognise your efforts and way of communicating your environmental credentials to staff and customers.

Questions to ask yourself when developing an Environmental Policy

- What importance do we place on environmental management within our organisation?
- What have our key achievements been to date?

- What are we planning for the future – what are our goals?
- What do we have in place to ensure that our organisation (including all employees) respect and improve the environment?



For further information on the EnviroVeg Platinum scheme, or for assistance in preparing planning documentation like an Environmental Policy, contact the AUSVEG Environment Coordinator at info@ausveg.com.au or phone (03) 9882 0277.

Planning for future success: The fundamentals of environmental planning for growers

AN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN IS A GREAT WAY FOR GROWERS TO PLAN THEIR ON-FARM ACTIVITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR, AND DEMONSTRATE ANY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS ON THEIR PROPERTY.

An Environmental Action Plan provides a summary of the environmental activities you plan to implement over a period. They underpin your overall strategies. It is a tool for management to identify priorities over the coming year and it provides evidence that your business is planning to improve its environmental practices.

Filling in the Environmental Action Plan is a relatively simple process – many growers already have an idea of the property management activities they plan to put in place, so it is just a matter of writing them down.

Any previous self-assessments and third party audits you complete as part of the EnviroVeg Program will also

assist in identifying areas where your business can improve. Completing an Environmental Action Plan is a relatively simple process, and growers can access a template and instructions in the EnviroVeg Platinum Induction Package, accessible at www.ausveg.com.au.

In essence, the plan should incorporate the environmental issues you are addressing, any proposed actions and who will be responsible in the business. Once complete, an Environmental Action Plan can help to guide staff within the business to meet any proposed actions over the following year.



For further information on the EnviroVeg Platinum scheme, or for assistance in preparing planning documentation like an environmental action plan, contact the AUSVEG Environment Coordinator at info@ausveg.com.au or phone (03) 9882 0277.



Chemical application and equipment calibration: Sustainable practices for growers

FOLLOWING FROM THE PREVIOUS EDITION OF SUSTAINABLE FARMING FOCUS, WE AGAIN TALK TO ROSEMARY HENDERSON OF PROTECH CONSULTING ABOUT THE EFFICIENT APPLICATION OF CHEMICALS.

Rosemary Henderson is a leading authority on chemical management in agriculture and provides AgSafe Accreditation training to staff of companies such as Bayer CropScience. In this article, Rosemary provides advice for growers on the efficient application of crop protectant products and equipment calibration.

Mixing, loading, spraying

Growers should plan ahead and select a suitable site to decant, measure and mix the required amount of product. Ideally, this area should consist of a concreted or sealed area which is situated away from water courses or storages to prevent contamination. Measuring and mixing the product provides the highest risk to the handler and any spills are potential point sources of environmental contamination. Never eat, drink or smoke when mixing chemicals, nor allow children or unauthorised people near the mixing operation. Make sure you have a ready supply of clean water and soap for wash down after mixing the product into the spray tank.

Equipment calibration

The sprayer should be calibrated regularly to ensure chemicals are applied evenly and at the recommended label rate. A properly calibrated sprayer will reduce the risk of applying too much chemical, which can lead to unacceptable residues and damage to crops. It also reduces the risk of low dosing leading to low efficacy and the risk of resistance build up.

Nozzles

Nozzles are an essential component of spraying equipment. Growers should match the type of nozzle they use to the type of product they are using and consider whether they are applying product for a pest, disease or weed.

It is important that growers select the best nozzle configuration to match the product being applied and the chosen application method.

Maintenance

Growers should ensure that all nozzles on a boom are the

same size and make to ensure a consistent spray pattern. Manufacturing specifications for each nozzle will state the operating pressure and output each nozzle is designed to work under.

Nozzle spray patterns should be monitored periodically and nozzles checked regularly for signs of wear and tear. Worn nozzles are inefficient as they affect the output and spray pattern.

Boom height

The distance between the boom and the application target area can affect the evenness of product application, and needs to be adjusted throughout the season as the crop grows higher. Nozzle manufacturers provide recommendations for growers as to the optimum boom height required to achieve a consistent spray pattern.

Spray drift

Spray drift is the most common cause of off-target chemical movement. The product label includes important information that will reduce the risk of spray drift. A combination of various factors can contribute to spray drift, including wind speed and direction, droplet size and the volatility of the chemical.

It is important to check weather conditions before and during the spraying operation.

If the weather is unsuitable or unpredictable, don't spray.

Further information on the APVMA's spray drift policy framework and label requirements is available from APVMA website www.apvma.gov.au.

Cleaning of empty containers and spraying equipment

After pouring the last drop of product into the spray tank, growers should always triple-rinse the container and pour the wash water (rinsate) into the spray tank rather than onto the ground. This is to prevent contamination of water sources such as groundwater, contamination of soil, inadvertent residues in animals grazing in the area, protection of people working in the area, and to gain maximum efficiency from the purchased chemical.

Always follow cleaning and decontamination instructions on the product label for cleaning sprayer after use. If in doubt seek advice for the chemical reseller or manufacturer.



For more information on the safe disposal of farm chemicals please visit: www.drummuster.com.au and www.chemclear.com.au



Houston, we have a solution

A SECOND GENERATION FARMER FROM TASMANIA, COLIN HOUSTON WEATHERED THE DOWNTURN IN WOOL AND MADE HIS MARK IN VEGETABLES. A FOCUS ON SOIL MANAGEMENT FUNDAMENTALS AND A WILLINGNESS TO TRY NEW TECHNIQUES CONTINUES TO SERVE HIM WELL AS HE PLANS TO HAND OVER THE BUSINESS TO THE NEXT GENERATION.

Starting off in farming in the mid-seventies, Colin Houston ran a wool farm in Hobart. A stint in dairy was followed by a return to wool, but the price crash of the early 1990s required him to look to a future in vegetables. Through his business, Southern Fields, he now specialises mainly in lettuces for the fresh market in Tasmania. With an eye on the future, management is gradually being passed onto his son, Ben. A focus on soil management fundamentals ensures the land

is profitable today, and will remain so in the years ahead. "The biggest change we have made on our farm is carefully manipulating nutrition and ensuring the plant receives feeding when required," Colin says.

The production practices at Southern Fields have been carefully honed over years of work with researchers at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, especially student research conducted into soil health. "We always aim to

manage our land to achieve the best soil possible," Colin says.

A history of working with researchers and conducting field days has ensured Colin is regularly exposed to new production methods, which can be integrated into his farming system. "The biggest thing we got out of the research was an emphasis on plant nutrition, and ensuring that we adhere to a nutrient budget," he says.

Colin works with field agronomists regularly and tests carried out prior to and during

planting ensure fertigation matches the needs of his crops. Benefits have included healthier plants which are less susceptible to disease, and a high percentage of cut outs.

At present, the business is doing a lot of work with use of green manures, biofumigants and sorghum in its crop rotations. For lettuce, the rotation is one crop lettuce followed by a brassica crop in the same ground. For the brassica rotation, either a cauliflower or green manure mustard is used. The

ground is continuously cropped year-in-year-out, but rested and returned to pasture every five to six years. Positives of implementing a systematic crop rotation program include better quality crops and increased organic matter for water and nutrient retention. “We have noticed terrific results from use of biofumigants, which act as a weed and fungus retardant... it acts like a natural form of Metham Sodium.”

In Colin’s opinion, having a totally balanced nutrition program is essential. “We try and balance PH, N, P and K in our crops and have found that this is effective in maintaining a high percentage of cut outs. We also only put N on when it’s required, which has benefits in

increasing shelf life.” Colin has also been proactive in adopting controlled traffic farming principles in his business. After a crop is picked, it is ploughed in and left to break down, with the next crop sowed into the fixed bed.

As for the benefits from adopting soil management best practice into his business, Colin affirms that it is all about the cut outs. “Cut outs are the main benefit,” he says. “We aim for 80 per cent, which is generally achievable, but (we actually) achieve 90 per cent, which makes all the difference financially.”

As for the role of good farm management, Colin sees it as essential to the success of his operation. “I think that if you



Colin Houston preparing his product for transportation.

have someone who is a good grower and has green fingers, then you get good results – my son has got that,” says Colin. “To be successful in this industry, you need a mix of business skills and an ability to grow, as it is important to have flair and know how to grow.”

In the near future, Colin is planning the development of a new property and is keen to develop even more productive soils. “The new property has outstanding soil carbon levels and we are very excited to get started.”

Photographs by Loic Le Guilly.



“ To be successful in this industry, you need a mix of business skills and an ability to grow, as it is important to have flair and know how to grow ”

- Colin Houston



Q&A Young grower profile

Name: Matt and Kate Zagami

Age: Both 35

Location: Wairewa, Victoria

Works: AvaGrow Farms

Grows: Snow peas, peas, beans, sugar snaps, Chinese cabbage.



How did you first become involved in the vegetable industry?

Matt: I grew up involved in my family vegetable operation. When I finished high school I studied ag-science at Melbourne Uni's Dookie campus and gained a degree. After that, I worked with a crop protection company in the Goulburn Valley. The family farm was calling me back and soon after graduation, I went back home to help my father develop his farm. The family farm grew beans, peas, sugar snaps and snow peas. When I came back we planted over 10000 lemon trees on 80 acres. In 2010 Katie and I took over the vegetable production

and ventured out on our own, concentrating on growing snow peas for the fresh market and a local processing company.

Kate: My involvement came from my marriage with Matt. We met at the University of Melbourne Dookie Campus, I was studying Natural Resource Management and Matt studied Applied Science Agriculture.

What is your role in the business?

Matt: I'm involved in all parts of our business. I manage the harvest and packaging, all planting operations, sales and marketing, budgeting and irrigation.

Kate: Our business is a family

partnership, with Matt and me. I am involved in business development expansion and planning, marketing, administration and budgeting.

How would you describe your average day at work?

Matt: During harvesting, which generally starts in September and finishes in June, I'm up early with the harvest and packing crew to get product packed, picked and market-ready. While out in the paddock, I do my crop scouting and talk to market agents about harvest numbers and quality. Then it's back home for a quick coffee with Katie and to see the kids

off to school. Then it's back out to set my tractor drivers up with their daily operations in spraying and ground prep. I like to be out in the crops as they're being harvested, bringing the product back to the cool room ready for pack out. By lunch I'm preparing product for transport. I also try to spend a bit of time in the office getting paperwork for transport and keeping records up-to-date. Once trucks have gone, it's back to the paddock checking crops and catching up on jobs.

Kate: With four young children, my average day revolves predominately around school and kinder activities. I try to do something for the business every day, even if it is just talking to Matt about where we are in the planting and harvesting

schedules. At least once a week I try to reconcile the book work.

What do you most enjoy about working in the vegetable industry?

Matt: Every day is different. No matter how good your plans are for the day, week or month, things change and you just have to adapt.

Kate: I enjoy the flexibility and family-friendliness of working in the industry. To me it's more than a career but a life choice as well. As Matt said, every day is different and we have the ability to evolve and grow.

What are the biggest challenges that you face as a grower?

Matt: Getting a reasonable return for our produce.

Kate: Environmental challenges, such as changes in weather patterns.

You attended the Young Growers' Study Tour in August this year. What did you learn from the experience?

Matt: We need to continue to be innovative with packaging so that we meet consumer needs.

Kate: The tour was fantastic. I gained a lot of information about the potential for export and the need to ensure appropriate pack sizes, and necessity for 'value adding' our produce. I was extremely impressed that the average farm size was less than 10 hectares, and was capable of producing enough

to support an entire family. The extent to which they utilise protective cropping was also encouraging.

What was the highlight of the tour for you and why?

Matt: Seeing the different types of protective cropping being used in Asia and seeing the way vegetables are packed for sale.

Kate: The highlight was the innovation in both growing systems and product marketing.

How do you think more young people could become encouraged to take up jobs in the vegetable industry?

Matt: As I am a part of a small vegetable operation, I think we would have to become more profitable to offer better positions for younger people.

If you weren't working in the vegetable industry, what would you be doing?

Matt: I think I would be still doing something involved in agriculture.

Kate: If I wasn't in the vegetable industry or a full-time mum, I would love to be involved in the sustainable farming planning sector.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Matt: I'll still be working in AvaGrow farms, growing vegetables and developing new innovative ways to keep our production profitable and sustainable.

Kate: I see AvaGrow expanding in the vegetable industry and promoting ourselves with great quality and sustainable produce. AvaGrow is continually employing innovative farming practices to ensure sustainability and viability.



Photographs by Shane Cloak
www.facebook.com/LiquidLightPhotography.



Economic outlook: An economy in transition

WITH THE DYNAMICS OF THE WORLD AND AUSTRALIAN ECONOMIES GRADUALLY SHIFTING, AUSVEG ECONOMIST SHAUN MUSCAT EXAMINES THE RAMIFICATIONS FOR VEGETABLE GROWERS.

Australia has been fortunate enough to experience continued growth for the past two decades, during a tumultuous period for the nation's economy. While many of the developed economies around the world are still recovering from the global financial crisis, Australia has been virtually the only advanced economy to avoid recession. The shift in global growth from west to east, which has raised overseas demand for Australian resources, has underpinned this relative prosperity. However, the Australian economy is entering a new phase as the mining resources boom begins to slow and the exchange rate remains uncomfortably high, limiting alternative export opportunities.

Australia will require a transition to a more balanced economy, with non-resource activity the focus. Australia's economy is forecast to continue growing at around 2.75 per cent in 2013-14 and three per cent in 2014-15, although more recent forecasts suggest a less optimistic outlook, with growth to remain below trend through 2014, before picking up through 2015. A slowing economy will profoundly change Australia's economic landscape, but whether this benefits vegetable growers, depends on the future economic drivers and the policies that the Australian Government intends to pursue.

Economic Drivers

Australia's prosperity and economic growth will continue to be largely driven and influenced by key global economies, including the

United States, Europe and particularly those in Asia. In recent months the US has shown signs of recovery and is growing at a moderate pace. Conversely, European economies are predominately still in recession, with economic growth in the region expected to be -0.4 per cent in 2013. Despite this, Australia's major trading partner China is forecast to grow strongly by 7.5 per cent this year, and expected to continue growing, albeit at a more sustainable pace. This is promising for Australia, since Asia is, and will continue to be, a key trading partner that underpins Australia's economy.

Although demand for Australia's resources is expected to rescind from previous highs, it will continue to make an important contribution to Australian growth. Other sectors in the economy need to be stimulated, to help offset the tapering resources boom and to provide a more balanced economy. To assist with this transition, many experts are suggesting lowering the Australian dollar, which would help stimulate trade-exposed sectors of the economy, such as the vegetable industry.

Impact on vegetable growers

A lower exchange rate will translate to Australian vegetables being more cost competitive and you would expect a subsequent increase in demand for vegetables from overseas. This, coupled with Australia's close proximity to Asia, presents Australian vegetable exports with

unprecedented opportunities. According to Deloitte, the Australian dollar could settle around US\$0.80 in the longer term. Although this is only part of the story, a lower exchange rate is likely to also create additional cost pressures on growers, as prices for imported

inputs used in production, such as fuel and machinery, are likely to increase.

Whilst lower exchange rates are set to benefit Australia's vegetable exports, perhaps more important is the buying behaviour and confidence of Australian consumers, since the





“ Australia’s prosperity and economic growth will continue to be largely driven and influenced by key global economies ”

special occasions. In terms of labour, the weakening mining boom, which is predicted to increase Australia’s unemployment over the next few years, is favourable for the vegetable industry. This may translate to less demand for labour in rural areas, which will help ease vegetable growers’ labour costs and provide a larger array of skilled and non-skilled workers to choose from. This is encouraging for growers, since labour is generally the largest vegetable production cost.

Monetary and fiscal policy

Government spending to support the Australian economy is expected to deliver mixed outcomes for growers. Initial indications suggest that the new government is set to wind back levels of spending as they strive to deliver sustainable budget surpluses on average over the next decade. The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) is unlikely to increase the official interest rate until mid-late next year, particularly due to ongoing global economic uncertainties and Australia’s increasing unemployment. Furthermore, if the Government’s reduction in spending transpires, this is likely to place additional pressure on the RBA to maintain low interest rates to encourage increased spending and investment. The current cash rate level of 2.5 per cent is at a historical low. This is positive news for vegetable growers as low interest rates reduce the level of payments for those with debt and provides access to cheaper credit.

Conclusion

The transitioning economy is unlikely to impose any material

changes on vegetable growers, although the effects will vary depending on the nature and structure of the vegetable business. Overall, whilst growers are set to benefit from easing labour pressures and borrowing costs, this could be offset and surpassed by higher imported production input costs and less uptake of Australian vegetables due to more price conscious consumers. As such, growers will need to continue managing and minimising costs, where possible, to ensure their returns are maximised.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Australia has enjoyed growth for the past two decades, despite a tumultuous economic climate.
- Australia will require a transition to a more balanced economy with non-resource activity.
- A lower exchange rate will translate to Australian vegetables being more cost competitive.
- Initial indications suggest that the new government is set to wind back levels of spending.
- Growers will need to continue managing and minimising costs, where possible, to ensure their returns are maximised.



AUSVEG: (03) 9882 0277
Project Number: VG12071

This project has been funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

majority of Australia’s produce is sold domestically. Over the past year, household consumption has remained below average. Although consumer sentiment measures have been more encouraging of late, concerns about job security and the economic outlook domestically

and abroad remain.

Furthermore, a number of wage growth measures are around their lowest in a decade. Overall, this means consumers are more inclined to purchase vegetables that offer the highest value, but may buy more premium priced vegetables on

'More dollars into growers' pockets' key for Minister Joyce

JUST A FEW MONTHS INTO HIS ROLE AS MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, THE HON. BARNABY JOYCE MP HAS DISCUSSED HIS VIEWS ON THE SECTOR WITH *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA*.



Minister Joyce Speaks with Sydney Markets Head of Operations Shane Chester during a visit to the facility.

One of the key points within the Coalition's Policy for a Competitive Agriculture Sector is the commission of a White Paper on agriculture. What will the Government seek to examine in this White Paper?

The Government has committed to developing a White Paper on the competitiveness of the agriculture sector, looking at ways to boost agriculture's contribution to economic growth, trade, innovation and productivity by building capacity and increasing profitability at the farm gate. A taskforce has been established within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop the White Paper over the coming 12 months.

I think that the White Paper is going to be a big project for me this year. People should understand how it works so that they know how to be a part of it. It starts with an 'issues section' where we get all the issues on the table. Then it goes to the Green Paper where a number of alternatives are placed out. Then you get the White Paper at the end of the year which is the alternatives you have chosen. Everyone should have some interest in it because it's your life. Ultimately it ends up as legislation and drives the way the decision goes. Your trading terms, access to finance, how farmers are being dealt with, transport, logistics – all these things are part of it.

The Coalition has also announced that it will provide \$100 million in additional funding for Rural Research and Development Corporations. How will this benefit the wider horticulture industry?

The \$100 million funding boost will yield benefits to a range of agricultural industries, including horticulture, for some years to come. The additional funding will provide greater capacity for the rural research and development corporations to deliver cutting edge technology, continue applied research, and focus on collaborative innovation and extension. It also presents an opportunity to fund collaborative research projects on a scale that may not be achieved through existing institutions or research initiatives.

What do you consider the most significant threats to the Australian horticulture industry at the present time?

The biggest threat is an oversupplied market, which lowers prices and therefore the return to the grower. The Australian domestic market is capped by the size of our stomachs so as our horticultural industries increase their productivity, establish new enterprises and expand production, export markets must be developed to take that

extra produce. The future of the Australian horticultural industry is therefore strongly linked to gaining and maintaining market access, particularly China and Indonesia, which are high priorities for the government.

Also, the drought facing many Queensland farmers is a stark reminder of the importance of water availability to agriculture in our naturally variable climate. The Australian Government is investing significantly in research and development to optimise water use efficiency, recognising its importance to farm business profitability and productivity.

One of the major issues facing agriculture is a lack of young people joining the industry. What is it about agriculture that keeps people away and how do we get people interested again?

Agriculture faces a number of challenges in attracting new entrants, due in part to poor awareness of agricultural career pathways. To help address this, the government is providing \$2 million for a programme that help teachers better understand and teach students about the products and processes associated with food and fibre production - as well as the diversity of careers available in the industry.

With the cost of domestic vegetable production increasing and an increasing number of foreign imports coming into the country, what actions will the government take to support the local industry?

We are committed to cutting red tape and removing unnecessary



Minister Joyce examines produce with vegetable grower and Sydney Markets Director Billy Lee.

regulation, which will make the local industry more competitive. We are going to get rid of the carbon tax. I know many horticulture farms rely on electricity to run cool rooms, packing lines or irrigations pumps. Getting rid of the carbon tax is going to put money straight back into growers' pockets.

We want to reduce red tape and fast-track the registration of new agvet chemicals and the review of registered chemicals. My first step will be to introduce legislation to remove the previous government's re-approval and re-registration scheme for agvet chemicals before it commences on 1 July 2014. In addition we have committed \$8 million to improve access to agvet chemicals for minor and specialty uses – which I know has been a problem in many vegetable crops. We will cut the company tax rate by 1.5 per cent, which will see Australian agribusinesses paying a new lower rate of 28.5 per cent from 1 July 2015. This will put more money back in to growers' pockets, which is going to help them to invest in the future growth of their farm businesses.

The Australian vegetable industry is shifting focus to capitalise on opportunities for export to neighbouring countries. How is the government supporting export development?

It's a priority for this Government to reduce market barriers and commit to comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) so that Australian producers can capitalise on these opportunities. The government is working quickly to finalise bilateral trade agreements with China, Japan and Korea. Korea is an important market already for potato producers and we want to build on that.

Horticulture Australia Ltd and AUSVEG have recently released a discussion paper on Australian vegetable export opportunities, which is designed to stimulate discussion amongst growers about exports. The Australian Government provided matching funding for this important project.

Australian vegetable produce is amongst the safest and best quality in the world, made to the highest standards. How will the government continue to maintain biosecurity in Australia, ensuring the country stays free of dangerous pests and diseases?

The biosecurity system relies on governments, industry, businesses and the community working together to protect our agriculture sector by minimising biosecurity risks, including prevention of the illegal entry of planting material which poses a significant biosecurity threat. The risks of exotic pests and diseases of planting material entering Australia via regulated trade are minimised by rigorous biosecurity protocols including post entry quarantine.

The Coalition has announced policies to increase regional telecommunications services but little detail is available about the National Stronger Regions Fund. How will this policy work and how can it help agriculture?

In terms of regional telecommunications, under the Mobile Black Spot Programme, the government will provide \$100 million to ensure outer metropolitan, regional and

remote communities have access to wider and more reliable mobile phone coverage. Expanding mobile coverage in regional Australia offers potential benefits for farm safety and for the productive capacity of farm businesses.

Under the National Stronger Regions Fund we will invest \$200 million each year in local capital works projects to improve local communities. This will help communities with poor socio-economic circumstances and higher than average unemployment, by improving local facilities, creating local jobs and building needed infrastructure.

Countries around the world subsidise their farmers. Often these are countries that have experienced famine. What is your stance on foreign subsidies? Do they inhibit efficiency?

Agriculture is one of the most distorted sectors in the global economy. The Government will continue to pursue a reduction in the subsidies and tariffs used by other countries through the WTO and through free trade agreements.

What will your priorities be for 2014?

My priorities always are to get a fair return to the farm gate, that's my job. Since becoming the Agriculture Minister it's like taking over a new business. I'm really happy with the

movement we've made in areas of agriculture. Free Trade Agreements have been a good outcome to try and get more Australian product moving. The focus is to make sure places like these (Sydney Markets) stay viable – that people are making a buck. It's making sure the farmers, the people who do the work out in the paddocks are being paid a fair amount and making sure the people who buy the product have the greatest capacity to access the product.

What goals would you like to achieve as Minister for Agriculture?

I want to do what I can to put more dollars into growers' pockets. That's my bottom line.



Photographs by John McRae.

Minister Joyce is introduced to grower Sam Grima at the Sydney Markets.

Women shine in southern Europe

THE 2013 WOMEN'S GROWER STUDY TOUR PROVIDED NINE AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE GROWERS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT ITALY AND SPAIN, TO LEARN FROM SOME OF EUROPE'S MOST SUCCESSFUL HORTICULTURAL PRODUCERS AND INDUSTRY SERVICE PROVIDERS. THE TOUR WAS FUNDED BY HAL USING THE NATIONAL VEGETABLE LEVY, VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM INDUSTRY, AND MATCHED FUNDS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.

The 2013 Women's Grower Study Tour gave Australian growers the opportunity to learn from the production practices and large scale operations found in the Italian and Spanish horticulture industries. During the 14-day tour, participants had the opportunity to view both open-field and protected cropping operations, engage in hands-on interaction with international R&D innovations, tour wholesale markets, and convene with the international horticulture community at the MacFruit industry convention.

Italy

The tour began in Italy with two days at the MacFruit Convention in Cesena. Widely regarded as one of the most important horticultural conventions in Europe, MacFruit was attended by international industry service providers and growers and producers from Europe, America and Asia. Tour attendees networked with exhibitors and were exposed to a range of European innovations including packaging, cultivation technology and machinery developments.

Following the convention, study tour attendees took part in a series of farm visits throughout Italy, which involved tours of vegetable-growing companies that ranged from family-operated farms and cooperatives, to large scale multi-national operations. One of the smaller operators visited on the tour was Mr Riccardo Astolfi's Societa' Agricola Farm,

which provided an intimate and relatable insight into the reality of the vegetable industry in Italy. Contrasting Astolfi Farms, the tour's Italian leg culminated in a visit to the Ortoromi Cooperative's large-scale protective cropping and processing facilities in Northern Italy. At the Ortoromi facility, massive amounts of leafy produce were being grown, processed, packaged and shipped to retailers throughout Italy and across the European continent, in an impressive display of productivity and logistics.

Spain

After departing Italy, the study tour travelled to Spain and engaged in a series of industry visits throughout Madrid and the southern regions of Murcia and Almeria.

The G's Grower Group provided attendees with a tour through the dry, desert-like region of Murcia, led by Region Manager, Mr David Abram. Through Mr Abram's experiences with the horticultural processes of the region, Australian growers were able to closely consider the techniques and technology utilised to conduct large scale vegetable-growing under hostile conditions. The G's Group utilises advanced developments, from desalination plants to custom farm machinery, in order to productively cultivate over 1,100 hectares of land in a desert environment.

The following day,



Tour participants outside the MacFruit industry convention in Cesena.



A visit to Riccardo Astolfi's Societa' Agricola Farm.



representatives from Syngenta provided attendees with an extensive tour of the Almeria region, an area renowned for the extensive use of plastic greenhouses. Here, the study tour was permitted to visit the distribution center of La Casi, the largest cooperative of tomato growers in the world. The visit to La Casi provided an opportunity to witness a massive and successful horticultural business operation, encouraging the adoption of similar processes where they were relevant in Australia. In Almeria, the group also visited a Syngenta research facility, and were given an in-depth analysis into the process of testing and developing new vegetable varieties.

The final visit on the tour was to Mercamadrid, one of the

largest fresh produce markets in all of Europe. Attendees were given a guided tour of the market facilities, as well as insights into Spanish methods of buying, selling and transporting fresh vegetables.

The tour received very positive feedback from all attendees involved, with growers considering serious future implications for their businesses as result of the techniques and technology witnessed over the two week trip.



Project Number: VG12706

A full project report will be released in early 2014 and made available on the AUSVEG website www.ausveg.com.au.



The tour group visits the Syngenta research facility in Almeria.



Inside one of the impressive greenhouses.

Greenhouses prove effective during Syngenta visit

AS PART OF THE 2013 WOMEN'S GROWER STUDY TOUR, PARTICIPANTS VISITED SYNGENTA'S RESEARCH FACILITY, BASED IN ALMERIA IN SOUTH EASTERN SPAIN. THEY WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A SNEAK PEAK AT SYNGENTA'S WORK IN TESTING AND DEVELOPING NEW VEGETABLE VARIETIES.

This year's Women's Grower Study Tour group travelled to the northern hemisphere, visiting Italy and Spain in what was a successful tour that gave growers exposure to innovative growing practices and large-scale local growing operations.

During the tour, the nine growers visited Syngenta's research facility in Almeria, Spain. The Almeria region is well-known for its plastic greenhouses, which dot the landscape. Growers were given an in-depth explanation of the process of testing and developing new vegetable varieties within these greenhouses.

Craig Thompson, Head of Vegetables at Syngenta Australia said the visit provided the growers with an invaluable opportunity to see what Syngenta was working on in the region.

"[Participants] would have seen a wide range of varieties in trial and I guess it was a great opportunity as a leading strategic partner of AUSVEG for us to show the time and effort that goes into developing new varieties which come into Australia," he said. "They would have seen a lot of work around tomato and pepper varieties for indoor production and glasshouse systems. That's

the more advanced production systems we're seeing. In Spain in particular, they've been working closely with the glasshouse pepper producers on a program to help them move towards more sustainable pepper production systems."

"The activities that go on at these facilities are really good to see in the flesh, because growers can see the level of investment we put in to developing and improving the industry."

Melinda Brimblecombe, a sweet corn, pumpkin and broccoli grower from Forest Hill in Queensland, took part in the tour and said the greenhouse

visits were particularly impressive. "I had heard about it but until you actually see it, it's hard to believe," she said.

"The amazing thing about it is that if they didn't have the greenhouses, it would just be desert and no farms, so really, they are very impressive farmers."

The 2013 Women in Horticulture Study Tour was funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy, voluntary contributions from industry, and matched funds from the Australian Government.

2014 Annual Vegetable Levy Payers' Meeting

2:30-3:00PM, Saturday 21 June 2014 – Cairns Convention Centre, QLD

This meeting will offer growers the opportunity to learn about, and provide feedback on, the investment of the National Vegetable Levy.

To RSVP, email AUSVEG at info@ausveg.com.au.

Young Growers' Study Tour: Oriental lessons as young guns head east



A GROUP OF YOUNG AUSTRALIAN GROWERS HAS TRAVELLED TO ASIA TO INVESTIGATE NEW TECHNOLOGIES WHILE EXPLORING THE EXPORT POTENTIAL OF EMERGING MARKETS IN OUR REGION.

In late August 2013, a group of nine young vegetable growers travelled to Japan and Hong Kong as part of the 2013 Young Growers' Study Tour. In line with the Vegetable Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), the nine-day tour had a dual focus on viewing production advancements and looking into export market development opportunities in the emerging Hong Kong and Japanese markets. A key goal was to provide an opportunity for young vegetable industry leaders to meet with contacts on the ground and learn more about how each market operated to help de-mystify the export process.

The tour was funded by Horticulture Australia Limited through the National Vegetable Levy, voluntary contributions from industry and matched funds from the Australian Government.

How it's done under the Rising Sun

Starting off in Tokyo, Japan,

the tour headed to Ohta wholesale market, the largest fresh produce market in Tokyo. Japan still maintains a strong central market system, with around 80 per cent of produce distributed through these wholesale systems. Japan also has significantly more market diversity when it comes to supermarkets, with the largest company, AEON, having less than 10 per cent market share, requiring these companies to buy through the market system. The fact that there were only limited cool-chain facilities in the markets, with the majority of produce delivered to market and sold same day, was also surprising to the group.

While in Japan, the young growers had the opportunity to visit a grower cooperative called Decopon which specialised in producing organic vegetables. Grower cooperatives are popular in Japan, as the average farm size is five hectares or less, so growers group together to share machinery and process and market their produce. Decopon manages processing and

juicing operations for its growers and has been instrumental in developing lucrative export markets.

The following days incorporated visits to University Research and Development facilities, protected cropping facilities run by Mitsubishi and farming operations run by AEON supermarkets.

A highlight of the tour was the opportunity to meet with buyer and merchandising representatives from AEON, the largest supermarket group in not just Japan, but Asia. After touring an AEON-run farm, the group met with senior merchandising executives and had the opportunity to ask questions about how fresh produce is distributed and marketed in Japan.

While field growing operations were much smaller than in Australia, the Japanese protected cropping industry is making rapid advancements, with investment from large multinational companies like Mitsubishi. The tour visited facilities of Mitsubishi Agri Dream in Ibaraki Prefecture, which showcased a protected cropping system with potential to result in significant water and nutrient savings for growers. In addition, the system was modular, allowing for gradual expansion of the production

area and combined an on-farm nursery, which germinated seeds using ultraviolet light.

Big city surprises

The group then headed to Hong Kong, where participants had the opportunity to meet wholesalers, visit advanced protected cropping facilities and attend the 2013 Asia Fruit Logistica exhibition.

A visit to a plant factory in Hong Kong was another highlight. The facility used ultraviolet light and a completely controlled environment to produce micro greens in the middle of Hong Kong city. A 1,000 square-metre facility is able to produce around one tonne of produce a week. While electricity costs were higher than conventional field production, the owner of the factory said this was more than offset by reduced transportation costs due to the facility's location in the heart of one of the world's most bustling metropolises.

The tour culminated with a day visit to Asia Fruit Logistica, the preeminent fresh produce expo in the Asia Pacific region. At the expo the group had the opportunity to see a number of leading industry exhibitors as well as leading agricultural supplier Bayer CropScience, who presented to growers.



AEON representatives share some insights with tour participants.

Written evaluations and debriefing sessions were held for the group each day to discuss key information and points of interest. In addition, tour participants kept a diary throughout the tour to ensure a record of their observations and each day's events.



Project Number: VG11711

A full project report will be released by early 2014, available on the AUSVEG website: www.ausveg.com.au.



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Next crop leads the way

Growing Leaders: Carolyn Thomas, Calum Wilson, Noel Jansz, Craig Arnott, Sean Christensen, Geoffrey Foster, Luke Spittles, Jarryd Janke, Sarah Simpson, Sarah Limpus, Deana Said, Kees Verstag and Suzaane Maire.

The latest crop of Growing Leaders have successfully completed Australia's only national industry-specific leadership program for the vegetable industry, following the conclusion of a six-month course.

During a dinner event at Canberra's Crowne Plaza Hotel on Thursday 28 November 2013, AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy congratulated the cohort on their achievement as he officially graduated 13 successful participants in the 2013 Growing Leaders – National Vegetable Industry Leadership program.

Addressing the group in the lead-up to ceremony, Mr Mulcahy spoke of the importance of leadership in the industry and the need for an understanding of politics, advocacy and the media, in order to get ahead.

The Growing Leaders graduation and industry networking dinner was once again strongly supported by key industry figures, who flew in from across Australia to attend.

The event marked the culmination of a six-month program, during which participants attended three

three-day residentials, participated in more than 20 skills development sessions and liaised with over 90 industry heavy-hitters through guest speaker panels and industry networking activities. At least two industry workplaces were also toured.

"This is one of the great concepts of industry 'future proofing'," said Growing Leaders Program Manager from Rural Training Initiatives, Jill Briggs. "What better way to guarantee a strong industry into the future than invest in new leaders?"

Applications for the 2014 Growing Leaders program close on January 20, 2014.

Growing Leaders is the leadership platform delivered through funding from Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL) using the National Vegetable Levy as well as matched funding from the Australian Government. For more information visit www.ruraltraininginitiatives.com.au



Phone: (02) 6035 7284
Email: admin@ruraltraininginitiatives.com.au.

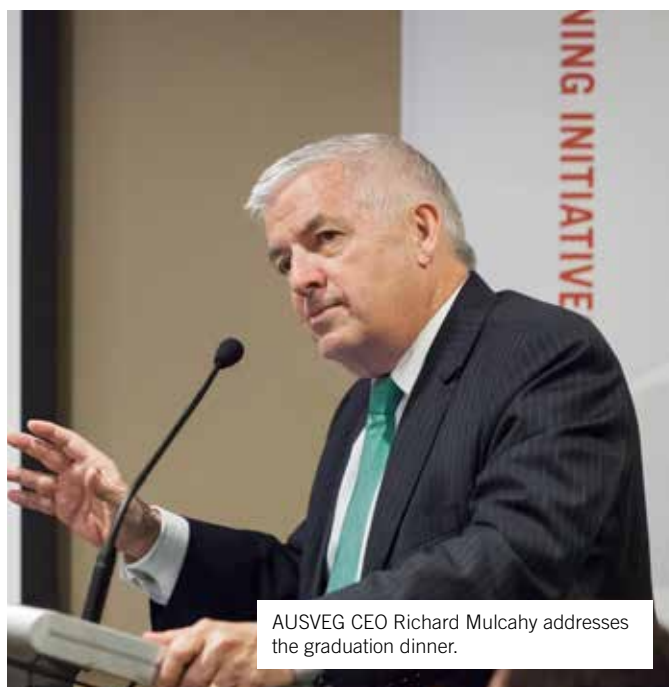
Project Number VG12053



Jill Briggs, Richard Mulcahy and Sarah Limpus.



Jill Briggs, Calum Wilson and Richard Mulcahy.



AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy addresses the graduation dinner.

Dacthal 900WG now registered for lettuce

Horticultural herbicide Dacthal 900WG (active constituent chlorthal-dimethyl) is now registered for pre-emergent weed control in transplanted lettuce at a rate of 6.25kg/ha, with a four week withholding period.

Dacthal 900WG has been approved in Australia since 2004 and is currently used for pre-emergent weed control in

a variety of vegetable crops including brassica, beans, peas, carrots, potatoes and turnips.

Growers are advised to use Dacthal 900WG before weed seeds germinate, and within three days of cultivation.

The current permit for chlorthal-dimethyl herbicides (PER12386) will not be renewed once it expires in August 2016.

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Searching for sustainable soil health systems

A RECENT PROJECT HAS EXAMINED OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING SOIL HEALTH WHILE POTENTIALLY SUPPRESSING DISEASES AND PRODUCING VEGETABLES MORE ECONOMICALLY IN QUEENSLAND AND NEW SOUTH WALES.

With growers under increasing cost, production and resource pressures, a recent vegetable soil health project set out to examine more sustainable methods of producing vegetables in Queensland and New South Wales. Researchers worked on long-term field trials in the two states and examined commercial operations, while considering if soil management could be improved to take advantage of greater soil biological activity and diversity, while economically producing vegetable crops. Although both the Queensland and NSW trials yielded some positive results, researchers stressed different soil types in different parts of Australia needed to be taken in to account, and localised soil health solutions needed to be developed for specific regions. The project received funding from HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government. It also involved input from the Queensland

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, as well as assistance from growers.

Queensland

Long-term field trials in Queensland investigated the use of minimum-tillage, organic mulch systems. They were compared to conventional “plasticulture” with intensive tillage systems. Zucchini and capsicum crops were grown using both systems. The north Queensland research involved a trial site near Bowen, as well as an examination of a nearby commercial operation which had implemented similar systems for a longer period of time. Sorghum mulch grown at the trial site over summer was used as organic matter on crops. “So we had our conventional systems of growing vegetables with intensive tillage with plastic and annual plastic replacements and then at the other extreme, there was trying

to get a minimum tillage system, using just underground drip tape and using organic mulch that was grown over the summer period,” said one of the project’s lead researchers Dr Tony Pattison from the Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

“In the first year of the trial the organic mulch wasn’t so successful due to a number of factors – one of them being that the soil was quite compacted and the other was that you also need to alter your water management, your nutrition management and so in the second year of the trial that’s what we did. Then, growing the sorghum crop we increased the amount of nutrients to try and get more organic matter building up so we’ve got a thicker mulch during the cropping season.”

“Because we are comparing plastic with organic mulch, we actually needed to water more in the organic system because we were losing a bit more moisture. Having made those corrections, we actually

managed to get equivalent yields across the two systems.”

It was also found a build-up of organic matter may have driven biological processes in the soil, leading to a reduction in soil compaction and plant-parasitic nematodes on the commercial site in north Queensland.

Generally, in north Queensland’s dry tropics, it was found permanent bed systems with minimum tillage and organic mulch have the potential to produce equivalent yields to conventional vegetable production systems that use intensive tillage and polyethylene mulch. To achieve this, however, it was necessary to overcome soil constraints and adapt agronomic practices favouring plant growth without disturbing soil excessively.

Researchers also stressed recommendations would have to be developed for specific crops. Degraded soils also create challenges for permanent-bed minimum-tillage systems, researchers found. They also noted the permanent bed system

with organic mulch and zone tillage was less water-efficient than systems using polyethylene mulch. Nevertheless, they appeared to be as efficient in nutrient use.

NSW

In NSW, researchers examined the application of garden compost as a potential alternative to commonly-used, frequent-tillage systems and high inputs of poultry manure and inorganic fertilisers around the Sydney Basin. Surveys have previously identified significant soil degradation, in particular depletion of soil organic carbon and accumulation of extractable

phosphorous (P) in the area.

The field trial was located at the NSW DPI Centre for Recycled Organics in Agriculture near Camden in NSW and involved several treatments organised in a randomised complete block. It was found large applications of blended garden organic compost improved soil quality (soil structure, chemistry, biology) but that improvements diminished over time with aggressive rotary hoe tillage practices as consecutive crops were grown. Production increases for vegetable crops grown with the full compost treatment were also recorded, compared to farmer practice.



The capsicum crop, treated with (125 dry t/ha) achieved almost double the farmer practice yield.

Compost also increased the percentage of water stable aggregates in the soil, with the change leading to an increase in structural stability, aeration and drainage. It was also suggested that more frequent applications of compost or larger inputs of compost and its organic carbon may be required for a sustained increase in soil biological activity relative to conventional practice.

Researchers also noted phosphorous loading needed to be taken into account when considering compost application rates and manures and that it would be inadvisable to base

limits solely on nitrogen.

Generally, the results suggested garden organic compost may be a useful soil conditioner to improve soils used for intensive vegetable production in the Sydney basin. The soil health and production results for the 12 crops grown to-date in the long-term field trial demonstrate there was no agronomic benefit to maintaining the soil at a high P status. This is important due to the off-site impact that excess P can have on the environment.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Soil health issues are typically regional problems and therefore, need to have regional solutions.
- Changes to soil properties take time to manifest themselves, requiring longer term research activities.
- The testing and validation of vegetable production systems needs to be flexible to allow changes to be made in response to new information as it becomes available.
- As vegetable growers reduce their inputs and develop more sustainable systems, soil biological process become more important to enhance disease suppression and nutrient recycling. However, a greater understanding of how soil biology contributes to the functioning of the soil is required.



AUSVEG: (03) 9882 0277
Project Number: VG09038

This project has been funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.





Australia well-placed in food security stakes

A NEW GLOBAL INDEX HAS RANKED 107 NATIONS IN TERMS OF FOOD SECURITY. WE EXAMINE THE STUDY'S FINDINGS AND THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES THEY PRESENT TO AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD.

Australia has retained a strong position in a new study ranking international food security, despite a slight fall in overall score. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Food Security Index, sponsored by DuPont, gives overall marks out of 100 to 107 nations worldwide, considering 27 unique indicators across the three broad themes of affordability, quality and safety, and availability.

Regardless of a minor drop in Australia's overall score to 80.1, the country is ranked 15th out of 107, compared to 14th out of 105 nations 12 months earlier. Ireland and Singapore are additions to the updated index. Across the three categories, Australia ranked 5th for affordability, 17th for availability and 8th for safety and quality. The nation achieved top scores in the fields of (lack of)

corruption, (lack of) prevalence of under-nourishment, presence of food safety net programs, access to financing for farmers, food safety and nutritional standards.

Comparing Australia to other advanced nations

Overall, the USA tops the list with Norway, France, Austria, and the Netherlands and Switzerland (equal fifth) rounding out the top five. Australia also falls just short of New Zealand, which places ninth, with an overall score of 82. While our cross-Tasman neighbour outranks us in the fields of public expenditure on agricultural R&D, food consumption as a share of household expenditure, and agricultural infrastructure,

Australia scores more favourably in protein quality, diet diversification, sufficiency of supply and micronutrient availability.

Compared to the top-ranking USA, Australia achieves higher marks in the categories of agricultural import tariffs, urban absorption capacity, food safety and corruption. It falls short in the fields of sufficiency of supply, agricultural infrastructure, protein quality and diet diversification, among others. China is ranked 42 overall with a score of 60.2.

Identifying vulnerabilities and opportunities in Australia

With a specific interest in food security and sustainability,

Associate Professor Mark Lawrence from Deakin University's School of Exercise and Nutrition Science said the index was a useful insight into global issues and the challenges facing Australia. He said while generally the nation appeared to be faring well, performance in the field of availability could potentially be improved. He added the availability criteria could also prove useful when considering policy directions, particularly given recently-stated desires to develop Asian exports and become a "food bowl" for the region.

"I think it's interesting that we seem to perform well in terms of affordability and quality but less so on availability," he said. "The value of this sort of information is how it is used to inform policies and so on and in a way (recent policy) is in reverse

order here because if we've got a policy that is about developing Australia for exports for Asia and being a food bowl and this data is coming out showing that, there does seem to be a bit of a disconnect."

Seeking solutions in the index

A DuPont spokeswoman said it was hoped the data would assist in the understanding of global food security trends and help find solutions to world hunger.

"DuPont is a company of scientists and engineers. We're fond of saying that what gets measured, gets done," she said.

"That's why, after many months of development, we are pleased to support the Economist Intelligence Unit with the launch of their Food Security Index. Our hope is that the Global Food Security Index will promote collaborations across the food value chain, generate insights and stimulate action to feed a growing population."



"With a common language to discuss the root cause of hunger, governments, private and public sector entities can

work together to make better informed decisions that drive sustainable results at a local level."



The Food Security Index can be viewed at foodsecurityindex.eiu.com

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Veggie lessons now just a click away

A NEW 'VEGGYCATION' WEBSITE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AS A MEANS OF DISSEMINATING VERIFIED AND ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF VEGETABLES.



A new website, developed as part of a project designed to arm the industry with the necessary R&D information to better understand and communicate the health benefits of vegetables, has gone live. Vegetable industry stakeholders and growers who depend on end user demand for vegetable products for their livelihoods, can now access the Veggycation portal as a means of learning more about specific veggie varieties and the dietary benefits they can bring. While educators and children are set to benefit from the easily-accessible educational treasure trove of nutritional information, growers too now have an additional tool to assist with the identification of verified data on the products they grow.

Creating the site

Stemming from a project co-led by Plant & Food Research Australia and MacTavish West, Veggycation was developed in an effort to simplify currently-available information about food regulations, verified health benefits, and how they can be disseminated. With the regulatory framework implemented by Food Standards

Australia and New Zealand restricting the marketing of produce and, in some cases, leading to confusion over communicating dietary benefits, Dr Hazel MacTavish West – one of the project leaders – said developing a website had been identified as a means of providing easy-to-follow educational information to kids, teachers and growers.

“Plant and Food (Australia) have been putting together the information that is on the database on the nutritional composition of different levied vegetables and together we have interpreted the nutritional information and the health claims, interpreted it in to some more meaningful end user health benefits,” she said.

“My key role has been coming up with the concept of Veggycation and putting the communication tool together and getting the design elements that made it vibrant and fun. We did quite a lot of stakeholder engagement and feedback to make sure it was in a tone of voice and an imagery that the industry felt happy with and from there we made it in to a functional website, with access to the database.”

Although widely

acknowledged, health benefits associated with vegetables can come from a variety of sources and can take some effort to verify. With this in mind, the developers of the Veggycation website aimed to compile all credible data about the health claims and present them in a manner which resonates.

“So it is one thing knowing that there is Vitamin C in something but another to know what it's doing for me and the benefits it will bring,” said Dr MacTavish West. “That's what we're conveying here.”

In an effort to spread the word as widely as possible, a section for ‘Kids (and Educators)’ has also been included on the site. This includes small sound bites designed for children, which do not require explanation from adults.

Guiding growers with practical information

With an extensive compilation of data relating to the health benefits of various vegetables, the ‘For Growers (and Industry)’ section of website has been designed to give producers factual information about the health benefits of their products.

With regulations relating to the promotion of produce in mind, developers have also included a 10-step checklist to act as a guide through the process of alerting end users to health benefits. Three case studies – for carrots, cos lettuce and red capsicum – have also been developed.

“This was all about empowering growers so that they had a toolbox of information so that they could understand what was special about their vegetables and why people should eat it and really that was what the project was set up for,” said Dr MacTavish West.

“Then what we added on to that was making sure it was presented in a way that they could easily communicate it with end users, so we added those tabs on for veg lovers, for kids and teachers to give something there for consumers but also to illustrate how that could be communicated for growers. So it's information they (growers) can use in independent greengrocers or on their websites or on their packs, without having to go to a third party, or commissioning their own research. For instance, they can go on to the Growers pages and see that carrots are a good

source of whatever it might be, and the benefits of that. We've also liaised with the retailers to make sure they understand that the data is there and growers don't have to go back and revalidate that."

Dr MacTavish West said it was hoped the website would also "hold the hand" of growers and marketers through the potentially-tricky information dissemination process.

"It's all about what they can legally claim," she said. "It's all about being legally compliant because what we're seeing on all sorts of products at the moment are all sorts of claims for this that and the other and that will simply not be allowed because with the current legislation that came in force in January, they've given a two year period of time where they allow people to say different things and then it becomes legally binding that they have to abide by the standard regulations."

"If it is some new whizz bang variety they may want to do that to go and do some analysis but there is a framework there for generic vegetable growers that's legal and helps hold their hand through the process."

“ This was all about empowering growers so that they had a toolbox of information so that they could understand what was special about their vegetables and why people should eat it ”

- Dr Hazel MacTavish West.



Future development

Dr MacTavish West said work on the Veggycation website was ongoing and further improvements and dissemination, including user workshops, were in the pipeline.

"What I would like to do is ensure, that the next lot (of workshops) that we have, we get more bums on seats because they really are an intense workshop on how to use that information. So if companies send the technical managers who make the decision about what goes on pack and what analysis gets done, they'll get a lot of benefit."

Dr MacTavish West said the developers were also seeking feedback on how the project could be improved.

 Project Number: VG12043
For more information go to www.veggycation.com.au.

Soil solutions



with Andrew Olley

Calcium and Magnesium strategies

IMPACT FERTILISERS' NATIONAL AGRONOMY SERVICES MANAGER, ANDREW OLLEY, DISCUSSES STRATEGIES TO ENSURE A HEALTHY SUPPLY OF CALCIUM AND MAGNESIUM.

Vegetable crops require a consistent and balanced supply of both Calcium and Magnesium to produce optimal results, both in terms of yield and, often more importantly, quality. Having a clear strategy for these two vital nutrients is important as quick fix applications when problems arise in the crop are costly and can often diminish yield/quality.

A soil test from a reputable laboratory is required to assess your soil's Calcium and Magnesium reserves and will indicate whether application may be required. If so, the most cost-effective solution for both these nutrients is a preplant application to lay down a nutrient base, which the crop can access through its growth period, as required.

Depending on the pH of your soil, two options exist for a base of Calcium. These are Lime (Calcium Carbonate) and Gypsum (Calcium Sulphate), both of which can vary greatly in their purity depending upon source of supply. Lime is used when the soil pH is less than optimal and Gypsum when pH correction isn't required. Both of

these products require time to solubilise and react within the soil. Ideally they are applied once per season to keep a level plane of Calcium supply rather than large hits every few years.

Where Calcium and Magnesium are required and soil pH requires correction, options exist for the use of Dolomite (Calcium & Magnesium Carbonate) or blends of Lime and Magnesium Oxide. When Magnesium is applied in the oxide form, it has the advantage that it slowly becomes available over an extended time period and, unlike Magnesium Sulphate, leaching losses are minimal.

In the event where only Magnesium is required, Magnesium Oxide, for slow release, and Magnesium Sulphate granules, for quick release blended into the preplant or plant fertilizers, are very successful strategies.

Soluble and foliar applications of Calcium and Magnesium can be effective, however their timing and rate is critical to achieve good results. These style of products are many times more expensive

per unit of nutrient supplied. Where cost pressures are squeezing farm gate returns, careful assessment of their use should be considered. Care should also be taken when relying on solubles to be the basis for your Calcium and Magnesium program that when they are applied they spike these nutrients in the soil solution. Availability of other essential nutrients such as Potassium can be disrupted until levels stabilize over time after each application, which may affect the crop's development.

While advances have been made in nutrient forms and application strategies when it comes to Calcium and Magnesium supply, the 'old' methods of Limes, Dolomites and Gypsums etc are still very valid means providing consistent nutrient supply at a low cost base.



Please send your soil nutrition questions to *Vegetables Australia*.
Email: info@ausveg.com.au
Phone: (03) 9882 0277

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THURSDAY 19 JUNE 2014. CAIRNS CONVENTION CENTRE.



Reverse Trade Mission: Asian trade delegates forge new links with Australian growers

THE FIRST REVERSE TRADE MISSION (RTM) TO BE FACILITATED BY THE AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE INDUSTRY WAS HELD OVER EIGHT DAYS FROM MAY 31 TO JUNE 7, 2013. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOPING CLOSE TIES WITH A RANGE OF KEY VEGETABLE INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS FROM ASIA WERE SIGNIFICANT COMPONENTS OF THE RTM, FACILITATED THROUGH ATTENDANCE AT THE 2013 AUSVEG NATIONAL CONVENTION, AND FARM AND WHOLESALE MARKET VISITS IN QUEENSLAND AND VICTORIA, WRITES FELICITY POWELL.

Twenty participants made up the RTM delegation, originating from Hong Kong, Macau, Japan and Malaysia. Participants also represented different areas of the vegetable supply chain; including hospitality (e.g. hotels and restaurants) and retail (e.g. supermarkets) sectors, as well as providers, fresh produce distributors and importers.

The main aim of the RTM was to establish direct channels of communication between Australian growers and overseas buyers, specifically those based in Asia. Delegates had the chance to not only experience the quality of Australian-grown produce, but also gain a better understanding of Australian and Asian consumer trends and preferences. AUSVEG developed the content for the Mission's program in consultation with a variety of organisations from both government and industry.

Delegates attended the 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence. A dedicated area at the Convention was set aside to facilitate business/trade discussions, whereby 'buyers' within the delegation could meet with interested Australian growers personally to discuss potential export opportunities.

A cooking demonstration and vegetable showcase comprised of multiple booths which displayed locally-grown produce sourced directly from nearby Queensland farms. Delegates were able to see and taste the produce, ask questions and talk with growers also in attendance at the vegetable showcase.

RTM delegates were directed to attend the AUSVEG Trade Show to learn about Australia's vegetable production operations, services and logistics. Each delegation was accompanied by their respective interpreter

to facilitate communication with exhibitors.

The 2013 AUSVEG National Convention was attended by over 1000 vegetable industry stakeholders, a majority of which were growers. This made the event an ideal facilitator of networking and business opportunities.

Farm visits

The RTM program also included visits to several vegetable-producing farms. The aim of the farm visits was to enhance perceptions amongst RTM delegates, particularly the sourcing managers present, of the quality and freshness of Australian grown produce, as well as the efficiency of the operations.

Substantial operation size was necessary in order to accommodate all three delegations and it was also

deemed important to expose participants to varying vegetable growing conditions (e.g. climate and geography) and produce.

Vegetable producing farms in Queensland and Victoria were selected due to the number of top-tier operations present in the two states. In Victoria, delegates visited Tripod Farmers in Bacchus Marsh, and Gazzola Farms on the Mornington Peninsula. In Queensland, they visited the Fassifern Valley-based Kalfresh operation, and Windolf Farms in Gatton.

Market visits

Visiting wholesale markets was deemed a key strategic activity for the RTM. A large amount of vegetables are moved through Australia via wholesale markets, with domestic prices influenced by what happens within them. Wholesale markets allow buyers to view, select and buy produce

from different suppliers/growers.

Brisbane Wholesale Market

The visit to the Brisbane Wholesale Market aimed to assist delegates gain a better understanding of Australia's key distribution centres and the level of choice that exists in the market. The visit also sought to provide RTM delegates with a more in-depth experience of potential niche products. The tour of the Brisbane Wholesale Market was designed so that each of the three delegations (Japan, Malaysia and Hong Kong) was guided by an experienced exporter, to whom questions could be directed regarding challenges in exporting certain vegetables and any other issues. The visit also allowed for networking time with growers or agents present at the markets.

Melbourne Wholesale Market

The Melbourne Wholesale Market is the second largest market of its kind in Australia. It has over 100 members which means more options, products and therefore choice. The aim of the RTM's visit to this market was to allow delegates to compare produce, seasonality, varieties on offer and pricing.

Implications of the Reverse Trade Mission

The Reverse Trade Mission 2013 provided the Australian vegetable industry with a valuable insight into the interest that several Asian markets have in sourcing more produce from Australia. The export of vegetables in to Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea has been growing



Delegates examine some fresh Australian produce.



Callum Hann puts on a cooking display for Reverse Trade Mission delegates.

steadily in the past years, which demonstrates a growing demand from Asian consumers for clean and reliable produce. The RTM initiated the much-needed process of developing relationships with major stakeholders in Asia, which will help to establish distribution channels for Australian

vegetable producers into these markets, as well address existing market access challenges.

i For more information:
 AUSVEG (03) 9882 0277
 Project number: VG12101



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Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	States
PER13653	Maldison / Leeks, Spring onions and Shallots / Onion Thrips	1-Oct-12	31-Oct-18	All states (except Vic)
PER13397	Clethodim (Select herbicide) / Peas (green & processing), Eggplant or Aubergine, Chilli peppers, Paprika, Silverbeet & Spinach / Annual ryegrass & winter grass that are resistant to quizalafop herbicides	15-Nov-13	31-Dec-16	All states (except Vic)
PER14203	Propyzamide (Kerb 500) / Artichoke (Globe) / Selected broadleaf and Grass weeds	12-Nov-13	30-Nov-16	All States
PER14211	Fenhexamid (Teldor) / Snow peas and Sugar Snap Peas / Grey mould and Chocolate mould	27-Nov-13	30-Sept-16	All states (except Vic)
PER12386	Chlorthal-dimethyl (Dacthal) / Lettuce / Stinging nettle	29-Jun-11	31-Aug-16	SA & WA only
PER14186	Spinetotam (Success Neo) / Eggplant or Aubergine / Melon Thrips	3-Oct-13	30-Sep-18	All states (except Vic)
PER12396	Pendimethalin (Stomp) / Horseradish / Annual grasses and broadleaf weeds as per label	31-Oct-13	30-Jun-15	All states (except Vic)
PER14127	Pendimethalin (Stomp) / Brassica leafy vegetables & Rocket	31-Oct-13	31-Aug-18	All states (except Vic)
PER13122	Emamectin (Proclaim) / Celery (Field), Eggplant (field & protected cropping) / Helocoverpa spp., lightbrown apple moth, cluster caterpillar	31-Oct-13	30-Sep-16	All states (except Vic)
PER14212	Imidacloprid (Confidor) / Rhubarb / Aphids	31-Oct-13	30-Jun-18	All states (except Vic)

These permits have had their additional data requirements changed. Full details of all permits are available on the APVMA website: www.apvma.gov.au/permits

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A negotiation training course has been developed specifically for vegetable growers.

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Vegetable levy payers are invited to apply for programs to be held in Melbourne and Perth.

Download an application form from the events page at www.ausveg.com.au or call (03) 9882 0277.

Applications close 31 January 2014.

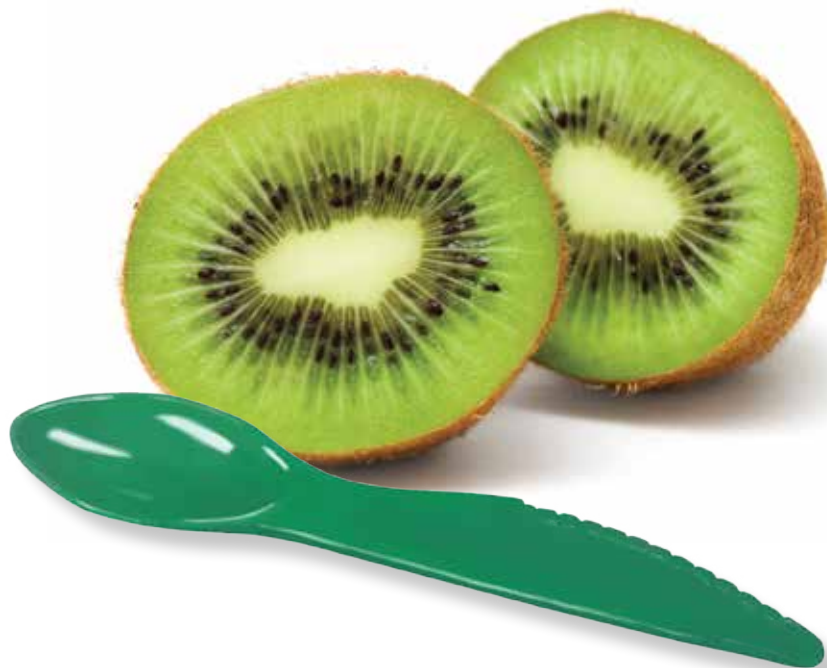
Melbourne, 19 - 21 March 2014
Perth, 7 - 9 April 2014

*Australian Vegetable Levy payers will be required to make a contribution of \$1000.
A Travel Allowance may be provided at the discretion of the selection committee.

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Industry in the media

AUSVEG has continued its comprehensive and consistent engagement with Australian and international media over the past year, with 2013 proving one of the body's most successful ever in communicating the outcomes of industry research while advocating for Australia's 9,000 vegetable and potato growers.

From December 2012 to December 2013, AUSVEG reached a cumulative audience of around 33.2 million.

In December, AUSVEG spokesperson Andrew White appeared live on ABC1's Midday Report to discuss Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data indicating that vegetable imports from some parts of Europe had increased substantially in the past five years. He explained how the vegetable processing industry was at dire risk and that higher labour costs had greatly affected growers. Mr White also appeared on ABC Radio's Rural News, which was syndicated nationwide.

AUSVEG Chairman, Geoff Moar, provided comment to the *Bundaberg News-Mail* on

the appointment of former AUSVEG Director Mark Napper to the Board of Horticulture Australia Limited. Mr Moar said that Mr Napper had extensive experience across many sectors of Australian horticulture and would be a valuable contributor to the HAL Board.

According to recent research completed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Aussies are currently the world's biggest consumers of vegetables. AUSVEG spokesperson Cameron Brown weighed in on the report, telling MIX FM Sydney and a range of syndicated stations that, notwithstanding the positive news, Australians should still be eating more vegetables. AUSVEG spokesperson Hugh Gurney also featured on radio following research findings from the United Kingdom that the carotenoids found in brightly coloured produce can help provide a glowing complexion. Following the Government's announcement of a free trade agreement (FTA) with South Korea last month, Mr Gurney



also appeared on 5AA radio to welcome the breakthrough, stating that it was a momentous outcome for the Australian horticulture industry and would create new opportunities for growers to supply first-class produce to South Korea's citizens.

Mr Gurney also provided comment on the release of the Federal Department of Agriculture's Terms of Reference for its Agriculture White Paper. He welcomed the release, but said that it was important that the White Paper did not discount the importance of investment in research and development (R&D).

Key topics for the November/December period:

- AUSVEG highlights ABS data showing that European vegetable imports have increased substantially over the past five years.
- Vegetable industry welcomes FTA with South Korea.
- AUSVEG continues to encourage Australians to reap the benefits of an increased intake of fresh vegetables.
- AUSVEG welcomes the Coalition's release of Terms of Reference for its Agriculture White Paper.



Plant Exports Management System to aid growers sending veggies overseas

If you export plants or plant products from Australia or are a plant exports Authorised Officer, you need to know that there is a new IT system to simplify the plant export documentation process—the Plant Exports Management System (PEMS).

PEMS will reduce the average documentation time for commodity inspections—saving time and money. It will facilitate a range of processes that will enable efficient export of plants and plant products from Australia. PEMS will optimise the export inspection and documentation process through the efficient storage, transmission and reporting of inspection records and supporting documentation.

PEMS is being developed by the Department of Agriculture.

What does this mean for growers?

PEMS will make plant export operations more efficient and reliable by:

- Reducing data entry times.
- Validating Authorised Officer competencies automatically.
- Storing inspection

records and supporting documentation.

- Eliminating double handling of documents.
- Allowing you to electronically request authorisation of your RFP (due for inclusion in release two of PEMS, April 2014).
- Being available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Providing inspection documentation to exporters electronically.

When will PEMS be available?

Release one is scheduled for November 2013 and PEMS will

be rolled out across Australia between November 2013 and June 2014.

Release two is scheduled for April 2014 and will include the capacity to use PEMS when offline and contain provisions to record Export Compliant Goods Storage documentation.

How will I know how to use it?

Instructional material will be available in December 2013, available online at www.daff.gov.au. PEMS will also include an inbuilt help system to help you learn how to use it.

Face-to-face training will be

available for internal and external Authorised Officers. Authorised Officers will be informed of training details and will be able to register themselves for training.

For more information

For more information go to www.daff.gov.au/plantexports or contact Plant Export Operations. Plant Export Operations provides important information through regular industry advice notices.

Subscribe to receive these updates by visiting daff.gov.au/plant-stakeholder-registration. You can also email PEMS@daff.gov.au.

Key Points:

- PEMS will work on a range of devices such as desktop computers, laptops and tablets.
- PEMS will make documentation processes more efficient, reducing export time.
- PEMS will centralise and store export documentation. This will make keeping accurate records easier and accessing them faster.
- PEMS will have an offline mode (release two).
- Exporters will be able to request inspection appointments from the Department of Agriculture electronically through PEMS (release two).
- RFP authorisation will be requested from the Department of Agriculture electronically through PEMS (release two).

Around the states

Queensland



Two major north Queensland farms have signed up to participate in a new workplace health pilot. *Live Well Farm Well*, a partnership between Diabetes Queensland, Growcom and the Queensland Government, is focussing on practical ways farm workers can reduce their risk of chronic disease such as Type 2 Diabetes and heart disease. It will help farm workers maintain healthy weight levels, get active, eat well and reduce their alcohol consumption.

Over the next 18 months, the project will work closely with a number of farms on the Cassowary Coast to develop

programs that fit farming schedules and are easy to implement and maintain. It is hoped this will achieve higher productivity and reduce absenteeism, as well as encourage happier and healthier workers. The two farms already involved in the pilot are Liverpool River Bananas and LMB Farming. While these are banana farms, the project would welcome the interest of vegetable growers and other fruit growers in the area.

Both farms are taking different approaches to achieving healthier workforces. Liverpool River Bananas has rolled out the 'Eat It' program to teach their people valuable skills about preparing healthy meals. At LMB Farming, staff are strapping on pedometers and getting involved in a '10,000 Steps' program which helps people to increase their incidental exercise throughout the day.

The pilot project on the

Cassowary Coast is an important step in improving the health of farm workers and is a good fit for Diabetes Queensland and Growcom. Diabetes Queensland aims to raise awareness about how to prevent Type 2 Diabetes through managing risk factors such as obesity and being overweight. As the peak body for Queensland horticulture, Growcom also wants more people to increase daily consumption of vegetables and fruit as part of the solution. The *Live Well Farm Well* project manager employed by Diabetes Queensland is Maya Smitran. She comes with a wealth of experience, having formerly worked for the Healthier Great Green Way (Queensland Health) as a Senior Health Promotion Officer. She has lived in the Cassowary Coast region for 20 years on a farm near Innisfail.

She is based at the Growcom office in Tully and is supported one day per week by

Engagement Strategist, Georgie Knight. Farm businesses in the Cassowary Coast region which are interested in getting involved in *Live Well Farm Well* can contact Ms Smitran on (07) 4068 2255.

Diabetes Queensland and Growcom are working with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland on this Healthy Workers Initiative as part of Queensland Workplaces for Wellness. This is a joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health.

Alex Livingstone Growcom

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Western Australia



The run-up to the holidays is an extremely busy time for growers and it's no different for vegetablesWA. We have been rolling out a range of important initiatives which will benefit our industry, including energy efficiency workshops in the metro and Carnarvon districts, water use efficiency and planning assistance, and working with government through some serious problems.

An area where work continues is in helping growers reduce instances of Stable Fly. Growers must be commended for steps taken to combat this pest. I know that through correct steps, they have seen significant reductions, and the benefits of retaining surface mulch have improved crop

performance. However, Stable Fly management requires constant vigilance because small lapses can spawn millions of flies. If you require advice or assistance, our Field Extension Officers are willing to help.

Our industry must face the reality that we are increasingly operating in a community which has expectations about the way we conduct our business and the impacts the broader populace. This is often referred to as a "social license to farm". Growers will find it is not a loose concept but that our markets, such as supermarkets, are driven by the "customer always being right", and are looking to enforce this social licence and give it economic value. We must therefore all strive to undertake best possible practice.

I was very honoured to recently welcome Mr Thang Le to the vegetablesWA Committee of Management. Mr Le is a highly-respected grower and a Vietnamese growing community leader. I look forward to his knowledge and experience contributing.

West Australia is already a vegetable export powerhouse and I'm pleased to see progress that our new Export Development Manager, Gavin Foord, has achieved. It's Gavin's job to complement existing export activities as well as develop new opportunities.

vegetablesWA has continued to engage with the WA government and I welcome progress made. It was pleasing to see an industry proposal for a one-stop shop for land development approvals to limit red and green tape receiving a good hearing by Agriculture and Food Minister, the Hon. Ken Baston MLC, at a grower meeting at Ivankovich Farms in Myalup. We'll continue working to ensure this idea is progressed as part of the government's drive to reduce agricultural red-tape.

The Committee of Management is continuing to develop a new Strategic Plan for vegetablesWA, and it's time for members to have their say. I would welcome contributions from growers about the services

you want from your Peak Industry Body.

As Jim Turley continues his semi-retirement from industry he recently resigned as Executive Officer of Horticulture WA, the organisation which supports all state horticulture Peak Industry Bodies. I was appointed as interim Executive Officer until February 2014. I look forward to working with our broader horticulture family to improve our sector until further arrangements can be made.

John Shannon vegetablesWA

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New South Wales



Asia is in a consumer confidence crisis. Food safety has been a hot topic in recent times from incidences of botched baby formula to contaminated fried chicken. China and the Asian region are no strangers to the media flurry that arises from food safety concerns. China's recent track record and Japan's ongoing recovery from the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster are a case in point. Arguments around whether or not the food

safety concerns are a systemic issue are irrelevant. The reality is that the majority of Chinese consumers do not believe the food they purchase is safe. Experts suggest the emergence of China as a net importer of food has been increasingly driven by food safety concerns as opposed to the hype about food security. I am not going to claim to be an expert on these matters, however, it is not difficult to follow the higher level trends unfolding in Asia.

There is increasing desire for food safety validation, with many producers in Asia having identification codes which track the product from the farm gate to the supermarket. Some even go as far to have a profile of the farmer attached to the product. Australia is ahead in some areas in the validation of food safety status for livestock, which is governed by the

National Livestock Identification Scheme. However, the question of how we validate the safe food status of our fresh produce still needs to be addressed. With scheduled biosecurity reforms underway in NSW, and federal reforms on the horizon, NSW Farmers seeks the introduction of a grower registration scheme as the first step towards food safety validation, and ultimately accessing Asian opportunities.

At the time this article was written, Federal Minister for Small Business, Bruce Billson, had just announced the draft terms of reference for the 'Root and Branch' review of Australia's competition law. Importantly for our horticultural members, the draft terms of reference signal the need to examine whether industry codes provide effective protections for covered small businesses and will allow reform to competition laws and powers

of the ACCC that will be better placed to deal with these types of anti-competitive behavior. Through its relationship with the National Farmers Federation and other farming and horticultural representative organisations, NSW Farmers has already commenced building a case for reforms to competition law, with an across industry approach.

Peter Darley

NSW Farmers' Association
Horticulture Committee
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Victoria



Once again we commence another year and 2014 will no doubt provide new challenges for the Victorian vegetable industry. Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria (VGA Vic) has been in existence for over 60 years, informing and assisting its Grower Members, supported by a range of industry suppliers in their role as Industry Associate Members.

Membership plays a vital part in the operation of the Association, not only from representation on the Executive Committee but from being recognised at industry meetings and conferences as being an active member of VGA Vic. We are no different from other associations covering a wide range of industries in Victoria,

where membership is declining for a multitude of reasons. The Victorian vegetable industry needs your committed support. If you have not responded to an invitation to renew your membership, or have not received an invitation to participate as a grower member, please let me know.

It has been regularly stated that the value of the vegetable industry begins with growers at the farm gate. Growers should be leading the industry and representing the Victorian vegetable industry at State level. Victorian vegetable growers must maintain unity and support VGA Vic as their local organisation. VGA Vic State Membership of AUSVEG also provides the opportunity for levy paying growers to ensure industry issues requiring attention in Canberra's political corridors, are heard.

It is apparent fresh vegetables are not always a priority in family diets or shopping lists. The question raised is, 'Where does one begin to educate the growing population of Victoria?'. One positive answer is through children. The Melbourne Market

Authority (MMA) provides a Market Fresh Schools program designed to educate primary students about the importance of fruit and vegetables in diets. VGA Vic supports this program and presenters Teisha Dower and Carolyn Creed with fresh vegetables. Grower attendance when invited to share knowledge is also an essential part of this program and the continued education of Victorian school children.

The majority of growers operate on public roads with large machinery and semi-trailers when transporting fresh vegetables. All growers should be aware of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) and an available industry guide under the Heavy Vehicle National Law. The NHVR was created to administer one set of rules to reduce duplication and inconsistencies across State and Territory borders. For more information visit www.nhvr.gov.au.

The 2013 VGA Vic Annual General Meeting held in Melbourne during October resulted in the re-election of Keilor vegetable grower, David

Wallace as President. One new addition to the executive committee was Cranbourne vegetable grower, Joe Kelly, who received a warm welcome from the President and executive members Craig Arnott, Bill Bulmer, Peter Cochrane, Vince Doria, Paul Gazzola, Luis Gazzola, Frank Lamattina, Rocky Lamattina and Anthony Mason. Guest speakers included Richard Mulcahy, David Minnis, Pam Hawkes, Teisha Dower and Carolyn Creed.

Remember VGA Vic is YOUR growers' voice of the Victorian Vegetable Industry

For industry information contact Executive Manager Helena Whitman mobile 0407 772 299 or email: helena.w@vgavic.org.au.

Keep smiling

Tony Imeson

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Tasmania



It seems every week we see another indicator of how bad things are in Tasmania – how we trail all other states, and even the Northern Territory, in some economic indicators, education outcomes, etc. This week, new figures showed that the rate of workplace involvement for women is lower here than anywhere else in the nation.

Eventually, the message that things have to change must get through to even the most recalcitrant naysayers.

The TFGA fully comprehends the parlous state of Tasmania's

finances. We have given credit where it is due for the stringent measures the present government has taken to stabilise the situation. We can all argue that we see some decisions as nothing short of bizarre, but let's not get bogged down in a debate about football.

We've recently released our submission to the government for consideration in preparation of the 2014/15 state budget. You can read it here: <http://tinyurl.com/lavf27e>.

Even though we come to the bargaining table with a vested interest, TFGA has put our case to the next Treasurer, whoever he or she may be, to focus on the main game (and forget about football). The main game is maximising economic activity in the private sector to create the wealth that will pay for the basic fundamentals of a society: health, education, and law and order. In other words, we have to get back to basics, concentrate on proven core industries and treat with caution

hopefuls whose projected economic returns could never be audited.

If agriculture in Tasmania is to continue to be one of the key, if not the key, economic drivers of the state economy, and generate more wealth and prosperity, farmers must at least be able to compete on a level playing field with other Australian producers.

As we have a State Election coming soon, the reality is that the incoming government, new or returned, must seriously examine the impediments that make us more and more uncompetitive, not just with international suppliers, but also with our peers on the mainland.

State-specific regulatory costs in Tasmania continue to impose significant burdens on farmers here, with no evidence of any increased return. We are continually told that farmers must operate in a global market – and we do. That means our prices are set by factors well beyond our control, and we have limited capacity to claw

back more of the retail dollar to cover increasing on-farm costs.

This is not a scare campaign, nor is it a case of Chicken Little saying the sky is falling. It is the harsh reality of doing business in Tasmania. We are over-governed and over-regulated, and it is becoming simply unsustainable. As part of TFGA's election campaign, we will be asking the major parties what they will be doing about reducing the red tape that is stifling agriculture in Tasmania.

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CALENDAR



19 – 21 June 2014

AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence

Where: Cairns Convention Centre, QLD.

What: The AUSVEG National Convention showcases speaker sessions, entertainment and an impressive trade show. The event will provide delegates with an opportunity to forge relationships with members of the industry, supply chain, researchers and growers.

Further information: AUSVEG (03) 9882 0277, convention@ausveg.com.au, or www.ausveg.com.au/convention.

21 June 2014

2014 Annual Vegetable Levy Payers' Meeting

Where: Cairns Convention Centre, QLD at 2:30PM-3PM.

What: This meeting will offer growers the opportunity to learn about, and provide feedback on, the investment of the National Vegetable Levy.

Further information: To RSVP, email AUSVEG: info@ausveg.com.au.





Target the Japanese market.

Exporting to Japan: A Symposium for Vegetable Growers
Sunday 22 June 2014. Cairns Convention Centre.

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