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with IPM

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Industry Conference:
Vegetables Take Centre Plate

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vegetables australia



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Pathways to central market



Grower Profile: Moustafa Osman and the Greenhouse Effect

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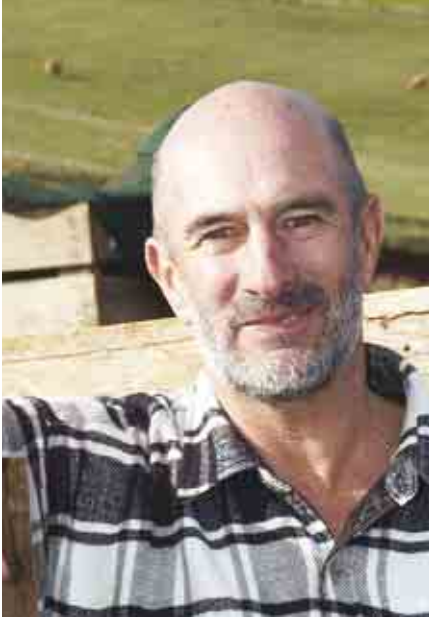
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A word from the AUSVEG Ltd Chairman

The last few months have seen many positives for the industry as we move forward with VegVision 2020 and the new Mandatory Code. However, it is difficult to escape the increasingly urgent issue of drought and the effect this is having and will continue to have on vegetable growers and the entire industry.

As the drought tightens its grip, we must take time to consider how the industry will pass on the increasing cost of production down the line to the consumer. It's up to us, as an industry, to ensure that extra costs are spread as evenly as possible, right through the chain, so the price of vegetables does not over-inflate.

On a lighter note, AUSVEG continues to look at ways to strengthen its structure to be an even better voice for growers. The changes will help us to better deal with problems within the industry, and build up

membership. This revision of structure will make the organisation stronger and more than ever motivated to strengthen and guide this innovative industry.

Further to this we are revising the Industry Advisory Council, to consolidate the good work done so far, and achieve more for the research and development dollar. We continually need grower input on research projects so that we don't lose sight of issues that you face.

Michael Badcock
AUSVEG Ltd Chairman

From the Editor



What a fantastic few months for the vegetable industry. Growers can now rest assured that they will have a strong set of guidelines to conduct business within the supply chain, with the passing of the Mandatory Code of Conduct (p. 46). We have also seen the launch of VegVision 2020, which provides the industry with a strong purpose and vision for the future (p. 12).

In this issue we share with you the story of Sydney-basin grower Moustafa Osman, who has successfully implemented IPM to protect his crop of mini-cucumbers. We also continue our 'Women in Vegetables' series with a look at Queensland grower Denise Harslett and her family-run farm near Stanthorpe.

By now you should have the 2007 Vegetable Industry Conference pencilled in your diary (May 29 to June 1) with the

theme 'Vegetables Take Centre Plate' (p. 18). The conference will focus on reclaiming the central place vegetables should have on the dinner plates of Australians.

As well as the latest news and research from around the country, we also share with you the findings from the recent AUSVEG grower survey on page 31 – see how your peers view the National Vegetable Levy.

There's plenty here to keep you informed in what is certainly a time of great change and advancement for growers and industry.

Youna Angevin-Castro
Editor, Vegetables Australia



Mandatory code victory

Australian vegetable growers are celebrating the long awaited passing of the mandatory horticulture code of conduct.

"This is a great win for vegetable growers. With a mandatory horticulture code, a more level playing field will evolve resulting in better performance across the industry," Michael Badcock, AUSVEG Chairman said.

Despite forming the core link in the fruit and vegetable supply chain, growers have the least amount of power.

Vegetable growers had previously completely rejected a voluntary code proposed by Minister Ian McFarlane during a working group in Canberra. "It has been over two years in the making but the delivery of the mandatory code has made the waiting worthwhile," Michael said. "On behalf of industry I would like to thank Minister McGauran for his commitment, foresight and support throughout this difficult process. The Howard Government has finally delivered on their election promise. However, it will take serious resources to implement the code and vegetable growers are looking forward to working with government, wholesalers and retailers to make the code a success," Michael said.

A Horticulture Code of Conduct between growers, wholesalers and retailers will lead to the introduction of a greater level of accountability and fairness within the horticulture industry. "By encouraging good business practice, the code will reduce the current trend of growers avoiding the wholesale markets. Because they know

they will get a fair deal," Michael said. "A targeted Horticulture Code of Conduct also helps growers because it is overseen by the industry itself which makes sure it remains focussed on delivering efficient outcomes."

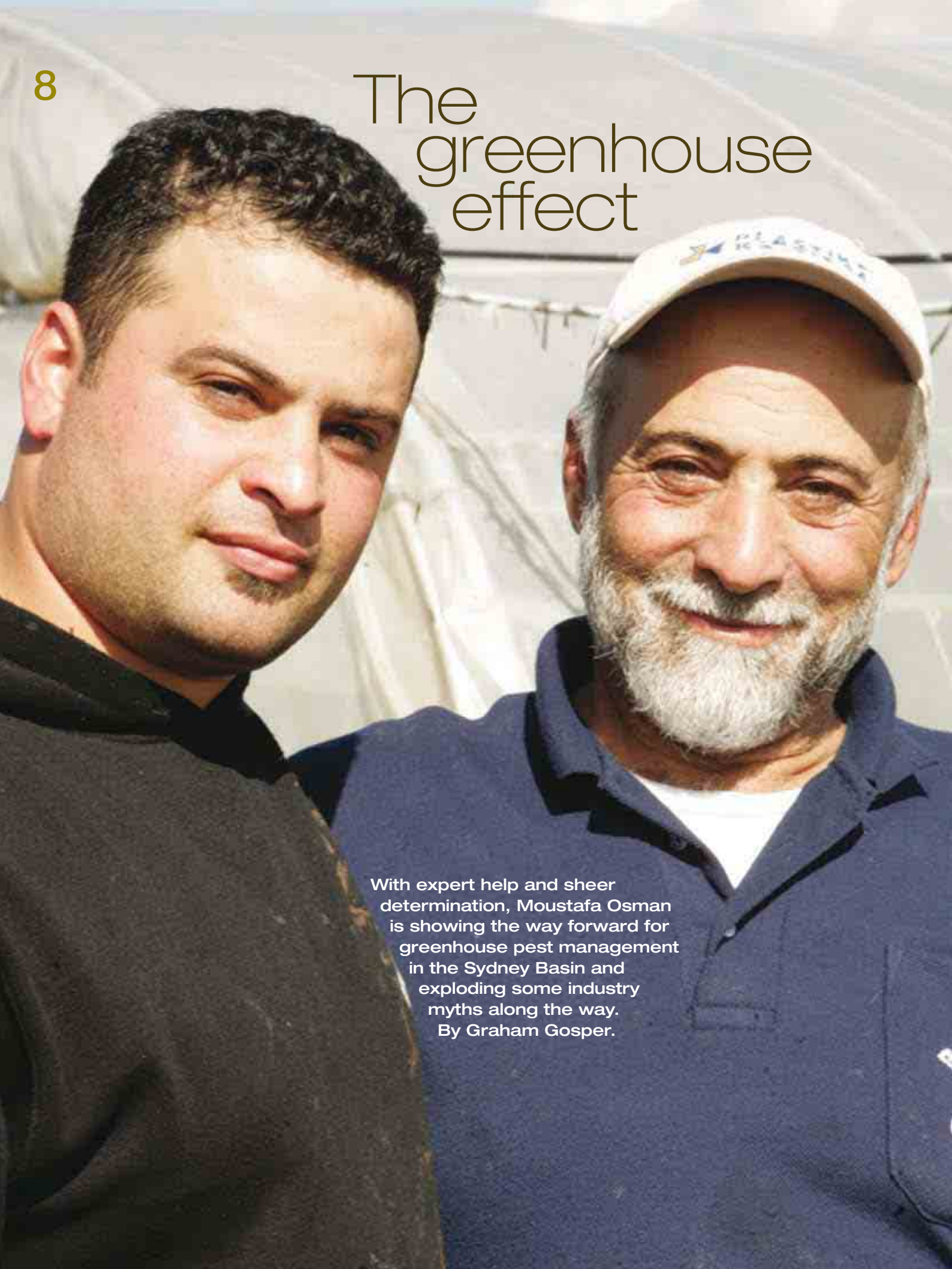
Growers have long been calling for a mandatory code to oversee trading relations between themselves and their trading partners. The reason is simple – despite forming the core link in the fruit and vegetable supply chain, growers have the least amount of power. They have been unable to get contractual clarity and effective dispute resolution systems.

While some growers have very good relationships with their buyers, there are common problems that stop the industry reaching its full potential and, in many cases, impede growers from earning a fair living. Under a mandatory code, parties are obliged to participate and must follow the guidelines of the code and, if there are problems, participate in the prescribed dispute resolution mechanisms.

These guidelines are not onerous responsibilities but common business practices that simply ensure fair trading. "AUSVEG will continue working with Government to implement the horticulture code of conduct across the whole industry," Michael said. ■



The greenhouse effect



With expert help and sheer determination, Moustafa Osman is showing the way forward for greenhouse pest management in the Sydney Basin and exploding some industry myths along the way.
By Graham Gosper.



Moustafa, 28, and his three brothers grow mini cucumbers, known as qukes, for major supermarket supplier Perfection Fresh Australia. The vegetables are grown in a greenhouse on a two-hectare block at Rossmore, about 40 kilometres west of Sydney.

Moustafa first became interested in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies and biological controls at a grower's meeting about four years ago. The popular view among growers at the time was that such measures were only suited to hi-tech greenhouses. But Moustafa was convinced from the beginning that they could offer major benefits in the many low to medium-tech greenhouses such as the one his family operated.

No fruit has been discarded this year due to thrips damage.

His increasing involvement with Perfection Fresh and the company's demanding quality assurance standards was also making Moustafa well aware of the need for a pest management program that offered minimum use of chemicals and allowed him to trace and address the source of pest problems. So when a NSW Department of Primary Industries team approached Moustafa in December 2004 and invited him to become involved in an IPM development program, he eagerly accepted.

The program is part of a project aimed at helping Sydney growers identify pest problems and implement IPM. The project is led by Dr Stephen Goodwin, Senior Research Scientist for NSW DPI at Gosford Horticultural Institute and involves several NSW DPI research specialists.

Vegetable IPM Project Officer, Stacey Azzopardi, who is based at Richmond, first helped Moustafa organise a survey of his greenhouse which found that western flower thrips were a major pest problem. Lack of registrations and withholding period

percent and in two months they were down to an acceptable level," Moustafa said.

Moustafa also obtained a permit for Spinosad with a one-day withholding period to allow him a chemical option should thrips numbers increase. However, ongoing good



restraints, meant they could not be controlled chemically and up to 30 percent of the fruit was being damaged as a result.

With Stacey's help, Moustafa introduced a farm hygiene program, controlling weeds in a five metre buffer around the greenhouse and removing old crop waste from the area. "We also put down weed mat and lifted the bags off the ground," Moustafa said. They also set up sticky traps to monitor the thrips. The results were dramatic. "Within a few weeks the thrips numbers were down by 50

farm hygiene has kept numbers down with weekly scouting revealing minimal thrips.

Crops are now being managed using biological control agents and targeted spraying of soft chemicals where necessary. No fruit has been discarded this year due to thrips damage.

Stacey and her team have showcased the results achieved by Moustafa to other Sydney Basin growers during a series of farm walks which began in February 2005.

Continued on next page

The greenhouse effect (continued)

Almost 100 growers turned out for one such walk in June this year to review the progress of the previous 12 months.

Moustafa said that the IPM project has also provided many indirect benefits. "We now find it much easier to meet the quality assurance and traceability requirements of Perfection Fresh," he said. "Because we are monitoring disease and pests it is easier to trace the source of any problems and deal with them."

Moustafa said the changes have also increased the reputation of his operation. "Whenever we put any produce through the markets it is now among the first sold," he said.

With fewer frustrations and better organisation, Moustafa has more time for other things such as developing his business. He is working with brothers, Mohamad, Bachir and Zahir, on plans to expand the marketing and production arms of the operation.

Moustafa and his brothers are also undertaking work to improve the ventilation system of the greenhouse for better control over humidity levels. This, he said, will enable more effective control of white fly pests and fungal disease threats in the greenhouse.

Despite the plans and the IPM success, Moustafa says the greenhouse will never become a fully computerised, hi-tech operation. He said the family has maintained a special relationship with the vegetables they grow since his father, Osman Osman, moved from Lebanon and took up the block at Rossmore in 1991.

"We watch the qukes 24/7 and we can tell immediately when they are not getting the care they need," he said. "We treat them like babies." Moustafa believes that this care is reflected in the quality of the produce and cannot be matched by fully computerised operations.

Moustafa said many growers with low to medium tech greenhouses still think that IPM and biological pest control is beyond them or "just too hard." He concedes that there is a lot of work involved in the initial steps to establish good farm hygiene and an effective pest monitoring system but the benefits that flow from IPM after you get over the hump more than repay the effort. All growers need to see that IPM is just another step towards truly organic farming and the way of the future for the industry. ■





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Minister Peter McGauran and the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group (AVIDG). Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

VegVision 2020 to Double Value of Vegies in Australia

On September 13, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran and Richard Bovill, Tasmanian Vegetable Grower, released the strategy 'VegVision 2020' that will guide the vegetable industry to a more profitable future.

The vision aims 'To double the 2006 value of fresh, processed and packaged vegetables in real terms by stimulating and meeting consumer preference for Australian products in domestic and global markets'.

The plan is the culmination of extensive consultation across the entire vegetable industry supply chain, from growers to retailers.

"The release of the plan is a very important milestone for our industry and marks a time of great change," Michael Badcock, AUSVEG Chairman said.

The plan is the culmination of extensive consultation across the entire vegetable industry supply chain, from growers to retailers and has a strong focus on maintaining and growing domestic consumption of vegetables as well as increasing exports. "The vision is bold and AUSVEG is taking a lead role in implementing VegVision 2020 as there is much to be gained for all vegetable growers," Michael said. "We look

forward to working closely with the Government and the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group to implement the projects outlined in the strategic plan."

VegVision 2020 is the first of seven projects that were identified by a major vegetable industry 'Taking stock and setting directions' project completed in late 2005. "I would like to thank the Government, in particular Minister McGauran for the ongoing support of the vegetable industry and issues we face. There are many challenges ahead and only by working together will we be able to achieve our goals," Michael said.

The Australian Vegetable Industry made great strides in 2005 taking responsibility for its own destiny and creating a pathway for its future profitability and sustainability. This commenced with the AUSVEG crisis meeting and the Fair Dinkum Food Campaign in 2005, along with the establishment of an Australian Vegetable Industry Partnership between AUSVEG and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The preparation of the Australian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan will be pivotal in guiding the industry in a dynamic global business environment. The plan has articulated the shared aspirations of the various sectors of the industry for the future. Its preparation provides the opportunity for all participants in the industry to be involved in setting the direction and priorities for action.

"Now that the plan is out we have a clear roadmap forward and have no reason for delay. Growers should shortly be able to see real changes to their industry that over time will have a positive effect on farm. I urge all Australian vegetable growers, industry bodies, wholesalers, exporters, retailers and processors to take an interest in VegVision 2020 and work collaboratively together to the benefit of the whole industry. Without this, the plan will only be a printed document that sits on the shelf and we definitely don't want that," Michael said. ■



Minister Peter McGauran (left) and Richard Bovill
Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The key focus areas of the plan include:

- Delivering to changing consumer preferences and increasing demand.
- Market recognition for Australian quality, safety, reliable supply and innovation in products and services.
- Internationally competitive vegetable production and supply chains.
- Visionary leadership and change management.

Taking stock and setting directions: the seven projects

The seven Foundation Projects which address a range of issues critical for the future of the industry include:

- development of an Australian Vegetable Industry strategic plan
- investing in leadership and industry structures
- enhancement of industry information and decision support
- implementation of rigorous industry-wide benchmarking
- investing in business skill development
- undertaking global comparative analyses
- investing in market development

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Securing fertilisers for growers

Vegetable growers are warning the Australian government to keep access to vital fertilisers simple or face a food security risk in the future. "Punishing vegetable growers by reducing the viability of their businesses is not the way to fight terrorism," Chairman of AUSVEG, Michael Badcock said. "Restrictions and protocols on common fertilisers will place unreasonable pressures on an already cost-squeezed industry. The ramifications are high. It will force many growers out of business, reducing industry capacity and hurt many struggling rural communities," Michael said.

In the fight against terrorism, the Australian government has been tightening regulations on critical fertilisers. The first of these was Ammonium Nitrate and now others such as Potassium and Calcium Nitrate are coming under scrutiny. "Fighting terrorism is also about maintaining the freedoms we currently enjoy. Unnecessary regulation in comparison to our global competitors puts us in an unviable situation and could place food security at risk," Michael said.

Global competitors to Australian vegetable growers such as the United States, Asia and the European Union currently have relatively easy access to fertilisers. The US is the only other nation looking to address the ammonium nitrate issue in a Bill currently before

Congress. "Instead of restrictions, the Australian Government should consider grower registration. A National register of growers would make it possible to track the use of fertilisers without restricting supply," Michael said. "Australian government studies say the risk to the Australian public is small but for the vegetable industry it is enormous. The restrictions on Ammonium Nitrate are too onerous and as a result growers are having difficulty purchasing it. Resellers can no longer afford to stock Ammonium Nitrate, so even if growers have put all compliance measures in place, they can't actually buy it," Michael said.

Calcium and Potassium Nitrate are ideal alternatives to Ammonium Nitrate. These fertilisers are critical to achieve high yields and quality vegetables. "With Ammonium Nitrate gone, if growers lose access to Potassium and Calcium Nitrate, many growers could be in serious trouble. And where will it stop? The list of potential inputs in vegetable growing on the strike list is frightening," Michael said.

AUSVEG and the Australian government will work closely together to make sure any restrictions put in place don't affect the long term viability of the vegetable industry and Australia's food security. ■

Balancing

The New South Wales Farmers Association acknowledges the paramount importance of national security, but is concerned that the regulation of Security Sensitive Chemicals will result in more costs to industry, increased purchase prices throughout the supply chain and ultimately, the unavailability of key agricultural fertiliser and chemical products.

In December 2002, Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a national review of the regulation, reporting and security surrounding the storage, sale and handling of hazardous materials, with the aim of minimising the risk of these materials being used for terrorist purposes.

According to draft documents currently available there may be over 100 agricultural chemicals and fertilisers which may be subject to being listed or tiered according to their accessibility, seize ability and impact.

Access to industrial and agvet chemicals - agricultural chemicals, including pesticides, and veterinary medicines - is widespread in Australia, because they are widely used by industry and the community. More than 40,000 chemicals are potentially available in Australia, translating into more than

products such as potassium and calcium nitrate which generate \$1.6 billion in production of fruit and vegetable crops, have no direct replacement products available. The ammonium nitrate regulations have led to the national unavailability of the product as a result of manufacturers and importers shying away from increased compliance costs or promoting alternative products – it is feared the same may occur with respect to this much broader list of products.

The Association believes further onerous regulation is unnecessary. An industry driven stewardship and traceability system could be developed which pulls together existing components already in place such as chemical user training and storage premises accreditation and other well established industry risk management systems. ■

i For more information: Visit www.nationalsecurity.gov.au



400,000 trademarked products. The range of groups that are likely to be affected by regulation of chemicals, includes industry, farmers, retail outlets, large and small, and small business.

The Review of Hazardous Chemicals is currently being considered by Commonwealth departments and agencies prior to consideration by the COAG Hazardous Materials Review Steering Committee. State and territory governments will then be provided an opportunity to comment prior to industry consultation. Through the consultation process the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is expected to actively engage industry through various industry peak bodies to allow them to comment on the recommendations in the report.

According to draft documents currently available there may be over 100 agricultural chemicals and fertilisers which may be subject to being listed or tiered according to their accessibility, seize ability and impact.

The concern for horticulture producers is that the possible regulation of key fertiliser



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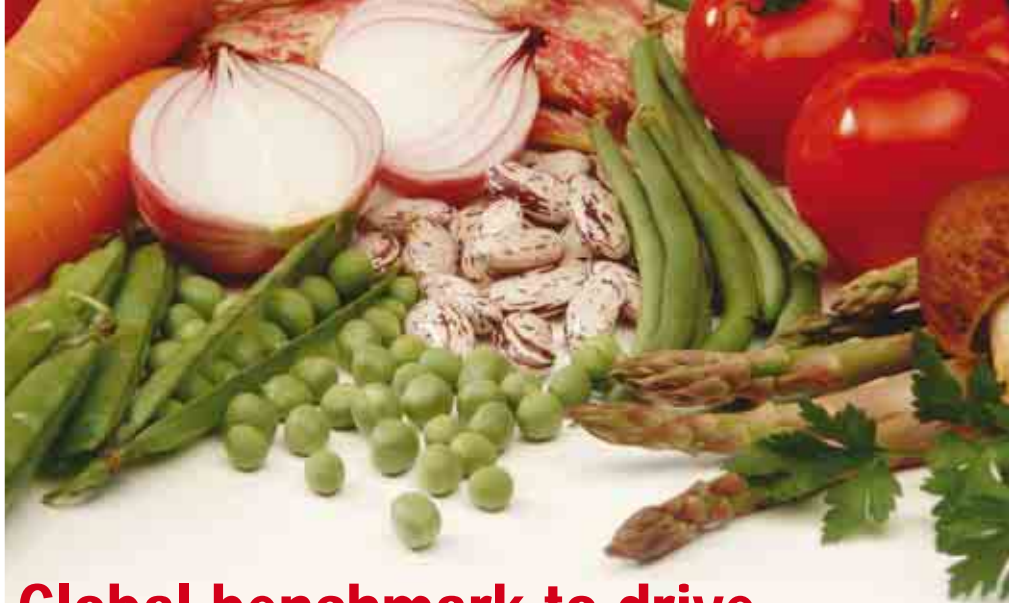
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Global benchmark to drive Queensland value chain

Growers need to play an active role in the value chain for greater profits, according to a project recently conducted by Growcom. By Stephen Zelez.

A comprehensive Queensland grower study was conducted and benchmarked against global trends for a greater understanding of domestic and global factors occurring in the horticultural industry.

The study revealed the majority of growers are dissatisfied with their relationship with customers and service providers immediately adjacent to them in the value chain.


Some key areas needing focus in the Queensland value chain include; the further development of services, provision of information, development of systems, mentoring and policy areas. The successful delivery of these key areas will improve the production end of the value chain.

Growcom Chief Advocate, Mark Panitz said that the project identified the framework required to assist Queensland producers to develop the skills, experience and structures necessary to remain strong contributors to both the Australian and global horticultural value chains.

Mark said growers need to become the leaders in the development of their industry as part of its future structure. "Growers will be expected to be leaders in innovation, rather than followers particularly in terms of gaining access to new varieties, development of innovative marketing concepts and strategies," he said. "Producers will increasingly be required to undertake activities that have been considered the responsibility of others in the chain."

The study recommended the formation of successful partnerships as one vehicle that can be used to shorten the value chain and get closer to the consumer. Strategic partnerships will also enable the industry to be responsive to the global business environment.

Mark said that some producers would seek to partner with those further up the chain either in processing and/or marketing enterprises. "Future success will depend more and more on the level of business management skills of the producer," he said.

Growcom will continue to develop a number of joint projects that will benefit Queensland's horticulture industry. 

Bottom Line

- The horticultural chain is dynamic, continually evolving and its structure will mostly be determined by the decisions of consumers and retailers into the future.
- Industry leadership and grower entrepreneurship will be critical factors for the ongoing success of the industry.
- Increasing the skills of the labour force within horticultural industries, product innovation and working co-operatively up the value chain, are areas identified that will create a prosperous horticultural industry.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: HG03071
Keywords: value chain



Ready for the challenge

Finding a number of similarities between the meat and vegetable industries has helped Kate Dunn with her new role as Industry Development Officer for Queensland.


Kate started out in the meat industry after graduating with a degree in agriculture, but has recently made the move to vegetables after six years in the industry.

In her role based at Growcom, Kate facilitates dialogue between farmers and researchers. "One of my main roles is to explain to growers how and where their levies are being spent. I also talk to them about research and development and then go back to the researchers to discuss the issues concerning growers," she said. "I work very closely with the researchers, because they may not be able to meet with as many growers as they would like and it definitely helps to extend their research work."

Kate is also enjoying the chance to be a part of the vegetable industry as it goes through a time of change. "There are a lot of

things happening in the industry at the moment in terms of imports and exports, demand from consumers and the challenges growers face to meet their changing requirements," Kate said. "Consumers want to know a lot more about the product such as where it has come from and what it's been treated with."

Kate sees Queensland as being in a strong position to meet these demands, due to its size, varied climates and the ability to produce a variety of crops all year round.

"The main crops grown in Queensland are tomatoes, potatoes, beans, mushrooms, lettuce, carrots, capsicums, celery and onions," Kate said. "A challenge for all our growers is to produce quality vegetables to fit the purpose of the end user." 



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Tasmanian Vegetable Grower,
Richard Bovill



Vegetables Take Centre Plate

Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2007

The vegetable industry will again take centre stage at the second Australian Vegetable Industry Conference, to be held from 29 May to 1 June 2007 at Darling Harbour, Sydney. Building on the success of this year's first ever industry conference held in Brisbane, the event aims to continue the momentum and further unite the industry.

According to AUSVEG General Manager, Lisa Maguire, the theme, 'Vegetables Take Centre Plate', is about promoting the vegetable industry as a serious agricultural contributor. "We need to show the rest of Australia that the vegetable industry is a mature, focussed industry backed by world leading research," Lisa said. "The theme is also about reclaiming the place vegetables should have on the dinner plate in the minds of consumers - rather than being a side dish to be ordered separately."

A close look at consumers, their requirements and the motivations they have when purchasing fresh food will be a key theme of the Conference. "We want to highlight the importance of vegetables in the Australian diet. This builds on the significant interest generated at the Conference this year with a popular panel discussion involving Woolworths, Coles and McDonalds. Growers are obviously interested in supply chain issues and we'll be integrating both research and development, supply chain and consumer topics in the program," Lisa said.

Speakers will include the vegetable industry's leading researchers, international guests, representatives from the supply chain, consumer marketers, restaurateurs and dieticians.

Growers will go away with not only a thorough understanding of the industry's levy-funded research and development effort, but with better knowledge of global trends, the supply chain and the motivations of their ultimate customer – the consumer.

A key objective is to continue the VegVision 2020 process by uniting the industry, sharing information and providing formal networking opportunities for growers, researchers and industry.

Vegetable, potato and onion levy funds will help keep costs to a minimum, with organisers looking to attract at least 700 delegates to the Conference.

An organising committee with representation from growers and all sectors of the vegetable industry including potatoes and onions will steer the Conference direction. The organisers are looking for input from industry into the Conference program and have also made a call for sponsorships.

For more information contact:

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Tel: (03) 9544 8098
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Conference Features Include:

- Cutting edge levy-funded R&D projects
- Extensive trade show
- Field trips
- Annual levy-payer meetings (potatoes and vegetables)
- Social Program including Conference Dinner at Cockle Bay
- Announcement of winners in the 2007 Australian Vegetable Industry Awards



AUSVEG Ltd Chairman, Michael Badcock

AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE INDUSTRY CONFERENCE



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Checking capsicum plants in the field to confirm infection by powdery mildew to commence protection applications



Powdery mildew infection on capsicum plants causes leaves to shrivel or drop and expose the fruits to sunburn

A milky solution

An epidemic of powdery mildew in capsicums in 2000 forced growers and researchers to find new ways of combating the damaging fungus. Jodie Powell finds out how.

Ayr-based researcher Dr Chrys Akem explained there's no quick-fix for powdery mildew in capsicums. His research, prompted by the 2000 epidemic, has found there's no simple solution to a problem which reduces yield and robs the industry of income.

Chrys said while chemicals have provided some relief, there's far more to be gained from taking a whole-system approach to ensure the fungus doesn't take hold in epidemic proportions again. "The word 'control' itself can be misleading. Once powdery mildew is in the field, it's very difficult to eliminate. It cannot really be brought down to a level that does not affect yield or fruit quality. Once you understand that, you need to look at basic plant spacing, fertiliser timings and irrigation systems."

There's also an unlikely 'secret' weapon: powdered milk.

In 2004, the team began trying to discourage growers from using continuous applications of fungicide for a range of reasons, among them the financial and health costs to the grower and the effect of these chemicals on the fragile environment. "We are concerned about the environment, especially the potential flow of the chemicals as run-off into the Great Barrier Reef. That is why we are advising growers carefully to consider weather conditions to decide if they really need to spray and not just do so on a routine or calendar basis. Capsicum guidelines for managing powdery mildew are focusing on not over-using chemicals," he explained.

Chrys and his team are working to find other more environmentally friendly options that could be sprayed on capsicum plants to activate the plant's own natural defence system. This would provide some sort of a barrier to prevent the fungus from establishing itself on the plant. There has been some success using a liquid form of silicon (STAND SKH) produced by Agrichem. "Silicon is basically made from sand particles and when sprayed on plants it hardens the cell walls of the plant. Mildew spores find it hard to penetrate after they germinate and it also increases the plant's defences making it more resistant to attacks," Chrys said. Now, researchers are trying to encourage growers to alternate fungicide sprays with such environment-friendly products rather than relying mainly on the fungicide sprays. "We don't have a magic bullet yet, but if we can cut back to three or at the most five sprays of fungicide each season, it will save on costs to the growers and to the environment. Growers do not need to waste money making seven to ten sprays when they would be equally effective with three," he said.

The other danger of over-using chemicals is that the fungus could develop resistance to the fungicide, rendering the chemical useless. For example Bayfidan, a systemic fungicide protects plants from within, but brings with it the danger of fungus developing resistance if used more frequently than three times a season.

There's also an unlikely 'secret' weapon: powdered milk. It could be used to combat powdery mildew if alternated with silicon sprays and could significantly reduce the

effect of the disease on infected capsicum. "Powdered milk is not completely new to protect plants, it has been tested in the glasshouse on cucurbit plants infected with powdery mildew and was shown to be effective against the disease. In 2004 we tested it on infected capsicum plants in the field and had good results. The benefits are obvious, powdered milk is not bad for growers' health and it's also not harmful to the environment. If growers can substitute just one chemical spray with powdered milk, it all helps," Chrys said.


"Silicon is basically made from sand particles and when sprayed on plants it hardens the cell walls of the plant. Mildew spores find it hard to penetrate after they germinate."

Ironically, Chrys and his team at the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries have had to ask for an extension to their three-year research project. This was because the conditions which produced a bumper capsicum crop in 2005, did not favour data collection. The fungus can only be successfully studied in the field because it cannot be grown artificially in a laboratory. "We have some data from 2004 and we unfortunately need to have another season of good disease development because disease levels were very low in 2005," he said.

This season looks like producing better results for research and Chrys is confident growers will be able to put into practice his recommendations to minimise the impact of

Growing a healthy capsicum

the fungus on crops. "So far, we have had indications that there may be some disease in the fields which is promising from a data collection point of view."

The crop will be harvested in November and Chrys and his team hope to have their findings ready by April 2007. The research area takes in Bowen, Burdekin and Gumlu, near Ayr which is considered the capsicum heartland of northern Queensland. His research will focus on properties near Ayr and Gumlu. Chrys hopes word of mouth about the successful options to manage powdery mildew will give other growers the confidence to adopt his approach. 

The Bottom Line:

- Powdered milk can be used to protect capsicums from powdery mildew.
- Over-using chemicals can lead to fungus resistance.
- The 2006 capsicum season should produce a valuable crop for research to control powdery mildew.



For more information: Visit
www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
 Project number: VG03029
 Keywords: powdery mildew, capsicum

Powdery mildew infection on capsicum plants leaves a white powdery appearance on the underside of an infected leaf which is often first seen as a yellow spot on the upper surface of the leaf. This covering reduces the photosynthetic area of the infected leaf.

"The disease infection reduces the surface area available for light absorption. The plant may not be killed, but the fruit on the plant will be smaller," Chrys Akem said.

If the leaves are severely infected this may lead to defoliation exposing the already formed fruit to sunburn, increasing further losses as such damaged fruit can not be sold.

Chrys said the solution to powdery mildew lies not in developing new chemicals to combat the disease, because the fungus has been shown to easily develop resistance to fungicide sprays, but rather in growers looking at how they approach the entire process of growing a healthy plant. "Let's start changing our way of thinking – it has to be a whole cropping system approach in which we integrate all the options of producing a healthy plant. When we start talking about crop management, we need to be focusing on the crop, not just the disease or pest".

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Reduced pass harvesting of export cauliflower

Cauliflower and broccoli producers could reduce their labour costs following a successful project to reduce the number of harvests required.

By Carolyn Walker.

Depending upon the growing area and soil type, one pass harvesting of cauliflower and broccoli crops may be possible, according to Rachel Lancaster, Research Officer from the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia. "We'll develop a guide for reduced pass harvesting that can be used by cauliflower and broccoli producers," Rachel said. "This will lead to a reduction in labour, which is not only becoming increasingly expensive, but also increasingly scarce. We have developed the use of targeted fertiliser applications to reduce the impact of 'transplant shock'. Also, anecdotal evidence showed that by applying nitrogen and phosphorus straight after transplanting, less number of passes for harvest resulted."

The project looked at the role of additional potassium applied after transplanting. The results showed that applying 20g/L potassium nitrate to cauliflower seedlings in the tray prior to transplanting increased the yield, and allowed approximately 80 percent of the crop to be removed

at the first harvest. Applying potassium nitrate two days after transplanting on the soil surface beside cauliflower plants resulted in two harvests, with 83 percent removed at second harvest. "We looked at using irrigation to manage the number of harvests," Rachel said. "By developing a sliding scale of irrigation for cauliflower, this resulted in two harvests for each crop being regularly achieved. The sliding scale uses soil tensiometers that indicate when the crop requires irrigation. We practice full evaporation replacement when the crop is being established, with a reduction in soil moisture to 10, 20 and 30 cBars as the crop matures. As the cauliflower curd forms and matures, the irrigation should again be set at 100 per cent evaporation replacement to ensure high quality curd production. We will test the technique on broccoli over the summer months, as it is most effective during warmer temperatures."

Care is needed to ensure that when the air temperature is high, additional water is applied to 'cool', although not necessarily

irrigate, the plants, to reduce the potential for quality problems. Another benefit is that less water is required to produce a crop, increasing water-use efficiency.

The results showed that applying 20g/L potassium nitrate to cauliflower seedlings in the tray prior to transplanting increased the yield, and allowed approximately 80 percent of the crop to be removed at the first harvest.


The use of plant growth regulators such as ethephon and gibberellic acid may be useful for triggering the change in the plants from vegetative to reproductive. Initial results showed that ethephon did not reduce the number of harvests required, and further investigation was needed to determine the best application time, relative to the growth stage of cauliflower and broccoli. "We have



Advantages for growers

Manjimup grower Gary Ryan said the advantages highlighted by the project would be significant. "The less time spent harvesting, the more cost effective our operation is. Less passes means less leaf damage to plants, which in turn means less sunlight entering the curd and adversely affecting the quality of the cauliflower," Gary said.

"We currently plant larger amounts, but we will be able to plant smaller amounts more often with these changes. This will be less labour intensive and allow us to better manage our continuity of supply."

plans in place for demonstration crops of broccoli and cauliflower, and these will be treated as commercial crops grown in line with the agronomy program we have developed," Rachel said. "The crops will combine all factors useful for reducing the spread of harvest such as irrigation method, potassium application soon after transplanting and crop density." 

The Bottom Line:

- Guidelines are being developed to reduce pass harvesting in broccoli and cauliflower.
- The reduction in the number of harvests will reduce labour costs.
- Monitoring soil moisture and controlling irrigation can reduce pass harvests.



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: VG02051
Keywords: pass harvest, cauliflower

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The screenshot shows the AUSVEG Grower Portal website. The header includes the AUSVEG logo, 'Grower Portal', and a user login status: 'Logged in: Youna Angevin-Castro'. The main content area is titled 'Vegetable Levy' and features a large image of a potato field. Below the image, there is a text block explaining that the National Vegetable Levy is matched dollar for dollar by the Australian government for R&D. Five interactive boxes are displayed: 'News' (no news currently), 'R&D Projects' (search through a database), 'Downloadable Publications' (various publications), 'Issues' (latest information on levy issues), and 'National Vegetable Levy' (general information). The footer contains copyright information and navigation links.

Years of returns from your investment through the National Vegetable Levy are now available to growers on-line.

A research and development database has been developed for the benefit of all Australian vegetable growers and can be found at the website www.ausveg.com.au.

The database contains every project funded by the National Vegetable Levy from the last three years, with project summaries, presentations, images, factsheets, newsletters and final reports. Comprehensive project-based articles, researcher contact details and downloads makes it clear and easy for growers to access results from the levy-funded R&D. The database is fast becoming a one-stop-shop for research and development information for vegetable and potato growers.

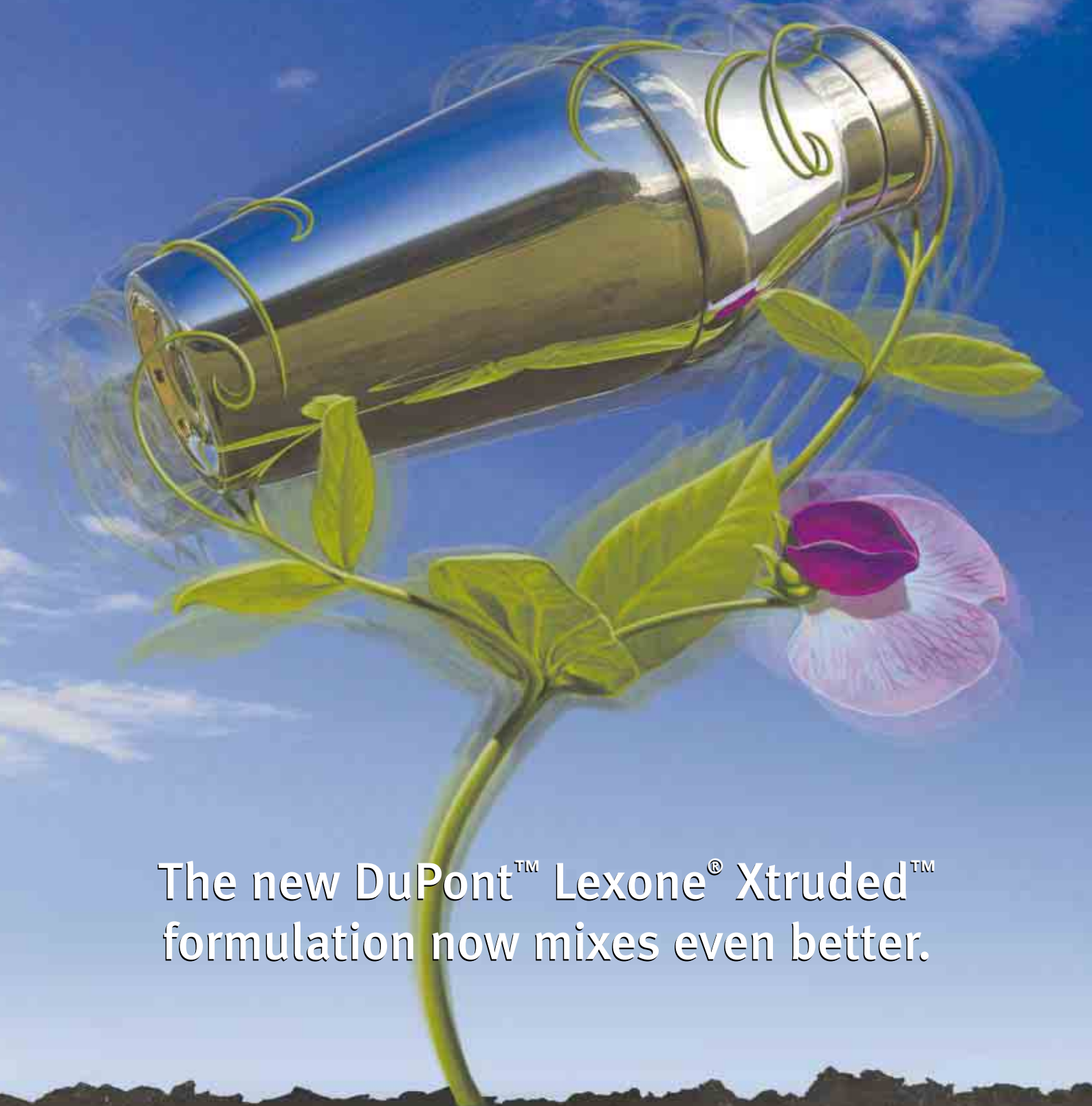
Entry to the database is as simple as completing an on-line form at www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm and within 24 hours you will have your username and password sent to you on email to login. Entry to the site is free to all levy payers.

A username and password are required to access the site to protect the intellectual property of the levy investment with access only granted to Australian vegetable and potato levy payers and related service providers. 

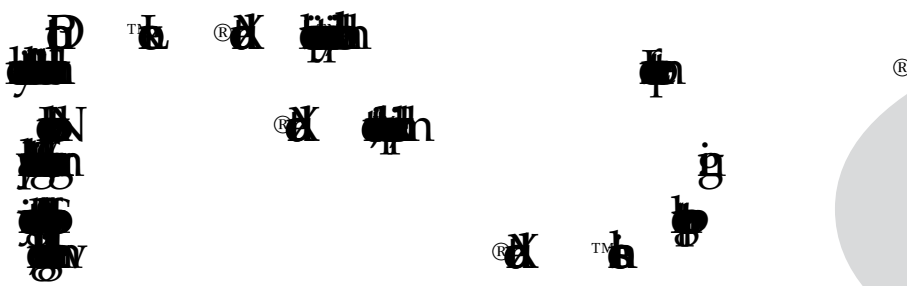
Log-in Tip

Make sure you register to get your username and password before trying to log-in to the site.

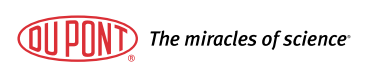
The screenshot shows the login page of the AUSVEG Grower Portal. It features the AUSVEG logo and 'Grower Portal' text. Below is a text block explaining the R&D funding and the purpose of the database. To the right, there are input fields for 'Username' and 'Password', and a 'Log In' button. The footer contains copyright information.



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Labelling sweet potatoes

Queensland researcher Dr Tim O'Hare recognises the health benefits of the sweet potato and says the potential for labelling the vegetable represents an exciting marketing opportunity for growers, as Barbara Hall discovers.

Earlier this year Tim, from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, presented the health benefits of sweet potatoes to growers, suppliers, seed companies and other researchers at the National Vegetable Industry Conference in Brisbane. "Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) are a rapidly growing industry with more people enjoying this traditional vegetable. Consumers will also be pleased to learn about their broad range of health benefits including low GI, a good source of dietary fibre and high in antioxidants," Tim said.

Sweet potatoes are particularly high in soluble fibre, in fact higher than most vegetables. This is as important as soluble fibre which can lower cholesterol, while insoluble fibre mainly just keeps you regular.

So what do these benefits mean and how can they be made useful to growers and consumers?

The Glycemic Index Symbol labelling system was recently introduced in Australia as a health promotion tool. The GI is a method of ranking foods according to their effect on blood glucose in the body, and was initially introduced as a guide for diabetics. Foods with low GI such as whole grains, legumes and sweet potatoes, make the blood glucose level rise and fall gently.

High GI foods such as white bread and potatoes cause the glucose levels to rise and fall sharply which can affect long-term health. Low GI foods are best at controlling our blood-sugar levels. The GI is now used widely as a tool to improve eating habits and reduce obesity.

"The sweet potato GI is around 44 while a boiled potato is 56 to 101. Any rating below 55 is considered low, 55 to 69 is intermediate, and 70 and over is high," Tim said.

The GI Symbol program means foods that have been GI tested can have the symbol and their value listed on the label. The GI Symbol appears near the nutrition information panel, along with the words high, medium or low. The program is run by the non-profit company Glycemic Index Limited, formed by the University of Sydney, Diabetes Australia and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Another significant benefit is that sweet potatoes are high in antioxidants. It was suggested that these antioxidant properties could explain the once historically low rate of bowel cancer in Maoris, for whom red-fleshed sweet potatoes were once a diet staple. Studies have also shown that sweet potato fed to mice with a disposition to bowel cancer had a strong protective effect.

"We currently grow purple-skinned, white fleshed sweet potatoes, but not purple skinned, purple-fleshed varieties. The latter have the highest antioxidant levels of all sweet potatoes and would be worth the consideration of Australian sweet

potato growers for their potential in the market-place," he said.

All sweet potatoes are also high in dietary fibre. The effect of dietary fibre on lowering cholesterol levels, avoiding constipation and possibly reducing the risk of colon cancer, is well known. Half a sweet potato, cooked and served without its skin, contains almost four grams of dietary fibre, more than double the generally accepted benchmark of healthy dietary fibre.

Importantly however, sweet potatoes are particularly high in soluble fibre, in fact higher than most vegetables. This is as important as soluble fibre which can lower cholesterol, while insoluble fibre mainly just keeps you regular.

Tim said research was needed to confirm without doubt the health benefits of the sweet potato which could then lead to labelling of the vegetable. "This is something I am interested in doing over the next year or so and I look forward to one day seeing the many health benefits of the vegetable clearly labelled on the supermarket shelf," he said.

The bottom line:

- Sweet potatoes have a broad range of health benefits including low GI, dietary fibre and high in antioxidants.
- Glycemic Index Labelling system will label and rank foods such as sweet potatoes according to their GI.
- A sweet potato has a GI of around 44 compared to a boiled potato of up to 101.



Nutrition Information	
Serving size	= 150g
Servings per packet	= 2
Energy	190 kJ
Protein	5.0 g
Fat	1.0 g
Saturated fat	
Carbohydrate	
Total	8.0 g
Sugars	5.0 g
Sodium	70 mg
Glycemic Index = 35 (low)	

The GI is a ranking of food carbohydrates according to their impact on blood glucose levels. Foods with a higher GI raise blood glucose more than those with lower GI values.

Top left: Tim would like to see sweet potatoes in Australia labelled in a similar way to this, to clearly indicate to consumers all their health benefits.

Bottom left: Sweet potatoes compare favourably with potatoes and rice, having a relatively low Glycemic Index.

GI of different (starchy) foods:

FOOD	GI	
spaghetti	38	LOW GI
Sweet potato	61	MEDIUM GI
Rice, white	69	MEDIUM GI
Potato	70	HIGH GI
White bread	70	HIGH GI
Baked potato	85	HIGH GI

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Family Ties

Continuing the Harslett family tradition of farming is something that Denise Harslett and her husband Alec have enjoyed for over 30 years. The farm now has a \$3.7 million turnover, keeping the family busy all year round.
By Bethany Hall.

The venture has gone from strength to strength, branching out of traditional produce and embracing new crops as opportunities presented themselves.

"We grow all our own seedlings, it's where I spend most of my day and I love it."

"Harslett Farm" is located 20 kilometres west of Stanthorpe at Amiens in south-east Queensland. The area, known as the granite belt, lends itself to farming and being about 1000 metres above sea-level, is cooler than the rest of the mostly tropical state.

"My husband's family have been farming here since they took up the property as settlers after the First World War," Denise said. "And I've been here since I got married 31 years ago - we're up to the fourth generation with our son Tim coming home to work on the farm after moving away to study agriculture."

Denise describes her personal contribution to the farm as being across a broad range of aspects – perhaps willing to take on a different variety of work than her male counterparts. "I take care of the books - I guess it's a job that anyone could do quite easily, but I'm quite suited to it, and the men here don't seem to want to get involved! And it's good because it's not heavy work," said Denise.

But her expertise extends far beyond the office. Denise relishes time spent in the plant nursery, where she nurtures seedlings that will eventually be planted and harvested.

"We start this process in July and finish around the beginning of March," she said. "We grow all our own seedlings, it's where I spend most of my day and I love it."

Denise's background in agricultural science also means she gets out into the crop frequently to search for insects. "I do the insect scouting which is something I enjoy. When we realised we would need to monitor insects I brushed up a little with help from



our crop consultant so that we could do it ourselves and not rely on him all the time – my agronomic background meant it was relatively easy to learn.”

“Harslett Farm” has grown many crops over the years, changing with consumer tastes and market demands. “It was originally a fruit farm, but we’ve been growing vegetables since the Second World War. We started growing celery then because of the demand from the US troops who were stationed in Townsville. I’m not sure why

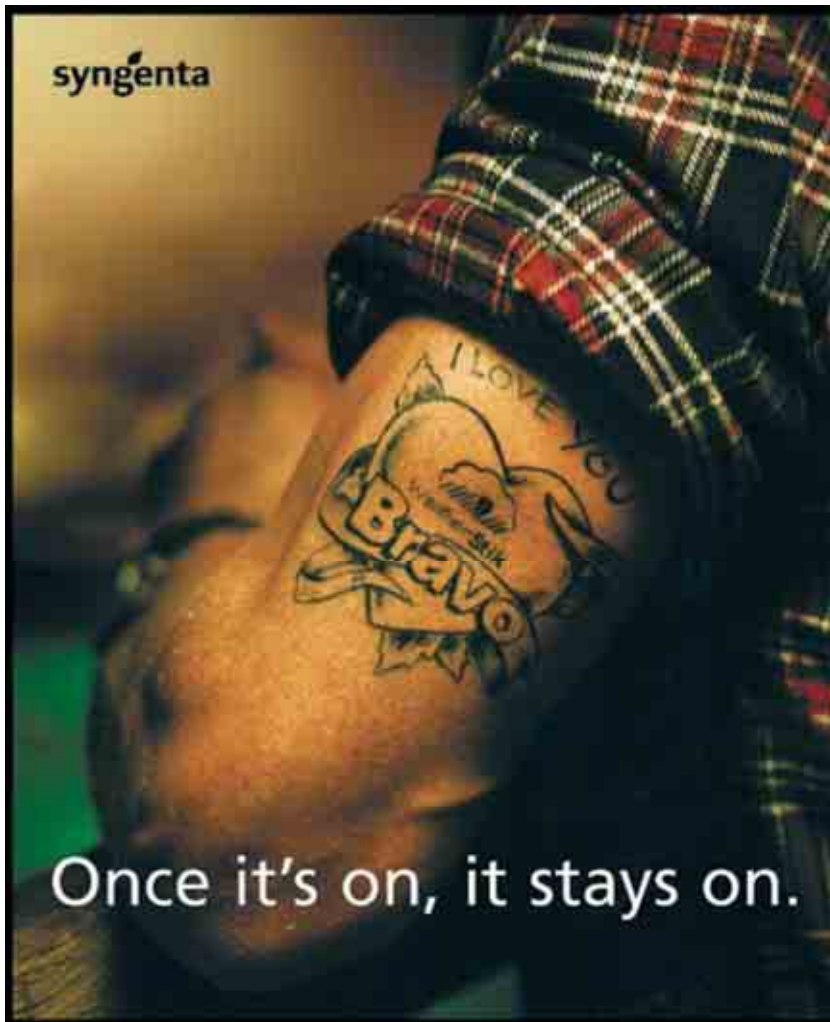
they wanted celery – Americans must be big celery eaters!” Denise said.

The family now grow a range of leafy green produce including celery but have also added wombok, cos lettuce and broccolini. Denise says they have a pragmatic approach to what is grown on the farm. “We change depending on demand and what we see as making a profit. We modify all the time and we try and grow particular produce when we know we’ve got a market. In the last couple of years we’ve started supplying to fresh

processors which we didn’t do before and we’re growing less celery and more wombok, partly because the demand is there and partly because celery is a heavy water user – growing alternative crops makes our water go further,” she said.

The Harsletts also dabble in wine grapes, but it is not a large part of their production. “We don’t grow any fruit aside from a few grapes - we have had them made into wine which we sell, but we don’t have a

Continued on next page

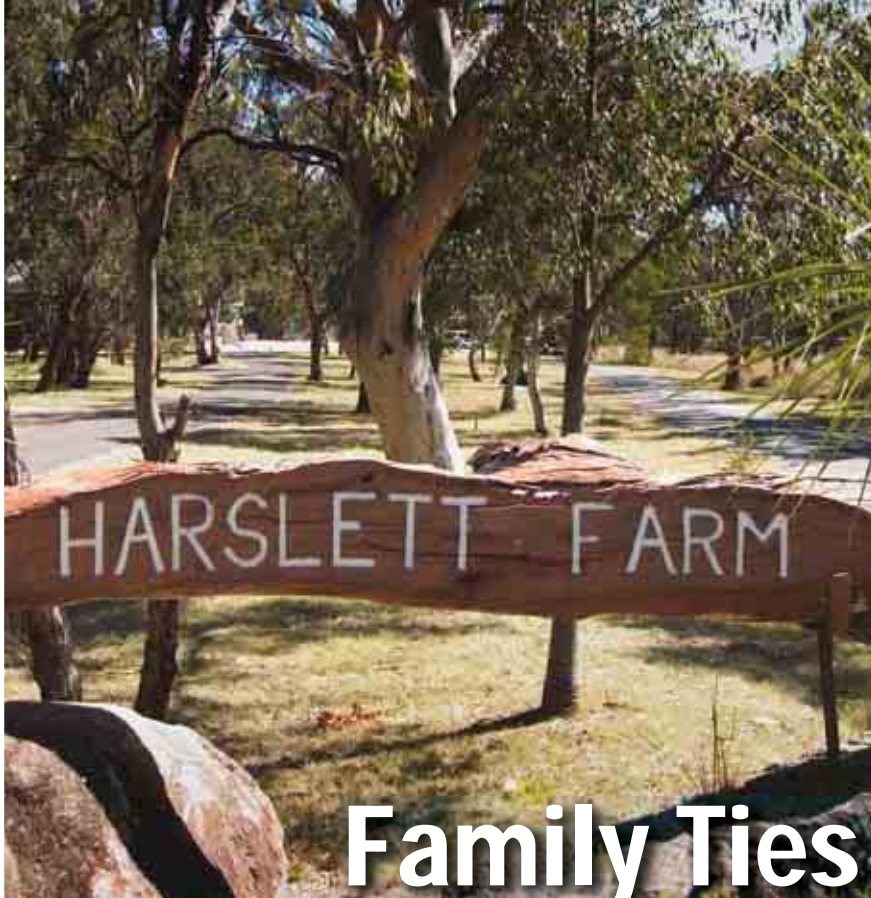


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Family Ties

(continued)



cellar door here on the farm – we try to keep the weekends to ourselves!” Denise laughs.

As with the majority of Australian farms access to water is an on-going issue at Harslett Farm, with all crops grown under permanent irrigation, stored in self-funded surface dams.

Only about a fifth of the farm are is used for cropping. However, this doesn't mean the crops produced are in any way small in quantity. Last year the farm produced over 220,000 cartons of vegetables, along with 444,000 kilograms of processing salad greens. The vegetables and salads are sold to fresh markets along the eastern seaboard from Brisbane to Adelaide and to processors who package the produce for sale into supermarkets.

The key to the farm's success is that it is still very much a family concern. As well as their son Tim recently joining the team, Alec's cousin Peter and his wife Rosie are a vital part of the business and this helps to keep things running smoothly. “Being a family farm helps to spread the load and gives us time to go away – we're not tied here because we can work together to arrange time off.”

Despite a year-round workload, the majority of labour is required during summer, where the team of up to 70 staff work long hours. In the cooler months a shorter working week and reduced hours leave time for more relaxation and the chance for some time off.

Surely with such a flexible approach to their farm and the crops they grow, the Harslett family's success looks set to continue. Now into their fourth generation of farming, and with a willingness to keep learning, a world of opportunity is available to them. ■



Sally Brent of Bunny Bite Foods

Grower Survey Results

In early 2006 AUSVEG commissioned an independent survey called the "Australian Vegetable Industry Communication Survey." One of the aims of the survey was to gain an insight into grower recognition of the National Vegetable Levy. To find out how many growers were aware of the levy, if they knew what it was used to fund, and if they were satisfied with the information we provide along with how the money is spent.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) are aware that they are paying a levy on their vegetable sales, with the highest recognition in South Australia and Western Australia of 100 percent.

When asked to recall items that the levy is spent on, 63 percent said they could


recall some items. The top items they felt their levy was going towards were: research (55%), promotion (17%), advertising (7%) and industry development (7%).

Awareness of how the levy is spent and who decides how the money is spent was quite low. 66 percent do not know how or who decides where the levy money is spent. The state with the highest number of respondents who state they do know is Western Australia with 55 percent.

Committees and Grower Representatives are both equally identified by 34 percent of respondents as how/whom decides what the national levy money is spent.

73 percent of growers said they do not know where to go or how to make a

suggestion on where the levy money is spent. South Australia said had the highest percentage of growers who knew how to make a suggestion, while growers in Queensland are the least aware of how to make a suggestion.

Overall, of the 96 percent of respondents who knew they were paying a national levy, the majority is neutral or dissatisfied with the information they receive on how their money is spent. 



For a copy of the survey report contact AUSVEG Tel: (03) 9544 8098 or visit www.ausveg.com.au

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The National Vegetable Levy is used to fund projects that benefit Australian vegetable growers. The levy means that we can plan research and development rather than undertaking uncoordinated and sporadic research that produces few useful outcomes.

The Australian government matches industry investment in research and development dollar for dollar, making the money go twice as far towards a better-informed industry.

Growers are also kept informed of all crucial news and issues within the industry through the AUSVEG website and Vegetables Australia magazine. These are powerful tools in getting industry messages to growers, keeping you informed up to the minute of issues as they progress. Each time you receive an issue of Vegetables Australia magazine, you have a tangible example of where some of your levy is spent. Flip through the pages and whenever you see this symbol  it represents a research project that has been wholly or partly funded by the National Vegetable Levy.

Log on to www.ausveg.com.au and register as a levy-paying grower to gain access to current and past research projects, this site can only be accessed by growers that pay the levy and research provider organisations involved in the research. It is a tool for growers to keep up with the very latest research as it happens and as projects end and findings are released. It is vital that the research and development that is undertaken with the levy revenue is relevant and useful to growers. With this in mind, Horticulture Australia and AUSVEG have set up an industry based advisory group responsible for recommending where funds from the levy should be allocated.

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Drought support extended across Australia

Farmers battling drought in 18 exceptional circumstances - declared areas across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia will receive an additional \$350 million in drought support.

The assistance will be extended to all eligible producers in the regions until 31 March, 2008. The Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, said the decision followed an assessment by the National Rural Advisory Council (NRAC) – an independent group of farmers and agribusiness professionals who

advise on a range of rural and agricultural issues, including exceptional circumstances. "The Government is also considering additional drought assistance measures," he said. "The announcement was part of the Government's streamlined exceptional circumstance re-application process, which enables declarations to be 'rolled over', taking the pressure off farmers still in the grip of drought."

Minister McGauran said it was important farmers in these 18 areas did not self-assess but rather contacted Centrelink on the

National Drought Helpline, 13 23 16, as soon as possible to check their eligibility for assistance. For interest rate subsidy information, producers should contact their relevant State Rural Adjustment Authorities. "There are other, non-exceptional circumstance related support services available from Centrelink, such as advice from social workers and Financial Information Service officers who can help individual farmers and their families deal with the effects of the drought," he said. ■



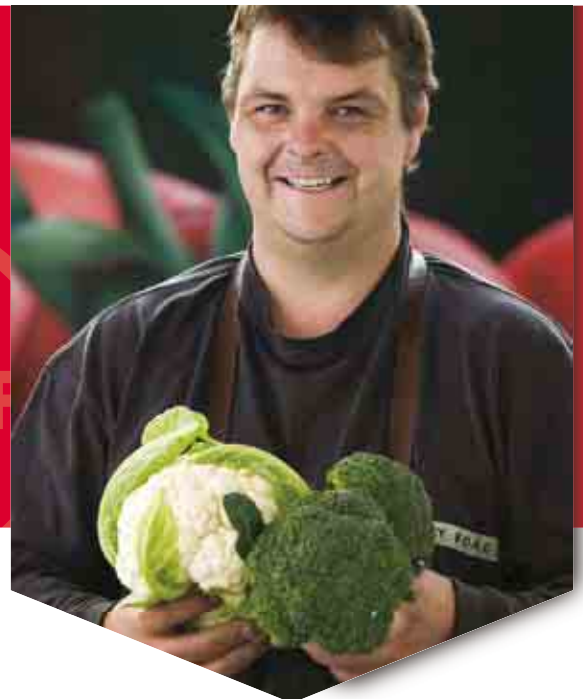
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Growing better crops

Western Australia's vegetable growers are benefiting from an on-farm research and training project to assist them get good production from 'best practice' irrigation and fertiliser management on sandy soil. By Angela Brennan.



Source: Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia



with sand

Source: Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia

Western Australia's Department of Agriculture is conducting a project to assist vegetable growers with sandy soils get the most out of their water and fertiliser.

Close monitoring of daily evaporation, soil moisture and soil nitrate levels to schedule irrigations and fertiliser releases. This will be complimented by an internet-based support system to be developed on Vegetable Western Australia's website.

There are often simple but highly effective changes that growers can easily implement.

"We are encouraging industry to adopt 'best practice' irrigation and fertiliser management for a range of crops grown on sandy soil as these have inherent difficulties," Project Researcher Peter O'Malley said. "We will work closely with as many growers as possible who are specialising in root and leaf crop production to introduce the use of more efficient irrigation design, evaporation based irrigation scheduling and 'crop demand' based fertiliser strategies," he said.

Irrigation specialist, Rohan Prince, was appointed to work with growers from Lancelin, north of Perth to Busselton in the south. He is assisting growers measure and upgrade the performance of their sprinkler systems to provide adequate and uniform moisture without losing it to wind and evaporation or leaching essential nutrients through excessive watering.

There are often simple but highly effective changes that growers can easily implement. "Pressure checks are one simple way to get the most out of your irrigation system as sprinkler pressure and nozzle size affect sprinkler uniformity. If you have uneven application of water then some areas will be over-watered and others under-watered. Poor system uniformity can also affect distribution of fertiliser throughout the crop especially where fertiliser is applied through irrigation."

Catch containers can also be used to measure uniformity and application rates. Other significant factors include the choice of sprinkler, sprinkler and lateral spacing and knowing wind strength and direction. "Before you can correctly schedule your irrigation you must know the application rate and how uniformly your sprinklers apply water," Rohan said.

Through the project, soil moisture probes, lysimeters and electronic rain gauges have been installed on farms to help guide irrigation scheduling and to demonstrate the advantages of weather-based irrigation scheduling. This is supported by 'real time' evaporation data available to growers via the department's website from online weather stations installed throughout the growing area.

Significant improvements have already been documented on some of the trial farms however, Rohan noted that on many farms very simple changes could improve irrigation

uniformity. On some farms the trend was to apply too little rather than too much water.

The project is part of a multi-pronged approach reflecting widespread industry support for improving water management in vegetable production. With 40 percent of Western Australia's water resources being used by irrigation, and over half of this on horticulture, industry and government are keen to develop sustainable solutions.

"'Waterwise on the Farm' training one-on-one assistance to implement better irrigation practices and help in applying for the irrigation improvement grant available under the scheme is being offered to growers. These programs provide in-depth training for grower's wanting to improve their water use efficiency," he said.

The Bottom Line:

- On-farm research and training is helping growers get the most out of sandy soils.
- Measuring performance of sprinkler systems can be a simple way to improve efficiency.
- Visit the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia's website: www.agric.wa.gov.au

For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: VG04009
Keywords: sandy soil, nutrients



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Taking a leap of faith

Tony Joseph



The key to a successful grower-wholesaler relationship is a partnership built on trust and sticking with what you know best. Bowen tomato grower Jamie Jurgens knows a good wholesaler can make or break a business. By Jodie Powell.



Jamie is carrying on a tradition begun by his family 15 years ago through working with Brisbane Markets-based wholesaler company Alfred E Chave, and in particular Tony Joseph. "We originally started consigning some of our produce with them and after a couple of years they requested more produce and we now sell 100 percent of our tomatoes to them," Jamie said.

"The benefit is not so much about trying to cut costs, but trying to understand what people want."

He said the relationship allowed him to concentrate on his field of expertise. "We can specialise in what we do - we're growers, not marketers. There's no way that from 1000km away we can make reactive decisions for the market. Tony has his feet on the ground down there in Brisbane and that's very important," he said.

Tony and Jamie meet face-to-face about every six to eight weeks, but in between they speak five or six times a day. "We're relaying information about orders. He markets our product and informs us of where he's sending the fruit," Jamie said. Tony agrees their roles are clearly defined. "He can concentrate on the growing side and we concentrate on the selling side," Tony said.

Jurgens Produce Pty Ltd grows over 120 hectares of tomatoes a year and in spring about 70 people are on staff ensuring the fruit hits the market successfully. Jamie's family has grown tomatoes in Bowen for about 80 years. "My great-grandfather was one of the first in the region to grow tomatoes, he got out of the industry eventually and Dad got into it," Jamie said.

Tony's family also has strong links with the vegetable industry. "I've been involved for 40 years myself, which makes me



the third-generation in my family to work in wholesaling. We started working with Jamie's parents and now Jamie's come along and I work with the whole family," Tony said.

About 50 wholesalers operate from the Brisbane Markets at Rocklea, just south of the city centre, with each specialising in particular fruits and vegetables.

Buyers link-in with wholesalers through the umbrella body Brismark, a body made up of more than 50 shareholder organisations based at Rocklea. Brismark estimates its total turnover at more than \$970 million annually, in excess of 90 percent of the total turnover of all primary licensed fruit and vegetable wholesalers in Queensland.

Tony said just as the wholesaler-grower relationship allows each to focus on their area of expertise, so too does each wholesaler specialise in what they know. "It's no good if a banana grower wants

to send me produce because we don't specialise in that area," Tony said. The pair said the relationship would be a disaster without trust. "You have to allow yourself to put your trust in people it is through good communication that you develop trust. We couldn't operate without them and Tony couldn't run a business without us," Jamie said.

Tony explained planning was also important. "We've always got a market for them and we have a wide range of markets, whereas growers who want to do their own marketing only have a very narrow area. Our scope is to handle everything, not just to pick the eyes out of it," he said.

Jamie estimates the relationship has allowed the Jurgens Produce business to double. "The people we're supplying see we're adding value in our chain through good communication. We educate them about the product and make sure that if they're putting an order in, it gets there at the right time and is the right colour," Jamie

said. "It's educating people about the whole chain and the benefit is not so much about trying to cut costs, but trying to understand what people want."

Jamie said the marketplace wanted consistent quality and supply and wholesalers were able to facilitate meeting that demand in a way growers selling direct could not. "A lot of people we supply to are contractors and they have to supply the contract to their customers. There's no room for excuses or mistakes," Jamie said.

Tony and other wholesalers aim to ensure there are few mistakes by knowing their marketplace inside out. "The wholesale market is about volume and brand-naming," he said.

Tony and his company has worked hard over the years to position the Jurgens' Vee Jays Tomatoes as a market leader. "Buyers get to know who Vee Jays Tomatoes is and a lot of the time you can sell the fruit sight unseen. When buyers trust the brand, it's a whole lot easier to do business," Tony said. ■

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Monitoring pesticide

Confidence in the safety and quality of fresh vegetables plays a substantial part in the success of the fresh produce industry and is taken very seriously by growers and consumers alike, as David Jarwood discovers.

Pesticide residue testing programs aim to check that crop production pesticides are being used correctly so that produce is safe. Recent analysis indicates that some pesticides may be more persistent in hydroponic production systems than others.

To protect the hydroponic industry's capacity to effectively manage pests and diseases while also ensuring that maximum residue limits are not exceeded, Mr Jeremy Badgery-Parker and Dr Sophie Parks from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, initiated a study to evaluate the persistence of certain pesticides in hydroponic lettuce and to develop better information about the quality of hydroponic produce.


The risk of residues in hydroponic leafy lettuce may be higher than that for field-grown head lettuce for two reasons. Leafy lettuce, being open-hearted, has a greater number of leaves potentially exposed to pesticide spray. Secondly, after application of pesticide to hydroponic lettuce, there is potential for contamination of the recirculated nutrient solution which results in additional uptake of the pesticide through plant roots.

"The introduction of specific pesticide labelling relating to hydroponic growing systems was anticipated as a consequence of the survey results. There are signs of this beginning to happen as the Australian Pesticides and Veterinarian Medicines Authority starts to exclude some products from use on hydroponics," Jeremy said.

"For example, the permit for Confidor for seedling drenching of lettuce (for lettuce currant aphid) may be limited in the near future and not available for hydro grown lettuce. Also, there is an expectation that methomyl will be suspended from use in hydro lettuce in the near future though field lettuce will still be able to use it," he said.

A key outcome has been a series of management recommendations for hydroponic growers which will help minimise the likelihood of residues in their crops. These recommendations are available as part of the Spraysense Factsheet series called 'Minimising Pesticide Residues in Greenhouse and Hydroponic Crops'.


The Australian Pesticides and Veterinarian Medicines Authority sets residue limits and reviews products to ensure that they meet the current standards. "For the grower, this means that checks are continuously occurring to ensure that when registered products are used according to the label directions, produce will not contain unacceptable residues," Jeremy said.

As a direct result of the project, discussions were initiated by the project team between industry representatives and regulatory authorities to address residue issue and to ensure that the best possible outcome for industry was achieved. 

The Bottom Line

- The research indicates some pesticides may be more persistent in hydroponic production systems.
- Specific pesticide labelling for hydroponic growing systems may be useful.
- The results will be used to improve grower and industry knowledge of pesticides residues and to improve residue levels in the future.

To access the Spraysense Factsheet visit: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/> Search for 'Minimising Pesticide Residues in Greenhouse and Hydroponic Crops'.

 For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: VG03029
Keywords: hydroponic lettuce



residue in hydroponic lettuce





Getting the most from your vegies



Lesley Hedges of Crop & Food Research, New Zealand with the new brochures.

Food nutrition is becoming an increasingly prominent issue for consumers, creating an opportunity for the vegetable industry to improve the profile of vegetables. Simon Adams investigates a new program designed to harness this interest.

A project currently underway in New Zealand is likely to give Australian growers a marketing boost for their produce, with researchers collating scientific information on the nutritional and health benefits of vegetables and how to get the most out of them.

The two-year project has so far published six reports, with this information used to publish promotional booklets on potatoes, tomatoes, salad greens, cucumbers, celery and radishes. "Our aim is to provide scientific information on the benefits of vegetables that many people may not be aware of, as well as dispelling some existing myths," said Project Leader Dr Carolyn Lister from the New Zealand Institute for Crop and Food Research.

Drawing on statistical data and historical information, the booklets convey a complete summary of health benefits for the consumer. "There's already a lot of information about vegetables out there, but it often deals with one aspect of a vegetable or is limited to one variety. We're combining all the available information and presenting it in a readily accessible format for as many people as possible," Carolyn said.

In addition to listing the nutritional benefits of vegetables, such as the lesser known antioxidant benefits of potatoes and tomatoes, the booklets also offer advice on how to spot the best quality product as well as cooking and preparation suggestions designed to get the best nutritional value from the produce.

For example, the 'How Does a Potato Stack Up?' booklet tackles perceptions of the low nutritional value of potatoes, while the booklet

entitled 'Tomatoes – Seeing Red' highlights the antioxidant value of lycopene, an antioxidant found in relatively few other foods.

The booklets, which are currently available on the internet, are planned to be distributed to the food industry, food writers and health professionals such as dietitians and nutritionists, in an effort to get the message to as many people as possible. "We are targeting people who are in a position to communicate the information to others. We are using this collated information to raise consumer awareness, which will translate into increased product sales both at local markets and increased exporting opportunities, not to mention improving people's health," she said.

Reports have already been written on yellow and orange vegetables, root vegetables and brassicas, and publication of the associated booklets is imminent. Further reports will include beans and peas, alliums, herbs and green vegetables.

<http://www.vegetables.co.nz> and then look under 'Resources'.

The Bottom Line

- Consumer demand has led to a new range of booklets outlining the health benefits of vegetables.
- The booklets, available on the internet, include nutritional value and preparation hints for various vegetables.
- To look at the booklets visit: <http://www.vegetables.co.nz>



For more information: Visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm
Project number: VG05072
Keywords: nutrition, health



Guiding the Industry

Peter Dal Santo has been working in agricultural science for over 20 years. Through his business AgAware, he is currently helping Australian horticultural producers to address the sticky issue of pesticide use.

Peter undertook an agricultural science degree at La Trobe University, and also holds biochemistry major from Melbourne University. He worked in the agricultural chemistry industry from 1983 to 1999 in Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria, across sales, marketing, research and development.

"We also looked at chemical use overseas, information on field efficacy and crop protection programs that could be modified to suit Australian conditions."

In 2000, the vegetable industry undertook a national approach to pesticide access. In the same year Peter joined the AUSVEG-owned Crop Protection Approvals which was involved in applying for minor use permits, predominately for the vegetable industry. Peter worked with industry to generate 'wish lists' for new pesticide uses. However, this led to congestion in Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Management Authority's (APVMA) system and therefore dissatisfied growers and industry.


After the project finished in 2003, Peter started up a consultancy business AgAware, which manages pesticide access for all horticultural industries in Australia, coordinating the application process for chemical permits.

AgAware in association with APVMA has been working to consolidate a range of permits for the same pesticide into one permit for multiple crops. Permit consolidation has so far occurred for 12 pesticides that will convert 56 different permits to 14 'mega' permits. This has relieved the congestion within APVMA considerably.

Peter along with Horticulture Australia and associated industries has developed a new approach to address future pesticide requirements. The new, focussed strategy came after wide consultation with industry. The needs identification process, through a series of workshops with growers and key members of the industry, found a range of key issues. They looked at the current list of diseases, insects and weeds for each crop, as well as the current range of pesticides legally available to use against these problems. "We also looked at chemical use overseas, information on field efficacy

and crop protection programs that could be modified to suit Australian conditions," Peter said. This assisted in negotiations with pesticide manufacturers to increase the registrations of a wider range of chemicals.

"There has been a big swing across the horticultural industries towards soft chemistry," Peter said. "I coordinate projects and manage the process of gathering information from the grower, consultants and researchers."

Peter coordinates emergency permits, urgent permits and minor-use permits on behalf of all horticultural industries. So far, he reports that the process has been very successful in terms of helping the industry to determine current and future pesticide requirements. The process also takes into account findings from other levy funded projects in IPM, resistance monitoring, residues and disease and insect pest-management options. 



For more information about permits visit:
www.apvma.gov.au/permits/permits.shtml



Heliothis (Heliocoverpa armigera)

One of the most well-known and prevalent grubs infesting vegetable crops across Australia, the Heliocoverpa caterpillar presents a real challenge to growers due to its increased resistance to a range of insecticides.



The more common species, *Heliocoverpa armigera*, usually breed locally and pupate over winter to emerge as moths in late spring. There are three to four generations each year, with each new group bigger than the last. The only relief comes during autumn when numbers decrease as the mature larvae delay their development into mature pupa over winter.

An Integrated Pest Management system is the most effective form of control for this damaging and persistent pest.

The insect attacks a variety of vegetable crops including beans, peas, capsicums, brassicas, lettuce and sweet corn. In the case of sweet corn, the caterpillar chews the leaves and down into the silk channel of the cob. Here they eat the kernels and the damage increases as the grub grows, rendering the corn unfit for sale. However, the damage can be removed by chopping the ends off the corn and pre-packaging it for sale.

There are a number of effective controls, however monitoring the Heliocoverpa is key to protecting crops and banishing this pest. It is important to monitor crops at least once a week when vegetables are beginning to appear to check for infestation. It is more effective to control the eggs before they are hatched, because once they have, the caterpillars are more difficult to eradicate.


Pheromone traps can help to assess the prevalence of the Heliocoverpa, by monitoring the flight of adult male Heliocoverpa moths. The male is attracted to the synthetic lure which

imitates the female's sex pheromone.

This serves as an early warning to indicate when to start checking the crop for eggs and caterpillars, and is a method of monitoring rather than a control. Inspecting the traps every day to check how many moths have been caught will give a good indication of the threat to a crop.

The management of the Heliocoverpa will also help to control other pests, as the steps taken to eradicate them will diminish the threat from other insects. Biological agents are an effective way of managing numbers of Heliocoverpa, however at certain times of the year pesticides are also needed to minimise damage to vegetables that are to be commercially sold.

A variety of control methods within an Integrated Pest Management system is the most effective form of control for this damaging and persistent pest. There are many natural predators of the Heliocoverpa which attack both eggs and caterpillars. Available commercially, egg parasitoids such as *Trichogramma* and *Telenomus* wasps invade Heliocoverpa eggs making them shiny and black, destroying the original contents of the egg.

Pupae busting is also an effective alternative to pesticides – over winter pupae can be destroyed by disturbing the soil to a depth of five to ten centimetres, either by directly killing the pupae or by disturbing the tunnels through which they would have emerged as a moth, trapping them underground. 

 For more information about Heliocoverpa research: visit www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers.login.cfm
Keyword: Heliocoverpa





Running On Empty

As world oil reserves dwindle, there is more debate about biofuels and alternative methods of running our vehicles than ever before. But what are these fuels, and where is Australia now in terms of availability to consumers? Tim Richards takes a look at this exciting industry.

If you told anyone nowadays that it costs peanuts to run a vehicle, they'd think you were mad. But over a hundred years ago, at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris, Dr Rudolf Diesel demonstrated a diesel engine that ran on peanut oil.

Biofuels, derived from plant crops or recycled cooking oils, have been around since motor vehicles were invented. However, while petroleum oil remained cheap and plentiful, they remained an overlooked fuel source. In the 21st century however, with petroleum becoming ever scarcer and expensive, attention has turned to these alternatives in a big way.

One of the most prominent is biodiesel, a fuel designed to work in existing diesel engines without any need for modification. The name covers a range of ester-based oxygenated fuels made from vegetable oils or animal fats, with comparable properties to conventional diesel.

Managing Director of South Australian Farmers Fuel, Andy Fisher, pointed to biodiesel's use in Adelaide as proof of its success. "All the Metro buses run on a premium diesel blend, and so do the trains." He also mentioned its usefulness at the city's fruit and vegetable market. "Those using diesel forklifts can now use them in confined spaces where they couldn't before, like coldrooms, because the carbon monoxide produced is negligible."

Another biofuel, often mentioned in the Australian media, is ethanol. This high-octane, water-free alcohol is available as a 10 percent mix with petrol, known as E10. In the US, Brazil and Sweden, 'flexible fuel' vehicles can run on various combinations of regular fuel and ethanol, but this option isn't available in Australia.

"The farmers of the future will be the oil barons of this country."

Andy is critical of the Australian Government's reluctance to allow the use of higher ethanol blends. "We're the only continent that caps its ethanol retail blend at 10 per cent," he said. "Everywhere else you can have a flex-fuel vehicle, and run up to 100 per cent ethanol if you choose."

But why should we use these fuels?

"As a transport fuel source they're sustainable and renewable," Executive Director of Renewable Fuels Australia, Bob Gordon said. "And we're running out of domestic oil reserves."

They're renewable because their base ingredients are grown. In Australia, biodiesel and ethanol are derived from crops like sugar cane and wheat, and vegetable oils such as canola, soybean and palm oil.

"There's no silver bullet replacement for oil, but biofuels can help extend its life by taking some of the demand pressure off,"


said Bob. "We see ourselves as part of the transition from petrol and diesel, to the fuel technologies of the future."

Biofuels are also better for the environment. Biodiesel has significantly lower carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide emissions than its traditional counterpart, along with producing lower hydrocarbons, particulates and carbon monoxide. However, some tests have found increased production of nitrogen oxide, which can contribute to smog, though this is in dispute.

Ethanol also has impressive environmental credentials, being non-toxic, water soluble and highly biodegradable. As it contains 35 per cent oxygen, its addition to petrol assists fuel combustion, thus reducing exhaust emissions. It's credited with reducing carbon monoxide emissions by as much as 30 per cent.

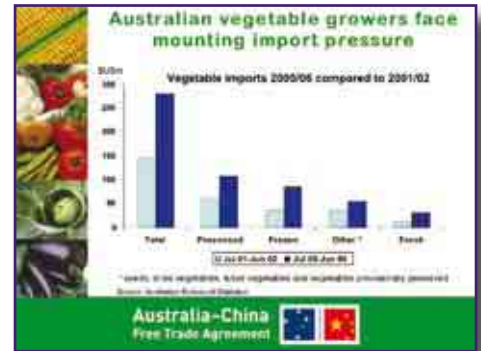
With a diminishing role for conventional oil, what's in store for the future of biofuels?

"With the rapid emergence of flex-fuel technologies, we'll see cars rolling off the manufacturers' lines here in Australia with the capability to use higher ethanol blends," Bob predicts. "10 years down the track, we could see biofuels, along with LPG and CNG, supplying 20 percent of transport fuel use."

Andy also pointed out the silver lining for Australia's vegetable growers. "The farmers of the future will be the oil barons of this country," he said. 

Economic Outlook

In late September, following an invitation from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian consul in Beijing, Ian James, AUSVEG's economist, travelled to Xi'an, China. Xi'an is the capital city of Shaanxi Province, a large agricultural area in north-west China. Bethany Hall spoke to Ian about his visit.



What was the purpose of your visit to China?

The visit to China was part of the ongoing discussion between Australian and Chinese government officials on an Australia/China free trade agreement.

What is up for negotiation in a free trade agreement?

A free trade agreement is about removing distortions to trade which either seek to boost exports, usually through subsidies, or restrain imports through quotas or taxes (tariffs). Free trade agreements do not deal with biosecurity issues although some economists claim these are pseudo barriers to trade.

Who organised the discussions and what was their purpose?

On the Australian side, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and on the Chinese side, by the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture. The purpose of the discussions was to enable industry representatives from both sides to provide a brief background on their industry and in particular industry attitudes to a free trade agreement between the two countries.

How were the discussions conducted?

The discussions were held in a conference format. The conference was opened by the Australian Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Senator McGauran and China's vice-minister for Agriculture



Fan Xiaojian. They were followed by speakers from Australia and China on each major agriculture industry. Horticulture was given an afternoon session and had three speakers representing fruit and nuts, vegetables and wine grapes.

Why was there a need for industry representatives to present at the conference?

The Chinese are concerned that a free trade agreement will result in China being swamped with Australian produce. They have little understanding of the physical constraints on Australian agriculture and have not been convinced by Australia's negotiators. From a vegetable industry perspective my role was to reinforce the view put forward by Australia's lead negotiators that firstly, Australian vegetable growers do not pose a trade threat to China and secondly, that there are concerns amongst producers in Australia as to the fallout from a free trade agreement between Australia and China on Australia's domestic vegetable market.

What are the existing tariff arrangements between Australia and China?

Fresh vegetables from China enter Australia tariff free. There is a tariff of 4% on some lines of frozen and processed vegetables. China imposes a tariff of 10% - 13% on fresh vegetables from Australia and a tariff of up to 25% on frozen and processed vegetables.

What was AUSVEG's position?

The message was kept simple and succinct. The thrust of the argument was that Australia, being a small producer of vegetables in world terms, did not pose any significant threat to Chinese domestic markets. On the contrary Australian vegetable growers were facing mounting pressure from Chinese imports. Australia already gave generous entry to Chinese product. Hence, the Australian vegetable industry was unwilling to make any further concessions unless they led to a level playing field for the industry.

What was achieved by the conference?

The Chinese officials were given a clearer picture of the Australian agriculture sector and the physical limits placed on agricultural producers by topography and water resources. The fact that the message was being carried by industry representatives rather than Australian bureaucrats was a significant plus.

In your opinion is a free trade agreement between the two countries likely?

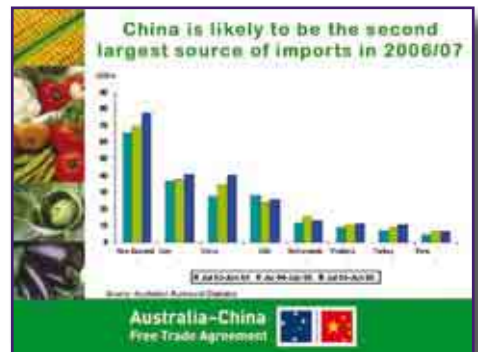
An agreement which leads to zero tariffs particularly on agriculture will be difficult. There is a widening income gap between urban and rural areas in China which means that China will be sensitive to anything which they perceive as harming their agricultural sector. However, some precedent has been set in respect of vegetables by a free trade agreement between China and Chile which saw tariffs removed on vegetable products within a space of two years.

How significant was the conference for Australian vegetables?

The conference was extremely significant and represents a milestone for Australian vegetable growers. An invitation to the conference was a big win for the vegetable industry and builds on the momentum established last year in gaining recognition that vegetable growing is an integral and important part of the Australian agriculture sector.

Where to from here?

Discussions on the free trade agreement between government officials will recommence in December. However the progress to an agreement will be slow. If an agreement does occur it is most unlikely to be less than two years in coming to fruition. In the meantime, the industry needs to respond to the Chinese challenge in a strategic way.



Banana biofuels to reduce growers' fuel bills

Growcom has received a grant of close to \$200,000 from the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency to build a pilot biofuel plant in Tully.

The plant will test the commercial viability of using waste bananas to produce a natural gas to run tractors, farm machinery and vehicles. The plant will be constructed and operated in the next 12 months on the plantation of Bush Holdings at Tully. "About 10 per cent of bananas are currently discarded in the Queensland banana industry every year due to imperfections which make them unsuitable for sale," Growcom CEO Jan Davis said. "Bush Holdings has agreed to partner with us to provide the constant supply to the plant required for the pilot project."

Researchers have shown that natural gas can be produced from bananas using a 'continuous digestion' process involving natural microbial organisms.

Bananas offer the advantage of producing a cleaner gas, consisting of just methane and CO₂, than other waste streams such as human sewage, piggery or feedlot waste, with the added attraction of less noxious odours.

"We anticipate that the pilot plant will begin producing gas in about five months time and we hope it will prove that the gas can be produced in commercial quantities and compressed for use in combustion engines to power tractors and machinery. The scaled up production could ultimately see a cheaper alternative fuel to petrol produced at the larger packing sheds on farm, saving growers a significant amount on their annual fuel bill. The technology also has the potential to be transferred to other fruit and vegetable commodities such as apples in other regions," Jan said. ■



Agri-Food National Conference 2006

The Agri-Food Industry Skills Council launched Australia's inaugural National Conference 2006 in Melbourne in September. This brought together 130,000 enterprises from rural, coastal and regional Australia, to discuss issues now confronting the agri-food industry.

The conference opened in Melbourne under the theme 'Building a Sustainable

Future'. It brought together for the first time leading national academic, political and business identities to explore many of the crucial issues facing a sustainable agri-food industry in the 21st Century.

The agri-food industry employs around 800,000 people and produces seven percent of GDP. The conference debated

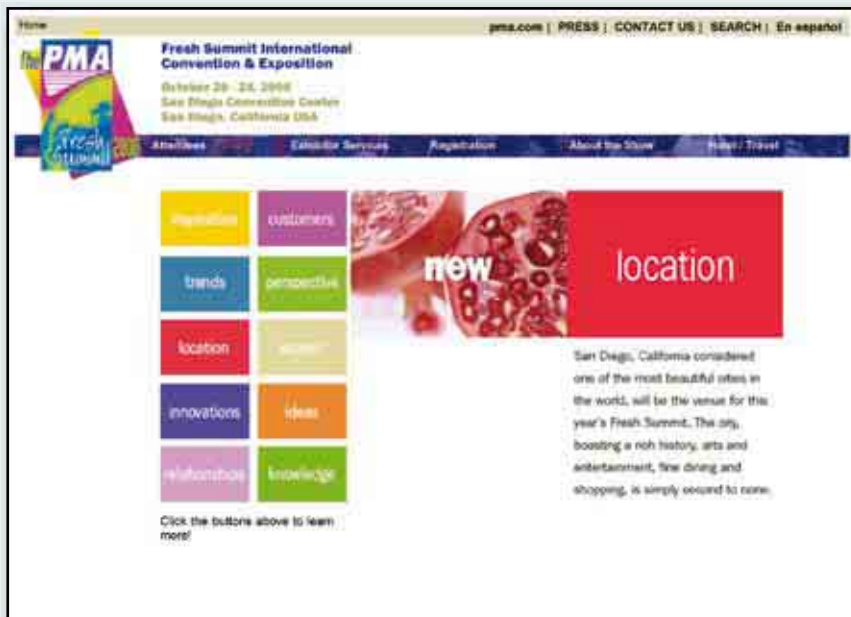
the latest innovation in training and workplace skilling for the agri-food industries, as well as covering the controversial impact of Pacific island immigration to resolve an impending national crisis in attracting skilled workforces to regional and rural Australia. ■

Brisbane Markets says 'Go for 2 & 5'

Brisbane Markets' Marketing and Communications team members show their new 'Go for 2 & 5' signage on their promotional vehicles. From left, Chiara Sullivan, Claire Richardson and Jacqui Gregory.



Fresh Ideas at PMA Summit



The Produce Marketing Association's (PMA) Fresh Summit held annually in the United States, recently drew to a close. Held this year from October 20-24, it is the world's largest fresh fruit and vegetables event.

It is a great chance for members of the fruit and vegetable industries world-wide to gather to share and learn about latest trends and developments within the industry.

Fresh Summit is organised by the PMA which is a not for profit global trade association serving over 2,400 members world wide. The PMA's core purpose is to sustain and enhance an environment that advances the marketing of produce and related products and services. Fresh Summit attracts 750 exhibitors and over 17,000 attendees from more than 70 countries.

Every segment of the industry is represented at Fresh Summit, including supermarket retailers, importers, exporters, growers, packers, shippers, brokers, transporters, wholesalers, suppliers, distributors and food service operators.

The summit forms part of the Young Growers PMA tour undertaken each year by a group of growers from Australia and New Zealand. The primary intention of the tour is to expose young growers to issues such as production, marketing, processing, value adding, supply chain and research. ■

STOP PRESS:

For a full account of the PMA Summit see the January issue of *Vegetables Australia* where Kent West, Vice Chairman of AUSVEG will report on the conference.

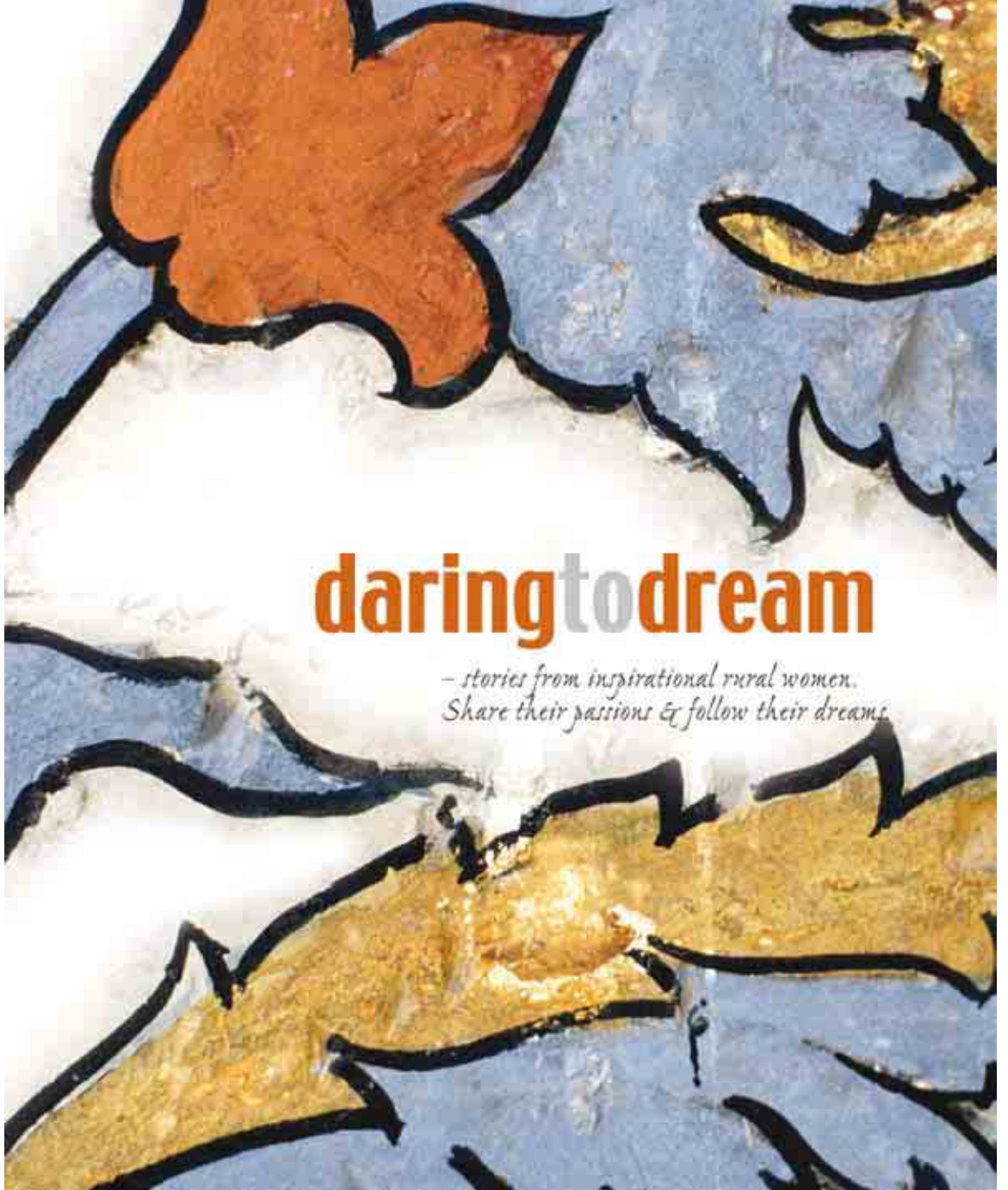
Brisbane Markets has joined the choir of voices encouraging Queenslanders to eat their two fruit and five vegetables each day by taking up a 'Go for 2 & 5' sub-licence through Queensland Health and Horticulture Australia Limited.

'Go for 2 & 5' is a four-year campaign urging Queenslanders to eat at least two serves of fruit and five of vegetables a day to stay healthy and avoid developing chronic disease. Queensland Health launched the campaign earlier this year after it was found that less than 15 percent of adult males and 21 percent of adult females in the state were eating the recommended daily intake of vegetables.

Brisbane Markets will integrate the branding and healthy eating messages into its current \$1 million annual marketing and communication commitment to educate Queenslanders. This will include 'Go for 2 & 5' imagery on its fleet of promotional vehicles which visit independent retailers and schools through south east Queensland, promoting fresh fruit and vegetables.

"Brisbane Markets has an important role as an industry leader in assisting to promote the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, and our involvement in such a landmark campaign is seen as an excellent outcome for the industry," Brisbane Markets CEO Andrew Young said. "An increase in consumption volumes from the current average level of 3.8 serves per day to 4.8 serves per day would result in a billion-dollar injection into the fresh and processed fruit and vegetable industry." ■

Lives of Rural Women Celebrated



New South Wales Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald used the annual New South Wales Women's Gathering weekend event from October 20 to 22 at Grafton to launch a new book, *Daring to Dream*, featuring the stories of inspirational women from rural backgrounds.

From pest animal ranger to farm tourism pioneer, the stories' subjects are as diverse as the regions of New South Wales they represent - all sharing a common determination to follow their personal dream, and make a difference.

Editor, Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network Coordinator, Sonia Muir, said the *Daring to Dream* book offered readers a unique learning opportunity to better understand some of the challenges and rewards being experienced by rural women and their families.

"By sharing their stories, the women featured in *Daring to Dream* are also providing a mechanism for networking with other rural women, and providing an important avenue for mentoring and encouragement to others,"

she said. "This book is a tribute to women from rural and remote backgrounds who have set goals, overcome challenges and agreed to share their stories."

The book contains 27 stories covering a cross-section of rural women from various backgrounds and geographical areas. Their stories of striving for their personal goals will provide inspiration to anyone with an interest in rural life.

Daring to Dream forms part of a broader Rural Women's Network internet mentoring initiative, with plans already underway for the second bank of stories. Sonia is keen to hear from rural women who have a story to share and can be contacted on (02) 6391 3611.

The project's aim is to recognise rural women playing key roles as achievers and agents of change across a range of areas including; agriculture, industry, business, community, sport, the arts and natural resources. ■

Daring to Dream is available for \$11.00 plus postage by phoning 1800 028 374.



Brisbane Conference Celebration. Source: Dr. Russ Stephenson, chairman of the bid committee

Australia to host the International Horticultural Congress in 2014

Australia has been chosen to host the 29th International Horticultural Congress in 2014 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Brisbane was named as the host city by Council members of the International Society of Horticultural Science at a meeting in Seoul, South Korea prior to the staging of the 2006 International Horticultural Congress in mid-August.

The five-day Congress is expected to attract more than 2,000 international delegates from over 100 countries and will generate an estimated \$7 million for the Queensland economy.

The Congress, which is held every four years, will next take place in Lisbon in 2010 before coming to Brisbane in 2014. This is

only the second time that the International Horticultural Congress has been held in the southern hemisphere, having previously been staged in Sydney in 1978.

The Horticultural Industries in Australia and New Zealand contribute more than \$10.6 billion to the region and are at the forefront of innovation and research world-wide.

Dr. Russ Stephenson, of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, chairman of the bid committee, said that the Societies and all the supporters were delighted that the International Horticultural Congress will be returning

to the southern hemisphere after a gap of 28 years. "Australia and New Zealand make leading edge contributions to international horticultural science and our industries utilise the research outcomes to maintain their competitiveness in global markets. Now we must work closely together to organise a memorable event when we showcase all aspects of Australian and New Zealand horticulture to the world in 2014," Russ said. ■

State Association profile

Growcom, Queensland



Jan Davis CEO, Growcom

Growcom, formerly known as Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers, is the peak lobbying organisation for the horticulture industry in Queensland. Horticulture is a growing industry worth \$1.54 billion in 2005, \$790 million for fruit and \$750 million for vegetables.



Growcom represents the horticulture industry in the development of policies and regulations on a range of issues including land and water management. It works to ensure practical, workable and sustainable outcomes for growers.

Over the last three years the organisation has undergone some major changes. After 80 years of providing essential services to the horticulture community, Growcom made the transition from a statutory body to a commercial, voluntary organisation.

The name 'Growcom' was introduced to reflect the new focus of the business. In July 2003, the statutory arrangements the organisation had worked under since 1923 were removed. These arrangements had directed that all commercial producers of fruit and vegetables in Queensland must be levy-paying members of Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers. The arrangements also gave specific guidelines for the work that the organisation was able to do. Since the removal of these statutes the organisation has introduced new membership arrangements and developed a range of commercial services.

CEO Jan Davis, joined Growcom in September 2001 and led the organisation through this major change. Jan previously worked as Principal Consultant for Jawin Associates, a consulting firm which specialised in providing advice and assistance to agricultural and environmental industries. She also worked in senior positions for the Australian Mushroom Growers Association, Greening Australia and the Nursery Industry Association of Australia. She holds a Master

of Environmental Planning, a Bachelor of Economics, Graduate Diplomas in Environmental Studies and Education and a Horticulture Certificate, as well as a Master of Agribusiness.

"As we move into the future, Growcom will focus on industry representation including developing policies and lobbying governments on behalf of horticulture," Jan said. "We will also continue to provide industry information and development including field staff to service growers, education and publications as well as commercial and consultancy services for industrial relations, human resources, marketing and promotions."

According to Jan, the Queensland fruit and vegetable growers remain Growcom's core business, but the removal of the statutory limitations allows Growcom to capitalise on other opportunities. "We will strive to continue to offer our members services relevant and essential to their business success in the horticulture industry," she said.

Growcom has been awarded a grant of \$350,000 under the FarmBis Targeted Industry Initiative for the accelerated rollout of the organisation's training and delivery model. The model is based on research and analysis of current and future issues impacting on Queensland horticulture, and the industry skills and training requirements to respond to these issues. "This project will allow horticulturalists to access a broad offering of training and services to meet their business needs," Jan said.

Growcom offers several membership categories to more than 1,600 members. The organisation's core membership remains Queensland fruit and vegetable growers, but this has broadened to include commercial and consulting services to the entire horticulture industry.

The organisation's monthly Fruit & Vegetable News magazine is regarded as the Queensland industry's bible. It provides members with the latest news, information on smart farming practices and management advice. Growcom also distributes a fortnightly electronic news bulletin, Horticulture Now to provide the latest information on activities and initiatives.

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Growcom's membership categories include:

- **Grower member:** for commercial growers of horticultural produce and products
- **Corporate member:** organisations or individuals who have a strategic link or vested interest in the horticulture industry
- **Group member:** a registered or recognised group of growers who have joined individually or as a group with one registered representative

Growcom's services to members include:

- An active and influential advocacy team, working for the continued benefit of the industry
- Water efficiency, farm management systems and pest management programs
- Information services regarding policy and government relations, land and water issues, and farm management systems
- Industrial relations and people management
- Marketing and promotions

AUSVEG



John Roach, Chief Executive Officer, AUSVEG

Last month AUSVEG opened a small office in Canberra which reflects the importance the organisation places on developing and maintaining good relationships within all areas of the Australian Government and other major stakeholders. And I have to say the welcome mat has been terrific allowing the views of vegetable growers to be at the forefront of many National debates.

There was reason to celebrate last month. The long awaited Horticulture Code of Conduct was endorsed by the Howard Government to be a mandatory code. Cabinet has accepted the position of vegetable growers and others and the legislation will be brought into parliament shortly. While this is a fantastic result we are concerned that the code must include everyone as, for example, if retailers are excluded, the important wholesale sector is at risk of being disenfranchised.

The potential restrictions on security sensitive chemicals are also of great concern to our industry. For this reason AUSVEG was invited to participate in the Prime Minister and Cabinet COAG Industry Consultation Working Group. On this forum AUSVEG will be an important contributor ensuring the views of growers are heard for an outcome that doesn't unjustly penalise growers and improves regulatory consistency across Australia. A national discussion paper is to be released shortly and I would encourage everyone to comment on it.

Our economist, Ian James at AUSVEG made a presentation to the Free Trade Agreement Conference in China recently along with the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran. Ian reinforced that the Australian vegetables industry is an important player in the Australian agriculture sector. At present there appears to be

few barriers to China in moving product to Australia but AUSVEG will work hard to gain a level or equal trading arena for Australian vegetable growers looking to export to the growing markets of Chinese consumers. In this debate we must make sure that vegetables are not 'traded off' in favour of other agricultural commodities in the FTA process.

AUSVEG is also looking to change its organisational structure to be more inclusive and better service growers. The Board has started this process by initiating an audit of what AUSVEG does as perceived by its members and other key stakeholders and what they would like to see AUSVEG do. The AUSVEG Board recognises that a strong National Peak Industry Body involving all of the vegetable industry is a prerequisite to repositioning the industry and better meet the challenges of the future.

There are many points to consider in changing our structure. Some of these include: maintaining present member interests, allowing direct membership of AUSVEG to be completely inclusive and democratic, allowing affiliate memberships, holding an Australian Vegetable Forum to promote debate from the whole of industry on issues that AUSVEG will drive, just to mention a few.

In debating these changes, I want to stress that in no way does this detract from the importance of our state based vegetable grower associations that work exceptionally hard at servicing growers and keeping the voice of growers heard at the state level. In fact it should enhance their work. By working collectively with these industrious organisations, grower issues can be addressed more successfully on a national basis.

If you would like to provide comment on our suggested changes to our structure please visit www.ausveg.com.au, or email me at john.roach@ausveg.com.au or call the AUSVEG office on (03) 9544 8098.



John Roach
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG Ltd.

New South Wales

Drought Impacting On NSW Vegetable Growers

The NSW Farmers' Association is acutely aware of the severe drought conditions which are impacting upon farmers and their communities across NSW. Concerns over the climatic outlook and the impact of drought conditions dominated discussion at the recent Executive Council Meeting in Sydney on Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 October 2006.

The President of the Association, Jock Laurie has appointed a special Presidential Drought Taskforce to examine all facets of the drought and to explore and progress possible ways to alleviate the significant financial and emotional pressure on drought affected farmers and their communities. The Taskforce encompasses members of the Rural Affairs Committee and it also has representatives from the livestock, horticulture, cropping and irrigation sectors.

The Association has been in continual discussion with all levels of Government as well as rural stakeholder groups. Measures which are currently under consideration by the Association will not only assist farmers across NSW, but also contractors, rural industries and small businesses.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie has unveiled a Drought Discussion Paper to highlight the issues that need to be addressed by both levels of Government in order to support agriculture through the worst drought on record. The Drought Discussion Paper was finalised by the Association's Presidential Drought Taskforce and outlines issues associated with social, financial and environmental aspects affecting farmers.

Luke Jewell
Senior Policy Analyst
NSW Farmers Association



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Around the States

Tasmania

Potato Congress 2006

TFGA Potato Council delegation to the 6th World Potato Congress and Study Tour returned to Tasmania at the beginning of September following a very successful three-week trip.

The Congress was a well-run event and was attended by over 800 delegates from around the world, representing every facet of the potato industry. A key focus for the congress was potato promotion as a healthy food and the need to regain the market place that had been taken over by such crops as rice. With rice being a heavy user of water in its production, there is great potential to push the humble potato into third world communities as a more water-wise, healthy alternative with a greater nutritional value.

A two-week long study tour prior to and after the congress was a great opportunity for the team to see first hand potato production from seed to processing and packing in the USA.

Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan

The Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan consultation process has continued over the month of September, with Euan Laird drawing together a draft that has been sent out for comment from across the value chain.

The Draft is planned for release toward the end of November. This will be earlier than originally planned. Key projects have been identified and are currently in the process of being prioritised and applications for funding being developed.

Cereal & Seeds

The Cereal & Seeds portfolio has landed in the area of Vegetable Council. While this may concern some, it is in fact a great opportunity for the promotion of TFGA to Vegetable seed growers, and the benefits of being part of the Association. Given the minimal amount of hands-on and personal approach shown to date, it should not be too difficult to raise the profile and deliver some degree of benefit to seed growers in the State.

Central Coast Strategic Alliance

A partnership has been forged between the Central Coast Council and TFGA Vegetable Council. It is planned to open up possibilities and marketing opportunities for the vegetable sector in conjunction with all other areas of primary production and business sectors in the region. The focus will be on excellence and the importance of quality product that can be identified as special and grown on a unique environment under best practice.

Aerial Spraying

A meeting of agricultural and horticultural industry players was held at Devonport to discuss the issues surrounding aerial spraying and the implementation of a mandatory code of practice.

Peter Lee-Archer from DPIW Spray Information Referral Unit provided those in attendance with an update on the proposed changes to the Tasmanian Code of Practice for Aerial Spraying. The revised code is being drafted into a regulation and will mean a greater level of enforcement. Once the Draft has been completed, it will be given to industry for comment and review.

Denis Leonard
Executive Officer
TFGA



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Queensland

Industry success in finally winning the Federal Government's commitment to introduce the Mandatory Code of Conduct has received an overwhelmingly positive response from vegetable growers in Queensland. The efforts of Growcom and other HAC members have been recognised in this major achievement. Transparency throughout the supply chain will lead to the development of fair, efficient and effective market systems for horticulture producers throughout the nation and guarantee the Australian horticulture industry will be able to expect the same standards in doing business as every other small business throughout the nation. This can only be for the good of all growers in Queensland and across the country.

With the spotlight on the supply chain, a group of young growers from the Stanthorpe region participated in a supply chain tour in Brisbane in early September. The group visited a range of supply chain service providers including the Brisbane markets, a fruit and vegetable home delivery service, several retail outlets and a food service venue in Brisbane.

During the month, Growcom also held a workshop with a small group of growers (including some leading vegetable producers) to learn more about their supply chain issues. The group spent some time discussing a range of issues and identifying some potential solutions. Growcom will now look at how these solutions might be implemented in the future.

Jan Davis
CEO
Growcom



growcom
together we grow

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Victoria

Lack of water and rain in growing areas is of major concern to all Victorian Vegetable Growers. Governments must act quickly and use taxpayers' money to resolve the water shortage issue. There have been too many excuses and irrelevant reasons given for not constructing additional water storage dams and ensuring that good rain water does not continue to pour out into the ocean.

There are many debates regarding the value of providing recycled water for growing vegetables in Victoria. Guarantees to provide recycled "A" class water have not been forthcoming from Water Authorities and State Government, resulting in a mistrust by growers in producing safe quality produce for human consumption when using recycled water.

The 2006 AGM held in October resulted in the re-election of President Luis Gazzola and Senior Vice President David Wallace. Robert Nave was elected Junior Vice President. We have a couple of new faces on the executive committee with John Said (Ballan Farms) and Craig Arnott (Arnotts Vegetable Farms) joining Peter Cochrane, Silvio Favero, Paul Gazzola, Frank Lamattina, Rocky Lamattina, Anthony Mason, Frank Ruffo, Tom Schreurs and Paul Temuskos who renominated from the previous year's committee. John Costa and Joseph Fragapane did not nominate.

One hundred years of farming by the Wallace Family at Keilor was celebrated in September with an inspection of the property and a celebration lunch for over 200 guests at Keilor. At the VGA AGM President Luis Gazzola presented David Wallace with a certificate of appreciation from the VGA.

The VGA Executive Committee had recommended to members that Life Membership be awarded to Silvio Favero, which was accepted unanimously at the AGM.

President Luis Gazzola presented a Life Members Plaque to Silvio Favero at the dinner following the AGM.

During dinner members and guests had the pleasure of seeing a slide show presentation by Helena Whitman of her recent holiday trip to the Northern Territory.

Helena then addressed the dinner group with the latest development of the AUSVEG environmental programme and explained where Victoria's Enviroveg project now fits into the national programme.

The 2007 National Vegetable EXPO is to be held again at Werribee and the organising committee is moving forward. All trial plots have now been allocated to seed companies. The EXPO will be held Thursday 3 and Friday 4 May 2007 at the Gordon Institute of TAFE Production Horticultural Campus, Dairy Road off Sneydes Road Werribee.

Tony Imeson
Executive officer
VGA



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Western Australia

WA Grown Vegetables Stand Out In Dubai

Recently I had the opportunity to inspect and compare our Western Australia grown vegetables in the supermarkets, warehouses and cool rooms of Dubai. Comparing our vegetables against other countries in the new Mall of Emirates "Supa" supermarket, the quality of our carrots and broccoli stood out. Carrots from Lebanon were half the price, however everybody was purchasing the Western Australia. Product. Other supermarkets were similar, although vegetable products from Holland were prominent.

Minister Visits Growers On Their Farm

A short time ago, our State Agriculture Minister Kim Chance, took a day out of his busy schedule to visit Western Australia vegetable growers. The visit allowed the minister to see issues that are affecting our growers and gave growers the opportunity to express their concerns directly. Valuable ministerial time was gained by Vegetables Western Australia to explore a range of issues with the minister. Some of these were labour shortages, infrastructure costs and delays, government approval processes, export development, water availability and supermarket power.

Jim Turley
Executive Officer
Vegetables WA
Potato Growers Association of WA (Inc)



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Calendar of events

NOVEMBER 2006

23-24 November

8th Annual Food Regulations and Labelling Standards Conference

Sydney, Australia

This annual food conference brings together leading industry, government and regulatory speakers to address the latest developments in food health claim standards; fortification of food; the role of food labels in fighting obesity and diabetes; allergens; country of origin and food miles and managing marketing-compliance relations.

Four Points by Sheraton, Sydney

For more information:

Tel: 02 9080 4307

Email: registration@informa.com.au

Website:

www.informa.com.au/food2006

DECEMBER 2006

3 – 7 December

Australian Society of Soil Science Inc and Australasian Soil and Plant Analysis Inc Conference

Adelaide, Australia

This conference will appeal to all those who work in any aspect of soils and soils science. A four day program is planned in association with a trade exhibition and the opportunity for all delegates to tours of the local region.

For more information visit:

Website: www.plevin.com.au/soils2006/welcome.htm

7 – 9 December

IFE India

New Delhi, India

IFE India is India's leading exhibition for its US\$70 billion food, drink and hospitality industry. The show returns to the Pragati Maidan Exhibition Grounds in the heart of New Delhi.

For more information visit:

Website: <http://www.ife-india.com/>

MAY 2007

29 – 31 May

Australian Vegetable Industry Conference

Sydney, Australia

Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre
Darling Harbour

The theme for the conference will be 'Vegetables Taking Centre Plate' and is about promoting the vegetable industry as a serious agricultural contributor. A close look at consumers, their requirements and the motivations they have when purchasing fresh food will be a key focus of the conference.

For more information:

Tel: 03 9544 8098

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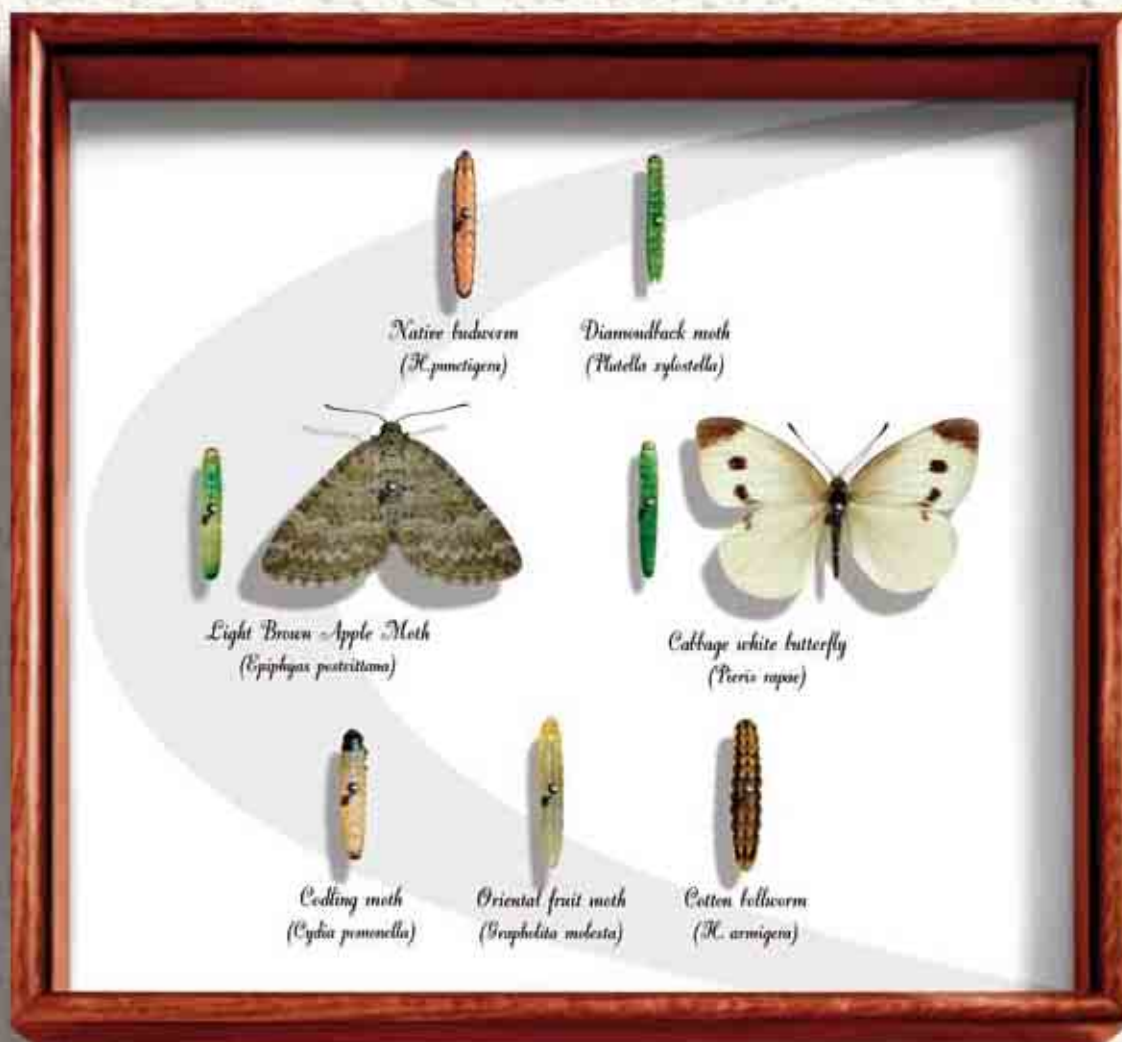
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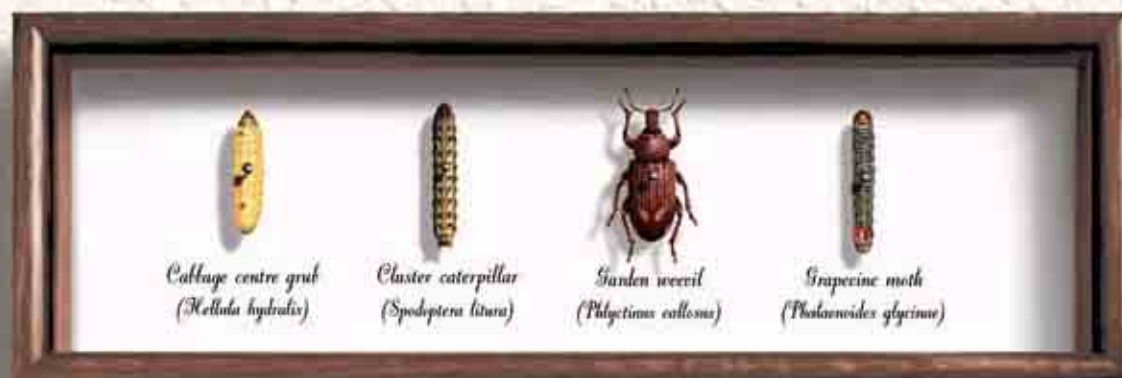
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