

vegetables

australia

January/February 2011

**Richard
Hawkes**
On the rise

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AUSVEG

2011 National Convention

Trade Show and Awards for Excellence
Brisbane • Sebel-Citigate Hotel • 14-16 April



Newly announced speakers

Turn to page 14 for more information

vegetables australia

AUSVEG Chairman

John Brent

AUSVEG CEO

Richard J Mulcahy

Production/Editorial Manager

David O'Neill
AUSVEG
Ph: (03) 9822 0388
Fax: (03) 9822 0688
david.oneill@ausveg.com.au

Communications Manager

Hugh Tobin
AUSVEG
Ph: (03) 9822 0388
Fax: (03) 9822 0688
hugh.tobin@ausveg.com.au

Advertising

Max Hyde
Ph: (03) 9870 4161
Fax: (03) 9870 4163
M: 0408 558 938
max@hydemedias.com.au

Graphic Design

Brinelle Hateley
AUSVEG
Ph: (03) 9822 0388
Fax: (03) 9822 0688
www.ausveg.com.au

Print

Southern Colour Pty Ltd

Distribution Queries

AUSVEG
Ph: (03) 9822 0388
Fax: (03) 9822 0688
admin@ausveg.com.au

Contributors

Darcy Boyd, Rob Hall,
Andrew White, Ian James, Louise
Lawrence, Vanessa Kennedy and
Tony Windsor MP.



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All research and development projects have been funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and/or voluntary contributions from industry, and matched funds from the Australian Government. *Vegetables Australia* is produced by AUSVEG Ltd and is free for all National Vegetable Levy payers. For more information visit www.ausveg.com.au

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PO Box 2042, Camberwell West, Vic, 3124
ISSN 1834-2493



▶ FRONT COVER:

Richard Hawkes

Photo by James Vincent
Groove Imagery

John Brent AUSVEG Chairman

It is with great enthusiasm that we begin 2011, looking to build on the success of the previous 12 months.

The extreme weather conditions experienced by growers in the latter stages of 2010 have caused significant damage to some crops across Australia, particularly in the eastern states. However, as we have proven time and time again, our industry is made up of resilient characters, who I'm certain are doing everything they can to recoup these losses and carry on.

The 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence is now just three months away and anticipation is building rapidly. Already a host of impressive speakers have been announced with a few favourites, such as Robert 'Dipper' DiPierdomenico

returning to the event. The Convention will be held this year from 14-16 April in Brisbane, at the Sebel-Citigate Hotel. With an exciting list of speakers, the convention promises to be an event not to be missed.

High profile speakers announced to date include: The Hon. Tony Abbott MP, Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia, who has provisionally confirmed his attendance; Malcolm Jackman, CEO of Elders; Callum Hann, 2010 MasterChef finalist; Joerg Ellmanns, Managing Director of Bayer CropScience; and Ian Macleod, Managing Director of Peracto.

The attendance of growers is the most imperative aspect of the Convention, and every effort will be made to ensure the event is beneficial for all Australian growers. If you have any questions regarding the

Convention or require further information, then please contact the team at AUSVEG on (03) 9822 0388, who can also help you register for the event.

An enormous trade show which was a highlight of last year's Convention is well on the way to being sold out for 2011. Companies that wish to exhibit at the Convention please visit www.ausveg.com.au/convention to fill out an exhibitor registration form and secure a booth before it's too late.

In other exciting news, Victorian vegetable grower, Richard Hawkes was late last year recognised with the prestigious Young Leader Award at the Horticulture Australia Limited Awards held in Sydney.

To have a vegetable grower win such an award, that encompasses all horticulture industries, is a coup for our

industry. It shows that young vegetable growers are amongst the most promising leaders in horticulture.




John Brent
Chairman
AUSVEG

Richard Mulcahy AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

Without doubt, one of the biggest issues facing the vegetable industry is our ability to utilise developments in mechanisation and reduce the significant cost of labour incurred by growers.

Reducing this burden is critical for Australian growers to be able to compete against their international competitors, who often aren't required to meet the same stringent standards in regards to labour and quality assurance.

To see the effect mechanisation can have on the industry, I recently took the opportunity to tour the impressive facilities at Boomaroo Nurseries in Lara, Victoria. Boomaroo is one of the leading seedling producers in Australia and is also a leader in incorporating automated technology in their production facilities.

The level of mechanisation in their operation is a major reason for their success and is an example of how all vegetable producers through innovation, can reduce costs and increase profitability.

Cutting-edge irrigation and spraying systems, mechanised sorting facilities and state of the art equipment such as specialised trays, are just some of initiatives the business has implemented to build a competitive advantage.

Seeing the effect these innovations have had on reducing labour costs, and also the level of precision, illustrates that if the industry embraces technology and growers find ways to mechanise their operation, significant gains are possible.

For this reason, AUSVEG will host a special mechanisation seminar to be held immediately

preceding the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, which will be held from 14-16 April 2011 in Brisbane

Mechanisation has been identified as a key industry priority. This seminar, scheduled for Thursday, 14 April, will seek to identify specific priority areas within mechanisation, which will further guide R&D funding toward improvements for the vegetable industry in the future.

AUSVEG will also take steps to ensure all vegetable growers are aware of the latest developments in terms of mechanisation in the vegetable industry, through a special themed issue of *Vegetables Australia* to be released in March. The edition will feature a number of growers and agribusinesses who are at the forefront of mechanisation in the industry and also profile the latest R&D developments in this

critical area. Agribusinesses who wish to advertise in this edition should contact Max Hyde at Hyde Media on (03) 9870 4161.




Richard J Mulcahy
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG

Editorial

At times it must seem like a never ending battle for vegetable growers, facing the unpredictability of mother nature. Heavy rains have caused havoc for many on the east coast, especially in Queensland where flooding has delayed the planting of summer crops and provided difficult conditions.

Growers in southern New South Wales and Victoria have also been dealing with worst locust plague in over twenty years, as well as heavy rainfalls.

Despite a considerable level of commitment to the spraying of this pest by growers, locusts were still a major concern and threatening to cause significant damage prior to Christmas.

Over in the west, growers are still battling drought conditions and are working hard to

implement water strategies, to optimise their usage.

Despite these challenges, vegetable growers remain vigilant and determined to make 2011 a profitable and successful year. In this edition of *Vegetables Australia*, we profile a number of young leaders

emerging in the industry.

Fresh from winning the 2010 Horticulture Australia Limited Young Leader Award, Victorian grower, Mr Richard Hawkes is our featured grower for this edition. Turn to page 26 to read how he has strived to build his knowledge and give himself the

best chance of success.

Another young grower poised to become a leader in the industry is Mr Phillip Cochrane. Also based in Victoria's south east, the 22-year-old speaks to *Vegetables Australia* about why he loves the daily challenge of producing fresh vegetables (page 36).

Mr Hugh Tobin, AUSVEG Communications and Public Affairs Manager, rounds out the trio on page 18. Mr Tobin has recently met with politicians from all the major political parties in Australia. This initiative is part of AUSVEG's new Public Affairs Program which aims to ensure the concerns of growers are considered by decision-makers.

We hope the weather hasn't dampened your spirits, and that 2011 will deliver the rewards you deserve.



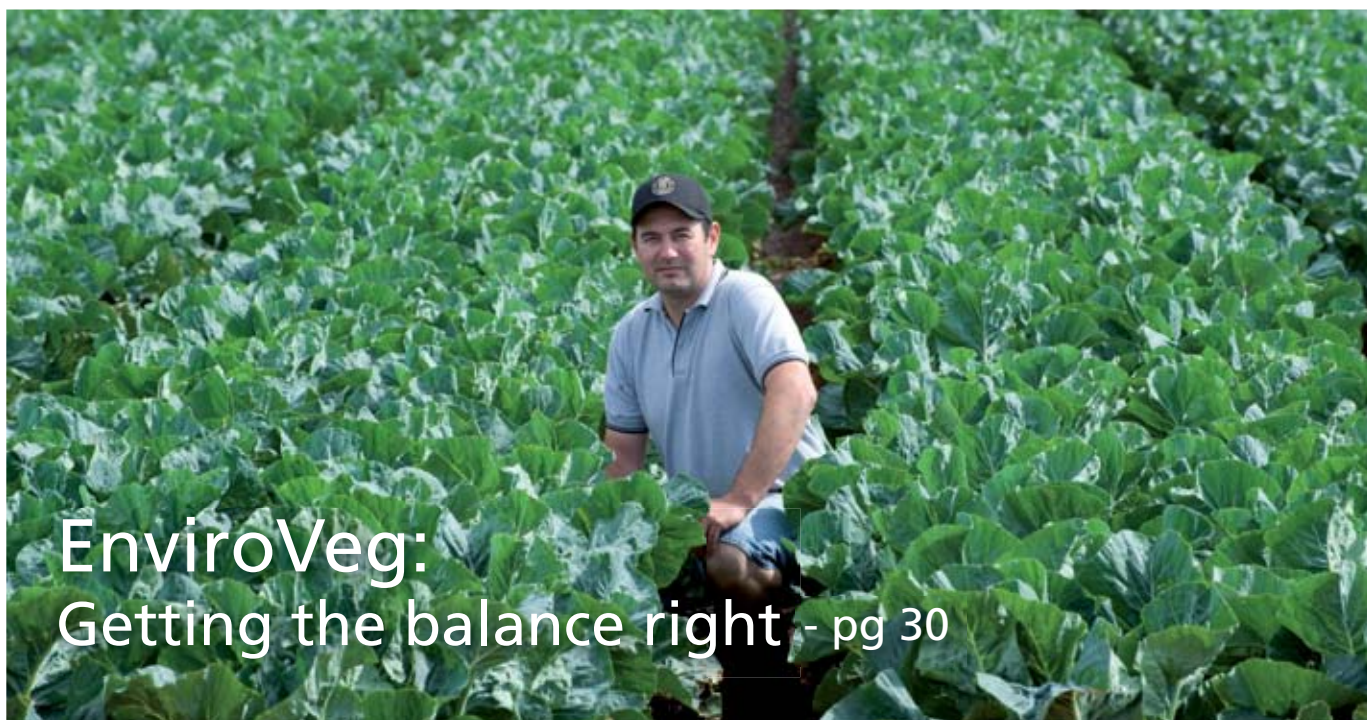
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Getting the balance right - pg 30

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Re-elected AUSVEG Chairman urges action on imports

Re-elected AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent, has called for urgent action to stop imported produce entering Australia and placing pressure on the viability of Australian vegetable and potato growers.

Mr John Brent, owner of vegetable producer and processor Bunny Bite Foods based in Boonah in Queensland, was re-elected unopposed for another term as AUSVEG Chairman at the AUSVEG Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Monday, 15 November.

Mr Brent used the opportunity to call for urgent action on what he described as an alarming influx of imported produce from countries such as China, New Zealand and the United States.

"If the import situation continues along current trends, then it is likely that many Australian vegetable and potato growers will face further viability issues," Mr Brent said.

"If we have this unhealthy reliance on imported food, not only does this threaten Australia's food security long-term, but it is also a negative for the domestic economy, with horticulture employing around one third of all those employed in agriculture," he said.

"We are lucky as consumers that we currently have extremely high quality produce here in Australia, thanks to the strict regulations in terms of quality assurance."

"However, Australian growers are being undercut in our own markets by foreign competitors, who are able to offer a cheaper product, but which we can't guarantee will meet those same strict regulations that Australian growers adhere to," he said.

Mr Brent has overseen a new direction at AUSVEG over the past 18 months. He was responsible for the appointment of the current CEO of AUSVEG, Richard Mulcahy in April 2009. Since that time AUSVEG has dramatically transformed its operations.

"Our National Convention in 2010 was heralded as the largest gathering of the vegetable and potato industries in their history, and an even bigger event is being planned for April 2011 in Brisbane," Mr Brent said.

Mr Brent said he was looking forward to his next term as Chairman as AUSVEG further developed its role in the political arena.

"AUSVEG will be looking to provide a greater appreciation for the huge challenges facing Australian farmers, particularly in the vegetable and potato

sectors," he said.

"AUSVEG has successfully stepped into the political arena, increased our media profile and strengthened our financial position within the past 12 months. We are in a much stronger position to execute and deliver on the needs of growers."



[From Left] AUSVEG Deputy Chair, Dr Elizabeth Duncan, Chairman, John Brent and CEO, Richard Mulcahy at the AGM in Brisbane.

Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	States Covered
PER10908	Tebuconazole / beetroot, chicory, endive, radish, silverbeet, spinach / Sclerotinia rot	Valid 9/06/10	30/06/13	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER11852	Teldor (fenhexamid) / capsicum & lettuce (field and protected crops) / Grey mould (Botrytis cinerea)	13/08/10	31/01/13	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER11946	Clethodim / Peas (green & processing), Eggplant, Chilli peppers, Paprika, Silverbeet & Spinach / Grass weeds	16/9/10	30/09/12	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER11732	ebuconazole / carrot / Powdery mildew	20/10/09	31/03/11	Valid for NSW, SA and Tas only
PER12572	Acramite (bifenazate) / cucumber, capsicum, tomato / Two-spotted mite	17/11/10	30/09/11	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER12384	Dual Gold (S-metolachlor) / rhubarb / weeds	18/11/10	31/08/15	Valid for all states
PER12383	Prometryn / carrots / broadleaf weeds	29/11/10	30/09/15	Valid for Qld only

These permits have had their additional data requirements changed.

Full details of all permits are available on the APVMA website: www.apvma.gov.au/permits

Editorial by Tony Windsor MP

Chair of the House of Representatives Regional Australia Committee and Member for New England

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

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

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

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

managing the water.

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

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

I think we can all agree on something else too: this is a very big challenge. But I'm hoping that by listening to you and your community and getting input from all sides of the debate we can be part of an agreeable, sustainable solution.

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



Tony Windsor MP is urging growers to make a submission to an enquiry into the Murray-Darling Basin plan.

Leaf spot detected in NSW

Cladosporium leaf spot, a disease that can significantly affect spinach crops, has been detected in Cowra, New South Wales.

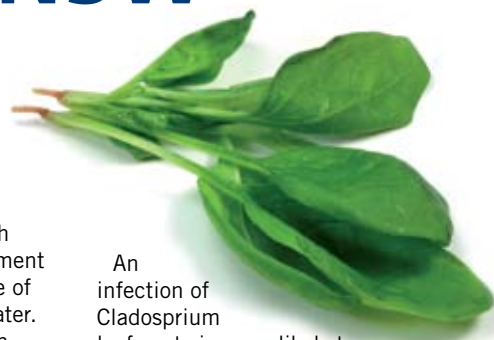
Cladosporium leaf spot (*Cladosporium variabile*), a disease which has caused damage to spinach crops throughout America, was detected in October in New South Wales. Growers are being urged to be on alert to stop the spread of this costly pest.

Cladosporium leaf spots may reduce the quality of processing spinach crops and may result in additional hand sorting for fresh market spinach crops. Testing in the United States has demonstrated that the severity of these leaf spots is greater

in the presence of spinach pollen, and that enhancement of disease in the presence of pollen is significantly greater.

The abundance of pollen in spinach seed crops may exacerbate outbreaks of leaf spot in regions of spinach seed production.

An infection of Cladosporium leaf spots is more likely to appear in young plants, with symptoms of white to pale yellow leaf spots on the leaves of the plant.



Transitioning to the Horticulture Award

Vegetable growers operating as a sole trader, in a partnership, or as a non-corporate entity in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania—if they haven't done so already—will need to make the transition to the new National Horticulture Award 2010 by 1 February 2011.

The new 'modern awards' came into force on 1 January 2010, but a year-long transition period has allowed growers the time to make the change from the state-based awards to the national system.

In the Northern Territory and Victoria, many growers will already be operating under the federal system, while WA growers (apart from those operating incorporated companies) will remain under their original state-based award after WA decided not to hand over industrial relations powers to the Federal Government.

For growers in Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, and New South Wales operating as a sole trader, in a partnership or as a non-corporate entity, the existing fruit and vegetable state awards (Division 2B State Awards) terminate on 31 December 2010.

From 1 January 2011, partnerships and sole traders are covered by the modern Horticulture Award 2010, with

transitional provisions applying from 1 February.

On 6 December, Fair Work Australia (FWA) released a final determination outlining the Horticulture Award 2010 transitional provisions applying to partnerships, sole traders and other non-corporate entities (Division 2B Employers), with the intention that the transition to the terms of the Horticulture Award 2010 will occur on 1 February 2011.

FWA indicated in the determination that even though the Division 2B State Awards will terminate on 31 December 2010, all the terms of Division 2B State Awards will be preserved and will continue to apply until 1 February 2011—at which point, the terms of the Horticulture Award 2010 will begin to apply transitionally.

What happens from 1 February 2011?

From 1 February 2011, the terms of the Horticulture Award 2010 will begin to apply

transitionally. Partnerships and Sole traders are urged to download a copy of the award from FWA's website and contact FWA for advice on how the transitional provisions will apply to their business. Growers who are unsure about their obligations should contact Fair Work Australia on 13 13 94.

What if I have a workplace agreement in place?

At 31 December 2010 businesses operating as a partnership or sole trader with a workplace agreement in place that was approved by a State Industrial Relations Commission prior to 1 January (e.g. a Certified Agreement), will continue to be covered by the agreement and NOT by the Horticulture Award 2010.

However, from 1 February 2011, the base rates of pay from each of the five levels in the Horticulture Award 2010 (i.e. the permanent hourly rates)

will apply.

From this date growers with a workplace agreement will need to ensure the minimum rates of pay in their agreement are not less than the minimum rates of pay in the Horticulture Award 2010.

All other terms of the Agreement will apply instead of the terms in the Horticulture Award 2010.

i For more information about the Horticulture Award 2010 contact Fair Work Australia on 13 13 94 or visit www.fairwork.gov.au.

Article written with the assistance of Growcom IR expert Robert Hall.

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Ask the industry

with
Scott Mathew



Scott Mathew, Technical Services Lead from Syngenta

Scott Mathew, Technical Services Lead from Syngenta, answers the tough questions from Australian growers.

Avoiding Waste

Q. What practices can I adopt when spraying to avoid wasting time and wasting product?

This starts with the accurate monitoring of the area to be sprayed, in order to calculate the required amount of water and accurate measurement of crop protection product to be put into the sprayer. This is so that there is no product left over.

The use of sight gauges can often lead to unreliably measuring the liquid in the tank. Easily the best method of measuring liquid is to use a flow meter fitted in the water filling line. This can be automated to make a sound when the correct amount of water has been added.

Over-filling is one of the major causes of environmental contamination. Foaming in the spray tank causes spray mix to leave via the overflow before the sprayer is full.

The three most common causes of foaming are:

1. Leaving the induction hopper open, resulting in air being sucked in.
2. Air leaks in the pipe work. To check for leaks, circulate clean water in the spray tank and inspect for any sign of bubbles on the suction side of the sprayer.
3. Adding product before there is sufficient water in the spray tank. The circulating spray mix shoots upwards inside the tank, mixes with air and creates foam.

Foam can be minimised by adding an anti-foam agent available from resellers. It is advisable to always have some in your spray store for emergencies.

Always mark the spot where a load runs out to avoid re-treating areas or leaving any areas untreated. Besides being costly, re-treating areas may exceed the maximum permitted rate and/or number of applications. Marking the spot where the spray runs out will also prevent leaving any unsprayed areas which can harbour unwanted weeds, insects or disease infections.

Auto on-off controlled by GPS has been universally well-received by sprayer operators. Potentially this is the biggest single waste avoider. GPS on-off typically reduces area sprayed size by three to

five per cent. You do not have to buy a new sprayer to take advantage of GPS. On most recent sprayers it is simply a matter of fitting a GPS antenna and GPS control box which plugs into the existing wiring.

Nozzles, booms and line filters should be thoroughly cleaned when switching between products with different modes of action or when moving on to sensitive crops.

The recommended method for sprayer cleanup is:

1. Always refer to the product label for full directions for washing out your application equipment.
2. Drain the spray tank and spray boom and rinse with clean water for at least 10 minutes.
3. Fill the tank with clean water (some products require the addition of 300ml of household chlorine [4% chlorine] per 100L of water, to effectively decontaminate the application equipment). Engage the agitation system for at least 15 minutes and then drain through the nozzles.
4. Repeat step 2 and then rinse thoroughly with clean water to remove all traces of chlorine bleach.
5. Nozzles and filters should be cleaned separately.
6. Dispose of all water used for cleaning.

Another nice little tip to reduce packaging waste is to use the largest pack size available. 10L packs v. 5L packs reduce the quantity of plastic packaging by 30 per cent.

Ask the industry

If you have a question that you would like addressed, please ring Syngenta on 1800 067 108 or email *Vegetables Australia*: david.oneill@ausveg.com.au. Please note that your questions may be published.

Mechanisation

Mechanisation focus for *Vegetables Australia*

A special mechanisation themed issue is planned for the 2011 March/April edition of *Vegetables Australia*.

With mechanisation becoming an increasingly important issue in the vegetable industry, the March/April edition of *Vegetables Australia* will be dedicated to developments in this crucial area.

The themed issue will feature growers and companies who are at the forefront of mechanisation and automation in the vegetable industry.

Also to be profiled in the magazine are a number of

Research and Development (R&D) projects that relate to mechanisation and increasing the use of technology in vegetable production.

These include: new mechanical harvesting equipment, the benefits of controlled traffic farming, and how the use of technology is helping to optimise production.

This edition will showcase the latest developments that aim to reduce labour costs and

improve growers efficiency and consequently their profitability.

Growers or industry members who would like to suggest topics within the scope of mechanisation that they would like to see profiled in more detail, should contact Production/Editorial Manager David O'Neill by phone on: (03) 9822 0388 or email: david.oneill@ausveg.com.au.

AUSVEG announces mechanisation seminar

A special mechanisation seminar will be held in conjunction with the AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence.

A special mechanisation seminar will immediately precede the AUSVEG National Convention, to be held at Brisbane's Sebel-Citigate Hotel on Thursday, 14 April.

Mechanisation has been identified as a key industry priority and the seminar will seek to identify specific priority areas within mechanisation, which will further guide R&D funding toward improvements for the vegetable industry.

One of the biggest issues facing the vegetable industry is the

ability of growers to utilise developments in automated technology and reduce the significant cost of labour.

Labour is consistently one of the largest input costs incurred by growers. Reducing this burden is essential for the Australian industry to remain competitive against international suppliers who do not have to face such tough legislation in regards to labour.

Experts in mechanisation will present at the seminar, in an important step to addressing this crucial issue.

Reach your customers

Are you keen to become involved in this exciting mechanisation themed edition and advertise in the most widely distributed magazine in horticulture?

Then now is your chance.

Please contact Max Hyde from Hyde Media to find out more information, with a range of ads available to suit all budgets.

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Email: <max@hydemedias.com.au>





Kids starting to know their veggies

New initiatives and the popularity of Junior MasterChef are helping Aussie kids become more familiar with vegetables, and instilling in them a greater understanding of healthy eating.

The success of Junior MasterChef; the McCain Foods School Veggie Patches program; and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program, have helped the vegetable industry interact with its youngest consumers.

An AUSVEG spokesperson, Andrew White, highlighting commentary in the *Veginsights* reports, said that the success of such initiatives was significant for the industry.

"With the recent popularity of television shows like MasterChef we've seen a new level of enthusiasm for food and vegetables. As a result we believe there are now some unique opportunities to promote healthy eating and develop public health initiatives amongst young people, to capitalise on that momentum and turn it into greater vegetable consumption," Andrew White said.

"Kitchen gardening programs like the McCain School Veggie Patches and the Stephanie Alexander Program, have sought to address the gap in education about vegetables

and where they come from and that's great for the industry."

The McCain School Veggie Patches program was launched in May 2010 to help primary school children learn about the origin and benefits of vegetables, by planting and growing vegetables in their own schoolyard.

Nearly one third of all Australian primary schools,

gloves, seeds, raised garden beds, mulch, gardening gloves and watering cans.

So successful was the project that another version is planned for 2011 with the company currently working on ways to further develop School Veggie Patches, so that schools can get even more out of the program in 2011.

Marketing Director of McCain

am pleased to announce that McCain School Veggie Patches will be back in 2011," Ms Anderson said.

Pete Evans, celebrity Chef and Ambassador for School Veggie Patches said it was great to see that so many Australian schools got on board for the program to educate children about growing and harvesting vegetables.

"I'm passionate about the role food education plays for children in giving them the building blocks for making healthy food choices later in life," he said.

"As a dad I've seen firsthand how involving kids in the garden and in the kitchen preparing meals has a positive impact on their willingness to eat and enjoy a wide range of vegetables."

The program represents a \$500,000 commitment from McCain Foods on garden equipment available to schools across Australia and New Zealand.

“There are now some unique opportunities to promote healthy eating and develop public health initiatives amongst young people.”

1,985 in total, registered to take part in the program.

The program involved participating schools collecting barcodes from McCain frozen vegetable and McCain Purely Potato products to redeem seeds and equipment for their vegetable gardens, including: wheelbarrows, gardening

Foods Australia and New Zealand, Ms Nicki Anderson, announced the return of the program in November, enthused by the great response from primary schools around the country.

"McCain Foods is passionate about playing a role in food education for children, and I

Further information can be found online at www.mccainveggiepatches.com

Momentum builds

The long list of high calibre speakers continues to grow as the industry prepares for the 2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence.

A first class list of speakers will headline the AUSVEG National Convention, to be held from April 14-16 at the Sebel-Citigate Hotel in Brisbane.

Back by popular demand to emcee the Convention is footballing great Robert 'Dipper' DiPierdominco. After such a stellar job at the 2010 Convention, Dipper is set to have us in raptures once again in 2011.

After the exciting announcement that MasterChef finalist, Callum Hann, will feature in a special celebrity luncheon at the Convention, even further high profile names have been added to a growing list of attendees.

The impressive list already confirmed includes: Malcolm Jackman, CEO of Elders, who will outline how he plans to reinvigorate the iconic Australian company; Ian Macleod, Managing Director of Peracto, an expert in succession management; Tony Abbott, Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia, who has provisionally confirmed his attendance; and Joerg Ellmanns, Managing Director of Bayer CropScience.

The line-up so far is indicative of the high quality event which AUSVEG is preparing. Stay tuned for further announcements as we count down the weeks to this prestigious event.

With the support of Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, a series of beneficial Plant Nutrition Sessions will take place on Friday, 15 April during the Convention. Experts from around Australia and the globe will present on all things related to crop health and nutrient application, including the latest developments that growers should be aware of.

Great Debate

Another highly anticipated event to be held during the Convention is 'The Great Debate', which will take place before lunch on Saturday, 16 April.

The topic for the debate is Water Usage in the Murray-Darling Basin, with two experts who have significantly different perspectives set to discuss the critical issue.

The event is proudly brought to you by Boomaroo Nurseries and will feature: Dr Arlene Harriss-Buchan from the Australian Conservation Fund, who leads the fund's work on the water for future program; and Dr Jennifer Marohasy, a biologist and expert in water science, who is

concerned that public policy on environmental issues is increasingly driven by moral crusading, rather than objective science or need.

Back by popular demand

Also back by popular demand, are the Young Grower Night and the Women in Horticulture Breakfast; two events that were well-received at the 2010 Convention. Dow AgroSciences will sponsor the Young Growers Night for the second year running, in support of this invaluable networking opportunity. As part of the event, an afternoon of go-karting will be held on Thursday, 14 April, bringing together the future leaders of the vegetable industry.

The Women in Horticulture Breakfast will again recognise the significant contribution women make in horticulture. Men and women will be invited to this event, to be held on the morning of Saturday, 16 April, celebrating the pivotal role women play in the functioning

of farms around the country.

Nominations open

Nominations are now open for the 2011 National Awards for Excellence. The event which will be held in a gala ceremony on Saturday, 16 April, will recognise the achievements of the vegetable and potato industries most outstanding members.

Award categories and nomination forms can be found on the succeeding pages. There are ten awards in total up for grabs with two new categories introduced in 2011.

The Rising Star Award will recognise an emerging leader in the industry; someone (under the age of 35) who has displayed exceptional commitment towards the horticulture industry. The Environmental Award will also be presented for the first time, celebrating the achievements of one individual who has demonstrated a commitment to implementing sustainable practices on-farm.

If you know of someone who has excelled in any particular category, than please fill out the form and return it to AUSVEG via the details provided below.

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





The miracles of science™



Dr Jennifer Marohasy



2010 Trade Show

Trade booths are going fast!

The Exhibitor Registration Brochure for the 2011 National Convention has also been released and places are in high demand. Half of the available trade show booth spaces are already booked. Please contact AUSVEG Marketing Manager, William Churchill to secure your booth before it is too late, phone: (03) 9822 0388, or email: <convention@ausveg.com.au.>



Robert 'Dipper' DiPierdomenico

Huge support!

AUSVEG has been overwhelmed by the support received by its many wonderful partners. This crucial support allows industry events such as the National Convention to go ahead. It also enables AUSVEG to prepare an event that is truly beneficial to growers, but is also enjoyable and provides valuable networking opportunities.

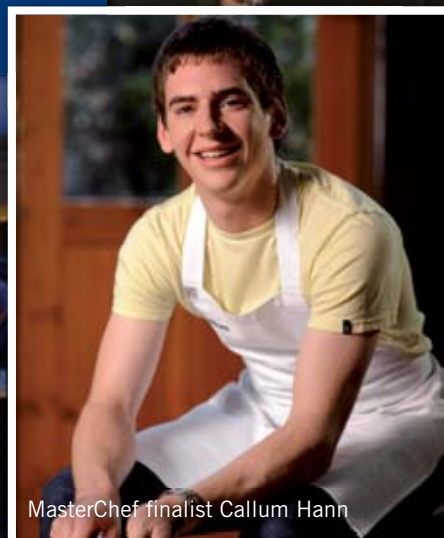
AUSVEG would like to thank leading partners, Elders, DuPont, Syngenta and Bayer CropScience, along with Boomaroo Nurseries, Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, Visy Fibre Packaging, Dow AgroSciences, Terranova Seeds, Transplant Systems, Toolpak Engineering, Peracto and Williames.



Dr Arlene Harriss-Buchan



AUSVEG Chairman John Brent



MasterChef finalist Callum Hann



2011 National Awards for Excellence

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

Nominations are being sought in the following categories:

Grower of the Year Proudly sponsored by



(Open to all vegetable and potato growers)

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

Young Grower of the Year Proudly sponsored by



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

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

Industry Impact Award Proudly sponsored by



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

Industry Recognition Award Proudly sponsored by



The miracles of science™

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

Rising Star of the Year

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

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

Productivity Partner Award Proudly sponsored by



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

Researcher of the Year Proudly sponsored by



Bayer CropScience

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

Innovative Marketing Award

(Implementation within the last three years)

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

Women in Horticulture

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

Environmental Award

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

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

Nominations close on 4 March 2011.

Nominations now open!

Nominations for the AUSVEG 2011 National Awards for Excellence are now open. To nominate yourself or someone you know in any of the categories listed, please fill in the form and return to the address listed below, or fax: (03) 9822 0688.

Nominations close on 4 March 2011.

Nominee details:

Name: _____

Contact number: _____

Address: _____

Business/Organisation/Farm name: _____

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

1. _____

2. _____

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

Nominator details: (your details)

Name: _____

Business/Organisation/Farm name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (work) _____ (mobile) _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please return nomination form to:

Post: AUSVEG Ltd
PO Box 2042
Camberwell West VIC 3124

Tel: (03) 9822 0388

Fax: (03) 9822 0688

Nominations close on 4 March 2011.

Pushing for a fair

If life in the vegetable industry wasn't busy enough for Hugh Tobin, head of the responsibility of managing AUSVEG's new public affairs activities.

Now in a joint role as Communications and Public Affairs Manager, Mr Hugh Tobin's schedule is as unenviable as the vegetable growers he represents. Often up early to meet media commitments and travelling far and wide to speak with politicians and decision-makers, the 27-year-old is committed to helping growers overcome a variety of challenges.

Before joining AUSVEG, Mr Tobin held the position of Public Affairs Manager with a public policy think tank. With an even temperament and a passion for representing growers' concerns, he is well placed to assume the dual responsibilities and advance the interests of the Australian vegetable industry.

The AUSVEG Public Affairs Program has been in the works for some time, but it wasn't until the 2010 AUSVEG National Convention, that enough resources could be generated to fund what will become an invaluable weapon in the fight to protect the rights of Australian growers.

Though just months into operation, Mr Tobin believes AUSVEG is already making an impact at the federal level.

"After the launch of the Public

Affairs Program on 1 July, our CEO wrote to every member of the Senate and of the House of Representatives. We were quite overwhelmed with the response, receiving over fifty replies requesting briefings," Mr Tobin said.

"I think this reflects the

at a reasonable price."

The main purpose of the meetings, Mr Tobin said, was to create linkages with key political figures and to alert them to the major challenges confronting growers.

"Two current issues that we were keen to discuss were the

to secure linkages with members from both the left and right sides of Australian politics.

"In line with our strategy, we met with senior members from the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party of Australia and the National Party, along with members from the Australian Greens. From the youngest MP, Wyatt Roy, to the longest serving, the Hon. Phillip Ruddock, we wanted to ensure we were speaking to all major parties," Mr Tobin said.

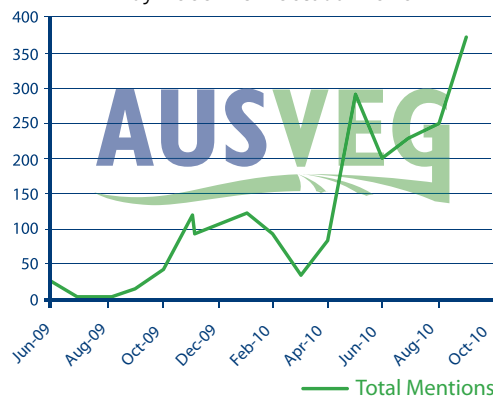
"In this current parliament every MP can make a difference."

Mr Tobin explained that the public affairs activities would be expanded over the next five years as further resources became available.

"As we refine our strategy going forward and increase our resources we will be able to construct a more targeted and comprehensive approach," he said.

AUSVEG has in the past been focused on promoting Research and Development (R&D) outcomes and communication activities concerned with keeping growers informed of industry developments. However, through the insistence of growers, a voice that united their interests

AUSVEG Media Mentions
1 May 2009 – 31 October 2010



increasing importance of horticulture to the politicians."

"They are starting to wake up to the problems in our industry and realise that we need to protect it from imports and rising input costs. That's what people want in the city electorates as well; secure access to Australian grown food

dimethoate and fenthion review, and the ineffective country of origin labelling legislation, that we believe isn't doing enough to help consumers find Australian grown produce."

AUSVEG Board member, Romeo Giangregorio, joined Mr Tobin for the important meetings which cast the net far and wide



[From left] Horticulture Australia Limited Chairman, Selwyn Snell; Olympian, Brent Livermore and Hugh Tobin.

[From left] AUSVEG CEO, Richard Mulcahy, President, Luis Gazzola, and Hugh Tobin.

go for growers

AUSVEG Communications team, it certainly is now with the additional

and one that had real effect at the federal level, became one of the key objectives of the organisation.

"Horticulture is now the second biggest and fastest growing sector of agriculture, and so it deserves a greater and more unified voice that reflects that size," Mr Tobin said.

"Whether it is the fragmented nature of horticulture or the lack of awareness of the issues that concern our growers, the sector has in the past often been treated unfairly in the formation of free trade agreements."

"This new Public Affairs Program hopes to address this. Going forward—as we grow, our ties increase and our profile builds—we will have an improved ability to influence decisions and policy formation."

Though the Public Affairs Program is now just over six months old, the profile of AUSVEG has been increasing rapidly for 18 months, since the appointment of CEO, Richard Mulcahy.

This increase, Mr Tobin said, has made politicians sit up and take notice.

"In all forms of media and in all states of Australia, the issues facing vegetable growers are now receiving significant

coverage. We now have the situation where instead of trying to create stories to get our name out there, media outlets are coming to us because they know we are a reliable source and we have an important story to tell," he said.

"Growers produce the vegetables that feed Australian families. Increasingly they are finding it really hard to make a profit."

"They are faced with rising input costs, a flood of imports, smaller profit margins and more red tape. We need to do more to support growers and secure the vegetable industry so that in 10, 20 or 50 years there are still growers around to produce clean and safe food for this country."

Mr Tobin was keen to point out that industry communications was still an integral and dominant part of his job. He credited his hard-working communications team for helping to improve communication with all industry members, including the approximately 9000 vegetable and potato growers AUSVEG represents.

"We have a great hardworking communications team at AUSVEG who handle various

roles on behalf of the industry," he said.

"From performing the role of secretariat of the Industry Advisory Committee, Working and Advisory Groups, to the publishing of *Vegetables Australia* and other publications, we aim to provide a crucial link between R&D outcomes and vegetable growers."

Whether it be internal communication within the industry, or campaigning for a fair go for Australian growers, it appears Hugh Tobin is helping growers finally make their voices heard.





A changing of the guard

Change is in the air at Harris Farm Markets, the biggest independent fruit and vegetable retail chain in Australia. After more than forty years at the helm, founder David Harris is preparing to pass the baton on to three ambitious sons. One of those young men now assuming a greater responsibility is son Tristan, who spoke with *Vegetables Australia* about balancing the old with the new, writes David O'Neill.

For most of us, taking charge of the business our father had built from the ground-up would be a daunting experience. But for Tristan Harris, who along with his two brothers, Luke and Angus, will assume a greater role in the running of Australia's largest independent fruit and vegetable retail chain, it feels like a natural progression.

Harris Farm Markets was founded by their father David, in 1971. From one location the business has grown to now

span 22 outlets across New South Wales, surviving the ups and downs of an incredibly competitive industry. Despite the young trio having more say in how the business is run, their father will still remain a prominent figure in the operation, using his wealth of experience to lead the fruit and veg buying team.

It is a mix of the old and the new; innovative ideas from three emerging entrepreneurs combined with the knowledge of someone who has lived

and breathed the industry for more than forty years, that the younger Mr Harris believes will see the business continue to thrive.

"Dad still has an absolute passion for fruit and vegetables and he will still be heavily involved five days a week, heading our fruit and veg buying team," he said.

With one of the most experienced fruit and veg buyers in Australia at their disposal, Mr Harris who looks after the business' purchasing

and marketing functions, said they were extremely lucky to still be able to tap into their father's knowledge.

"It's almost like he feels things sometimes, what products are about to come in, what regions they will be coming in from, he doesn't need to check records from previous years, he just knows," Mr Harris said.

"To have that sort of experience, it's almost like firepower and I can just unleash him. If I say to him, I need an extra hundred or so customers

at a particular store to meet budget, he just seems to know immediately what product will solve the problem."

As much as they need their father's experience he too must relish his three sons eagerness to be involved, and also their combined business knowledge.

With a history in banking, Angus looks after the company's finances, while Luke, as head of operations, manages the internal and external operations of all 22 Harris Farm Markets sites, including the management of over 1000 store employees.

"We're lucky in that the business is of a size that allows for significant and fulfilling roles in executive positions and we can all be involved," Mr Harris said.

"We are also lucky that Dad allows us to take an active role in how the business is run."

Taking on more responsibility gradually, has according to Mr Harris, helped to remove some of the fear of looking after a

"Customers only come to us because we can consistently put good quality produce on their plate."

According to Mr Harris, slowly a shift was occurring in the market back to quality and taste.

"For some time it seemed people were focused on yield and shelf life without worrying as much about eating quality," he said.

"Now we are seeing people not only growing for example, massive beautiful looking tomatoes, but aiming to grow massive, beautiful and good tasting tomatoes."

While price is always going to drive consumer behaviour, he said growers needed to look at taking the path that would lead to a competitive advantage.

"Price will always drive consumer behaviour, but it might not be the most suitable way to grow your business."

"If your ongoing competitive advantage is that your produce

“It’s like a boxing match. It’s not necessarily pretty and never easy, but when you get a win it is such a great feeling.”

legacy built over such a long period of time.

"I guess it feels daunting sometimes, especially because in this industry there is always a lot of competitive pressure. But the business has continued to grow and thrive whilst we have had some control of it, and I guess in time you feel more confident in your ability to run it."

Quality trend

Despite the many different trends the business must have encountered over time, delivering quality produce to consumers was still a key pillar in their operation, Mr Harris said.

"Quality is definitely still our most prominent feature," he said.

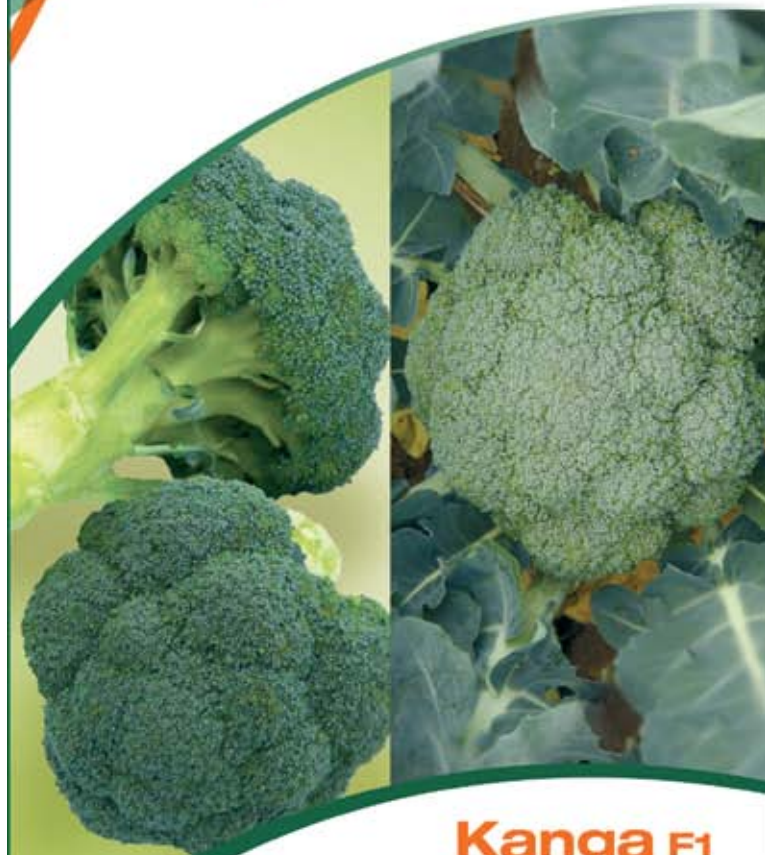
costs less than everybody else, then your price will likely keep going down. Whereas, if your differentiator is something else that is valuable to the consumer, then there is every chance that your price will go up over time."

Though Mr Harris believes that the big players have taken back some of the market share enjoyed by independent chains over the last 12 months, he said competition was just part and parcel of the industry.

"It's back into the trenches every morning," Mr Harris joked.

"It's like a boxing match. It's not necessarily pretty and never easy, but when you get a win it is such a great feeling."

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New AUSVEG



The Vegetable Industry Development Program's Knowledge Management reach growers and other industry participants, writes Andrew White.

An effective knowledge management system is not one device or platform, but rather an approach behind the scenes which creates better access to industry information and resources. That's according to Steve Spencer, Director of Freshlogic, the market analysis and consulting firm for the agribusiness sector, that has been contracted by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) to develop the approach for the vegetable industry.

"The priority is to develop more useful information and to get it to growers in a form that they can act on in making decisions," Mr Spencer said.

According to Mr Spencer,

improving knowledge management within the vegetable industry involves two key things: improving the information that is available; and getting information to people based on a better understanding of the information needs of growers and other participants in the supply chain.

"The work on developing an effective knowledge management system is essentially about building a much stronger and more relevant platform of information for access by industry," said Mr Spencer.

The approach has been built into the AUSVEG website, which was re-launched this year, complete with a new contemporary design that is

more reflective of the industry.

"The new AUSVEG website provides an opportunity to improve the service to growers in more cost-effective ways."

"The major component of the information that is held in the secure (or login) area of the new website is the R&D research engine, which draws on a large library of research reports, technical tools and aids for growers and other documents."

The new AUSVEG website avoids the need for a link to a separate 'portal' for grower information, with industry participants able to register and login to obtain access through the main website to: technical insights; vegetable market profiles, performance analysis, information and reports; publications like *Vegetables*

Australia, Potatoes Australia and *Vegenotes*; and career and training information.

New search function

It is hoped the new search function will make access to R&D resources and tools easier for growers.

"The major benefit of this new search facility for R&D outcomes is to provide growers with quicker access to a wider pool of technical information," said Mr Spencer.

"It will provide more comprehensive information on the outcomes from their levy investments and allow quicker access to those results through more precise search requests."

Mr Spencer said that users can search the database by focus area, research area, vegetable type, or even the type of document they are looking



website launched

SEARCH

program is attempting to develop a better way for useful information to

for, such as a technical note, research report or consulting study.

“It is intended that the search engine will make it easier for growers, by allowing a more specific search request and giving a more relevant result, so they are not forced to make an ‘open’ search of the database nor would they be daunted by a long list of search results.”

A specific document in the database may also have related links for further information—either to other reports in the library or to external documents and website pages, including those from state governments and other providers.

Planning for the future

Additional ongoing development of the website would be important, Mr Spencer said, with his goal to enhance the value proposition for growers and industry members.

“Further developments to the site are planned over the coming months to improve its usefulness to growers. These will include further tools and

aids to help with technical issues—especially in Integrated Pest Management, chemical and pesticide use and the environment,” Mr Spencer said.

In due course, the content in the website’s library would increase, Mr Spencer said, to include things like tools and user guides, that provide practical assistance with a specific problem or issue.

In particular, future site development will allow quicker access to information on pest and disease management, which has been the focus of almost half of the R&D activity in the past 10 years.

“Over time, the search function will also provide links to other technical information from a wide range of industry sources that can assist with specific areas of interest,” Mr Spencer said.

Industry urged to register on new website

The new AUSVEG website caters for different types of

users from the horticulture value chain: growers and researchers, the supply chain, media and other industry participants are all able to register.

Users who’ve already registered for the new website can login and access the ‘secure area’ of the website from within the blue menu on the homepage.

However, all growers and vegetable industry participants yet to register, are encouraged to join so they can access content from the secure area of the website, including the enhanced search functionality.

Simply go to www.ausveg.com.au and click on “Register Here”. Growers can also call AUSVEG on (03) 9822 0388 for assistance in registering.

The Knowledge Management program is a sub-program of the Vegetable Industry Development Program and is funded through the National Vegetable Levy with matching funds from the Australian Government.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Under the guidance of the Knowledge Management sub-program, a new AUSVEG website has been launched making it easier for growers to access information that will lead to on-farm benefits.
- An easy to use search engine will help growers navigate information resources to find results relevant to their individual issues.
- There are a number of zones for access by different types of users, allowing specific grower and levy-payer information to be treated separately to information for other industry stakeholders and the public.



Lu Hogan
Rural Directions
luhogan@optusnet.com.au
Phone: 0427 687 432
Project number - VG09147

“ The new AUSVEG website provides an opportunity to improve the service to growers in more cost-effective ways. ”

Bundaberg growers explore the supply chain

A group of Wide Bay fruit and vegetable growers have seized a unique opportunity to follow their produce through the supply chain with a visit to the Brisbane Markets and other retail facilities.

Bundaberg vegetable growers who attended a recent three-day study tour of the Brisbane Markets and other retail facilities have hailed it a great success.

Exploring processing plants, warehouses and retailers along with the impressive Brisbane Markets, growers were given an incredible opportunity to see their produce from a very different perspective.

The journey was designed to boost the farming community's business knowledge and reveal

to growers what processes and procedures their produce went through before reaching the final consumer. It was also used to encourage growers to increase their knowledge of marketing systems and supply chain concepts.

Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers (BFGV) and Brismark helped organise the two-and-half-day road trip, assisted by funding from the National Vegetable Levy and matched funding from the Australian Government.

Growers heralded a range of outcomes stemming from the

tour, but none more important than an exchange of information on marketing and business development initiatives between growers and supply chain partners, as well as creating closer contact and development networks between these parties.

On tour

The study trip involved an escorted tour of Brisbane Markets and also included a speaker forum, warehouse inspections and involvement in the trade occurring on the Brisbane Produce Market Central Trading Floor.

Other venues visited included:

Simon George and Sons processing plant; Carter and Spencer Distribution Centre; Snap Fresh (who provide catering facilities for Qantas); and retailers Fancee Fruit and Clayfield Markets Fresh.

A 'welcome dinner' allowed participants to talk about their expectations for the tour while a second dinner, involving the Brisbane Markets Limited Board, provided further networking opportunities and a chance to discuss industry issues.

Participants reported a range of outcomes from the visit, including improved wholesaler relationships, sourcing new contacts and forming mentoring



Bundaberg snow pea grower Tammie Laumann checks out the quality of produce at Fancee Fruit, one of Brisbane's leading retailers, during her supply chain tour.

arrangements between experienced and new growers on the tour.

Bundaberg bean and snow pea grower, Tammie Lauman said the tour was very informative.

"It was a great chance to visit the markets and to also visit a number of facilities that ordinarily you wouldn't get to see," she said.

"The visit to Snap Fresh (caterers for Qantas) was especially interesting, seeing how they process the fresh produce was pretty impressive."

Ms Lauman said that it was important for growers to develop good relationships with wholesalers and to receive feedback from buyers.

"The chance to speak with buyers and find out how they view your produce is pretty important. We visit the markets regularly to stay in touch with things such as packaging and get feedback direct from the buyers," she said.

"This tour was great to see different packaging ideas and to see how produce is presented at

“ It was a great chance to visit the markets and to also visit a number of facilities that ordinarily you wouldn't get to see. ”

the markets.”

The group also took the opportunity to gain contacts, gather up information resources to share with other growers and also received a better understanding of all facets of the supply chain.

BFVG Executive Officer Peter Peterson said the journey was an eye opener for growers, even though many had been farming for most of their lives.

"For the first time, our growers were led through the whole buying, selling and value adding process with some of the key players in the industry speaking directly to them, from the Brisbane Produce Market through to the retailers and food caterers," Mr Peterson said.

"Growers face so many challenges in their industry, and at times they must wonder why they have so many regulations and practices to follow," he said.

"A tour like this brings the whole picture together. It gets growers off the farm and directly in front of the people who are using their product."

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Bundaberg growers have visited the Brisbane Markets and other retail facilities on a three-day study tour designed to boost their awareness of the supply chain and increase their business knowledge.
- Insights into new packaging and methods of presenting produce were seen by growers as a significant positive to come out of the study tour.
- Networking and sourcing new contacts with wholesalers, retail managers, and other growers was considered a major benefit by participants.

i For more information contact:
 Vanessa Kennedy
 Brismark
 Phone: 07 3915 4200
 Email: <vkennedy@brisbane-markets.com.au>
 Project Number: HG09031

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On the rise

Victorian grower, Richard Hawkes has added the HAL Young Leader Award to his list of personal achievements. With a maturity beyond his years, the 28-year-old speaks with *Vegetables Australia* about the many experiences and lessons learned, that have him poised to become a leader in the vegetable industry.

Following in the footsteps of a long line of successful growers to come out of south east Victoria, Richard Hawkes is a young grower on the rise.

Having continually sought to increase his knowledge both within the vegetable industry and in other business environments, this fourth generation grower is leaving no stone unturned to ensure he too can taste success in the industry.

It was this eagerness to improve and love for learning that saw Mr Hawkes recognised with the Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) Young Leader Award, at a gala dinner in Sydney in November 2010.

The award recognises leadership from young people in horticulture, encouraging them to continue to seek leadership

and grower representative positions in the industry.

Encompassing all 38 member industries which come together under the banner of horticulture, the 2010 award attracted a record number of applicants.

Mr Hawkes' win follows the success of Asian vegetable grower, Rick Butler, who was one of two winners in 2009, and it illustrates the high quality of the young growers emerging in the vegetable industry.

"I can't say I am an expert on leadership," Mr Hawkes said with a smile when we asked about winning the prestigious award.

"I guess it's about doing things differently and always looking for a better solution to a problem."

"Whether its marketing or

growing, it's about finding new methods that work."

Despite his modesty, speaking with Mr Hawkes you quickly realise, his perspective on vegetable growing represents carefully considered opinions and a wealth of experience that belies his age.

This perspective has been developed by confronting many challenges, including taking a step away from the industry and seeking employment outside his own fence line.

With a bachelor's degree in agriscience and having spent a five-year period working with agronomy specialists, Ian Muir and Sons, Mr Hawkes has been committed to building on his knowledge so that he is now in the position to expand his family operation.

Remarkably, Mr Hawkes has

continued over page ►



“ No matter what you’re doing and how well you’re doing it, there will always be someone somewhere doing it better or cheaper.”





also spent the last two years combining farming duties with a role with Apple and Pear Australia Limited as Technical Manager.

While such a position for someone with a family history in growing vegetables might seem strange to some, it was the challenge of entering a new environment which attracted Mr Hawkes to the role.

"When I started with Muir's, most of the people I was dealing with I already knew and a lot were neighbours or family friends. Working with Apple and Pear Australia, I saw an opportunity to challenge myself and work with growers, and in an environment that I wasn't so familiar with," he said.

Though Mr Hawkes will remain involved at some level with projects within the apple and pear industry, he is now keen to throw his energy into the family business full-time.

Family tradition

For over 100 years, the Hawkes family has been growing vegetables, a tradition which halted momentarily in the late nineties when Mr Hawkes'

father decided it was time for a break from the risky nature of the industry.

"We'd had some tough years growing carrots and financially hadn't been too successful, so we got out of growing vegetables for a while and just grew lucerne," Mr Hawkes said.

Being forced to take a step away from the industry and experiencing just how hard it can be to remain profitable, might explain Mr Hawkes' philosophy of constantly seeking to increase his knowledge.

"Maybe if we didn't go through those tough times, I wouldn't have felt the need to go off in search of how to do things better," he said.

"On one hand it would have been great if I was at an age where I could have helped Dad out more, but when we stopped growing it also allowed me to go off and work for someone else and gain some experience doing other things."

"Working for Muir's was really great. They taught me a lot but also gave me scope to get out there and do what I thought was right."



Taking his experience to the next level, Mr Hawkes participated in an exchange program in his third year with the company. Venturing to Washington State in America, he began 12-months of work on what he described as the best apple orchard in the world.

Despite the vastly different environment and industry, Mr Hawkes said the lessons he learnt were invaluable.

"It's a matter of picking up the relevant ideas and trying to streamline your processes so that you're doing them as well as you possibly can," he said.

"No matter what you're doing and how well you're doing it, there will always be someone somewhere doing it better or cheaper."

Mr Hawkes also credits his

time spent with Muir's for many of the ideas which are now inspiring his own venture into growing.

"I was able to see some of the best operations in Australia, and the world for that matter."

"Even just in the south east alone, we have some extremely good growers. The Gazzola's, Lamattina's, Schreurs and Cochrane's; there's a number of really good operations and some very smart growers."

Starting again

With growing in their blood, a return to vegetable production was always a possibility for the Hawkes family and it was Richard who ignited the new beginning.

"It started with fertiliser trials I was doing and grew from there. Dad had never lost the passion for it and we had the farm, and really only needed some capital and some hard work to get it going again," Mr Hawkes said.

These days, Mr Hawkes father, Tony, remains the principle of the business, while his younger sister, Andrea, is also heavily involved.

While he plays down his role in the business, Mr Hawkes is clearly a man with endless ideas, determined to be successful in an industry he loves.

"I enjoy it, there is of course the family connection but I am also passionate about the industry. To me it's more of a hobby rather than a job," he said.

"It's a hobby that I try and make money out of and

something I really enjoy doing. I think it's pretty important to get that combination right."

"I seem to have gotten bored in my other jobs, but growing vegetables throws up something different everyday and there is always something new to learn."

Despite the numerous challenges and the risks

greatest profit," he said.

"We're not trying to conquer the world, just looking at doing things smarter and slowly growing as the cash flow will allow."

Learning abroad

Adding to Mr Hawkes' wealth of experience has been two

opportunities that you receive," Mr Hawkes said.

"The Berlin Fruit Logistica Trade Fair (part of the AUSVEG tour) was an amazing opportunity to see such a meeting of members from the fresh produce industry from all over the world."

"Study tours are also cheap learning. Because they are usually subsidised, you might pay a few thousand dollars for the tour but gain tens of thousands of dollars in ideas to improve your business."

Mr Hawkes said meeting growers from Australia and overseas was a valuable experience.

"Meeting other growers is really just another way of conducting case studies, comparing what they have done with what you're doing and looking at how they have overcome problems," he said.

You get the picture Richard Hawkes is really just beginning to spread his wings. With his feet on the ground and an eye on the future, he is one young grower poised to become a leader in the vegetable industry.

““Maybe if we didn't go through those tough times, I wouldn't have felt the need to go off in search of how to do things better.””

growers experience, Mr Hawkes said in theory, fresh vegetable production was just a big problem solving exercise.

"Growing vegetables and potatoes is basically just problem solving, doing the sums, being flexible in what you grow and working out what will deliver the

international study tours, once as tour leader with Apple and Pear Australia, and the other as part of the 2010 AUSVEG led tour to Israel, Spain and Germany.

"I couldn't recommend them (grower tours) highly enough for the learning and networking

Name: Richard Hawkes

Company: ER Hawkes and Son

Situated: Boneo, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria

Grows: Beetroot, parsley, potatoes, spring onions and fennel



Getting the

Werribee vegetable grower, Anthony Mason discusses how confronting challenges in writes AUSVEG Environment Coordinator, Darcy Boyd.

Anthony Mason is a second generation grower and part of the tight-knit community in the Werribee growing district, located 30km south west of Melbourne.

At just 19-years-of-age Mr Mason began managing one of his family's properties, steadily expanding his business from 20 acres in 1990 to around 100 acres across four farms today. Key product lines include:

lettuce, cauliflower and fennel. Mr Mason was one of the first growers to adopt the EnviroVeg Program, joining the program in 2002. The increasing

importance of environmental management in the public domain, Mr Mason said, meant joining the program was an easy decision to make.

"As growers, we all have an impact on the environment and I was keen to ensure I was doing the right thing in terms of sustainable practices, and make sure people were aware of our approach to growing."

The Werribee region is well-known for the density of growers in a confined area. A quick walk through Mr Mason's property and the high number of growers in such a close proximity is obvious.

Working in such a close environment does have its benefits, Mr Mason said.

"We do try to share

information and work together to find solutions to the some of the common issues we face."

Access to Water

Historically, Werribee growers have had access to water from the Pykes Creek Reservoir, situated 50km north west of Werribee.

In the early 2000s, the Werribee growers were offered access to recycled waste from the Western Treatment Plant, as a supplement to the reservoir water. The Western Treatment Plant services around 60 per cent of Melbourne's sewage and the water is treated to a Class A standard before it is used for irrigation purposes.

Initially, growers received a mix of water both from Pykes Creek Reservoir and the recycled water from the treatment plant.

As the drought continued, allocations from the Pykes Creek

Reservoir were cut, and the use of recycled water increased to 100 per cent for the district.

"In the last few years we have been on straight recycled water, which has created some problems for most growers," Mr Mason said.

The high salt content in the recycled water was the biggest environmental concern according to Mr Mason, who said with salinity concentrations upwards of 1,800-2,200 EC at times, problems were experienced with soils and subsequently crops.

"Together with the low rainfall in recent years, we now have a high level of salt in the soils," he said.

To overcome the problems associated with high salinity, Mr Mason has implemented a range of methods to balance the salt content in the soils.

These include increasing the use and frequency of irrigation and fertigation, so that crops do not dry out, as well as using soil

balance right

regards to water management, has made him more aware of environmental issues,

conditioners to improve the soil quality and plant growth.

Other methods have included occasionally using deep-ripping practices, to increase soil drainage, as well as trialling various composts to improve nutrition and water retention.

"You have to always monitor the soils, you can't let your crops dry out at all," Mr Mason said.

As Victoria has experienced its wettest spring in many years, the Werribee growers have had their allocations from the Pykes River Reservoir restored. While this fresh water is still mixed with the recycled water, the affect is a reduction in the concentration of salt down to a more manageable level.

Agronomy check

To help manage his soils and salinity levels, Mr Mason is in regular contact with a local agronomist. It was during these discussions that Mr Mason started to

implement IPM strategies into his farming practices.

He is currently taking steps to ensure that the chemicals he uses do not harm the population of beneficial insects in the field.

Mr Mason is now considering implementing a full-scale IPM

approach across his business.

"We are almost there, already there are a number of growers in the area that are looking into alternative approaches to pest and disease management," he said.

"Getting the wider community to understand that to implement an effective IPM approach you need to have bugs, healthy bugs in your plants, can be a problem."

"If you see a lady bird in your vegetables it means that the crop has probably seen fewer chemicals than a crop that has no bugs on it, and it will ultimately be better for your health."

EnviroVeg

For Mr Mason, EnviroVeg has been a valuable source of information, helping him confront many environmental challenges experienced on-farm.

"We have used the EnviroVeg Manual as a

point of reference in managing some of these issues," he said.

He cites the self-assessment checklist as a supportive tool in his decision-making.

"When you sit down and go through it, you find you are actually doing a lot of whats on there already, but there is always room for improvement," he said.

"It's a simple process. You do the checklist and see what areas can be improved, and it also allows you to be selective in what areas you choose to improve."

Mr Mason encouraged other growers to adopt EnviroVeg.

"As growers, we do try to do the right thing by the environment. As time goes on, there is going to be a lot more pressure on growers, in terms of sustainability, and I think that's where the uptake of the program is important for the industry."



To join the EnviroVeg Program or for more information contact:

Darcy Boyd
AUSVEG
Environment Coordinator
Email: <darcy.boyd@ausveg.com.au>
Phone: (03) 9822 0388
Project number: VG09002

“We have used the EnviroVeg Manual as a point of reference in managing some of these issues.”



Carbon Farming Conference and Expo

Although horticulture is generally a low emitter of carbon, with the likely introduction of a Carbon Trading Scheme in the future, it is important that growers are aware of opportunities and challenges for the industry, writes AUSVEG Environment Coordinator, Darcy Boyd.

The fourth annual Carbon Farming Conference and Expo was held from 26-29 October 2010 in Dubbo, NSW.

The speaker sessions at the conference sought to provide relevant information on all things carbon, including: the development of a carbon trading scheme, opportunities for landholders and practical solutions to reduce emissions on-farm.

Key presentations at the conference covered a range of topics including the Carbon Farming Initiative and systems for the measurement and verification of carbon stored on-farm.

Carbon Farming Initiative

The Federal Government's Carbon Farming Initiative has been developed to allow Australian landholders the opportunity to generate a

secondary source of income from carbon credits, through undertaking prescribed activities on-farm.

This could include growers entering into agreements with businesses to plant trees in a less productive area on their farm, which will act as an independent store of carbon.

After being independently verified, the carbon stored may be sold under a carbon market to companies that are looking to offset their emissions.

Other initiatives may also include financial incentives for Australian landholders that demonstrate an increase in soil carbon, through various practices including carbon rich applications such as biochar.

Growers may also benefit by reducing emissions of nitrous oxide, which have a significant global warming potential. This can primarily be achieved

through limiting the use of nitrogen-based fertilisers.

Measuring Carbon

A number of organisations and researchers throughout Australia are currently working to improve the science that is used to measure and monitor the level of carbon in soils.

A CSIRO project is working to assess the major soil types and agricultural practices throughout the country, as well as exploring land use management strategies that have the potential to build up soil carbon.

Biochar, which is charcoal created from the burning of biomass in a reduced oxygen environment, is an example of a product that can be used on-farm as a way of increasing soil carbon.

The Carbon Farming Conference was held at an interesting and relevant time

with the issue prominent in the industry at present.

Understanding the impacts of the likely future regulatory environment as well as the potential benefits under such a scheme, is useful and timely.

It is predicted that input costs including electricity, fuels, chemicals and fertilisers are likely to rise. However, there may also be a number of opportunities for growers, including those that can store carbon on-farm and in the soils, as well as reducing the use of nitrogen-based fertilisers.

The Carbon Farming Conference will run again in 2011.

i For more information please contact:
AUSVEG
Environment Coordinator,
Darcy Boyd.
Phone: (03) 9822 0388
Email: <darcy.boyd@ausveg.com.au>



EnviroVeg Seminars

Vegetable growers along with industry representatives, have benefited from two free EnviroVeg Information Sessions recently, held in Queensland and Tasmania.

EnviroVeg has continued to present valuable information about soil health to Australian growers, through information sessions held in Queensland and Tasmania.

Tasmanian growers heard from leading soil scientist, Dr Ian Porter, Principal Plant Pathologist from the Department of Primary Industries Victoria, who outlined the outcomes of a national soil health project.

The project, entitled *Management of Soil Health for Sustainable Vegetable Production*, included a number of trials run on farms throughout Australia.

The focus of these trials, undertaken over three years, was to compare how altering inputs and farming practices could lead to productivity and sustainability in the long-term.

The trials tested the use of fertiliser, fumigation, biofumigants, organic products and crop rotation practices.

Soil health, crop yields and financial benefits were measured across each trial.

The outcomes generated from this project showed that changing practices to those inputs which have a greater benefit to soil health, can lead to an increase in productivity and greater profits—upwards of \$3,000 per hectare.

Growers in Gatton were treated to presentations from two

leading industry researchers: Dr Stephen Harper, a Principal Research Scientist with Queensland's Department of Employment Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI); and Dr Victor Galea, a Senior Plant Pathologist with the University of Queensland.

Dr Harper discussed a current project that is considering nutrient management and fertiliser use at a regional level.

This project is investigating resource use efficiency of fertiliser use. It also aims to improve crop yield and quality, and reduce the off-site environmental impacts to sensitive waterways including the Great Barrier Reef.

Dr Victor Galea, outlined the development of several disease forecasting systems for a number of crop varieties.

The EnviroVeg Program and its benefits, and the importance of good environmental management also featured at the two seminars.

Encouragingly, the majority of growers who attended have since signed up to the program.



For more information please contact:
AUSVEG
Environment Coordinator,
Darcy Boyd.
Phone: (03) 9822 0388
Email: <darcy.boyd@ausveg.com.au>





Growers return with big ideas

A group of nine vegetable growers have returned to Australia after attending the 2010 PMA Fresh Summit and exploring large-scale vegetable growing operations in the USA.

The 12-day USA Grower Study Tour, which included the opportunity to attend the 2010 PMA Fresh Summit in Orlando, began on 13 October.

The unique experience allowed a select group of vegetable growers the chance to explore a number of large vegetable production businesses in key growing regions of the USA.

The summit was the first point of call for the tour, with participants joining over 15,000 members from the fresh produce industry. The study group also joined a special retail

tour during the summit which provided a great insight into the perspective of retailers in the fresh produce industry.

Tour members had the opportunity to explore the substantial number of exhibitors and speak with representatives from all levels of the supply chain.

Tour member Robert Kuzmich, a cucurbit and pumpkin grower from Western Australia, hailed the PMA Fresh Summit as the highlight of the study tour.

“The summit gave me a greater understanding of the

supply chain and marketing aspects that we could adopt in our business,” he said.

“The retail tour in particular was exceptional, with packaged products and product labelling of great interest.”

Farm visits

Following the summit, the study group ventured to Delaware to visit the headquarters of DuPont, one of the world’s leading crop protection manufacturers.

Visiting the facility allowed growers the opportunity to see the extensive research process

that leads to new chemicals and crop protection tools.

Queensland beetroot grower, Greg Lerch, said the visit to DuPont provided a great insight into the lengthy development process (of up to ten years), including what is needed to deliver a finished product.

“The DuPont visit was very interesting and a real eye opener to all the procedures that are needed to develop new chemicals,” he said.

The tour then moved through various farms, packing facilities, merchants, markets and cooperatives in Maryland and

Aussie growers learn about USA production



California for six days. The region is one of the major horticulture areas in America, producing over 350 different crop types. Tour members explored all aspects of the large-scale operations and discovered how logistical problems are overcome by these growers.

One of the highlights of the farm visits according to Mr Kuzmicich, was a tour of the San Ysidro Farms, a 1600-acre vegetable operation in Guadalupe.

"San Ysidro was a well-organised, large-scale operation. I found their minimum tillage production and level of mechanisation a highlight," Mr Kuzmicich said.

Visiting farms also allowed growers the chance to see how Australia production values compared to that of their USA counterparts. Though there were many ideas that growers were able to take away from the farm tours, they were also surprised to see that in many cases Australian production compared favourably with USA grown produce.

AUSVEG Marketing Manager, Mr William Churchill, who lead the USA Study Tour, said that growers who participated clearly enjoyed the networking opportunity. He said he expected that it would more than likely result in long-term friendships being developed between tour members.

“There is a lot to gain through the introduction to new products, technologies and services.”

"Though the tour included growers from Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. Participants enjoyed finding common ground in terms of challenges confronted but also learning of the different issues growers in other parts of Australia are facing," Mr Churchill said.

Mr Kuzmicich said he was considering applying to attend the Germany/Netherlands Study tour in February and would definitely recommend international study tours to other growers.

"There is a lot to gain through the introduction to new products, technologies and

services," he said.

"The networking opportunities are also very valuable and I would encourage others to apply."

The study tour, which was commissioned by Horticulture Australia Limited, in partnership with AUSVEG, was subsidised by the National Vegetable Levy

with matched funding provided by the Australian Government.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A group of nine Australian growers have returned after visiting large-scale vegetable growing operations as part of the 2010 USA Grower Study Tour.
- The study tour also included the chance to attend the 2010 PMA Fresh Summit, a unique event which drew over 15,000 members from across the fresh produce industry's supply chain.
- Participants reported a number of benefits, including gaining insights into how large-scale growers operate and the invaluable networking opportunity.



For more information contact:
William Churchill
AUSVEG Marketing Manager
Phone: (03) 9822 0388
Email: <william.churchill@ausveg.com.au>
Project number: VG10092

AUSVEG Chairman opens dialogue with key US political figures



AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent, joined the group for part of the US Study Tour and in the process secured a meeting with Mr Keith Frank, Agriculture Advisor to highly influential Texas Senator, John Cornyn.

The meeting which took place in Washington DC, saw the pair speak about differences and similarities between American and Australian agriculture, and discuss interaction between the two countries in horticulture.

Technological developments mean that producers around the world now have the opportunity to access markets that previously were out of reach. Opening dialogue with powerful political figures in

the United States can only be a positive for the vegetable industry in the future.

Mr Brent said that though the meeting was informal, it was important to open communication lines.

"Senator Cornyn is one of the most influential Senators in America, and meeting with his Agricultural Advisor was a great opportunity," Mr Brent said.

Young Grower

Phillip Cochrane

New feature

Phillip Cochrane was built for life on the land. The fourth generation grower speaks to *Vegetables Australia*, offering a unique insight into the benefits and pitfalls of being a young Australian vegetable grower, writes David O'Neill.

At just 23, and managing your family's intensive cropping operation, what do you see as the advantages of being a young grower in the Australian vegetable industry?

As a young grower, I am certainly eager to get stuck in and learn as much as I can. I have nothing holding me back and I'm perhaps more interested in looking towards the future and where things might go. I suppose us younger growers may be a little more enthusiastic than some of the older guys too, which naturally probably diminishes over time.

What then are some of the disadvantages?

The only major thing holding me back is a lack of knowledge, which you only get from experience and making your own mistakes. My Dad is a huge help and always watching to see how we're going and can sometimes see problems because he's experienced something similar in the past.

It's all good to be young and enthusiastic and want to work and have a go, but you do need someone who is older and wiser and has that experience. As a young grower, having someone who is willing to teach you, and actually explain why, and not just how, to do things is very important.

I was lucky enough to do my apprenticeship with a neighboring grower, Peter Shreurs, who really took me

under his wing. Peter opened his doors, which many wouldn't have, and showed me not only how to do things, but also took time to teach me why it was needed.

How have you looked to keep the business successful into a fourth generation?

When I came into the family business, I looked at ways to introduce new technology into the business to increase production. With two other local growers and one from interstate, we recently travelled to England and the Netherlands to observe growing practices and primarily look at a spring onion harvester.

We were so impressed we purchased a harvester and despite the current wet conditions, it is already proving effective.

Was vegetable growing always the plan?

Yeah, I suppose (said with a laugh). I struggled at school and I probably only stayed to get my VCE because of a few bribes from my Mum.

Even during my VCE, I was always on the farm and when I wasn't, I missed it. It became pretty clear pretty quickly where my heart was. I can't really see myself doing anything else. It's a lifestyle rather than a job.

Life on the farm never stops. You say that to people and they don't really understand it, but physically and mentally it never stops. Though it's often a 12-hour work day, it doesn't really bother me because I enjoy what

I do, and most of all I enjoy doing a good job.

What are some of the challenges you are currently confronting?

Though my dad is still heavily involved, he isn't getting any younger. I need someone who can work under me, someone who is going to stick around for a while and I can give some responsibility to.

It's just so hard to find Australian workers, people with common sense and the right motivation that see farming as a career. There are not many that want to commit to the hard work required.

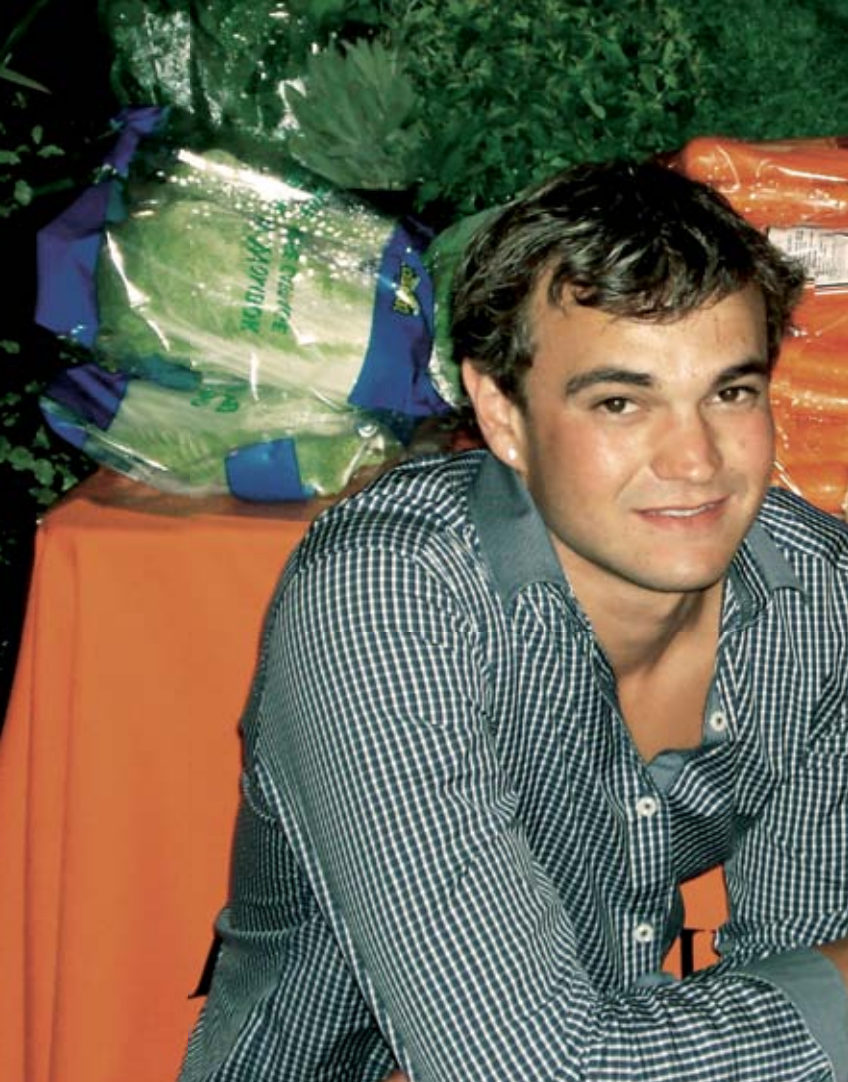
With intensive cropping and year-round production, do you ever find time to take a break?

It is just part of the game. We have periods especially during summer when we're flat out and work pretty hard, but then during winter everything slows up a little. We tend not to grow as much and we have time to travel and look at different ways of improving the business.

What's the best part of your job?

As I said, vegetable growing is more than just a job and it can be very rewarding. In one sense, you are your own master and if the opportunity is there, you can basically make it whatever you want. If you want to expand, or if you want to head in a certain direction, and you're prepared to work hard enough for it, then you can achieve anything.

“ Though it's often a 12-hour work day, it doesn't really bother me because I enjoy what I do, and most of all I enjoy doing a good job. ”



*Devon Meadows,
Victoria*

Who: Phillip Cochrane
Grows: Dutch carrots, spring onions, parsley, radish, baby beetroot, baby turnips and baby leeks.
Situated: Devon Meadows, Victoria

Phillip Cochrane at the Annual VGA Vic Regional Dinner, held in Dandenong in November.

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Natural ally

1.

New research shows that the use of beetles as a form of pest control, is effective in vegetable crops and can be incorporated into current insecticide programs, writes Louise Lawrence from the CSIRO.

Vegetable crops are attacked by a wide variety of pests, including whiteflies, leafhoppers, leafminers, flies, thrips and aphids. These pests can potentially devastate crops if not properly controlled.

Currently, many growers rely on insecticides to manage their pests. However, there are many instances when pests are present but because of the action of natural enemies such as predators and parasites, they are not at levels that threaten crop yields.

Two natural predators that are commonly found in vegetable crops, are the red and blue beetle, *Dicranolaius bellulus*, and the striped ladybird, *Micraspis frenata* (picture 2). These beneficial insects can

provide an effective form of pest control that indirectly results in reducing the use of insecticides.

A recent experiment conducted by the CSIRO showed that a single red and

pumpkin fields in the Lockyer Valley near Brisbane, Queensland.

Adult beetles were given different numbers of melon aphids, *Aphis gossypii*, to test

to increase their feeding rate in response to increasing aphid numbers helped them keep pest populations under control in the field.

Of the two species, the red and blue beetle were already known to be predators of moth eggs. However, nothing was known about the striped ladybird.

Previous research had shown that these beetles can also feed on pollen.

This information combined with the new results indicates that the red and blue beetle and the striped ladybird are true generalists. This means they can feed on a variety of foods and thus are a valuable weapon when pest species arrive in crops. If used at the right time, they have the ability to keep

“ Importantly, the more aphids that were provided, the more aphids they ate. ”

blue beetle, on average, ate up to 39 melon aphids per day, while a striped ladybird ate up to 60 melon aphids per day.

For these feeding trials, scientists used adult beetles collected from commercial

their ability to feed on this pest. This would allow an indication of the potential usefulness of these beetles in pest control.

Importantly, the more aphids that were provided, the more aphids they ate. Their ability



1. The red and blue beetle is a predator in horticultural crops.
2. Ladybird larvae are predators in horticultural crops.
3. The variable ladybird. Both adults and larvae are predators in horticultural crops.
4. The common spotted ladybird. Both adults and larvae are predators in horticultural crops.

pest populations below damage thresholds, providing important free pest control for vegetable growers.

The industrious work by beetles is not always noticeable. However, field trials have demonstrated that even very low levels of pests rapidly grow to damaging populations when natural enemies are excluded, usually because they are killed by broad spectrum insecticides, such as synthetic pyrethroids and organo-phosphates, or have yet to colonise the crop.

Predatory beetles are one of the important groups of natural enemies present in vegetable crops. The most common beetles include ground beetles and ladybirds. Although a few species of ladybirds are herbivores and can become pests, the vast majority are beneficial and can control aphids, scale insects and mites in crops.

While many growers know of the pest species—the

28-spotted potato ladybird—they are less familiar with the red and blue beetle and the striped ladybird.

Other beneficial species include the transverse ladybird, the common spotted ladybird, the variable ladybird and the minute two-spotted ladybird.

Research has shown that these species are predators of a number of pests, most notably aphids and moth eggs.

The free pest control service provided by these two species can be conserved or even enhanced in several ways and can also work for other natural enemies.

One very important practice is the regular monitoring of crops for pests to ensure optimal timing and targeting of insecticide applications. When pest thresholds are reached, choose selective insecticides that target the pest and not the beneficial insects.

In addition, it has been shown that many beneficial insects

spend parts of the year in native vegetation. This means that crops located near natural vegetation, such as those found around watercourses or planted shelterbelts, benefit from having natural enemies nearby ready to detect incipient, in-crop pest populations. These natural enemies then move into the crops and stop the pests from reaching damaging numbers, therefore, preserving native vegetation around farms may also contribute to free pest control services by natural enemies.

Dr Alejandro Costamagna and the research team at CSIRO's Sustainable Agriculture Flagship are currently focused on sampling different crops and habitats on farms to establish which ones are the sources of natural enemies. They are also looking at how the presence of those habitats increases the impacts of natural enemies on populations of aphid, whitefly and the moth, *Helicoverpa*.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Research conducted by the CSIRO shows that beetles, can provide a natural ally to vegetable growers in controlling devastating pests.
- The red and blue beetle, and striped lady bird have the ability to increase their feeding rate in response to increasing aphid numbers, ensuring pest populations are kept under control in the field.
- Native vegetation in areas surrounding crops has proven to be useful in increasing the number of beneficial insects.

i For more information contact:
Alejandro Costamagna
CSIRO's Sustainable Agriculture Flagship
Phone: (07) 3833 5684,
email <alejandro.costamagna@csiro.au>
Project number: VG07040



The other side

Industry Economist, and leader of the Vegetable Industry Development Program growers compared with less profitable growers.

For the last three years the vegetable industry through Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) has funded the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) to conduct a survey of vegetable farms production and financial performance.

Vegetable farms covered are those with a value of production in excess of \$40,000. The survey data is collected in face-to-face interviews with a sample of growers. The surveys are conducted in May/June to accommodate the April deadline for the signing off of financials for the previous financial year.

The latest survey results for 2010 were released in late November. In the past, data has been averaged across all vegetable farms. This has proven useful in analysing the general health of the vegetable industry. However, while some averaging is required, averaging may obscure important information.

This year the vegetable industry requested that ABARES break the data down to enable

a comparison between both financial performance and business practices of growers achieving high and low rates of return on capital. So what does this more detailed data reveal?

the industry appear reasonable there is a vast gap in profitability between growers.

The top 25 per cent of growers (more profitable growers) were highly profitable, with average

own or family labour.

Their rate of return on capital averaged 14 per cent excluding any capital appreciation on the value of land holdings. These figures suggest that these vegetable growers run highly productive and sustainable businesses.

The contrast with the bottom 25 per cent of growers (lower profitable growers) could not be starker. One third of this group failed to cover their costs of production, suggesting that they are surviving on revenue earned in other agricultural activities, lines of credit or off-farm income.

As a group these growers failed to turn a business profit suggesting they are making inadequate rates of return on the labour, land and capital they have tied up in the business.

On economic criteria, across the vegetable industry 55 per cent of growers are not receiving adequate returns for their efforts (See Table 1).

This ignores lifestyle considerations, superannuation issues in the form of capital appreciation, difficulty in skills transfers and a wide range of

“ On economic criteria across the vegetable industry 55 per cent of growers are not receiving adequate returns for their efforts. ”

Financial Performance

The new data format reveals that averaging across the industry, disguises the financial difficulties facing many vegetable growers.

While average returns across

cash incomes (revenue minus costs) in excess of \$600,000.

Average business profits were estimated to be around half a million dollars. This calculation takes into account cash income, trading stock on hand, minus the value for depreciation, and

Table 1: Financial performance and debt characteristics for vegetable farms by rate of return to capital group 2008-09 *Average per farm*

	All industry	Bottom 25%	Middle 50%	Top 25%
Total cash receipts	\$ 682 683	130 865	450 056	1 685 323
Total cash costs	\$ 478 449	147 922	349 180	1 058 996
Farm cash income	\$ 204 235	-17 057	100 875	626 328
Proportion with negative farm cash income	% 10	34	3	0
Farm business profit	\$ 110 649	-93 517	15 177	500 298
Proportion with negative farm business profit	% 55	100	60	0
Rate of return excluding capital appreciation	% 5.0	-6.6	1.6	14.0
Equity ratio	% 85	87	87	81
Farm business debt	\$ 430 764	155 984	391 882	785 051

Source: ABARES – Australian vegetable growing farms: an economic survey 2008-09

of the coin

Economics sub-program, Ian James discusses the characteristics of profitable

social considerations that may explain why vegetable growers remain in the industry.

This data has important messages for the industry and policy-makers especially in the light of continuing downward pressure on prices received, increasing vegetable imports, rising input costs and mounting concerns for food security.

Structural characteristics

ABARES also sought to ascertain whether there were differences in the business model between more and less profitable growers.

The more profitable vegetable growers operated on larger farms and were more specialised in vegetable production.

These growers generally had higher levels of debt and as a consequence have lower levels

of equity in their farms. Higher revenue, however, enabled them to have a lower debt servicing ratio. They were more likely to export and sell to markets interstate as well as directly to vegetable processors.

In contrast, the less profitable growers operated on a much smaller scale. There may be some bias in these figures as growers who produce vegetables undercover tend to have lower returns to capital than growers producing in fields.

The less profitable growers did not export and sold higher proportions of their product to local markets. A common characteristic across the industry was the continuing importance of the local State capital wholesale market as the key selling point regardless of financial performance.

Management of farms

In answer to a range of questions on management practices (See Table 2) the more profitable growers were more strongly engaged in practices that showed an understanding of issues beyond the farm gate. In respect to on-farm management issues there was little difference between the two.

Both groups had a strong commitment to biosecurity through a pest and disease monitoring program and the proportion of growers involved or considering involvement in on-farm environmental management was similar.

However, the more highly profitable growers had a much higher commitment to a food safety program, conducting a food safety assessment of their water sources and testing

produce for chemical residues.

Growers across the profitability spectrum rated increased farm input costs as the greatest threat to their future viability. Access to water, increased marketing costs, the import threat and continuing lower prices were of much greater concern to the more profitable growers. In contrast, urban expansion was a much more significant issue for the bottom 25 per cent of growers.

The possibility of rising land values as urban areas expand may help to explain why some unprofitable vegetable growers remain in the industry.

The ABARES vegetable farm surveys provide useful insights into vegetable grower operations both from a financial and management viewpoint. The economics sub-program of the VIDP is undertaking further research into the data provided.

Table 2: Selected characteristics of vegetable farms by rate of return to capital group 2008-09

	All industry	Bottom 25%	Middle 50%	Top 25%
Total area operated	ha 205	48	191	387
Area sown to vegetables	ha 30	8	21	70
Have a food safety program in place	% 63	47	64	77
Have a pest and disease monitoring program in place	% 91	98	85	96
Conducted a food safety assessment of the farms water source	% 51	31	56	60
Have participated in or are considering an environmental management program	% 45	41	49	42
Test produce for chemical residues	% 67	50	66	84
Impediments to future business viability				
Increased farm input costs	% 11	6	11	15
Environmental sustainability	% 92	94	92	92
Increased farm input costs	% 54	37	57	65
Availability of irrigation water	% 18	8	22	20
Access/costs of labor	% 60	57	58	69
Low prices due to imports	% 54	40	60	57
Low prices for other costs	% 57	41	62	64
Closure of local processing plant	% 13	3	17	13
Urban expansion	% 29	46	24	22

Source: ABARES – Australian vegetable growing farms: an economic survey 2008-09

THE BOTTOM LINE

- ABARES has conducted a HAL funded survey of vegetable farms production and financial performance which goes deeper than providing industry averages.
- Results show the top 25 per cent of growers (more profitable growers) were highly profitable while the bottom 25 per cent (less profitable growers) were struggling to cover the cost of production.
- The more profitable vegetable growers were also shown to operate on larger farms and be more specialised in their vegetable production.



For more information
Ian James is Project Leader of the Economic sub-program of the Vegetable Industry Development Program.
Project Number: VG08040

In pursuit of results

Though vegetable consumption has long been linked with healthy eating and weight loss, a new state-of-the-art dietary trial hopes to prove precisely why vegetables are a necessity for any healthy eating plan.

The *Healthy Eating And Lifestyle (HEAL) Study*, which is funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matched funding provided by the Australian Government, will examine the success and benefits of different dietary approaches in weight management.

Previous studies into this area have been reviewed and because of problems with compliance to the diet and difficulty in identifying biomarkers, it has been difficult to prove the precise health benefits of vegetable consumption.

In a new year-long study, participants will receive individualised advice from dietitians, regular health assessments (including cholesterol, blood sugar and weight assessments), counselling sessions for dietary change and a dietary plan.

The study is being led by the Director of the IHMRI Nutrition Theme and UOW

Smart Foods Centre, Professor Linda Tapsell, who is working with a team of scientists and research dietitians from Wollongong, Queensland and Curtin Universities, and the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

Prof. Tapsell said that vegetables are an integral part of the study as they are central to healthy dietary patterns, as seen across the globe.

“The study will provide more specific evidence, supporting the inclusion of vegetables in a healthy dietary plan,” she said

“Everybody knows that for a healthy diet they need to eat vegetables, but this study will enable us to gather some statistical evidence to support this belief,” she said.

About 120 people will take part in the study, a number that Prof. Tapsell said was important to give weight to the findings.

“We will be measuring everything that participants are eating and therefore will have

a lot of data on the benefits of vegetable consumption,” she said.

Participants will be given every opportunity to increase their vegetable intake with new recipes provided to them and new methods to incorporate vegetable intake made easily available.

“The study will reveal ways in which people have been able to increase the intake of vegetables,” Prof. Tapsell said.

The study will also generate new knowledge on the satiety properties (how full people are feeling) and biomarkers of vegetable intake.

“The biomarkers are really important as we need to understand how much of the effects we can attribute to vegetable consumption,” Prof. Tapsell said.

After the study is concluded, the results will be published in scientific literature such as the clinical nutritional journal.

Prof. Tapsell said the expected positive results should receive

significant publicity, which will hopefully correlate to consumers increasing their vegetable consumption.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A new study hopes to prove that vegetable consumption is an essential component of a healthy eating plan and can significantly impact on weight loss.
- The year-long study will include approximately 120 participants who will receive individualised advice from dietitians, regular health assessments (including cholesterol, blood sugar and weight assessments), counselling sessions for dietary change and a dietary plan.

i For more information contact:
 Professor Linda Tapsell
 University of Wollongong
 Phone: (02) 4221 3152
 Email: <linda_tapsell@uow.edu.au>
 Project number: VG09037



Beetroot could beat dementia

A recent study conducted by scientists at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, America, has shown that dementia could be preventable just by drinking beetroot juice every day.

Beetroot along with leafy greens like celery, cabbage and spinach, which are high-nitrate foods, have been found to improve blood flow and subsequently oxygen supply in the brain.

A “friendly” bacteria found in most people’s mouths convert nitrates into nitrites which act on the body’s blood vessels, causing them to open up. This increases blood flow and helps oxygen get to places in the body that are lacking or have limited oxygen.

As we get older, areas in the brain become poorly perfused (receive less blood flow), which is believed to be associated with dementia and poor cognition. From consuming high-nitrate foods, scientists believe that dementia and similar conditions could be prevented.

“ Everybody knows that for a healthy diet they need to eat vegetables, but this study will enable us to gather some statistical evidence to support this belief. ”



Fertilisers and insecticides:

In the wrong hands they're lethal weapons



Vegetable growers are being urged to help safeguard Australia from terrorism by remaining vigilant when it comes to chemical use and storage.

There are over 40,000 chemicals approved for use in Australia. Some of these are used regularly by vegetable and potato growers across Australia, in growing and maintaining their crops. However, a number of these chemicals, such as hydrogen peroxide, potassium nitrate, potassium chlorate and nitric acid, can be used to make homemade explosives.

In recent years, chemicals which are used in the vegetable and potato growing industries

have been successfully used by terrorists around the world to manufacture illegal bombs which have resulted in damage to property, mass casualties and fatalities. For example, in 2006 in Mumbai, terrorists attacked the suburban railway using bombs made from a chemical commonly used in fertiliser.

Investigations into previous terrorist activities around the world have shown that it is common for terrorists to stockpile fertiliser. In England in April 2007, five men were

found guilty of conspiring to cause explosions likely to endanger lives. During this investigation 600kg of fertiliser was confiscated from a storage facility.

In the United States, an investigation into the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing—one of the most destructive acts of terrorism on American soil—uncovered a stockpile of over 2,300kg of fertiliser.

Members of the vegetable and potato growing community can help safeguard Australia from terrorism by:

- Ensuring stocks of chemical compounds, particularly fertiliser and insecticides, are secure
- Regularly undertaking stock audits and reporting any discrepancies to the National Security Hotline (NSH) on **1800 123 400** and your local police, and
- Remaining vigilant and reporting suspicious activity, such as unusual stockpiling of chemicals to the NSH on **1800 123 400**.

Every piece of information gathered is important and could provide the missing link for security or intelligence operations—a 2005 terrorist plot in Australia was pieced together by information provided to the NSH by a chemical retailer.

**Article provided by the Attorney-General's Department.*

i Further information about chemicals of security concern, and hints about identifying suspicious activity, can be found by visiting www.australia.gov.au/chemicalsecurity.

Last month the Attorney-General launched *The Insider Threat to Business – A Personnel Security Handbook*. This publication is designed to help businesses understand and protect themselves from the security threat of insider activity.

To obtain a copy please visit: www.tisn.gov.au and follow the links.





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Asian veg stock take

An important study into the Asian vegetable industry has been released, outlining the growth of the sector and profiling the size and shape of the industry in Australia.

A new report entitled *Taking Stock of the Australian Asian Vegetable Industry* has been released, providing an updated analysis of one of the fastest growing sectors of the vegetable industry.

Asian vegetables have been seen in the past as a specialised niche market catering for Australians of Asian descent. In general, the growth of demand for Asian vegetables has been attributed to the recent growth in the number of immigrants from Asia. However, more recently there has been recognition that Asian vegetables are becoming an increasingly important part of the Australian diet.

To quantify this growth, a number of reports have been

published since the mid-nineties, keeping track of the performance of the industry over time. This latest report provides an updated snapshot of the industry, illustrating that it continues to experience strong growth.

Author of the report, researcher and Asian vegetable expert, Barry Lee, said the report was targeted at policy makers, industry representatives, researchers and facilitating arms of government.

“The objective of this study is to review and analyse the current situation in the Australian Asian vegetable industry and assess the sustainability of the industry

and future priorities for the sector,” he said.

“This report is targeted at all groups involved in the Australian Asian vegetable industry, and builds upon previous RIRDC studies to provide an up-to-date snapshot of the industry.”

Industry in numbers

A previous study had indicated that the Asian vegetables industry had grown from approximately \$50 million in 1994 to over \$135 million in 2002, a growth rate of 13 per cent per annum.

Mr Lee said the updated report shows that, based on the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, the industry was worth \$204 million in

2007/08.

“This result represents an annual growth rate of 19 per cent over the previous two years, accounting for six per cent of sales in the broader Australian vegetable industry,” he said.

Though the report is the third of its kind, the fact this latest version has been constructed using data from the ABS, Mr Lee said would create a baseline that will allow comparable analysis going forward.

“The previous reports profiling Asian vegetables are not easily replicated. The data available at the time was less consistent and from various sources,” he said.

“This report is based on new vegetable centre data, which ABS puts out and it gives a



consistent base to the reports.”
“This means we can use the same methodology going forward.”

Along with industry Economist, Ian James, who provided significant input to help collate and understand the data, state associations and grower groups were engaged to ground truth the ABS statistics.

According to Mr Lee, the growth rate of the sector at 19 per cent, is significant when compared to the overall Australian vegetable industry.

“Though it is still a relatively small industry, it has huge growth per annum. It should be recognised as an area that has continually expanded and is increasingly important.”

The report shows that leafy Asian vegetables such as Chinese cabbage, pak choy, choy sum, gai lan and kang kong are the most significant Asian vegetables by both value and volume.

In 2007/08, the value and volume of leafy Asian vegetables was more than twice the value of other groups.

Queensland was found to be the largest producer, by both value and volume of production,

followed by NSW and Victoria. Mr Lee said the order by producer size had changed since the previous report.

“Previously NSW was the largest producer but because of the growth of ginger production and the increase in the number of hydroponic growers now producing Asian vegetable varieties, Queensland is now the

is significant as the utilisation of such technology has attracted new growers to the industry. This is a positive sign of growth and investment in the industry.”

A key function of the report was to gain an understanding of the various challenges confronting growers of Asian vegetables and identify priorities that need to be addressed to

“This result represents an annual growth rate of 19 per cent over the previous two years and accounting for six per cent of sales in the broader Australian vegetable industry.”

biggest,” Mr Lee said.

While market gardeners and small scale producers represent a large number of growers in the Asian vegetable industry, Mr Lee said that hydroponic growers were an emerging group.

“The hydroponic grower group

build a sustainable industry.

The report was commissioned by Horticulture Australia Limited and funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

To obtain a copy please

contact RIRDC Publications enquiries by phone on: (02) 6271 4160 or email: publications@rirdc.gov.au.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A new report entitled *Taking Stock of the Australian Asian Vegetable Industry* has been released, providing an updated analysis of one of the fastest growing sectors of the vegetable industry.
- The report shows that based upon latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, the industry was worth \$204 million in 2007/08, growing at rate of 19 per cent per annum.
- A key function of the report was to gain an understanding of the various challenges confronting growers of Asian vegetables and identify priorities that need to be addressed to build a sustainable industry.

i For more information contact:
Alan Davey
Senior Research Manager, New Plant Industries
Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation
Phone: (02) 6271 4126
Email: <alan.davey@rirdc.gov.au>

Future priorities identified in the report

- **Industry development plan.** There is a need to develop and implement an overall approach to Good Agricultural Practices and environmental sustainability.
- **Research and strategy formulation to overcome labour shortages.** Research is required on whether labour saving techniques for labour intensive crops are possible.
- **Inter-State Transport.** Growers require more cost effective transport to enable them to service the southern state markets.
- **Future communications.** Communications should occur in a variety of forms and at all levels and points of contacts with growers. Grower's report a high penetration of RIRDC's Access to Asian Foods Newsletter.

Around the states

Victoria



Dealing with locust swarms is the key concern for all Victorian vegetable growers over the summer period.

Vegetables such as carrots and cucurbits can be damaged as seedlings or immature plants.

VGA Vic is maintaining regular contact with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries and relaying information to vegetable growers in areas where locusts are hatching and the direction of swarming.

Our two Industry Development Officers (IDO) are very active

not only on the farm but in attending regional industry workshops.

The regular information flow through to growers in the form of IDO Veggie Updates is receiving positive responses over a range of commodity topics. The Horticultural Industry Network project, funded by DPI provides direct on-farm contact with vegetable growers across the State.

Contacts: Helena Whitman IDO West: 0407 772 299 and Slobodan Vujovic IDO East: 0422 583 784.

The National Vegetable Expo scheduled for 5-6 May, 2011 at Werribee is well underway with all new variety trial plots fully occupied by seed companies. Good responses for static exhibits and machinery demonstrations are being received following the release this month of the prospectus.

This biennial event is a major drawcard for growers to view different crop varieties and provides industry suppliers with the opportunity of showcasing the latest technology. It also provides an important link between growers and those who provide services to the vegetable industry.

Further information is available from Expo Coordinator Claire Luppino: 0427 335 518.

The Harvest Picnic held in late November at Werribee Mansion featured a stand sponsored by the Melbourne Market Authority marketing team and supported by VGA Vic.

The stand proved very successful despite the changeable weather conditions. A range of fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables were available for tasting and the marketing team held enlightening

discussions with consumers, with an emphasis this year on whether the produce was grown in Australia or from overseas. It was pleasing to report that all the produce on display was grown in Australia.

2010 ended with a damp finale following the long drought over the past years.

To all vegetable growers we extend good wishes for 2011.

For the latest in vegetable information for Victoria take a look at our web site www.vegetablesvictoria.com.au or www.vgavic.org.au.

Tony Imeson

Executive Officer

VGA Victoria

Ph: 03 9687 4707

Fax 03 9687 4723.

Email: <contact@vgavic.org.au>

Tasmania



Promoting agriculture in Tasmania

Tasmanian farmers have proposed a \$100 million HECS-style loan fund operated by the State Government, to enable them to more freely invest in long-term agricultural projects, including irrigation infrastructure.

The investment fund is a key plank of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association's 2011 Budget submission. It makes proposals in six key areas, but with particular reference to the opportunities and consequences

of the \$400 million irrigation investment program.

The keystone of the TFGA submission is facilitating farmers' access to loans and credit, to make the most of opportunities in innovation and infrastructure improvements, such as irrigation.

Many farmers are under enormous financial strain due to poor seasons in the recent past, poor commodity prices, the high Australian dollar, increasing input and compliance costs, the uncertain future of various industries and markets, and tighter lending requirements by the banks.

The particular challenge of financing expansion of farming activities, and especially horticulture and other perennial agriculture, is the substantial time gap between planting and the first commercial harvest, which can be anywhere between five and 10 years.

The TFGA has proposed a government-sponsored loan fund, along the lines outlined by Prof. Jonathan West of the Australian Innovation Research Centre. This would be an income or profit-contingent loan scheme, in which the government created a self replenishing pool of funds, repaid by landowners on successful maturation of the vines or trees. It is similar in operation to the HECS scheme for tertiary students: you repay when you can better afford it.

In other proposals, the TFGA is asking for:

- \$3m over three years for development and delivery of irrigation efficiency programs;
- \$500,000 over three years to assist farmers to develop property management plans;
- \$375,000 over three years to establish an industry development program for forestry activities on private

land;

- \$375,000 over three years to appoint a biosecurity liaison officer to work with farmers to advise and ensure compliance with the numerous biosecurity requirements, vendor declarations and best practice measures;
- \$500,000 to implement the recommendations of the Alternatives to 1080 report, once it is released.

Nick Steel

Commodities Manager

Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association

Address: Cnr Cimitiere and Charles Streets

Launceston, Tas 7250

Phone: (03) 6332 1800

Fax: (03) 6331 4344

New South Wales



At the time of writing, large areas of inland NSW are experiencing severe flooding. After years of drought, rains earlier in 2010 raised everyone's hopes for a bumper harvest.

However, many crops are now unsalvageable and Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW) has estimated conservatively that \$500 million has been wiped off the value of NSW's wheat crop.

Rain is also impacting on NSW's fruit and vegetable crops with planting and harvesting

impeded or impossible and an outbreak of fungal diseases.

In Central NSW the big wet has severely hampered the planting of this summer's sweet corn crop and downgraded the cherry harvest.

In recent months, the NSW Farmers' Association has been urging the Federal Government to make a decision regarding the 13 recommendations concerning the Horticulture Code of Conduct made by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in its July 2008 report entitled *ACCC inquiry into the competitiveness of retail prices for standard groceries*.

The industry has been awaiting a decision since August 2009 when the

Horticulture Code of Conduct Committee gave its report entitled *Implications of the ACCC recommendations to amend the Horticulture Code of Conduct* to the Federal Government.

In mid-December, researchers from I & I NSW and Department of Primary Industries, Victoria travelled to Bathurst to visit farms and inform vegetable producers about the latest outcomes from their vegetable levy funded projects.

Topics covered included white blister, downy and powdery mildews, soil borne diseases and soil health management.

On a sad note, the NSW vegetable industry is mourning the loss of industry stalwart Geoff Gough. Geoff was an

active member of the NSW Farmers' Association for more than 50 years, receiving a Medal of Honour at the 2005 Annual Conference. Geoff began farming vegetables in Oberon, before moving to Macksville on the mid-north coast in 1980 to grow beans, snow peas and sugar snap peas. Our thoughts are with his wife Fay and his family.

Peter Darley

Chairman
NSW Farmers' Association
Horticulture Committee
Level 25, 66 Goulburn Street
Sydney, NSW 2000
Phone: 02 8251 1804
Fax: 02 8251 1750

South Australia



Grow SA is on the verge of rolling out South Australia's first horticultural and agricultural induction training system entitled Agwork Induction Program (AIP).

With occupational health and safety (OHS) compliance in the spotlight, in 2011 Grow SA will offer growers and others in the agricultural supply chain the ability to have their seasonal workforce fully inducted to a job specific stage and ready for employment.

Key areas of AIP will be OHS, Quality Assurance, Hazard

Analysis Critical Control Points (HACACAP) and Food Handling.

Once completed, participants will gain an AIP card with their photo identification and skills endorsed. Once gained the AIP card will allow for workers to move within the industry and remove training time for employers.

Don't Drop the Ball!

At the time of scribing this column, Wagga Wagga and many parts of New South Wales and Victoria, are inundated with water and serious floods.

Growers have seen crops severely downgraded and even lost in some cases. At the same time Australia's inland river system is looking the best it has for many a long year and the eight year dredging program at the mouth of the Murray ceased this week.

As usual the Australian rural industry is at the mercy of the weather and new issues are emerging while current or past issues are lost or shelved.

With this in mind it is critical that peak horticultural bodies should not drop the ball with regard to water flows, allocations and other related issues around the management of Australia's inland river system.

Going from famine to feast in one year, it would be only too easy to dismiss the pain, suffering and socio economic loss of the past decade's dry.

Cross border bickering must not be forgotten, but lessons learnt must be built on, to allow for planning and strategies to be put in place for future dry events.

It is critical for horticultural and agricultural bodies to play a watch dog role in keeping

all levels of government in tune with reality as it unfolds. They must be accountable for actions to ensure management and planning is implemented and amended constantly rather than with a knee jerk reaction when things go pear shaped again.

Future generations should not have to endure the suffering, anguish and even loss that many over the past decade have.

Learn from the past and plan for the future.

Denis Leonard

Chief Operating Officer
Grow SA
Phone: 08 8282 9200
Email: <denis.leonard@growsa.com.au>
0428 316 707

Queensland



MDBA: Mining must be included

Growcom represented Queensland horticulture at the Murray Darling Basin Authority stakeholder meeting in Brisbane recently.

While the purpose of the meeting was predominantly to summarise the draft report and allow for questions to be asked by those affected, Growcom was interested to hear the Authority's

comments on water taken from artesian sources by mining activities.

Many growers in the Murray-Darling Basin have commented on the futility of asking farmers to reduce water use so that it remains in the river system, if at the same time miners were allowed to take as much water as they wanted out of the aquifers. So it was pleasing to hear the Authority state that miners will have to be accountable for the water they take from aquifers that are connected to the Murray-Darling Basin. What this will mean in practice, and whether State authorities will willingly enforce this remains to be seen. But it is good to see that the principle

has been articulated that miners are subject to the same rules as farmers in the Basin.

It has been disappointing to hear conservation groups from New South Wales say that the only acceptable method to reduce water use in the Basin is buy-backs of water allocations, writing off water efficiency methods.

In the past 10 years, Growcom has implemented the Rural Water Use Efficiency (RWUE) scheme in horticulture in partnership with the Queensland Government. The scheme has seen more than 48 000 ML of water saved in this period, and the Queensland Government has received a return of \$26 in water savings and productivity

increases for every \$1 it has invested in the scheme.

Growcom has written to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Joe Ludwig, seeking a meeting to brief him on the RWUE scheme and to suggest that a version of this for the Murray-Darling Basin could deliver the water savings necessary without mass buybacks of water.

Alex Livingstone

Chief Executive Officer
Growcom
Address: Floor 1,
385 St Pauls Terrace
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006
Phone: 07 3620 3844
Fax: 07 3620 3880

Western Australia



vegetablesWA has recently launched a new project to support growers in fine tuning their water management. This has been done through use of the Vegetable Irrigation Scheduling System (VISS) which was developed by Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia.

VISS determines water application rates based on three factors: The crop growth factor (water needs accounting for the particular vegetable line and its growth stage), local evaporation rates and soil type. Growers have learnt about VISS at a number of workshops and more are being planned.

A substantial part of the project is daily face-to-

face extension work being undertaken by Charlotte Butler, our Field Extension Officer, who supports growers' use and application of VISS.

While the program has only recently commenced, a number of growers have started using the system and encouraging results have been achieved to-date, particularly given that WA has experienced its second driest winter on record.

vegetablesWA also welcomes the resumption of growers receiving extension of their National Vegetable Levy which funds Research and Development in the industry.

We will be working with the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP) to package up R&D results and communicate outcomes to growers in a range of ways that can be easily understood.

This will include important on-farm face-to-face contact with our Field Extension Officer, as well as through dedicated

workshops, the WA Grower magazine, E-News, a revamped website and the Carnarvon Growers Association.

vegetablesWA has again sought to defend our industry against funding cuts being proposed to government spending on vegetable research.

A federal economic agency, the Productivity Commission, recently released its draft report into R&D provided through R&D corporations across rural industries.

Most controversially the report recommends that the government reduce by half its funding for industry specific R&D, where it currently matches all grower levies on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

vegetablesWA is vehemently opposed to this suggestion on the basis of food security and the continuing rise of input costs. We also argued for consideration of regional R&D needs in the allocation of projects and funding.

On state issues, we have also gone into bat for growers against a report released by the WA Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) regarding water licensing fees. This document, to be considered by the state government, is based on user pays and cost recovery principles, but seeks to hit growers for the total costs incurred by management of all other users such as private residences whilst not charging these residences.

vegetablesWA will continue to work hard against these unfair proposals.

Jim Turley
Executive Officer
vegetablesWA
Phone: (08) 9481 0834.
Email: <pga-vga@vegetableswa.com.au>

Calendar of events

February 2011

8 – 18 February

Grower Study Tour - The Netherlands and Germany

For more information:

Phone: Elizabeth Cox on (03) 9822 0388

Email: elizabeth.cox@ausveg.com.au

► April 2011

14 – 16 April

2011 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and National Awards for Excellence

Sebel-Citigate Hotel, Brisbane

For more information:

Phone: (03) 9822 0388

Visit: www.ausveg.com.au/convention

Email: convention@ausveg.com.au

May 2011

5 – 6 May

National Vegetable Expo at Werribee
Premier Horticultural event in Southern Australia

Dairy Road off Sneydes Road Werribee.

For more information:

Prospectus available from VGA Office or Coordinator Claire Luppino:

Phone: 0427 335 518





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