

vegetables australia

July/August 2013

Matt Hood named Grower of the Year

At the 2013 AUSVEG
National Convention,
Trade Show and
Awards for Excellence

Diem Tran
Uprooted

Richard Mulcahy
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influence

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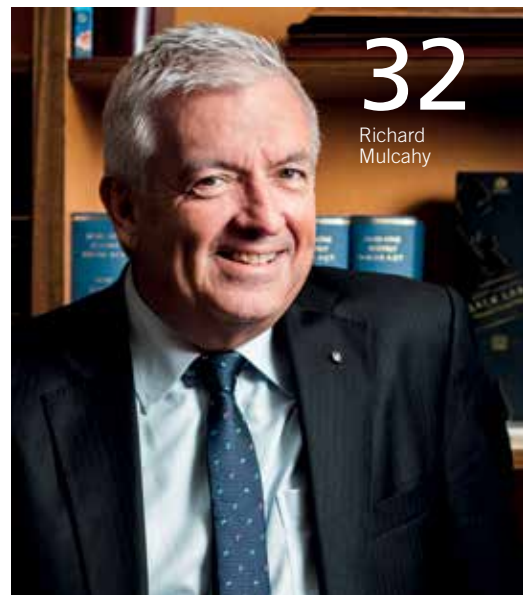
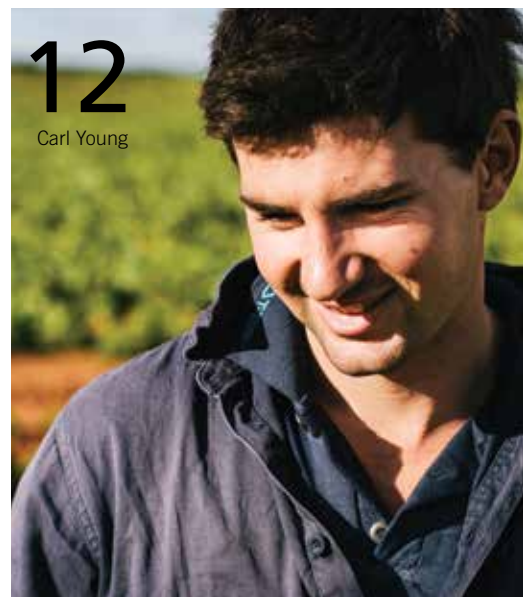
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AUSVEG Chairman and CEO messages



John Brent

AUSVEG Chairman

I was pleased to see the AUSVEG National Convention at the end of May break records as the largest we have ever hosted. With close to 1,100 delegates in attendance at Jupiters on the Gold Coast, such strong support underpins AUSVEG's ongoing program advocating on growers' behalf. The 2013 Convention gave the industry the chance to celebrate the triumphs of the previous year by recognising the outstanding contributions of leading vegetable and potato growers, researchers and agribusinesses. I would like to once again congratulate Queensland grower Matt Hood of Rugby Farm on being awarded the prestigious title of Grower of the Year. Matt gave an inspiring acceptance speech that astutely captured the challenges growers deal with on a day-to-day basis in wearing many hats to ensure the successful operation of their modern-day businesses.

As well as recognising those who've made outstanding contributions, the Awards for Excellence saw addresses by leading political representatives covering all political parties, including Senators Joe Ludwig, Christine Milne, John Madigan and Ian Macdonald, who spoke about the challenges and opportunities facing our sector. AUSVEG will continue to work with representatives across the political spectrum in the lead-up to the Federal Election to ensure that growers' views are represented.

It is a well-known fact that Australian vegetable growers have suffered hardships as a result of increased labour and operational costs over recent times. The focus of this edition is on emerging technologies that may provide some potential solutions for

these issues. It is imperative that as an industry we continue to invest in the development of new technology, so that we can operate increasingly profitable, sustainable businesses, and expand on the contribution that we make to the Australian economy and to international markets.

In line with this theme of developing new technologies, preceding the Convention, AUSVEG hosted the Emerging Technologies Seminar. As well as our brightest local minds, we welcomed esteemed scientists and businesspeople from around the globe, including from the USA, the UK and Israel.

The presentations were inspiring and addressed a range of research areas which have the potential to increase on-farm efficiency, address operational challenges or open up new markets. These included on-farm automation, the production of genetically-modified vegetables, pest insect sterilisation, the newest packaging technology, the development of a liquid-air engine that is potentially capable of being used in farming machinery, and synthetic biology. The seminar reinforced the great opportunities that are available to us under a well-directed research program that is targeted to industry needs. I hope that this edition of *Vegetables Australia* provides some insight into these emerging technologies, that can be of benefit to your businesses.

John Brent
Chairman
AUSVEG



Richard Mulcahy

AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

Australian vegetables feed more than the population of their country of origin. The observation of stringent standards of production has earned Australian vegetables an excellent global reputation, of which we at AUSVEG are immensely proud. This has increased international demand for our product and opened up new opportunities for the growth of Australian agricultural businesses.

I strongly encourage Australian growers to capitalise on these developments. The most important consumer market for Australian vegetable growers at this time lies in Asia. We at AUSVEG have made it our mission to educate growers as to how they can best establish strong trade ties with Asia by hosting and taking part in informative events, including the Exporting to China Symposium for Vegetable Growers, held at Jupiters Gold Coast in early June, and Asia Fruit Logistica, taking place in Hong Kong in September. These projects were funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

Organised by AUSVEG, the Exporting to China Symposium gave Australian growers the opportunity to hear from a diverse range of local and international professionals about the most effective ways to tap into the Chinese market. Speakers at the Symposium addressed such issues as regulatory obstacles, cultural differences and how to target key consumer groups. More information can be found in this magazine.

Asia Fruit Logistica is the leading international trade exhibition for fruit and vegetables in the Asia-Pacific.

At Asia Fruit Logistica, AUSVEG will exhibit a booth and inform consumers from all over Asia of the benefits of consuming safely-produced, Australian vegetables.

Opportunities for international education also come to Australian vegetable growers in the form of study tours, organised and hosted by AUSVEG. I am very excited about the tours coming up, including one which will take carrot growers to some of the biggest carrot-growing and processing operations in the United States, as well as the International Carrot Conference.

In August, young growers will visit Japan and Hong Kong, where they will have the opportunity to meet a number of leading exporters, visit supermarkets, and tour research institutions. Their tour will conclude with a visit to Asia Fruit Logistica.

Later in the year, a European tour will also be held, taking female growers to Italy and Spain. The tour will expose participants to some of the latest European growing technology and practices. It includes participation in the MACFRUIT Conference and incorporates a visit to the facilities of leading industry supplier, John Deere. I urge anyone interested in participating in international grower tours to contact AUSVEG and reap the benefits they present to Australian horticulture.

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**FRONT COVER:**

Matt Hood

Photograph by John McRae

EMERGING
TECHNOLOGIES
EDITION

Editorial

This special edition of *Vegetables Australia* explores emerging technologies and the opportunities available to growers. Significant progress has been made in horticultural research and development over recent years and the pace is increasing, allowing us to continually better our practices. It is an exciting time to be a grower.

In this edition, readers will enjoy a wrap-up of the 2013 Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar, held at Jupiters Gold Coast in May, including recounts of some of the most exciting presentations (page 30). Also, Dr Luke

Alphey, one of the seminar's best-received speakers, spoke to *Vegetables Australia* about his research into pest insect sterilisation (page 14).

Held following the seminar in late May/early June was the 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence - the biggest event in Australian horticulture. This edition includes a summary of the Convention (page 16) and recipients of the Awards for Excellence (page 20).

The Convention hosted speakers from various professional backgrounds. Prof. Salah Sukkarieh presented his

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Diem Tran



45

Roger Hellens



28

John McKenna



research into field robotics, the details of which can be found in this edition (page 25). Dr Roger P. Hellens' work on the application of genetics and genomics to new cultivar development is also featured (page 45).

Immediately following the Convention, AUSVEG hosted the 2013 Exporting to China Symposium for Vegetable Growers, of which a wrap-up can be found in this magazine (page 36) and AUSVEG Economist, Ben Loe reviews the Federal Budget outcomes for Australian agriculture (page 38).

Other R&D articles come in the form of an investigation into new products, uses and markets for Australian vegetables (page 10), as well as our regular EnviroVeg (page 28) and EnviroNews (page 26)

sections.

Queensland grower, Diem Tran, fled his native country of Vietnam to eventually settle in Australia at age five. In this edition, Diem tells his story and discusses the joys of raising cucumbers (page 40).

We also spoke to young Victorian lettuce and baby salad grower, Carl Young, who discusses his participation in the 2012 AUSVEG Grower Study Tour to Vietnam, China and Hong Kong, and his goal to further his agricultural education (page 12).

Also featured in this edition is AUSVEG CEO of four years, Richard Mulcahy (page 32). In the article, Mr Mulcahy describes the challenges he has faced in his role, and some of the greatest achievements that have been made by the organisation over the past four years.

TOP SPEED
PROTECTION AGAINST POTATO MOTH



BELT

Veggie bites

Facts & figures...

6.5%

The percentage by which export earnings from crops are forecast to decline in 2013-14 to approximately \$20.7 billion, following an estimated rise of 2.7% in 2012-13, according to ABARES.

\$2.34 million

The value of the Australian export market for lettuce into Singapore in 2010-11, as recorded by Horticulture Australia's Horticulture Statistics Handbook 2012.



5.23 kilograms

The average weight of broccoli purchased by consumers nationally in 2010/11, as recorded by Horticulture Australia's Horticulture Statistics Handbook 2012.



1895

The year Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*) was first detected in Australia, according to the Queensland Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

16,064.6 tonnes

According to Horticulture Australia's Horticulture Statistics Handbook 2012, 16,064.6 tonnes of carrots and turnips were exported into the United Arab Emirates in 2010-11, making it the top market.

3775

The number of Victorian businesses contributing to the Australian horticulture industry, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

4%

The decrease in vegetable prices recorded in the March quarter of 2013, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index.



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Waste not to be wasted

A NEW PROJECT INVESTIGATES THE POTENTIAL FOR VEGETABLE WASTE TO BE CONVERTED INTO USEFUL PRODUCT, WRITES KAREN SHAW.



At least 25% of vegetables produced on Australian farms are wasted before they enter the consumer supply chain. But an important new study has paved the way to finding better ways to transform this waste into dollars for the grower.

The three-month desktop study, *Identifying new products, uses and markets for Australian vegetables*, aimed to quantify vegetable waste produced nationally as well as examine alternative uses for the organic material. The research was funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.

Figures released by the Australian Institute showed Australians threw away \$5.3 billion worth of food in 2004. More than half of this was fresh fruit and vegetables. But according to Dr Jenny Ekman, study team member and horticulture researcher, these figures are from the consumer supply chain, and there was little information about what happened to vegetables before they left the farm gate.

To find out more, the study team interviewed processors and vegetable growers throughout Australia. Growers largely concurred that most waste occurred because vegetables did not meet increasingly demanding market specifications, rather than because they were damaged or diseased.

Carrots were listed as an example. Of the total 300,000 tonnes produced a year, 10% were culled because of damage, had cracks or were misshapen; another 23% were culled because they were out of specification and 5% were wasted during processing, which left a total waste of 93,000 tonnes or losses, worth about \$24 million a year.

The growers said that oversupply at certain times could lead to losses of up to

100% of some crops, with several reporting occasional losses of 50% or more.

Dr Ekman said growers were often forced to plough crops back into the ground because it was not profitable to harvest, process and pack them.

"We throw away a huge percentage of the food we grow simply because it doesn't meet the perfect standards which consumers demand," she said.

While much of the large volume of vegetable waste was ploughed back into the soil as green manure or was fed to cattle, the team was keen to establish better value uses for the waste.

Dr Ekman said that the first



step to lessening waste was to increase demand for Australian vegetables. She suggested a marketing campaign, promoting the health benefits of eating more vegetables as well as investigating ways to make eating vegetables "cool".

Research showed that half the population ate only two serves of vegetables per day, substantially less than the required five serves.

"The incidence of chronic

disease is rising and eating more vegetables is known to reduce the risk of disease," she said. "Campaigns to reduce smoking and drink driving had worked well and a campaign to encourage eating more vegetables could do the same."

Another alternative was to convert waste vegetables into biogas on-farm, an innovation already successfully operating in Europe. The finely chopped vegetable matter is added to

an anaerobic digester. It breaks down, producing solid and liquid waste, which makes useful fertiliser, as well as gas that is converted into electricity.

Dr Ekman said the gas - methane and carbon dioxide - could potentially generate enough electricity to heat a glass house or power a cool store.

"Energy produced by biogas costs \$80-\$160 per megawatt hour (Mwh), well below the average price for electricity of



about \$230Mwh,” she said. “But it’s only likely to be economically viable if energy produced is used on-site rather than returned to the grid.”

The research also examined the potential for converting vegetable waste into food for insects. There was already research being undertaken into using insects in poultry food as well as a suitable ingredient for fish food, but this could be further developed.

Dr Ekman said that many insects were efficient converters of food into body mass. For example, 5kg of fresh pumpkin could produce about 1kg of black soldier fly. The mature larvae of these insects consisted of 44% dry matter, of which 42% was protein and 35% fat.

“After harvest, insect larvae can be dried and milled producing high protein flour,” she said.

Meanwhile, an Australian

company in Griffith was already working on flavour and aroma extraction of various products. While vegetables were not currently being used, there was potential for aromatic compounds to be extracted from strongly flavoured vegetables, such as capsicums, and developed as natural flavourings.

“It’s certainly worth investigating further,” Dr Ekman said.

Dr Ekman urged vegetable industry leaders to continue this important research to help growers get better value in using vegetables that would otherwise go to waste.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A major study into Australian vegetable waste has recommended further research be undertaken into:

- A marketing campaign to increase consumer demand for vegetables.
- Investigating potential uses for waste vegetables such as on-farm biogas production as well as insect production and flavour enhancers.
- A campaign for growers and industry leaders for further investigation into these options to reduce waste of vegetables.



Dr Jenny Ekman
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Email: jenny.ekman@ahrc.com.au
Project Number: VG12046

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Chemical Group	Spinosyns (Group 5)	Diamides (Group 28)		Unspecified
Labelled pests:				
Potato moth	✓	✓	✓	✗
Helicoverpa (Heliothis/budworm)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Loopers	✓	✗	✗	✗
Light brown apple moth	✓	✗	✗	✗
Approved for other root and tuber crops?	Beetroot, carrots, celeriac, Galangal, parsnips, radishes, daikon, sweet potatoes, swedes and turnips	None	None	None



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Name: Carl Young

Age: 23

Location: Wemen, VIC

Works: A.R. & E.F. Young

Grows: Lettuce and baby salad

Q&A Young grower profile



Wemen,
Victoria

How did you first get involved in the vegetable industry?

I grew up on the farm and I'm part of a farming family. My grandfather was involved and this is all my father's ever done. I've been working on the farm on weekends and after school since I was young.

What is your role in the business?

I help look after the growing side of things. I make sure things get done on time, a bit of programming in crop monitoring, and then the rest of the time, I'm all over the place. I do everything. I guess my sole responsibility would be to make sure the crops grow properly.

Describe your average day at work.

Go to work, it'll be freezing, go and do the harvest. There'll be things that have gone wrong so I get on the radio going back and forth sorting people out. Generally just trying to get the harvest done and then if I've got time I'll go and look at what spraying needs to be done, look over the fertilisers, that sort of thing. Generally there's things that'll go wrong so there's no such thing as a normal day.

What do you most enjoy about working in the

vegetable industry?

I like the type of work I get to do, being very hands-on. Also watching the crop grow, and if you see something as an issue and you do something to try and fix it, to see that it's worked can be quite rewarding.

What are the biggest challenges you face as a grower?

Skilled labour shortage is an issue for us. We can get by, but we work around the issue by changing the nature of the jobs given to the people who work with us. We're making equipment easier to use, and we give employees more responsibility so they can get more out of it, and then they're happier. It's easier if they know what they're doing, and easier for us too. We're changing the atmosphere of the workplace to make it friendlier so people want to stay, and they are clear on what their jobs are. In a personal sense, it can be a bit isolating working out here at times. But it's also rewarding.

You travelled to China, Vietnam and Hong Kong last year as part of the Young Growers' Study Tour. What did you gain from the experience?

Going back to the isolation thing, growing up here, I didn't



really know many other people in this industry. Going over there made me realise there are so many people my age in the industry, so it gave me a lot of contacts. It made me realise that I'm not in it alone. It seems quite isolating but maybe it's not such a big deal. It's nice to know there are other people out there doing the same thing, and there's other people working to try to better our industry.

How do you think more young people could be encouraged to take up jobs in horticulture and the vegetable industry in particular?

Working in the vegetable industry is not so much a job, it's a lifestyle. I don't think that kids can really get a feel for farming unless they're out there doing it. It's not something you

can really learn at school, it's word of mouth. If it's a happy environment, then word of mouth will get out. But to start people off at a young age, it's really not going to work if it's going the way of the trend of the last decade or so with everyone going to university, because you can't really have a university degree then go straight on to the farm. Not many farmers are going to value that degree as such. I think everyone seems to go to university these days so farming is the other end of the spectrum where you need so much knowledge and you need to be so on-the-ball with it. Going to university is sort of frowned upon in a way.

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

I'd probably own a massive yacht and I'd do charters out to the reef and go scuba diving, I'd say! No, who knows. I want to study again, in environmental science, so perhaps something in that area. I'm not totally set on farming but while I'm here, I'm going to make the most of the opportunity.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I see myself still working in the industry, whether it's on the farm or not. In five years' time I will have developed myself in the industry. I want to do more travelling, and I also want to study in agriculture and environmental science, but I'd be more than happy to still be on the farm in five years' time. There might be more opportunities for me, and I'll take those opportunities wherever they may lead me.





Sterilisation technology means fruit flies may become a pest of the past

UK-BASED INSECT GENETICIST, DR LUKE ALPHEY, SPOKE TO FELICITY POWELL ABOUT FASCINATING NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF PEST INSECT STERILISATION, AND OUTLINED HIS PREDICTIONS FOR THE USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE.



Vegetable growers could soon see a reprieve from the dreaded fruit fly, according to insect geneticist, Dr Luke Alphey, Chief Scientist and Co-Founder of UK-based biotech company, Oxitech Ltd.

Speaking at the Emerging Technologies Seminar, held in conjunction with the 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Dr Alphey outlined the future of insect sterilisation, with improvements on the existing sterile insect technique (SIT) lying in the use of modern genetics.

The new technology involves producing genetically-engineered, sterile males of the species. The males carry two copies of a lethal gene, so

when they mate with the female, one copy is transferred by the sperm, thereby passing on a copy of the lethal gene to the fertilised egg. It is designed in such a way that the gene kills that individual as it grows. The pest doesn't make it through to adulthood, so the target population declines and can potentially collapse.

"SIT has a very long history of long-term suppression in a very sustainable way, and also, in some cases, eradication of a pest from target areas. It can be both a long-term suppression tool over large or small scales, or, for an appropriate pest in a carefully managed program in an area, it can mean actual eradication," Dr Alphey said.

Eradication has been achieved in several locations across the world. The biggest and best-known eradication was of the livestock pest, the New World screwworm fly, in the United States and Central America. Dr Alphey said that fruit flies in California and Florida were also eliminated through a combination of chemical treatments and the use of sterile insects.

"It was an integrated program but using sterile insects was the main approach. To start off with, they were doing the fire-fighting approach. They monitored the whole area, and if they got an infestation, they would go and take care of it," he said. "But they found it would

be more efficient to just release sterile insects continuously at a relatively low level over the whole area. So then any single female that comes in, mates with a sterile male, has no progeny [and] the problem goes away without them even knowing it existed."

Dr Alphey said that any environmental concerns about damaging the target pest's wider ecosystem were unwarranted. The genetic insect sterilisation technique has minimal off-target effects, because males of the target species will only mate with the females of the same species.

"Obviously, if you suppress that pest, it will have some effect on the ecosystem, but if you've already decided to do that then

you've probably already tried to do it with chemicals, which are much more broad-spectrum," he said. "All that environmental stuff you've got to look at on a case by case basis."

"The more you know about the biology of the pest - where it comes from, what it does, how it lives, what its habits are - the more sophisticated you can be about it," he said. "You don't have to know all that stuff, you could just innovate enough steriles to wipe them out, but the more you know about them, the more sophisticated you can be and therefore the more cost effective and efficient you can be."

Growers frustrated with the ineffective methods of pest control currently available will be happy to hear that the use of Dr Alphey's insect sterilisation technique in Australia is just around the corner.

Dr Alphey said products and strains for the Mediterranean fruit fly and Diamondback moth have already been developed. There are also strains for Mole worm, which is a pest for cotton growers, and some mosquito species that exist around Australia.

"For those, it would just be a question of finding a place to use them. I'd imagine we could just go ahead at full scale, but I imagine people would probably want to see a pilot trial first," he

said. "We'd be very happy to do that with anybody. We'd work with a growers organisation, or CSIRO, or a university."

"I came here from Canberra after speaking to the Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR), the national regulator. I've talked to them several times and they don't seem to see a problem," he said. "That's not the same thing as giving me a permit, don't get me wrong, they will look at it very carefully and so they should before allowing new genetic technologies to be used in the country."

With successful trials recently demonstrated in towns of up to 50,000 people in Brazil, scaling up to a larger site in Australia is a possibility that Dr Alphey is happy to entertain. However, demand for a strain which targets a specific pest must exist in the wider community.

"If a grower wants a strain, it could be introduced pretty quickly. So strains that we don't have yet, it generally takes two to three years to create, but not a huge amount of money to develop," he said. "Diamondback moth is the most widely distributed pest insect in the world - it's everywhere. But others, like Queensland fruit fly, are really quite Australia-specific. We're not going to make a Queensland fruit fly strain unless people in Australia want it."



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The Hon Dr John McVeigh, Queensland Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry with Councillor John Brent, Chairman of AUSVEG.

The 2013 AUSVEG National Convention: Bigger than ever

APPROXIMATELY 1,100 DELEGATES FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA AND ABROAD ATTENDED THE 2013 AUSVEG NATIONAL CONVENTION, TRADE SHOW AND AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN JUNE, MAKING IT THE BIGGEST EVENT OF ITS KIND EVER HELD BY AUSVEG.

THURSDAY - 30 May 2013

The highly anticipated 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence kicked off with an evening of entertainment at Jupiters Gold Coast. Delegates were welcomed by AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent, and prominent Australian media identity and Master of Ceremonies, Mr Mike Jeffreys. The Welcome Reception not only marked the opening of the Convention, but also gave attendees the valuable opportunity to begin networking

with their peers and get a taste of what was to be a weekend of inspirational ideas and valuable insights.

The Trade Show was officially opened on the Thursday night, allowing delegates to preview the nearly 70 stalls and booths that were to be on display over the coming days.

FRIDAY – 31 May 2013

Returning to the AUSVEG National Convention after a successful debut in 2012, the Agribusiness Leaders Breakfast featured speakers from a number of leading

multinational companies, coming together to discuss some of the most prominent issues facing Australian horticulture. Delegates were given the opportunity to hear insights into the industry from representatives from some of the country's leading agribusinesses.

The panel featured speeches by Syngenta's Paul Luxton, Elders' Mark Geraghty, Bayer's Dr Jacqueline Applegate, and Jeremy Cocks, who represented DuPont.

Delegates had the opportunity to interact with the panel in a question and answer format, making it one of the

most engaging events of the Convention.

AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent, also spoke about the importance of continuing to change our way of thinking, at a time when the Australian horticulture industry is as exciting as it is volatile.

Liberal Senator for Tasmania, The Hon Richard Colbeck, also addressed the Convention. He spoke about the 2005 tractor rally which travelled from Tasmania to Parliament House in Canberra, and which saw the birth of a national campaign against cheap imports and misleading Country of Origin Labelling.

One of the Convention's most anticipated appearances was that of Pam Hawkes, a former Victorian potato grower and co-owner of champion racehorse, Black Caviar. Ms Hawkes talked about her incredible journey travelling with Black Caviar across Australia and the world, with her highlight meeting Queen Elizabeth II at Royal Ascot in England.

Ms Hawkes was just one of many inspirational speakers to appear at the Convention. The speaker line-up also included the University of Sydney's Professor Salah Sukkarieh, who spoke about the fascinating future of field robotics; Bayer CropScience's Denise Manker from the United States, who looked at the relationship between science and nature; Bob Mullins, also from the United States and representing Syngenta, who spoke about marketing products and solutions to vegetable growers and consumers around the world; and Meat & Livestock Australia's Peter Barnard, whose rousing address to delegates showed how the vegetable industry could learn from the successes of the meat industry's foray into exports.

In the evening, guests were invited to enter the enchanting world of Casablanca at "Rick's Café". They were treated to a night of exquisite cuisine and spectacular surrounds in the midst of a Moroccan paradise.

SATURDAY – 1 June 2013

Another entertaining breakfast event left delegates with no



doubt that the closing day of the Convention was going to be one to remember.

Respected veteran political journalists, Steve Lewis and Chris Uhlmann, hosted the Saturday Morning Breakfast, captivating the large audience by talking about the inspiration for their book: a political thriller entitled *The Marmalade Files*.

The Saturday speaker sessions program boasted yet another diverse line-up of presenters. DLA Piper Australia Special Counsel, Tass Angelopolous, discussed the

Captions: Clockwise from top: AUSVEG CEO, Richard Mulcahy and Senator Nick Xenophon; Leader of the Australian Greens, Senator Christine Milne; Renowned Tokyo chefs, Junichi Miyazono and Tamaki Koichi at The Reverse Trade Mission; Journalists Steve Lewis and Chris Uhlmann, signing copies of *The Marmalade Files*.

pitfalls and processes of unfair dismissals, and James Bond, Chief Economist at the Financial Services Council, spoke about the changing global and Australian economies.

Mr Bond was followed by AUSVEG CEO, Richard Mulcahy, who reflected on the shocking trend of closures of

local food processing operations over the past 18 months, and the current threat of foreign vegetable imports flooding our shores. Mr Mulcahy's address was followed by a presentation by Dr Roger Hellens from Plant & Food Research in New Zealand. Dr Hellens discussed the application of genetics



AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner.



MasterChef All Stars Winner Callum Hann at the Reverse Trade Mission, cooking with ingredients from the Fassifern Valley and Gatton regions, QLD.



Aerial Angels put on a show at the National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner.

and genomics to new cultivar management.

The Food Industry Security Panel provided a valuable platform for discussion about the food industry in Australia, current trade agreements and the importance of biosecurity to our industry. Independent Senator for South Australia, Nick Xenophon, biosecurity expert, Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene, international trade

expert, Arthur Vlahoniasos and agriculturalist, Ruth Armstrong, provided a wealth of knowledge on the topic and plenty of food for thought.

The Great Debate finished off the morning. Chaired by ABC journalist, Chris Uhlmann, the debate discussed a variety of scientific and ethical arguments surrounding the polarising topic of Genetic Modification (GM). The four speakers argued

the case for and against the potential impact of GM on Australia's horticulture industry, biosecurity and human health.

As the last day of the Convention drew to a close, the youngest attendees of the Convention jumped in their go-karts for an afternoon on the race track. And over on the Gold Coast's picturesque Broadwater, the Convention's annual Women in Horticulture event

set sail. The event highlighted the important role that women play in the industry, and gave delegates the opportunity to network with other women in horticulture. Liberal Senator for South Australia, Anne Ruston, spoke about the importance of recognising the vital contributions that women make in the Australian horticulture industry, and her background as a former commercial rose-grower and small business owner in the Riverland district.

Soon it was time for the Convention to draw to a close. The Pavillion Gallery quickly filled with delegates, giving them the chance to rub shoulders at the Convention's highlight event: the AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner, which was attended by over 500 people.

In total, 13 awards were presented on the night, which featured acrobatic entertainment from the talented Aerial Angels and speeches from key political figures and industry participants.

The highly coveted Grower of the Year Award went to Matt Hood of Queensland. Danny Trandos of WA took home the Young Grower of the Year Award, and Belinda Adams of Queensland was recognised for her outstanding achievements in the horticulture industry, winning the Women in Horticulture Award. A comprehensive list of award winners can be found in this magazine.

AUSVEG would like to thank its leading Strategic Partners for their ongoing support, as well as its many other Strategic Partners, which made this spectacular event possible. No levy funds contributed to the funding of the 2013 AUSVEG National Convention.



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Ask the industry



with Scott Mathew

SCOTT MATHEW, TECHNICAL SERVICES LEAD AT SYNGENTA, SHEDS LIGHT ON THE APPROPRIATE APPLICATION OF FUNGICIDES AND INSECTICIDES TO PROTECT CROPS.

When I'm talking with people in the industry, I'm often asked why certain fungicides are better to be used at different times in the growing season of the crop than others.

Fungicides not only vary in their effectiveness to control certain diseases, but also in their mode of action. Some active ingredients remain on the surface of the leaf, thereby preventing infections from occurring, whilst others are absorbed into the plant tissue, where they inhibit the development or reproduction of the disease.

Question: What is the difference between the various types of fungicides?

In general, fungicides control infections by four broad modes of activity against diseases:

1. Protectant fungicides work by preventing the disease infection from becoming established in the plant.
2. Curative fungicides stop the development of disease symptoms after the disease has infected the plant but is not showing any visible symptoms of the disease.
3. Eradicant fungicides work by inhibiting the development of established infections where symptoms have already become visible.
4. Anti-sporulant fungicides work by preventing or reducing sporulation

of the disease without controlling the symptoms.

Therefore, the choice of fungicide to use should be made according to the conditions in the field. If signs of fungal disease have appeared, it is best to use fungicides that suppress fungal growth or stop it from spreading or alternatively apply a preventative fungicide prior to first sight of disease infection.

chemicals.

A single spray of any insecticide will only kill those whiteflies that are in the susceptible stages at the time of application or during the time the chemical remains active. Whiteflies in all other stages will survive and continue their life cycle.

It generally takes between 18-28 days for the whitefly life cycle from egg to adult in the warmer weather conditions of spring/summer, and as long as 30 to 48 days in

Table 1. The whitefly life cycle stage where common insecticides are active

Product/(Active)	Action	Activity against Life stages		
		Eggs	Nymphs	Adult
Admiral (Pyriproxyfen)	Translaminar	***	***	
Applaud (Buprofezin)	Contact Vapour	*	**	
Confidor Guard (Imidacloprid)	Systemic (Xylem Mobile)		***	**
ACATARA (Thiamethoxam)	Systemic (Xylem Mobile)		***	**
CHES (Pymetrozine)	Translaminar/Systemic (Xylem Mobile)			***
Talstar (Bifenthrin)	Contact	*	*	*
Movento (Spirotetramat)	Systemic (xylem and phloem mobile)		***	

Question: I have been targeting my whitefly insecticide application to coincide with their egg lays, however, I am still seeing large numbers of juvenile and adult whiteflies develop. What should I be doing differently?

There are five distinct life cycle stages (adult, eggs, crawler, larvae (scale) and pupa) of the whitefly and all differ in their tolerances to insecticides. However, all stages can be on a single plant at the same time (Refer to Table 1). The adult and crawler stages are the most susceptible to insecticides but the egg, scale and pupa stages vary in their susceptibility to these

the cooler conditions of winter.

Therefore, I would suggest that clusters of two to three applications of different mode of action insecticides at seven-day intervals should result in better control levels of whitefly. By doing this, you will target a number of different life cycle stages of the whitefly over a shorter period of time.

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

AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence

THE 2013 AUSVEG NATIONAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE CELEBRATED THE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS MADE TO THE AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY BY GROWERS, RESEARCHERS AND ORGANISATIONS, AT A MAGNIFICENT GALA DINNER.

Grower of the Year Award

2013 Winner - Matt Hood (QLD)



L-R: Matt Hood; Senator Joe Ludwig; Paul Luxton representing Syngenta.

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syngenta

Industry Leader Award

2013 Winner - Sean Richardson (NSW)



L-R: Sean Richardson from Syngenta; AUSVEG Chairman John Brent.

Young Grower of the Year Award

2013 Winner - Danny Trandos (WA)



L-R: Past winner, Michael Vorrasi; John Gilmour representing Dow AgroSciences; Maureen Dobra representing Danny Trandos.

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Rising Star of the Year Award

2013 Winner - Stuart Jennings (VIC)



L-R: Tim Walsh representing Coles; Stuart Jennings.

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Industry Impact Award

2013 Winner - Australian Bio-Plastics (VIC)



L-R: Wayne Dunne representing Visy; Joe Gagliardi representing Australian Bio-Plastics.

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Women in Horticulture Award

2013 Winner - Belinda Adams (QLD)



L-R: Past winner, Tina Lamattina; Belinda Adams; Senator Christine Milne; Murray Lynch, representing Steritech.

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Industry Recognition Award

2013 Winner - Figaro Natoli (WA)



L-R: Jeremy Cocks representing DuPont; Maureen Dobra representing Figaro Natoli.

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Researcher of the Year Award

2013 Winner - Dr Kathy Ophel Keller (SA)



L-R: Past winner, Dr Calum Wilson; Sue Cross representing Bayer CropScience; Dr Kathy Ophel Keller.

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Innovative Marketing Award

2013 Winner - Adelaide Produce Markets (SA)



L-R: Past winner, Andrew Fletcher representing Aussie Farmers Direct; Angelo Demasi representing Adelaide Produce Markets; Andrew Young, representing CMAA.

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Environmental Award

2013 Winner - John McKenna (TAS)



L-R: Stuart Upton representing Netafim; Max Baker representing John McKenna.

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Productivity Partner Award

2013 Winner - John Deere (QLD)



L-R: Senator Ian Macdonald; past winner Wayne Dunne of VISY; Royce Bell representing John Deere; Chris Willis representing Elders.

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Trade Display of the Year Award

Single-booth

2013 Winner - Crop Care Australasia (QLD)



L-R: AUSVEG Director David Addison; Kerrie Mackay representing Crop Care Australasia.

New Awards 2013!

Trade Display of the Year Award

Multi-booth

2013 Winner - Bayer CropScience (VIC)



L-R: Dean Schrieke (AUSVEG); Lachlan Bird representing Bayer CropScience.





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Future farms: where robots do the dirty work

AT THE 2013 AUSVEG NATIONAL CONVENTION, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY RESEARCHER, SALAH SUKKARIEH, SPOKE TO *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA* ABOUT THE EXCITING AREA OF FIELD ROBOTICS, THE ISSUES SURROUNDING THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF ROBOTS, AND THE AUTONOMOUS FARMS OF THE FUTURE.



Salah Sukkarieh is the Professor of Robotics and Intelligent Systems at the University of Sydney, and the Director of Research and Innovation at the Australian Centre of Field Robotics. An expert in his field, Mr Sukkarieh was one of the most anticipated speakers at this year's AUSVEG National Convention. Audience members were keen to hear about how field robotics technology had transformed various Australian industries, and what current projects existed in the research space.

Reflecting on the huge leaps in development that field robotics researchers have made in the last few years, Mr Sukkarieh outlines what he believes will be the autonomous farm of the future.

"It will be a large-scale operation. It will be a very structured farm," he said. "There will be appropriate pathway mechanisms that will lead us to some sort of shed where autonomous vehicles can hang around and be maintained and so forth. It will be very supervised, as opposed to being focused on manual labour. Robots will be acting like robotic mules, so robots that will tug, spray, sweep, weed, and mow."

However, to get to this point, there are hurdles to be overcome, one of which is the funding challenge faced by researchers in field robotics. When funding is provided, it often comes with the added expectation that the research will provide a tangible result.

"I think there's limited funding in this kind of environment to be able to really tackle problems



strategically," Mr Sukkarieh said. "I think you're always going to get these little bits and pieces of robots coming in, not working, coming back out and so forth. On the other end, the expectations can be quite high in terms of what people think a

robotic system can do." "There's that payoff," he said. "Projects that fund robotics research will pump in what they consider a lot of money, and they will expect to see results. It may be really not that much money from a robotics

perspective, so the expectations need to drop a little bit."

Another challenge is the general public's perception of robots. Mr Sukkarieh said that there was a lot more potential for our autonomous friends than to be used as killing machines,

contrary to what Hollywood might have us believe.

"I've done a lot of work on robotic aircraft. The perception is 'Okay, they're military drones, they're out to kill people.' But in fact for the last ten years we've been doing robotic work in environment applications, like in the cattle industry, aquatic weeds, tracking animals, and so

on," Mr Sukkarieh said. "There are all these benefits that come out of it. But, at the same time, you've got the image of Skynet and Terminator in the back of your head when you start to think of robots. That's one of those perception issues that we need to deal with, certainly."

When asked who is ultimately responsible for changing

the perception of robots, Mr Sukkarieh looks back in history to previous developments in technology.

"It's like going back to when we had horse and carts," he said. "Somebody came along and said, 'We're going to have this thing called a horseless carriage,' and people said, 'Firstly, how can you have a horseless carriage? Secondly, what does that mean? What's going to happen to us if we don't have horses?' that sort of thing. Next you had the automobile, so it's the same process."

"It's not so much that it's the responsibility of the individual," he said. "It's got to do more with a group. You're going to see more robotics in the military, you're going to see it more in stevedoring, and you're going to see it more in agriculture. Eventually, through osmosis, that whole understanding about how robotics works is going to come together."

"It's like saying a robotic car is a problem because the military are going to use it with

bad intentions when they go into some sort of village or whatever it might be and use it in that context," he said. "While at the same time, the same technology in the same type of vehicle would be used to support blind people going from A to B. As time goes on, I think people will start to see the benefits."

Prejudices aside, Mr Sukkarieh is proud of the high calibre of robotics currently being used in agricultural sectors around the world.

"I really like the novel ones, like the SlugBot, which can come along, pick up, identify and dissolve slugs in some form," he said. "But if you had to look at it in the context of what would be commercially viable, there's some good activity out in the US, looking at speciality tree crops. Carnegie Mellon University as well as Penn State University do some really great work where they're looking at the augmented harvesting process - building automation to assist humans."



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EnviroVeg Platinum launch

AUSVEG AND COLES LAUNCHED A LANDMARK ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM AT THIS YEAR'S AUSVEG NATIONAL CONVENTION.

AUSVEG and Coles have teamed up to deliver EnviroVeg Platinum, a voluntary program whereby growers can have their environmental practices verified by an independent party and access the promotional benefits of using the EnviroVeg logo. The scheme is intended to operate in a similar manner to other certification schemes in the marketplace, such as "Australian Made" or the Heart Foundation tick.

Supported by Coles, the logo is to eventually be applied to

product packaging and point-of-sale materials. EnviroVeg Platinum has been developed through collaboration between Coles and AUSVEG in an effort to reward environmentally-sustainable practices in the Australian horticulture industry.

The new scheme builds on the highly successful EnviroVeg Program by providing an option for growers to move from self-assessment to independent assessment. Consumers, governments and the broader community are demanding enhanced environmental

accountability from primary producers in Australia, and EnviroVeg Platinum will play an important role in communicating the environmental credentials of the industry with these key groups.

The Australian vegetable industry is at the forefront of environmental management in Australia, with EnviroVeg Platinum being the first industry environmental management scheme to be endorsed by a retailer in Australia. Coles and AUSVEG worked closely on the development of the scheme to

ensure that it was in line with the realities of vegetable production in Australia, and could be implemented in a way that worked within current quality assurance schemes already in place.

EnviroVeg Platinum represents a significant development in the way agricultural industries respond to the changing needs of consumers. By proactively managing environmental issues on property through both the EnviroVeg and EnviroVeg Platinum programs, the Australian industry is



AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent, discusses EnviroVeg with Coles General Manager Corporate Affairs, Robert Hadler.



Coles General Manager Corporate Affairs, Robert Hadler.

well-placed to communicate the achievements of the Australian vegetable industry in environmental stewardship.

With an increasingly urbanised population, insulated from the demands and realities of agricultural life, it is more important today than ever that the industry is able to maintain a dialogue with consumers, which addresses issues such as environmental management. Through the success of the EnviroVeg Program, the Australian industry has an asset from which to start this conversation and provide consumer confidence in the quality of Australian produce.



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EnviroVeg Platinum: the facts

What is EnviroVeg Platinum?

EnviroVeg Platinum is a newly-launched, voluntary scheme which builds on the EnviroVeg Program. Growers seeking additional recognition for their practices are now able to have their practices verified by an independent party and can access exciting new rewards under the scheme.

How does the scheme work with the current EnviroVeg Program?

The EnviroVeg Program will continue to be delivered free to all National Vegetable Levy payers and continue to exist as a self-assessed, capacity-building program. All current members will continue to be able to access the EnviroVeg Program Manual, regular industry communications and workshops delivered through the program.

EnviroVeg Platinum has been developed as a voluntary program for growers seeking to have their environmental practices externally verified and access benefits such as use of the EnviroVeg logo for promotional activities.

How do I sign up to EnviroVeg Platinum?

Australian vegetable growers who would like to sign up to EnviroVeg Platinum should contact the AUSVEG Environment Coordinator on (03) 9882 0277 or email jordan.brooke-barnett@ausveg.com.au

Where can I get further information?

The AUSVEG and EnviroVeg Program websites contain further information on the program, including key documents to get started.

These include the EnviroVeg Platinum Rules, the Auditor's and Self Audit Checklists, which include eligibility criteria for the

scheme, and an Induction Package to help growers implement EnviroVeg Platinum on their farms.

AUSVEG website: www.ausveg.com.au

EnviroVeg website: www.enviroveg.com

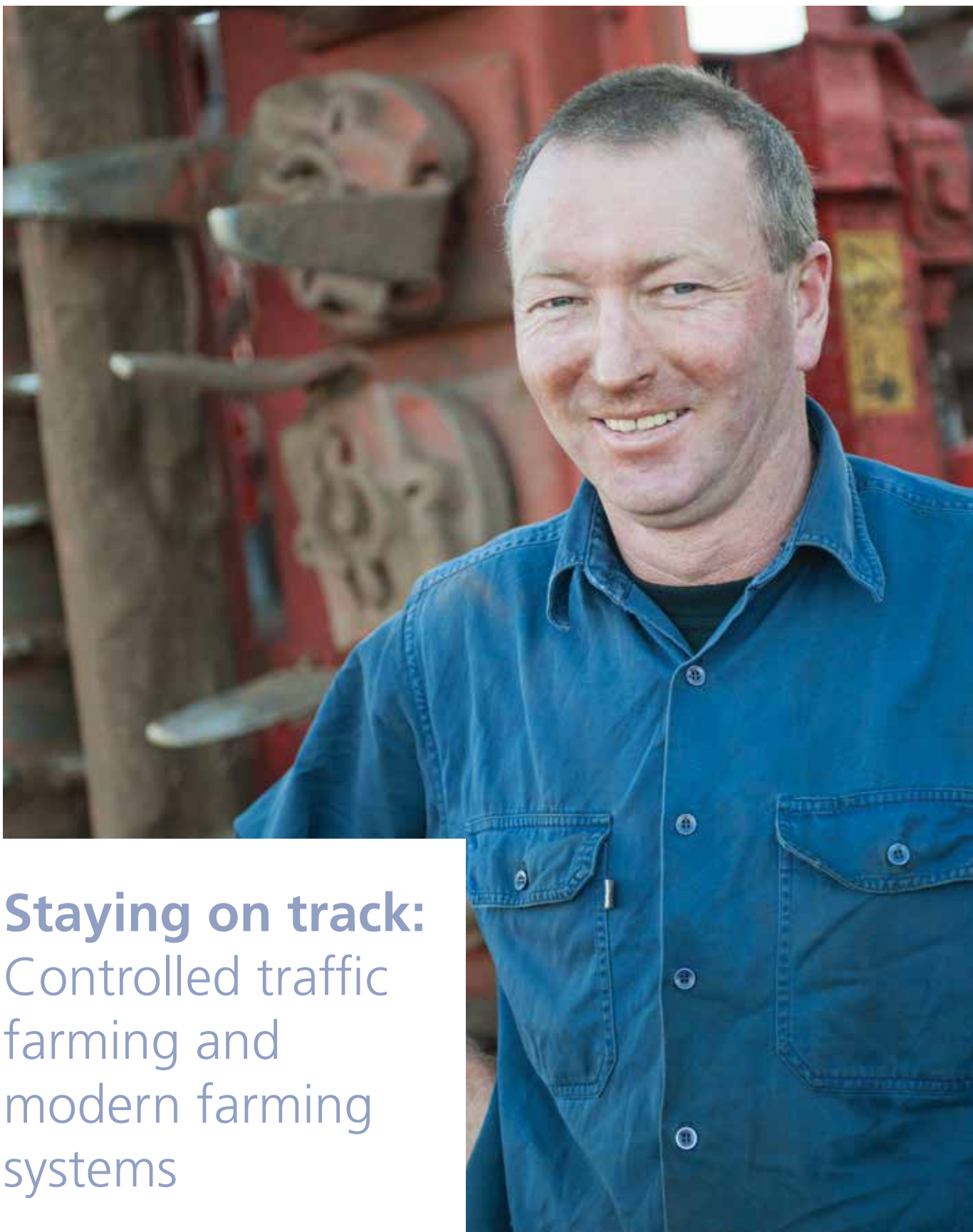
What is involved in participating in EnviroVeg Platinum?

EnviroVeg Platinum involves a step up in responsibility from the self-assessed EnviroVeg Program. Under the scheme, growers will volunteer to submit their operation for periodic assessment of their environmental performance, similar to a quality-assurance audit. The scheme has been designed to allow growers to conduct their EnviroVeg Platinum audit at the same time as their quality assurance audit to save time and resources. The same companies who currently audit quality-assurance systems in Australia will be used.

Whereas the current EnviroVeg Program is self-assessed and does not require evidence to be presented to prove compliance, EnviroVeg Platinum has some additional record-keeping requirements so that participating businesses have evidence of compliance to provide to the auditor. These are outlined in the EnviroVeg Platinum Self Audit Checklist, which is available on the AUSVEG and EnviroVeg websites.

What are the benefits of participating in EnviroVeg Platinum?

AUSVEG has teamed up with leading retailer, Coles, to deliver EnviroVeg Platinum and participating growers will have access to use the EnviroVeg logo when marketing their businesses. Coles are also teaming up with AUSVEG to deliver enhanced promotional recognition for the program in its regular customer communications.



Staying on track: Controlled traffic farming and modern farming systems

A WILLINGNESS TO ADOPT NEW PRACTICES INTO HIS FARMING SYSTEM AND A COMMITMENT TO SHARING HIS EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS IN THE INDUSTRY HAS SEEN TASMANIAN GROWER, JOHN MCKENNA, AWARDED THIS YEAR'S NETAFIM ENVIRONMENT AWARD AT THE 2013 AUSVEG NATIONAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE.



Photographs by Belle Young.

Six years ago, Tasmanian Agronomist, Peter Aird, and John McPhee of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, contacted John McKenna with an opportunity to trial controlled traffic techniques on his farm. Fast-forward to today and Mr McKenna has adopted the technology on a seasonal basis.

"It has been a lot of fun and games making it work," Mr McKenna said. "Often, I was dealing with unknown technologies such as using GPS equipment for field work."

Mr McKenna first trialed the techniques in 2007. After further trials in 2008 and 2009, he began to see the benefits.

"It all started when my agronomist, Peter Aird, was interested in compaction and brought John McPhee from the TIA in to do some trial work starting with onions in 2007," Mr McKenna said.

Mr McKenna saved 50-75% on fuel costs from the direct seeding of crops and less tractor work. This presented the added benefit of increasing his tractor's longevity. Other benefits of applying controlled traffic farming have included better soil structure, biology, drainage, aeration, porosity, infiltration and water-holding capacity.

One-pass groundwork has been adopted on-farm thanks to the use of GPS positioning, which has increased harvester-use efficiency. However, driving on the same wheel tracks has presented Mr McKenna with other challenges.

"As we compacted the soil on the wheel tracks, I found that the potato harvester we were using was not low enough to harvest the potatoes, so I had to lower it," Mr McKenna said. On his property, Mr McKenna grows peas, potatoes,

cauliflowers, carrots and poppies, using crop rotations. As each of these crops is often harvested using varying row lengths, a challenge for the industry has been to develop machinery that is consistent across all crop varieties. This is a continual area of investment for Mr McKenna, because although he has the equipment needed to harvest some of his crops, such as potatoes, other crops like cauliflowers are harvested using external contractors.

This difficulty has meant that Mr McKenna has been unable to apply controlled traffic farming to some of his crops. In order to do so, he would be required to invest in customised equipment. To implement controlled traffic practices for his potato crops, Mr McKenna had to construct a special potato planter, engineered to match his tractor size and wheel tracks.

"It was a bit of a punt, as it cost around \$80,000 to have made and no-one else had built one," Mr McKenna said.

Despite these difficulties, however, the ongoing benefits of controlled traffic techniques are clear to Mr McKenna.

"I think our whole farm is getting better because we're not flogging the ground," he said.

Eventually, Mr McKenna would like to move his whole production system to controlled traffic with investments in new machinery.

"I'm aiming to eventually have machinery which means we can use controlled traffic for all the crops we grow, but this will happen gradually as we purchase new equipment," he said.

Central to Mr McKenna receiving the 2013 Netafim

Environment Award was his willingness to share what he had learned with other growers. He has teamed up with the researchers running trials on his property, John McPhee and Peter Aird, to deliver field days, and has periodically allowed other farmers to have a look at what he is doing. Mr McKenna sees real benefits for growers in teaming up with researchers.

"To me, farmers get stuck in their own little world and are busy, so it is great to have these experts come out and visit you on the farm and help you to try new things," he said. "As for field days, we had quite a few when the trials were on, showing grower groups the trials."

Recently, Mr McKenna spoke to around 50 growers at a Potato Industry Extension Program Workshop in Devonport about how he had adapted his farming system and some of

the challenges he has faced. As an industry facing increasing domestic and international competition, it is important that Australian vegetable growers are able to work with researchers to ensure that it is able to be applied in the field, and offers our growers a competitive advantage.

Mr McKenna's willingness to share his experiences with other farmers is essential in demonstrating that emerging techniques such as controlled traffic farming can be adopted on farms throughout Australia. Having farmers like Mr McKenna that are willing to try something new is essential for the Australian vegetable industry in ensuring it stays at the forefront of production practices into the future.



The 2013 Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar: Celebrating leadership and innovation

ON 30 MAY 2013, JUPITERS GOLD COAST HOSTED THE 2013 EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN HORTICULTURE SEMINAR FOR OVER 100 VEGETABLE GROWERS AND INDUSTRY SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

The 2013 Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar showcased some of the exciting research being undertaken around the world into new ways to improve vegetable growing efficiency. The seminar also facilitated a dialogue between research specialists, growers and industry service providers; highlighted new opportunities for vegetable levy investment; and paved the way for future collaboration between researchers and growers.

The seminar opened with an introduction from the Session Chairs, Mr Jeff McSpedden and Mr Peter Ward. A delegation of eight international and domestic research specialists - each leaders in their fields - had been assembled to present their research and receive feedback from Australian growers.

A highlight of the seminar was Dr Luke Alphey's presentation about genetic insect sterilisation technology, which drew strong media coverage. The innovative research that Dr Alphey presented involved breeding male larvae in captivity with specifically designed, faulty

genetic traits. Upon reaching sexual maturity, the male larvae are released to mate with wild females, passing on those faulty genes to offspring. Offspring then die before reaching sexual maturity, effectively suppressing the target pest population.

Dr Alphey, from UK biotech company, Oxitec, considered the idea of an inherited lethality gene to merit investigation as it did not require chemicals, was species-specific, and was less expensive than many alternatives. Dr Alphey said that the program's next step in Australia would consist of pilot trials on pests identified by the horticulture industry. Dr Alphey noted that although public approval could potentially be an obstacle, the program had generally received positive feedback from the Australian public.

Dr Rusty Rodriguez from Adaptive Symbiotic Technologies spoke to attendees about plants that thrived in habitats exposed to great amounts of environmental stress, known to scientists as "extremophiles". Dr Rodriguez noted that evolutionary processes had

shaped extremophile genes over millions of years to deal with stressors. Dr Rodriguez referred specifically to plants located at geothermal sites, which managed to survive in extremely hot, toxic environments. In laboratory tests, Dr Rodriguez identified endophytic fungi (which live inside a plant) as the catalyst which allowed these plants to survive in extreme

conditions.

Dr Rodriguez cultivated the endophytic fungi at his Seattle laboratory and found that when separated, seeds and fungi would both grow, but would lose their tolerance to heat and toxicity. Dr Rodriguez then found that combining the endophytic fungi with plant types which had no prior relationship led to the transfer of beneficial properties,



Morflora COO, Dr Dotan Peleg.



The 2013 Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar.

indicating the potential for vegetable production in arid and saline environments. Dr Rodriguez is currently seeking regulatory approval for pilot trials in Australia, with several growers at the seminar expressing interest in hosting trials on their farms.

Dr David Ball from the Queensland University of Technology's CyPhy Lab was accompanied to the seminar by an autonomous weed-killing robot. Dr Ball's robot was designed using low-cost parts, many of which had come from recycled smartphones. Dr Ball noted that cost was rarely considered when developing robots, but CyPhy Lab's main concern was getting the greatest outcomes at the lowest possible price. Dr Ball's laboratory has recently received a multi-million dollar grant from the Queensland State Government, with Dr Ball noting that his team

was interested to hear from growers regarding their thoughts on what should be developed.

Mr Jeremy North from London-based start-up, Dearman Engines, presented the Dearman Liquid Air Engine. Dearman's technology involves liquefying air by cooling it to sub-zero temperatures and using it to power an engine, which operates in a similar fashion to a normal internal-combustion engine. By heating liquid air in a cylinder, the liquid rapidly expands to its gaseous state and, in the process, releases energy to draw down a piston. At the seminar, growers expressed interest in the engine's application in conjunction with cooling systems, particularly as the price of refrigerant gases is increasing due to the carbon tax. Mr North noted that the engine could be used in conjunction with diesel engines,

resulting in 30% improved efficiency.

After their presentation, Mr Jeff McSpedden, Session Chair and Chair of the Vegetable IAC, queried roboticist, Dr David Ball, and synthetic biologist, Professor Lars Nielsen, on the potential of combining robots equipped with infra-red sensors and vegetables modified to emit infra-red signals indicating maturity. Dr Ball and Professor Nielsen agreed that this innovative combination required further investigation, and both said that they were not aware of any such research already taking place.

The 2013 Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar was an initiative of the Australian vegetable industry, designed to showcase exciting technological innovation. The substantial turnout from across Australia exemplifies the faith of Australian vegetable growers

in the industry's commitment to the continuous improvement of on-farm efficiency. The message of the seminar will resonate throughout Australia's vegetable industry, and encourage growers to consider the innovative solutions that continue to become available to them to improve the functioning of their businesses.

The 2013 Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar was funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government. A video of the seminar presentations will be made available on the AUSVEG website.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- The 2013 Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar was held on 30 May 2013 to showcase some of the most innovative technology being developed to improve vegetable-growing efficiency.
- A delegation of eight international and domestic research specialists presented their research and received feedback from Australian growers.
- The event drew over 100 attendees from across Australia.



Project Number: VG12050



L-R Prof. Lars Nielsen; Dr Rusty Rodriguez; Dr Luke Alphey.

Australian Vegetable Industry Biosecurity Survey

NAME	BIOSECURITY SURVEY						
FROM	MACQUARIE FRANKLIN	FLT NO	1000	DATE	07.13	DEPT. TIME	00:00
TO	INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS	CLASS	A	GATE	00	BRD. TIME	00:00

Biosecurity is a shared responsibility. Biosecurity is the equivalent of farm insurance for the vegetable industry, and the Australian Vegetable Industry, via a HAL project, want to know how good the industry's insurance policy really is... Macquarie Franklin will be running a survey of key industry stakeholders during July to find out.

Go to www.macquariefranklin.com.au/survey.html and complete your details to register for the survey, and be in the draw to win a \$1,000 travel voucher.



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Four years of growing influence

IT HAS BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE RICHARD MULCAHY ASSUMED THE POST OF AUSVEG CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO). THIS PERIOD HAS BEEN ONE OF EVOLUTION FOR THE AUSVEG TEAM THAT HAS SEEN THE COMPANY'S REACH AND INFLUENCE GROW ENORMOUSLY.

Over the past four years, AUSVEG has been revitalised as a force in horticulture to such an extent that *The Weekly Times* reported in late 2011 that AUSVEG was now “considered in Canberra to be one of the nation’s most powerful agri-lobby groups.”

Two years on and the organisation continues to go from strength to strength, having developed strong relationships across the political spectrum. However, at the time of his appointment to the National Peak Industry Body representing Australia’s vegetable and potato growers, Mr Mulcahy says he knew little about the vegetable industry.

“It was very clear [in the initial interview] that apart from eating them and enjoying them, I had very limited knowledge,” he says.

At that time, the AUSVEG Board considered an in-depth understanding of Australian horticulture to be an important quality in a prospective CEO. Nevertheless, Mr Mulcahy was able to convince the Board that AUSVEG needed to be led by people with real expertise in administration (Mr Mulcahy had previously held chief executive roles in the Confectionery Manufacturers of Australia and the Australian Hotels Association, among others).

“The Board took the decision that was compelling, resolved to appoint me, and I think it is fair to say that the success we’ve had in the four years since I was appointed has confirmed the point I was making,” he says.

Thus, the reinvigoration of the Australian vegetable and potato growers’ National Peak Industry Body commenced. Mr

Mulcahy says that over the four years following his appointment, the AUSVEG team, supported by Chairman, John Brent, and the Board of Directors, has moved the organisation to be on a stronger financial footing and has increased Australian horticulture’s media profile, which has given rise to expanded political influence. AUSVEG has also successfully transformed the way in which industry research and development (R&D) is managed, ensuring that it is now undertaken on a more cost-effective basis, he says.

But one of the greatest strengths that he has brought to the role has actually been the engagement of a fresh, young staff, which, he says, periodically looks for mentoring and guidance. New people bring new ideas, and this

has been to the benefit of the organisation.

According to Mr Mulcahy, AUSVEG is now the highest-profile agricultural group in Australia, thanks to the team’s relentless effort to increase the prevalence of industry concerns in mainstream media.

“AUSVEG was, at the time of my appointment, generating only around about 25 media mentions a month. It has, in this past year, seen months where the figure has been more than 1000,” he says. “The media is a powerful tool in terms of advancing concerns of constituents and, again, I have had success in other industry organisations in utilising the media.”

Two issues currently of concern to the Australian horticulture industry, about which AUSVEG has been particularly vocal in the media,

include the Biosecurity Bill, and the threat of the Zebra Chip disease. AUSVEG believes that the Biosecurity Bill continues to have deficiencies, and has fought the passing of the Bill in its current form.

"We were able to force extended consultation by taking our concerns into the public domain, and there has been, subsequently, a Senate Inquiry into this Bill," Mr Mulcahy says. "There is general agreement that there is scope for biosecurity reform, given that the base legislation was introduced in 1908. However, the consensus is that this Bill needs more work."

Similarly, AUSVEG has run a media campaign to increase public awareness of the biosecurity threat to the potato industry from Zebra Chip disease, using social media, such as the production of an animated video that was uploaded to YouTube, as a vehicle to explain its concerns. The Zebra Chip disease has not yet reached Australia but has caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to the New Zealand potato industry. AUSVEG's video was picked up by the national media, including highly-rated television programs such as Network Ten's *The*

Project and Today Tonight on Channel 7.

"[The video] has recently been rated by Medianet, one of the media distribution organisations, as a case study of one of the most successful campaigns using various aspects of media," says Mr Mulcahy. "It contributed, in no small way, to a heightened awareness by parliamentary decision-makers of our concerns about this devastating disease."

"We remain optimistic that they will not endorse the plan to import potatoes from New Zealand," he says.

Importantly, during Mr Mulcahy's time at AUSVEG, the company's financial stability has also increased, allowing it to focus on a whole suite of issues that affect growers and suppliers. While in the past, AUSVEG had been heavily reliant on levy funds to carry out its duties and was focused almost exclusively on research and development related activities, a sound financial foundation has enabled the creation of a public affairs unit.

"AUSVEG is not the first industry organisation where [financial stability] was an issue at the time of my appointment," says Mr Mulcahy. "I've had

success in each instance in getting those organisations on a sound footing, and my view is that without a strong financial base, it's very difficult to progress the ambitions of the constituents."

"We are [now] also focused on the political considerations that impact on the industry, the image of the vegetable industry, global factors that might have adverse consequences for the industry, as well as opportunities for the industry," he says. "It has become apparent that many of the key suppliers to the industry want to be part of that journey and are willing to support the organisation."

Mr Mulcahy's career has been diverse, and this has enriched his education of administration. As well as having held chief executive positions in a range of industries, Mr Mulcahy spent several years in Australian politics. He was a member of the unicameral Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly, where he represented the Liberal Party and, later, where he served as an independent. Mr Mulcahy says that political life taught him valuable lessons that he has been able to apply to his management of an industry body.

"Agri-politics are as tough as parliamentary politics," he says. "What I've found in parliamentary life was that it's important to stay in touch with constituents...and understand their concerns."

"AUSVEG has made a concerted effort to talk to leading growers in Australia, who have a broad understanding of market forces, and they are able to keep us fully informed on emerging issues," he said.

There is much that Mr Mulcahy loves about his job. He says that he enjoys the variety and the pace of work and the broad range of people with whom he comes into contact. He says that his favourite memory of his time at AUSVEG was the initial address that he gave to the Australian horticulture industry at the vegetable conference at Crown Hotel Casino in 2009.

"I was the new kid on the block, unknown by most, understood to be a former politician, and I had the opportunity to lay out my vision for the future, only two weeks after my appointment," he says. "This was a challenging situation, an important address, and it was extremely well-received by those who were in attendance. I feel comfortable that the direction that I outlined,



Photographs by Brandon Rooney.

AUSVEG Director, David Addison with CEO, Richard Mulcahy.

that I was recommending to the organisation, with the support of the Board, continues to be accomplished.”

“And I’m also proud of the vastly improved relationship now existing between AUSVEG and Horticulture Australia Limited and their Board, their Chairman, Selwyn Snell, and their CEO, John Lloyd,” he says.

But work at AUSVEG has also presented Mr Mulcahy with significant challenges that he has had to overcome.

“Initially, it was reputational damage that AUSVEG suffered, in the view of suppliers, growers and the media, and this was something that I had to address in the first year,” he says. “It is also challenging dealing with the disparate needs and varying resources of our member organisations, some of which are in far stronger positions than others, and attempting to work with each of those bodies on a comparable level to deliver the best outcomes for growers.”

According to Mr Mulcahy, the horticulture industry itself has also seen considerable change during his four years as AUSVEG CEO. He says that during this time, the market has become increasingly competitive.

“The industry, by its very nature, is very supply and demand-driven. There are

few impediments to price fluctuations, meaning that in times of strong production, prices will generally fall dramatically,” he says.

“We’re also seeing increased consolidation, by which, I mean there are more and more farms becoming larger, acquiring neighbouring properties, or entering into arrangements with neighbouring properties.”

“This is paralleling a push by the major retailers to limit the number of direct suppliers with whom they want to deal, together with their determination to push the middle-men out of the equation and have relationships that operate as retailer and grower,” he says.

“There will always be challenges with the production of produce, but it would appear to be a lot more difficult at the present time due to issues relating to production levels, retail relationships, the cost of labour and competition now in the order of nearly a billion dollars in processed vegetables offshore,” he says. “AUSVEG has worked on a range of fronts to try and assist growers to go through these areas.”

With the demands of his role, it is difficult to imagine that Mr Mulcahy would have the time to pursue interests outside of work. However, he maintains a positive attitude and endeavours

to balance his duties with other pursuits and passions.

“I’ve recently taken up learning to fly,” he says. “I do take a keen interest in reading about politics; I enjoy going to the cinema with my wife when time permits; and I particularly enjoy meeting people from other countries and learning about their experiences and their different attitudes and values...I do, on those chances I have weekends clear, go with my wife to visit galleries, museums, and other things of interest in Melbourne.”

He has also been fortunate to live and travel in diverse regions of the world, either in a professional capacity or for leisure.

“I went to Israel when I was 19 as a delegate to a conference and found that country to be quite amazing,” he says. “Since my appointment at AUSVEG, Israel has come into sharp focus again because of a number of common agricultural experiences, not the least being producing commodities in arid climates, and the important role that irrigation plays in that country.”

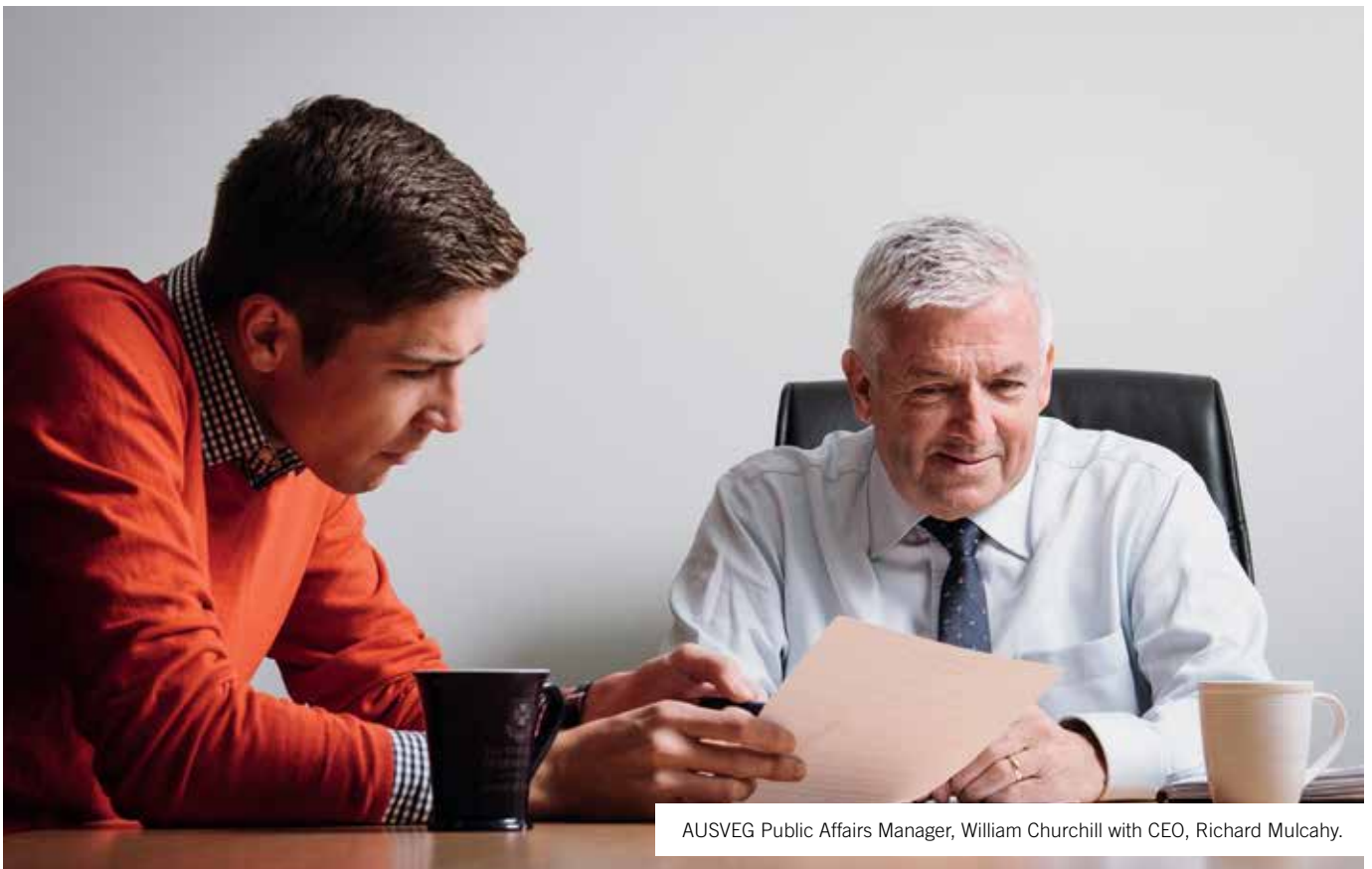
“I have lived in the United States and...I believe that it is still probably the one country in the world where one can learn more about marketing than in any other place I’ve spent time,”

he says. “I’ve also spent some time in my life going back to my ancestral homeland, being Ireland, where I have a few good friends and where I’ve had some great experiences.”

It is fitting that at the four-year mark, Mr Mulcahy reflects on his forecast for the organisation for the next four years.

“I hope to see AUSVEG continue to grow in the corporate space. We continue to do research and development projects within certain areas of activity such as communications, the environment and some trade activity, as well as grower tours, and we will continue to do those projects where we are best suited to carry them out on a cost-effective basis,” says Mr Mulcahy. “I do not harbour ambitions to continue to expand our activity in that space, but would rather see us continue to build our corporate base, which provides us with fewer constraints, the capacity to use those funds to support agri-political activities, and to undertake any other activity that the Board of the organisation might deem appropriate.”

“Our success has become the envy of many other organisations,” he says. “And the organisation may well expand its footprint in years to come.”



AUSVEG Public Affairs Manager, William Churchill with CEO, Richard Mulcahy.



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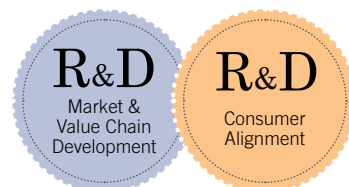
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Dealing with the dragon: Accessing the world's largest consumer market

WITH A POPULATION OF 1.34 BILLION, A RAPIDLY EXPANDING MIDDLE CLASS AND A SOCIETY THAT INCREASINGLY SEEKS HIGH STANDARDS OF FOOD PRODUCTION, CHINA PRESENTS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR AUSTRALIAN VEGETABLE PRODUCERS TO EXPAND THEIR BUSINESSES SIGNIFICANTLY. THE 2013 EXPORTING TO CHINA SYMPOSIUM FOR VEGETABLE GROWERS PROVIDED GROWERS WITH AN INSIGHT INTO HOW THEY CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY REACH CONSUMERS AND TACKLE THE CHALLENGES THAT DEALING WITH CHINA MAY PRESENT, WRITES WILLIAM GREGORY.



We are living in the “Asian century”. The power and magnetism of Asia continue to grow at an ever-increasing rate, as local populations boom and the rising demand for quality imported goods to the region create exciting prospects for foreign producers. As these developments take place, it is anticipated that Australian agricultural producers will be pressured to fill “Asia’s food bowl” so that these populations can be sustained.

At the geographical and economic centre of the region is, of course, China. In order to efficiently tap into the Chinese market, Australian producers need to be equipped to deal with cultural differences, government regulations and other obstacles that might be encountered. Held at Jupiters Gold Coast on Sunday 2 June, the Exporting to China

Symposium for Vegetable Growers was a great success and covered a range of topics from a diverse group of presenters including consultants, academics and growers who marketed their products to China, amongst others.

Dr Fanqiao Meng from the College of Resources and Environmental Sciences at China Agricultural University in Beijing delivered a presentation about consumer trends in China, focusing on vegetable products and Chinese culture.

“There are several reasons for Australian growers to be in China,” Dr Meng said. “The first is the growing domestic market. The Chinese economy has seen this rapid increase within the past 30 years.”

Dr Meng said that in the past, Chinese consumers were satisfied with a lower standard

of food production but were now seeking “better products”.

“Also, for the middle class consumption, especially for the quality products, their awareness and their concern is increasing a lot,” he said. “Australian products - Chinese consumers understand that they are very [high] quality, good quality.”

Given the stringent measures implemented to ensure that standards of safe vegetable production are met, Australian vegetables must demand a higher price both locally and abroad. This has motivated organisations such as AUSVEG to advocate for clearer Country of Origin Labelling on products sold in Australia.

Naturally, the question arises as to whether Chinese consumers are likely to pay more for quality.

“For the cost and price,

I think this is not the big challenge,” Dr Meng said. “The health of the family members [is] always the number one priority.”

Nevertheless, Dr Meng said that there would still be challenges for Australian vegetable growers when attempting to tap into the Chinese market.

“Try not to be mixed with these general commercial products [that are]...Chinese made or Chinese produced because they will lower down the identification of the vegetables,” he said. “You should find a good channel like a direct, special store in the cities...They have a special platform for the imported products.”

During the Symposium, attendees also heard from Prof. Hans Hendrichske from the University of Sydney, who addressed opportunities for exporters in the Chinese economy. A panel of Australian growers who had been successful in establishing positive export partnerships with Chinese consumers, provided insights into cracking



the Chinese market. The panel included growers, Peter Wauchope from Centre West, Peter Kermond from Macadamia Exports Australia and George Bobin from B&B Basil.

Mr Yu Zhang, General Manager at Golden Hill Import/Export Company from the Chinese province of Guangdong, shared his knowledge of navigating regulatory and logistical hurdles in China, and VISY's General Manager of Insights and Innovations, Richard Macchiesi, demonstrated what he envisaged to be the future of packaging.

The presentation delivered by Travconsult's Trevor Lee was particularly well-received, as he took an interactive approach to informing attendees of important cultural keys to remember when doing business in China, so that producers could best understand what he described as "the special situation in China, the special thing that

China is all about."

Attendees were given a language lesson, where they repeated important phrases. Mr Lee said that speaking even just a few words in the local language would "blow them away" when establishing a network of contacts, which he said was imperative for businesspersons in China.

"You need introductions. You need someone in your network who can help you to meet the person you need to know," he said. "You cannot go cold."

Attendees also learnt about traditions that should be observed when doing business with Chinese companies, such as the way glasses should be clinked in specific social contexts or the importance of maintaining "face".

"Throughout all of Asia, [face] means a lot," he said. "If you don't get this point, you will make mistakes in China. Face is powerful in social situations. It's extremely powerful in business

situations."

"I'm seeing Chinese businesspeople everywhere and how you deal with them, how you manage them, how you engage them, how you interact with them is going to be really crucial to your own organisations and the bigger industry you're a part of," Mr Lee said.

Also presenting at the 2013 Export Symposium was Dr Rodney Wee, CEO of Asia Cold Chain Centre, who spoke about packaging, shipping and associated logistics; Mark Gwizdalla, Manager, Opportunities (Food and Agribusiness) at Austrade; and Leigh Obradovic, Manager of Government Advisory Services at KPMG, who discussed food security.

"The World Health Organisation defines food security as when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life," Mr

Obradovic said. "In an ideal society, it's a right to be able to access enough food to be able to feed yourself."

Mr Obradovic said that the key to food security was demographics.

"It's classic supply and demand," he said. "The United Nations estimates that the global population of the world will increase from the current estimate of 7 billion people to around 9.2 billion people by the middle of this century. Now that's quite an extraordinary increase."

"Food prices and the accessibility of food is a key driver of poverty," he said. "World food prices spiked in 2008, and since 2010, the World Bank has estimated that 44 million people may have fallen into poverty around the world in low and middle income countries as a result of increases in food prices restricting the access to nutritious food."

"One thing we are all realising is the need to help the emerging economies of the Asia-Pacific, in particular, China, to be able to feed themselves as their economies develop," Mr Obradovic said. "Australians should never run out of raw food over the coming years. As such, Australia has an important role to play as a driver to help the emerging economies of the Asia-Pacific, in particular, China, to meet the demands that are emerging from the increasing middle classes."

"Produce exports will play a key role in an Australian context in meeting the opportunities posed by what's widely-known now as the Asian century," he said.

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Summing up: The Federal Budget outcomes for agriculture



FORMER TREASURER WAYNE SWAN HANDED DOWN THE FEDERAL BUDGET ON 14 MAY 2013, WHERE HE CHARTED A RETURN TO A BUDGET SURPLUS THROUGH GREATER SPENDING RESTRAINT. IT WAS A MIXED RESULT FOR THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR AS TIGHTENING ON THE PUBLIC PURSE KICKED IN, WRITES AUSVEG ECONOMIST, BEN LOE.

R&D

Drive Train

In the 2013 Federal Budget, agriculture was spared major funding cuts. The big news for agriculture was a new Farm Household Allowance to support farmers in hardship and a Farm Finance package to alleviate debt pressures and provide financial assistance to farmers.

National Drought Program Reform

The Federal Government announced a \$99.4 million investment over four years for a new Farm Household Allowance, under the National Drought Program Reform. This investment will provide much needed assistance to farm families during periods of hardship and support farmers in preparing for future challenges, including drought. Eligible farmers and their partners will receive up to three years of fortnightly income support paid at the Newstart Allowance rate.

A national approach to farm business training and a coordinated approach to social support services were

also announced as part of the reform.

Farm Finance

The Budget unveiled a Farm Finance package to help farmers restructure their debts. Concessional loans of up to \$650,000 will be available to eligible farm businesses, at an interest rate of 4.5%, adjusted according to prevailing economic conditions. \$420 million has been committed over two years towards the loans, with the states and the Northern Territory receiving \$60 million each.

Farm Finance is expected to provide some short-term relief to farmers, especially those in financial distress and finding it difficult to obtain finance for the next year. The package provides an extra 17 financial counsellors to work with agricultural businesses. A tax relief deposit scheme to help farmers manage fluctuations in their income will be overhauled, including raising the off-farm income threshold from \$65,000 to \$100,000.

Cost shifting

While some new assistance was announced, other areas have seen their funding cut. Funding for programs, such as the Biodiversity Fund to promote reforestation and revegetation and the Caring for Our Country program focused on sustainable agriculture and environment, have been reduced.

The money for these programs was reallocated into other government priorities, with \$141.5 million redirected from the Caring for our Country program to fund the Farm Household Allowance.

Investment in the environment

The Budget allocates \$25 million over five years towards a pilot National Produce Monitoring program that will monitor the use of chemicals on Australian crops. It will help identify risks associated with the use of agricultural chemicals not already being assessed. While this is good for local produce, it

will not cover any produce that is imported.

Other initiatives announced include \$669 million to be distributed over five years to regional Natural Resource Management organisations to enhance and maintain Australia's biodiversity and environment and \$429 million for the Carbon Farming Futures program, which converts abatement and greenhouse gas reduction research for use on farms.

A further \$200 million will be invested over five years in the next phase of the Reef Rescue program under Caring for our Country to assist land managers across the reef catchment to adopt improved agricultural and urban management practices. There is also money allocated to assist communities affected by floods and continued investment in Australia's biosecurity system program.

Other outcomes

The Budget makes a substantial \$24 billion investment in road and rail, including freight



corridors. Around two thirds of these projects will be in rural and regional Australia, providing a flow-on benefit to agriculture.

The Budget cut \$3.9 billion of assistance for industries affected by the carbon tax. This will hurt agricultural processors, which will likely pass on the costs to farmers. The regulatory burden on farmers was increased, with farm businesses operating as trusts and sole traders now required to report

PAYG monthly.

Relocation grants will be offered to skilled workers and apprentices to encourage them to move to rural areas with farming and mining labour shortages. However, application fees for 457 visas will almost double to \$900, which may discourage rural businesses looking to hire overseas labour.

More to be done

Many initiatives announced in the Budget were already announced in the lead up to the Budget, such as the Farm Household Allowance and the Farm Finance Package.

The Budget does not provide any additional money for research. The Government's commitment to match research and development funding remains unchanged. However, without additional funding for research, Australia's agricultural sector may find it difficult to improve its productivity and compete on the world stage.

Pressing long-term economic

issues faced by the industry remain increased input costs and competition from producers in other countries.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Former treasurer Wayne Swan delivered the Federal Budget on 14 May 2013, charting a return to surplus through greater spending restraint.
- A new Farm Household Allowance to support farmers in hardship was announced.
- Also announced was a Farm Finance package, designed to alleviate debt pressures and provide financial assistance to farmers.

i AUSVEG Economist Ben Loe
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This project has been funded using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.



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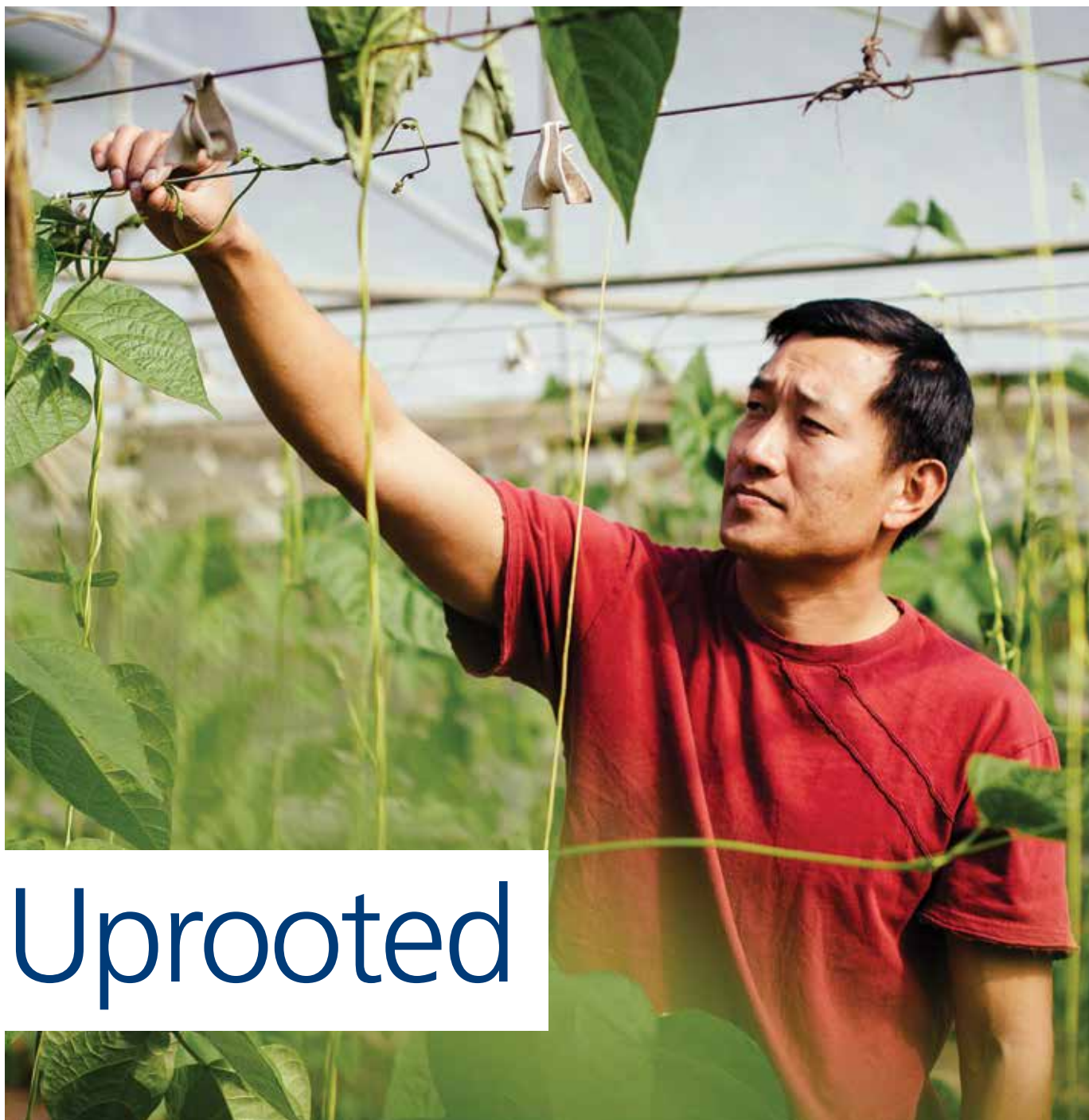


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Uprooted

DIEM TRAN'S FAMILY FLED THEIR NATIVE VIETNAM WHEN HE WAS TWO YEARS OLD, EVENTUALLY TO SEEK REFUGE IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA. AS AN ADULT, DIEM IS THANKFUL FOR THE HARD WORK HIS PARENTS UNDERTOOK, WHICH HAS ALLOWED HIM TO PURSUE A REWARDING CAREER IN CUCUMBER GROWING, WRITES RACHEL WILLIAMS.

Being a farmer was never a dream for Diem Tran.

But the child refugee from Vietnam is now carving out a successful career in the field at a cucumber farm in outer Brisbane.

As suburbs continue to expand around the Tran family's Heathwood property, just 25 minutes from the Queensland capital, the operation ticks along, defying the trend towards

innovative farming practices and risky expansion plans.

Instead, it relies on the premise of hard work and honesty – something Diem and his extended family have in spades, perhaps courtesy of their humble beginnings.

Diem's story is not one of a multi-generational farming dynasty. It's merely one about a strong work-ethic and the ability to listen and learn along

the way.

Along with his wife, Linda Le, and her parents, Duyen Thi Le and Hui Van Le, Diem is a world away from a southern Vietnamese fishing village in the province of Bac Lieu, from where his family fled in 1980.

"Mum and dad were determined to find a better place for me and my five sisters and three brothers," Diem recalls. "One of my eldest

brothers had a heart problem and was sent to Italy to foster parents there, prior to us leaving Vietnam."

"My grandparents had come to Australia before that and applied through the same refugee channel and they were able to get one brother and one sister over first and the remainder of us went by boat later," he said.

After a number of years in Malaysia, they were given

refugee status in Australia, settling in Brisbane in 1983.

Diem was five at the time. Now, 30 years later, he is indebted to his fisherman father and his mother for embarking upon their journey to secure safety.

"I can remember snippets of that time, mainly because of old photos or my parents talking about it," he said. "There was war. It was very dangerous. It was unliveable."

"My parents knew there was a better place to be and were constantly looking for ways to get out of the country," he said. "They had nothing, worked hard and saved their money to buy a home and raise us."

"They worked in factories and on trawlers – work that required little English but long hours. They believed in education and encouraged us to study hard while they laboured away to support us."

Diem's wife's family had also sought refuge in Australia, settling in Cabramatta before relocating to the property they now farm.

"They bought this land 25 years ago and thought they'd

try farming. They had no idea about farming. They had been in the clothing business in Sydney," Diem explains. "But they asked lots of questions of the local farmers and learnt from their mistakes. They relied heavily on the chemical suppliers for instructions and their knowledge."

After growing "all sorts" of Asian vegetables, they decided to grow three varieties of cucumbers – Green, Continental and Lebanese.

"They're not historically an Asian vegetable although they are used in a lot of Asian

cooking," he says. "They are hardier than many other vegetables to grow and not as temperamental."

In the 13 years since, about 3.5 hectares has since been transformed with glass houses to provide shelter for two varieties of the vegetable – Continental and Lebanese (the Green variety proved unprofitable) – and ensure year-round supply to Woolworths and markets in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

"They started off with a house and a little shed with very little cover, then added a small,

portable cool room. There was lots of dirt and mud," recalls Diem. "A packing and storage shed were then built and slowly the driveway was cemented. A packing machine was purchased to shrink wrap the cucumbers, as was a packing and grading table and bins to transport and ease the lifting work."

"We're very lucky to be farming in Brisbane. It is very built up now with a lot of housing developments so we are lucky to be so close to the CBD, whereas a lot of other farmers are much further away, which makes transport a bit more challenging," he said.

The operation, selling under the TD LE label, puts out three tonnes of product (about 18,000 cucumbers) a week and employs six full-time equivalents.

From seed to sale, cucumber growth takes seven to nine weeks in winter and six to eight weeks in summer. The product is picked by hand or with scissors, graded manually and then delivered to the appropriate markets, meaning the process is quite labour-intensive.

"We work eight hours a day now," he said. "It used to be 16



Photographs by Brandon Rooney.

though!"

The business has been supplying Woolworths for more than 13 years and Diem has nothing but praise for the supermarket giant.

"Bi-annual audits occur to review current practices and procedures to ensure that the produce is meeting the Woolworths Quality Assurance Standards," explains Diem. "Providing Woolworths with high-quality, farm-fresh produce has ensured a consistent order and a confident return."

Diem says the family business often dabbles in other vegetable trials.

"We change crops a little bit every once in a while – with beans, tomatoes and capsicums – on a market punt to see what the local market lacks," he said.

Diem's in charge of managing those "punts", although he admits it wasn't his first career choice.

"I finished university and Linda's parents needed someone to help manage their Woolworths side of things so I was roped in and have been there since," he said. "I had studied leisure management after a (school) guidance counsellor told me to do something I liked. I like leisure!"

"I focused on sports

management and worked with Queensland Volleyball a little bit but didn't enjoy it because it was fun for the people playing but I was managing and not actually getting to enjoy the sport."

So a lack of leisure led him to farming. As most farmers would attest, a farmer enjoying much leisure time is almost an oxymoron.

"Yes, I am very hands-on," Diem says. "We are working on getting it more organised and automated so hopefully it will be able to run its own course and we can slow down a bit."

"There is a future in robotics but we are not ones to go first. We are cautious people, not big risk takers," he said. "Better safe than sorry I guess. We will follow suit if others try it and it works."

Having also studied business at TAFE, Diem is attempting to create his own venture as an off-shoot to his in-laws' farm.

"I'm trying to do something for myself so I have started supplying greenhouse products to other Vietnamese growers in the Brisbane area," he says. "We can grow more if there is demand there but we have slowed down a bit because

there are a lot of competitors around so that is why I've looked at the supply chain to spread the risk."

He's hopeful that one day, he can pass the business on to the next generation.

"With three girls, statistically I am hoping that there will be one son-in-law that I can rope into the farming business," he said.

A dynasty dream has to start somewhere.



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Biosecurity brief

Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene



IN THIS INSTALMENT OF *VEGETABLES AUSTRALIA'S* SERIES ON BIOSECURITY, AUSVEG BIOSECURITY ADVISOR, DR KEVIN CLAYTON-GREENE, DISCUSSES THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THREATS TO AUSTRALIAN BIOSECURITY, AND OUTLINES HOW TRADE AND BIOSECURITY RISKS ARE CLOSELY RELATED.

What are the external threats to Australian biosecurity that exist today?

International flights and trade are two major things we must think about. There are 29 million people flying in and out of Australia every year. Assuming that there's only a small number of people coming into the country permanently, that means at least 14 and a half million people will be visiting Australia. Most of them probably aren't going to pose a risk by carrying something dangerous into the country, but some of them are. Some of them could be carrying things deliberately, some of them could be carrying things inadvertently. We don't know. Clearly anything that comes into Australia from overseas potentially poses a risk, whether it's people, cargo, or many other things. There are some people in the industry that say we should inspect everybody and every container coming into the country but the sheer enormity of these passenger and cargo movements means that it's not practical.

There are definitely risks there, but on the other hand, we can't stop trade because we rely equally on exporting to other countries. It is sometimes the same people that complain

about trade barriers that also complain about biosecurity risks. You can't have it both ways. The two are intricately related and can't be divorced from each other. On the other hand, there are a number of people and organisations who benefit from trade but do not contribute financially to managing the associated biosecurity risks.

What are the internal threats?

Again there are two things to discuss. If we look at Australia, all of the states have got their own pests. Not all pests are found all over Australia. Take fruit fly as an example. They don't have Queensland fruit fly in Tasmania or in Western Australia. But in Western Australia, they have Medfly, which they don't have in the eastern states. The eastern states have also got things like Potato cyst nematode, which isn't found in Tasmania but is in Victoria, and has been eradicated from Western Australia. Because we're such a big country, there are a lot of internal quarantine issues relating to movement of both product and people.

There are also millions of people flying interstate – almost double the number of people travelling internationally. In

addition, there are vehicular movements which are even less controlled, such as by car. These are also issues that need to be grappled with when we're talking about biosecurity and how to manage it.

What do you think are some misconceptions around the issue of biosecurity?

A lot of people think that biosecurity is just something that happens when you come into Australia. It isn't. Biosecurity goes from the farm all the way up to the border. Within states, we also have regions that have got different levels of biosecurity. If you take Victoria, for example, there are certain districts within Victoria where you can't take grapevines in and out because of phylloxera. If you go down to the farm level, you might have infestations in a particular paddock. We've seen that with white-fringed weevil. Then, of course, there are the movements that occur in and out of properties. People move in and out of their houses and farms every day. They then move to other people's places and other parts of the country. There are also utility providers, such as electricity and water

supply people, who come on to your property to read meters and things like that. Are there biosecurity protocols in place for managing the risk they may pose?

There's a whole continuum of biosecurity that stretches from the individual property right through to international movement. All of those have risks with them, and they need to be managed properly. It's up to individuals at all levels to do that.

One man's biosecurity is another man's trade barrier. What biosecurity is about is minimising risks, not eliminating them. Theoretically, the only way we can eliminate risks is to stop all travel and trade, and I don't think anybody's promoting that as an idea. It's about risk versus benefit. Some benefits far outweigh the risk, whilst others are far outweighed by potential biosecurity risk. Any potential pathogen that can threaten an entire industry (e.g. citrus greening) needs to be treated with the utmost caution. In other words, some risks are just too great and some are not so great. We always need to keep that at the forefront of our minds.



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



Super foods: Isolating desirable traits in fresh produce

AT THE 2013 AUSVEG NATIONAL CONVENTION, DR ROGER P HELLENS, SCIENCE LEADER AT PLANT & FOOD RESEARCH NEW ZEALAND, DISCUSSED THE CONTRIBUTION THAT GENETICS AND GENOMICS CAN MAKE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CULTIVARS, AND THE APPLICATION OF EXISTING RESEARCH TO THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT.

Dr Hellens' career to-date has seen him work on a wide range of model and crop plants, and he currently leads the breeding and genomics program for kiwifruit at Plant & Food Research New Zealand. As a guest of the 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Dr Hellens presented his research on genetics and genomics to a curious audience, eager to hear more about this fascinating field of study.

"In each crop, we're trying to work out what the most important traits are. For each of those things we're trying to work out what the biology is, and what the diversity is. Is it something that's in the 'too hard' basket? Or is it something science can contribute to?" he said. "If it is something we can contribute to, then we can do some research, and then we try to use that knowledge to help breed varieties that have got that added benefit. It might be resistance, it might be a production trait, or it might be a consumer trait which would give that added value."

A pivotal part of Dr Hellens' research is balancing grower traits with production traits.

"Water-use efficiency might be an important one, disease resistance always comes up, yield, productivity – if it costs you more to sell it than it does to grow it, it's probably not worth it. Those are all important things," he said.

Dr Hellens said his research also investigates what is important to consumers.

"If you're going to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in a research program, then the return on that research needs to be big," he said. "So if you're working on a commodity like wheat, a slight 5% increase in sales might be a huge dollar value, so you can justify doing it. For fruit and vegetables, generally the volume is quite low, so a 10% increase in potato sales probably wouldn't justify a \$2 million research program."

With all this in mind, Dr Hellens said there are many exciting projects on the horizon. His focus at Plant & Health New Zealand has been on fruit, but



he is confident that the findings can be translated to the wider vegetable industry.

"We're starting to slowly understand the things that are in fruit that are healthy – the antioxidants, the anthocyanins. There's so much research now about how those are made and accumulated, and what the molecular basis is behind novel varieties that are high in anthocyanin," he said.

"So for me, it's really exciting that we've now got a program where we're going to have high anthocyanin apples and high anthocyanin kiwifruit," he said. "Who knows what other fruits and vegetables can benefit from that research, because once you've done one or two, you start translating that knowledge on to other varieties."

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Industry in the media

AUSVEG strives to promote the Australian vegetable industry in public discourse and has been very successful in the past two months. The persistent engagement of the media has been crucial to amplifying AUSVEG's voice on behalf of growers.

During May and June, AUSVEG successfully engaged print and broadcast media, focusing on several key events and issues. AUSVEG gained maximum media attention for the 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence, where the industry's opportunities and challenges were discussed and debated.

Queensland Country Life reported in May that delegates representing 11 nations had confirmed attendance at the Convention and associated events, highlighting the increasing number of international attendees to the event, which they described as the "biggest of its type in

Australia." In the article, Simon Coburn, AUSVEG National Marketing Manager, said: "Australian-grown vegetables are considered the cream of the crop in terms of their international standard of quality and safety, so it's great to see the rest of the globe sit up and pay attention to the AUSVEG National Convention."

In the lead-up to the Convention, AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent, spoke to ABC Radio, urging government to do more for the rural sector. He said that the Australian rural industry needed a break and highlighted issues that would be discussed at the Convention. He also spoke about the Reverse Trade Mission, held prior to the Convention, and said that vegetable producers were struggling to compete with international growers. He said that Australia needed to have better trade negotiations; introduce clear Country of Origin Labelling legislation; and that the Australian Government



3.

had to ensure that Australian producers had an equal playing field to compete on.

At the Convention, crews from Channel 9, the ABC, *The Weekly Times*, Fairfax Media, *The Gold Coast Bulletin* and freelance journalists all covered the event. Held prior to the Convention was the Emerging Technologies in Horticulture Seminar, which gained much media attention. Dr Luke Alpey (featured in this magazine) was interviewed by several television and news outlets about his presentation, in which he demonstrated his research into pest insect sterilisation. Much media attention was also gained by Peter Barnard, Meat and Livestock Australia's General Manager, Trade and Economic Services, who encouraged vegetable growers to follow the example of record-breaking lamb exports by increasing vegetable exports.

In June, vegetable processor Simplot brought to light the challenges facing its vegetable processing plants in Devonport and Bathurst. Simplot said they may have to close these plants due to unsatisfactory financial returns arising from a very competitive food industry environment and unsustainably high costs associated with manufacturing in Australia.

AUSVEG spokespeople spoke to 2UE, ABC Radio and 2MCE, saying that AUSVEG would continue to call on the Australian Government to re-evaluate the food processing sector. AUSVEG said that action needed to be taken immediately. It told ABC Radio that vegetable growers invested \$14 million per year in levies into research and development to make the industry more efficient, but that high labour, power and freight costs were making it hard for processing factories to operate in a market full of imported

processed vegetables. AUSVEG also warned that the loss of vegetable processors meant that Australia was losing the ability to produce and preserve essential food commodities, which would put the nation in a vulnerable position.

AUSVEG will continue to engage the media to provide a strong voice for Australian growers.

Key topics for the May-June period:

- The 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence is held at Jupiters Gold Coast, where the Australian horticulture industry's biggest challenges and opportunities are addressed.
- Simplot, Australia's biggest-remaining vegetable processor, announces the potential closure of its Bathurst and Devonport plants, which could mean the end of vegetable processing in Australia.



1.



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Captions: 1 & 2. AUSVEG spokesperson, Hugh Gurney, speaking to ABC News 24 about Simplot's threats to close processing plants. 3. The approximate figure for vegetable imports for 2011-2012, as reported by Channel 7's *Today Tonight*.

Growers get bigger say in the allocation of levy funds to research and development projects.

Earlier this year, Horticulture Australia Limited and AUSVEG introduced the R&D project suggestion form to provide Australian vegetable growers and grower groups the opportunity to suggest projects for consideration by

the vegetable industry Design Teams.

In order to submit research and development propositions, growers are encouraged to provide a relatively detailed project outline using the designated form located on the

AUSVEG website. These project outlines will then be submitted to the relevant industry Design Team. Projects in this phase will be scrutinised by Design Team Members, at which time it will be determined whether or not to proceed with the development of the project.

If there is interest in advancing the project, a brief expanding on the idea may then be developed. At this stage, Horticulture Australia Limited reserves the right for project ideas to then go through a formal tender process.

Andrew White, AUSVEG Manager of Industry Development and Communications, said that the initiative was implemented to ensure that growers around the country had the opportunity to have a say in the creation of R&D projects.

"The new strategic investment plan has been put in place to ensure that it's not just researchers who are putting forward proposals for research projects, but that it's growers at the grassroots level who can influence where that money's being invested," he said.

"By introducing this project submission form, it ties in with the Design Teams, which have been put into place to ensure that it's growers' voices who are directing the investment of R&D money," he said. "I firmly believe that growers are in the best position to judge what is needed to make sure that the vegetable industry thrives."



For further information:
<http://ausveg.com.au/project-development/introduction.htm>



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Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	Comments	Permit Holder
PER10089	Chlorpyrifos / Parsley & Potato / Vegetable Weevil & Black beetle	12-Feb-08	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Covered by other permits - PER14074 & PER10283.	HAL / AgAware
PER10273	Bifenthrin / Sweet potato / Sweet potato weevil & Bean spider mite	22-Feb-08	30-Sep-13	Issued for NSW, QLD, NT, WA. New permit issued: PER14078.	HAL / AgAware
PER10279	Abamectin / Cucumber, Zucchini and Squash / Two spotted mite	22-Feb-08	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Use now registered - Vantel.	Ausveg
PER10311	Eco-Oil (Botanical Oil) / Greenhouse & hydroponic capsicum, cucumber & lettuce / Greenhouse whitefly & Silverleaf whitefly	7-Feb-08	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal. Growcom to be permit holder.	HAL / AgAware
PER10479	Iprodione / Garlic / Botrytis	29-Jun-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for Tas only. New permit issued: PER12464.	Australian Garlic Producers
PER10486	Carbendazim / Garlic / Botrytis	29-Jun-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for Tas only. Permit will not be renewed as product removed from sale.	Australian Garlic Producers
PER10695	Methyl Bromide / Various Fruit and Fruiting Vegetables / Fruit Fly & Thrips	4-Jun-08	30-Jun-13	Issued for WA.	DAF WA
PER10699	Methyl Bromide / Post harvest fumigation / Fruit fly	4-Jun-08	30-Jun-13	Issued for NSW.	NSW DPI
PER10800	Bayfidan 250 EC Fungicide / Chillies and Paprika / Powdery Mildew	2-Feb-10	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Use now registered - Bayfidan.	HAL / AgAware
PER10818	Bravo Weather Stik Fungicide (chlorothalonil) / Cucumbers / Botrytis rot	1-Jun-09	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal. Growcom to be permit holder.	HAL / AgAware
PER10878	Trifluralin / Peppers (sweet and chillie) / Broadleaf and annual grass weeds	11-Aug-08	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Growcom seeking to add crops to PER12823. Growcom to be permit holder.	HAL / AgAware
PER10882	Diazinon / Spring onions and shallots/ Thrips (excluding WFT) and onion seedling maggot	1-Jul-08	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states except Vic. New permit issued: PER14073, Growcom permit holder.	HAL / AgAware
PER10902	Dimethomorph / Leeks / Downy mildew	11-Oct-08	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states except Vic. New permit issued: PER13203, Growcom permit holder.	HAL / AgAware
PER10908	Tebuconazole / Beetroot, beetroot leaves, chicory, endive, radish, silverbeet and spinach / Sclerotonia rot	9-Jun-10	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal. Growcom to be permit holder.	HAL / AgAware
PER10934	Buprofezin / Tomatoes (protected) / Greenhouse Whitefly	9-Jun-09	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). New permit issued: PER14100, PCA permit holder.	HAL / AgAware
PER11120	Natrasoap and Neemtech / Greenhouse tomatoes / Greenhouse whitefly	10-Oct-08	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Renewal yet to send to APVMA.	HAL / AgAware
PER11483	Phosphorous acid / Tomatoes (processing) / Phytophthora root rot	13-Jan-10	30-Jun-13	Issued for NSW. Renewal yet to send to APVMA.	AgAware
PER11800	Pirimicarb / Garlic / Bulb aphid and other aphid species	1-Sep-10	31-Aug-13	Issued for NSW & Tas. Residue data required - AGP.	Australian Garlic Producers
PER11854	Cyprodinil & Fludioxonil / Onions / White rot, Black mould, Botrytis	25-Jan-11	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states. Use to be registered by Syngenta by August. Use to be registered by Syngenta by August.	HAL / AgAware
PER11919	Flint (trifloxystrobin) / Beetroot / Alternaria leaf spot and Cercospora leaf spot	29-Jun-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER12052	Phosphorous acid / Beetroot, Carrot, Parsnip & Brassica leafy vegetables / Damping off and downy mildew	29-Jun-11	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER12408	Baron 400 WP (oxyfluorfen) / Brussels Sprouts / Various Weeds	15-Apr-11	30-Jun-13	Issued for Tas.	Simplot
PER12822	Chess Insecticide/ Snow peas and sugar snap peas/ Aphids	11-May-11	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER12999	Azoxystrobin / Alliums / White Rot	26-Oct-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states. Use to be registered by Syngenta by August.	Growcom

Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	Comments	Permit Holder
PER13002	Metalaxyl-M / Lettuce / Damping off	27-Sep-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER13032	Pirimicarb / Sweet Potato, Brassica leafy vegetables, Chicory & Coriander / Aphids	26-Oct-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER13034	Score Foliar Fungicide/ Beetroot/ Leaf Spot	18-Oct-11	31-Aug-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER13047	Acramite Miticide / Tomatoes, Capsicums & Cucumbers / Two-Spotted Mite	8-Nov-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Chemtura investigating registration of uses.	Growcom
PER13089	Acrobat Fungicide / silverbeet, spinach, leafy lettuce / Downy Mildew	13-Oct-11	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER13123	Amistar (azoxystrobin) / brassicas, beans, brassica leafy vegetables / various diseases	02-Feb-12	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Use to be registered by Syngenta by August.	Growcom
PER13498	Pirmicarb / Sweet corn / Aphids	21-May-12	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER13579	Tramat (ethofumesate) / Spinach (Spinacia oleracea only), Silverbeet, Onions / Various Weeds	21-Jun-12	31-Jul-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic & Tas). New permit issued: PER14081.	Growcom
PER13585	Iprodione / Brassica Leafy Vegetables / Sclerotinia, Grey Mould, Alternaria Leaf Spot	1-Jul-12	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	Growcom
PER13625	Chlorpyrifos / swede, turnip, brassica leafy vegetables, silverbeet, spinach, celery, beans, snow and sugar snap peas / African Black Beetle and Wireworms	23-Jul-12	30-Jun-13	Issued for all states. New permit issued: PER14074.	Growcom
PER5815	Spinosad / Eggplant / Melon Thrips	11-Aug-08	31-Jul-13	Issued for all states (excl Vic). Application submitted for renewal.	HAL / AgAware
PER9722	Talstar (bifenthrin) / Sweet Potato / Wireworm	31-Mar-09	30-Sep-13	Issued for all states. New permit issued: PER14078.	HAL / AgAware

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Nitrogen leaching in horticulture



with Andrew Olley

IMPACT FERTILISERS' NATIONAL AGRONOMY SERVICES MANAGER, ANDREW OLLEY, DISCUSSES NITROGEN LEACHING IN HORTICULTURE.

Nitrogen (N) requirements for horticultural crops are high. With a large range of products and forms available to growers, making effective product choices can be daunting. Leaching of N, where water moves N out of the root zone, dramatically increases grower inputs of N, which thereby increases fertiliser costs.

Horticultural crops absorb the majority of N through their root systems from sources including Ammonium (NH_4^+) and Nitrate (NO_3^-). The aim of all N fertiliser application, whether via organic or manufactured products, is to have N that is available to plants for uptake as the crop requires it.

In the soil, an N cycle exists that is driven by microbial activities, which results in the formation of plant-available N. Depending on the type of N fertiliser used, the efficiency of crop tissue in converting N can be poor, especially due to soil-leaching, which can lead to N loss.

Urea, which is the most common form of manufactured N, requires conversion to Ammonium by enzymes in the soil and then to Nitrate for plant uptake.

Ammonium fertilisers, such as MAP, DAP, and Sulphate Ammonia provide water-soluble Ammonium, of which the crop can directly adsorb small quantities. The bulk of the Ammonium is converted to Nitrate for uptake.

Nitrate fertilisers, such as Calcium and Potassium Nitrate, do not require conversion in the soil and supply N as water-soluble Nitrate.

Organic fertilisers, such as manures, litters and composts, are also converted through the Nitrogen cycle to produce Ammonium and Nitrate.

Ammonium N and Nitrate N are both

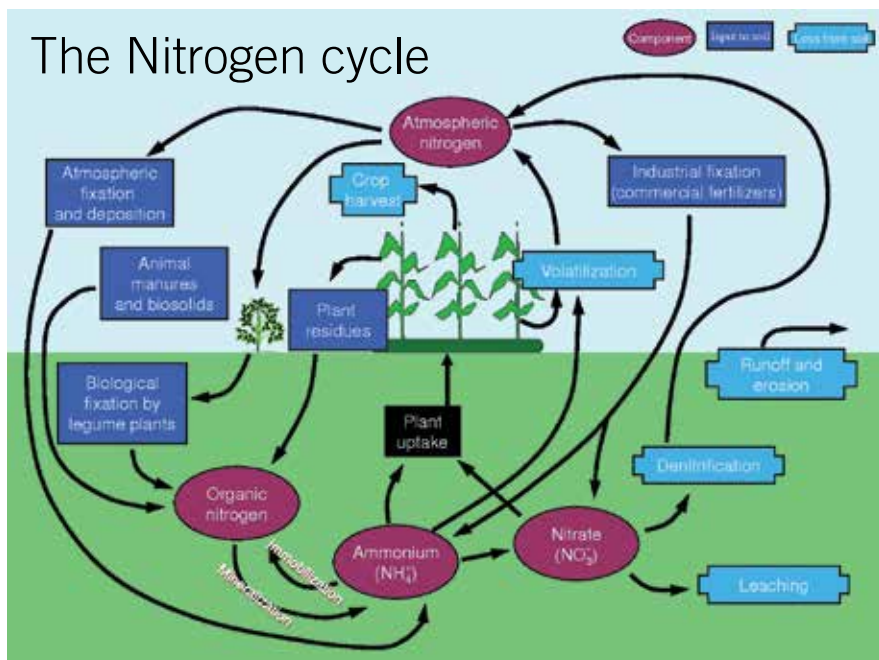
charged particles in the soil and hence behave differently in their ability to bind to the soil, which is negatively charged. Ammonium N is positively charged and hence is able to resist N leaching out of the root zone, as it is held by the soil. Nitrate N is negatively charged and has limited soil-binding abilities, resulting in it readily moving with water out of the root zone.

With these factors in mind, the choice of N fertiliser must be carefully considered, considering that although Nitrate N forms are readily taken up by the plant, they are also readily leached into deeper soil layers. Ammonium fertilisers are held on the soil, however, the soil bacteria in the Nitrogen cycle quickly convert it through the Nitrate, which readily leaches (as discussed).

Technologies have evolved to combat issues related to Nitrate loss. One such technology includes Nitrification Inhibitors, which greatly slow the microbe conversion of Ammonium to Nitrate. Another is the introduction of controlled release fertilisers, which bleed small doses of N on a daily basis.

Nitrification inhibitor treatments can be very useful in reducing Nitrate leaching, but a number of factors such as soil temperature and microbial load need to be taken into account. When these two variables are high, the inhibitor process has limited effectiveness, and when they are low, insufficient Nitrate may be available to the crop.

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New research reveals the importance of eating leafy greens

Eating leafy greens could be more important than first thought, with new research discovering a link between the consumption of leafy greens and improved protection from infection.

Published in the March 2013 edition of the Nature Immunology Journal, findings of research conducted by the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne indicate that an immune cell population essential for intestinal health can be controlled by leafy greens in a balanced diet.

The immune cells, named innate lymphoid cells (ILCs), are found in the lining of the digestive system and protect the body from bad bacteria in the intestine. They are also believed to play an important role in controlling food allergies, inflammatory diseases and obesity, and may even prevent the development of bowel cancers.

The researchers found that the gene "T-bet" is essential for producing a population of these vital immune cells, and that the gene responds to signals in food. Proteins in leafy green vegetables are known to interact with a cell surface receptor that

switches on T-bet, and might play a role in producing these cells.

The research team included Dr Gabrielle Belz, Ms Lucie Rankin, Dr Joanna Groom and colleagues from the Walter and

Eliza Hall Institute's Molecular Immunology division.

The study's authors said that until recently, it had been difficult to isolate or produce ILCs.

"The discovery of the

immune ILCs has thrown open a completely new way of looking at gut biology," said Dr Belz. "We are just starting to understand how important these immune cells are in regulating allergy and inflammation, and the implications for bowel cancers and other gastrointestinal disorders such as Crohn's disease."

ILCS are essential for maintaining a healthy environment in the intestine by promoting good bacteria and healing small wounds and abrasions that are common in the tissues of the gut. They may also have a role in resolving cancerous lesions.

AUSVEG Manager of Industry Development and Communications, Andrew White, said the findings back up the virtues that have long been held with respect to the health benefits of eating leafy green vegetables.

"It's fantastic that research of this kind is being conducted by researchers in Australia," he said. "We hope that the findings further motivate consumers to purchase leafy green vegetable products which may assist in improving human health."



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Around the states

Queensland



Growcom is concerned that the draft national Biosecurity Bill 2012 does not correct the serious deficiencies in the current legislation and regulations, nor does it address key issues raised by the Beale review in 2008. The Bill is currently being scrutinised by the Australian Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee.

Major issues relate to the Biosecurity Import Risk Assessment (BIRA) process and the appropriateness of the current definition of Australia's Appropriate Level of Protection.

In particular, there is no mechanism for an Australian industry which could potentially be significantly affected by a quarantine decision to have the opportunity to appeal the

decision based on the science, not just the assessment process, which is currently the case.

In recent developments, the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has now posted on its website the draft regulations with regard to the Bill.

It is clear from these that it is the Government's intention to downgrade the important role played by the Eminent Scientists Group in the BIRA process.

The Eminent Scientists Group (ESG) was set up as a "high level review group tasked with providing external scientific and economic scrutiny of expanded import risk analyses (IRAs)" (Source: Federal DAFF's website). Most importantly, while it is not an appeal body per se, it is independent of Biosecurity Australia and it reviews draft IRA reports as revised by Biosecurity Australia after consideration of stakeholder comments.

It was strengthened in September 2007 and again in July 2009 to take account of relevant new information, including assessing conflicting scientific views, to ensure that:

- All submissions received

from stakeholders in response to the draft IRA report have been properly considered

- All relevant matters relating to the likely economic consequences of a pest or disease incursion have been properly considered, and
- The conclusions of the revised draft IRA report are scientifically reasonable, based on the material presented.

It is of concern that the Government now plans to reduce its role and consequently its effectiveness in overseeing the integrity of the BIRA process.

Growcom is strongly of the view that the current role of the ESG should be retained. This is even more crucial given that the Government did not accept Beale's recommendations to establish an independent and expert National Biosecurity Commission.

Other concerns include:

- The issue of equity must be addressed – small industries do not have the capacity to respond adequately to IRAs within the tight timeframes required

- Too much power is vested in the role of one person – the Director of Biosecurity.
- There is no mention of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD) nor any other mechanisms to reimburse costs to growers in the case where a major disease does enter the country.

The Senate jointly referred the Biosecurity Bill 2012 and the Inspector-General of Biosecurity Bill 2012 for inquiry and report in November.

The Australian Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee is expected to report in November.

Alex Livingstone

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Victoria



Once again, the National Vegetable Expo proved a huge success for the vegetable industry with growers attending from not only all states but also from South Africa, New Zealand, Fiji and India. The two days of the Expo saw record crowds and possibly one of the best displays of vegetable crops for many years. We thank

growers, exhibitors and seed companies for making this biannual event the showcase it is of the industry's best. A special mention must be made of the contribution over many years of both Les Giroud and David Milburn who look after the site and crops.

Cheap imports are very much on the agenda in Victoria, with unprecedented fruit tree removal in the Murray Goulburn area due to reductions and cancellations of SPC contracts for canning fruit. This follows on the heels of other recent closures of processors in the state. Many of these growers will be looking to alternatives for income, with vegetable production high on their list of alternatives at least in the

short to medium term. This will impact not only on the volume of product hitting the market but also the returns to vegetable growers.

The recent merger of the former Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries into the Department of Environment and Primary Industries has seen many changes in staffing, location and services to our industry. The full implications of these changes are not yet known, however, VGA Vic looks forward to working in partnership with the new Department.

Finally, VGA Vic would like to congratulate AUSVEG on yet another great Convention. Many Victorian growers took the

opportunity to attend this year's event, which provided great opportunities for networking and discussion. Our congratulations also to all Award winners, especially Victorians, Stuart Jennings (Coles Rising Star) and Australian Bio-Plastics (Visy Industry Impact Award).

Tony Imeson

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New South Wales



The announcement from Simplot that the future of its Bathurst-based vegetable processing facilities is at risk sheds further light on the impact of supermarket dominance of fruit and vegetable producers.

NSW Farmers believes that it has been the constant squeezing of Australian food processors by the major supermarkets and their preference to support cheaper, imported produced food for their home-brand products that has left Simplot with no alternative.

It is for these reasons that NSW Farmers has been calling for a mandatory code to ensure that supermarkets do not act in an anti-competitive way. Such a code would require supermarkets to bargain in good faith and prohibit the retrospective amending of supplier contracts. For it to work, it must fully apply to the major supermarket operators and be supported by a rigorous compliance framework and a watch dog that is able to use its teeth when it is required.

NSW Farmers welcomes the announcement from the Coalition that it will consider a root and branch review to competition law if it takes government. We encourage this review to look at options that place the impact of dominant firms upon the whole supply chain to be placed firmly into the scope of what is anti-competitive behaviour.

With many consumers wanting to support Australian-grown and processed food, it is also important that the system for labelling the origin of processed food is changed. Under the present arrangements, Australian families do not have confidence that what they are actually buying is Australian. NSW Farmers supports the proposal put forward by the Australian Greens to change these rules by focusing on clearly identifying food which is wholly of an Australian source and that is processed in Australia.

Food processing is a highly important cog in the Australian food sector. It purchases approximately a third of all vegetables, and, for some commodities, is the major market that farmers supply. The squeeze being placed on these processors by supermarkets and favouring cheaper imports

for home-brand products has already resulted in a fall in the volume of vegetables processed in Australia and a reduction of prices to farmers.

More needs to be done and urgently to keep food processing in Australia as its loss will not only be to the detriment of farmers, but to all Australians.

Peter Darley

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Chairman
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Western Australia



Reducing the incidence of stable fly, which require both a blood meal and rotting vegetable matter to complete their life cycle, has been a major focus for vegetablesWA and our growers. Over the past 18 months, the WA vegetable industry has established a set of best management practices and guidelines for growers to follow to ensure minimal breeding of stable fly in vegetable crop residues, as well as helped to fund a number of projects to look into new ways of managing the pest. One of these projects aims to control stable fly through

bio-accelerators, which speed up the breakdown of organic matter as well as changing the microbial composition of the organic matter to an environment which is not appealing to the stable fly for breeding/laying their eggs. In addition, vegetablesWA has recently committed up to \$20,000 towards a project that will see various types of stable fly traps set up in the worst-affected areas in an effort to find new control measures and reduce stable fly numbers as much as possible. Our Field Extension Officers have also been active in working with growers around good practice to minimise this pest. We certainly hope these combined efforts will yield results to maintain the social licence of our industry.

We have been very pleased to see the vegetablesWA Vietnamese Field Extension Officer, Vo The Truyen, is continuing to make a big

difference to the businesses of this significant portion of our West Australian growing community. He has linked the Vietnamese growers to research and development projects as well as provided advice where appropriate. Great evidence of his success has been the grower participation rates in the More Dollars per Drop program in Carnarvon, funded by the State Government Royalties for Regions program. Over the initial two weeks that Truyen was working with DAFWA staff to undertake grower interviews, there were 19 Vietnamese growers participating, which was nearly double the participation rate of others. Our industry should always focus on the best ways to assist growers, no matter what their background.

In the advocacy sphere of our operations, we have been pleased with the positive working relationship we have developed with the new state

Minister for Agriculture and Food, The Hon Ken Baston MLC. He has certainly voiced his support for the horticulture industry. We have also continued our strong engagement with the Hon Terry Redman MLA who, following the State election, has responsibility for water. I will continue telling state and national governments that unless they help our industry, our people will not be there to provide the fresh vegetables necessary for the population.

Jim Turley

vegetablesWA
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Email: pga-vga@vegetableswa.com.au

Tasmania



Tasmanian farmers were dismayed by Simplot's announcement that its Devonport vegetable processing facility is under threat of closure. Most of them weren't surprised, though, as it's been like waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Food processors and farmers alike compete in a ruthless global marketplace, and we can only be successful if we can remain competitive. We have been warning for years that continued cost increases are not sustainable without increases in farm gate returns. However, we've actually seen costs rising

rapidly, while at the same time returns have been falling.

Tasmanian farmers have worked tirelessly with processors including Simplot to improve efficiency in an attempt to absorb these cost hikes. We estimate that this has delivered around 7-8% annually in cost savings from farm to factory over the past few years, while at the same time, returns at farm gate have fallen significantly. That simply can't go on, and it's no wonder that food processing plants have pretty much disappeared from Australia as rising costs priced them out of the market.

A state government report released during the parliamentary estimates hearings this week confirms everything we have been saying. The report was undertaken by leading consultants (including KPMG) and is dated January this year in order to present "a baseline estimate of the time and cost of complying with state-based regulations".

Overall, the cost of complying with red and green tape in

Tasmania was estimated to be 2.6% of gross state product. The good news is that this compared favourably with costs in other states (e.g. Queensland at 2.8% GDP) and with similar overseas benchmarks (e.g. up to 3.2% of GDP in the UK).

The bad news is that, on almost every measure, compliance costs for the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector in Tasmania were rated as either the highest or in the top few highest categories. The survey data showed compliance costs for the sector totalled \$336m per annum.

The problems we're seeing have been exacerbated by the fact that low-cost imports have flooded into Australia, often from countries that subsidise their farmers and turn a blind eye to behaviours that are illegal here. The massive power of the supermarket duopoly has added to industry stress, as retailers have relentlessly focused on lower prices at the expense of local producers. Rising input costs (including fuel, freight, power and labour) need to be

contained, too.

Tasmanian farmers are committed to continuing to work with Simplot to enable them to retain their processing capacity here for as long as we can. But, unless something changes, Simplot has now clearly signalled that may not be for much longer.

It is also time consumers recognised that if they want the best, they have to pay a bit more. We all need to learn that there has to be a true value placed on the things we produce here under the conditions we all expect for ourselves in this country. Otherwise, our future is grim.

Jan Davis

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Fax: (03) 6331 4344

CALENDAR



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Where: USA

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28 August - 5 September 2013

Young Grower Study Tour

Where: Japan and Hong Kong

Further information: AUSVEG (03) 9882 0277
or info@ausveg.com.au

3 September 2013

Asiafruit Congress

Where: AsiaWorld-Expo, Hong Kong

Further information: www.asiafruitcongress.com/

4 - 6 September 2013

Asia Fruit Logistica

Where: AsiaWorld-Expo, Hong Kong

Further information: www.asiafruitlogistica.com/en/

23 September - 6 October 2013

Women in Horticulture Study Tour

Where: Italy and Spain

Further information: AUSVEG (03) 9882 0277
or info@ausveg.com.au

17 - 22 August 2014

International Horticultural Congress

Where: Brisbane, QLD

Further information: www.ihc2014.org/



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The vegetable industry's 1800 Agronomist service provides a unique way for Australia's vegetable levy payers to access agronomic advice in relation to their commercial vegetable businesses. Available free to vegetable levy payers, this telephone-based service provides general agronomic advice from a highly trained and experienced agronomic service provider.

The 1800 Agronomist service provides agronomic advice for Australian vegetable growers on:

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