

vegetables

australia

January/February 2012

A moment with the Minister

Senator the
Hon Joe Ludwig

Joanna Wren

Rising star

Air into water

A new hope

Simon Coburn

Marketing change

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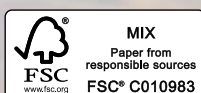
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Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig

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John Brent AUSVEG Chairman

There have been encouraging indications of late as the third annual flood in the Murray-Darling region has seen signs of life return to the river. Waterbirds are breeding, river red gums are beginning to flower, but the issues surrounding the Murray-Darling basin remain ongoing. I understand the concerns of locals and empathise with those in the region who continue to face a level of anguish and uncertainty under the Murray-Darling basin plan. It is vital that the views of the local community and those working in the industry are heard and reflected in a plan for the basin. The issue runs to the heart of farming and remains a sensitive area for many people. As the new year opens, we will see how

the future of the plan unfolds.

Further South, I am pleased to see that the 2012 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence is progressing well. The May event is rapidly approaching, and AUSVEG continues to receive a healthy number of delegate registrations in the lead up to Hobart. As has been discussed throughout many avenues, the 2011 Brisbane Convention was a resounding success, but I am looking forward to seeing this year's Convention grow even further. It has become the flagship event for horticulture and one that serves the benefit of growers around the country.

Finally, I am delighted to welcome Mr Luis Gazzola to the AUSVEG Board of Directors. Mr

Gazzola is a long-time supporter of AUSVEG and carries over 50 years of experience within the industry. Gazzola Farms, which are featured within this edition of *Vegetables Australia*, are a shining example of what hard work and great organisation can achieve. As someone who truly understands the present-day challenges facing growers, he is an outstanding addition to the AUSVEG Board. His appointment was announced at the AUSVEG Annual General Meeting in late November. I would also like to make a special note of thanks to the outgoing Victorian Director John Said for his time and invaluable contribution to the Board over the past three years. I wish him well in all his future endeavours.




John Brent
Chairman
AUSVEG

Richard Mulcahy AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

2011 was a challenging year, particularly climatically, for many within our industry. Fire and flood have swept across the land, but we can be proud of the resilience shown by our nation's growers. Our industry is strongly positioned and I look forward to continued growth in the coming year.

In December, I attended the Labor Party Conference in Sydney as a business observer. Whilst there, I attended one on one meetings with key members of the Federal Cabinet, canvassing a range of issues on behalf of the vegetable industry. It is vital that the views and concerns of growers are represented at the National level, and AUSVEG will continue to liaise with all political parties

to ensure that this occurs.

December also saw the Victorian launch of the Australian Manufacturing & Farming Program (AMFP) in Ballarat. The significant initiative was launched by Senator John Madigan and is intended to bridge the gap between politicians and the manufacturing and farming industries. Senator Nick Xenophon and the Hon Bob Katter MP were also present to show their support for the Victorian launch of the program. AUSVEG will be in attendance in March for the National launch on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra and I encourage you all to join me there.

I am pleased to see this

edition of *Vegetables Australia* take time out with Joanna Wren for the Young Grower Feature. Ms Wren's pursuits in horticulture and academia are a fine example of what young people can achieve within our industry. AUSVEG is committed to supporting and promoting women working in the industry and we will continue to feature many such examples in forthcoming editions of the magazine. I look forward to the third annual Women in Horticulture Award at this year's Convention in Tasmania. The spread of wonderful candidates means it is certain to be a hotly contested award.

I wish you all a safe and successful 2012.




Richard J Mulcahy
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG

Editorial

So begins another exciting year for AUSVEG and horticulture in general. This edition of *Vegetables Australia* features a detailed interview with Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig (page 16). In a rare opportunity, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry canvasses a range of topics relevant to growers and the industry.

A long history of sustainable farming is covered during an in-depth discussion with the Schreurs family (page 37). As founding growers in the EnviroVeg Program, the Schreurs have remained committed to environmentally responsible practices and serve as an excellent example for the industry.

In late 2011, AUSVEG welcomed a team of Israeli agricultural delegates to its office, treating them to a tour of Gazzola Farms on the Mornington Peninsula.

Their visit and experiences are documented in 'On tour in the name of cultural exchange' (page 30). Despite Israel possessing a highly sophisticated horticultural industry, the delegates professed their astonishment at the level of technology and organisation on display during their Australian experience.

Elsewhere, *Vegetables Australia* profiles young grower Joanna Wren (page 26). At age 26, Ms Wren is the co-owner of Sunshine Produce in Western Australia, dividing her time between the growing and operational aspects of the business and lecturing at the South West Institute of Technology in Margaret River.

This issue also covers several exciting R&D developments. Included is a project that has identified immune-suppressive effects in wasp venom, which could greatly aid the fight against the biggest pest of



Enviroveg case study:
Peter and Darren Schreurs

37

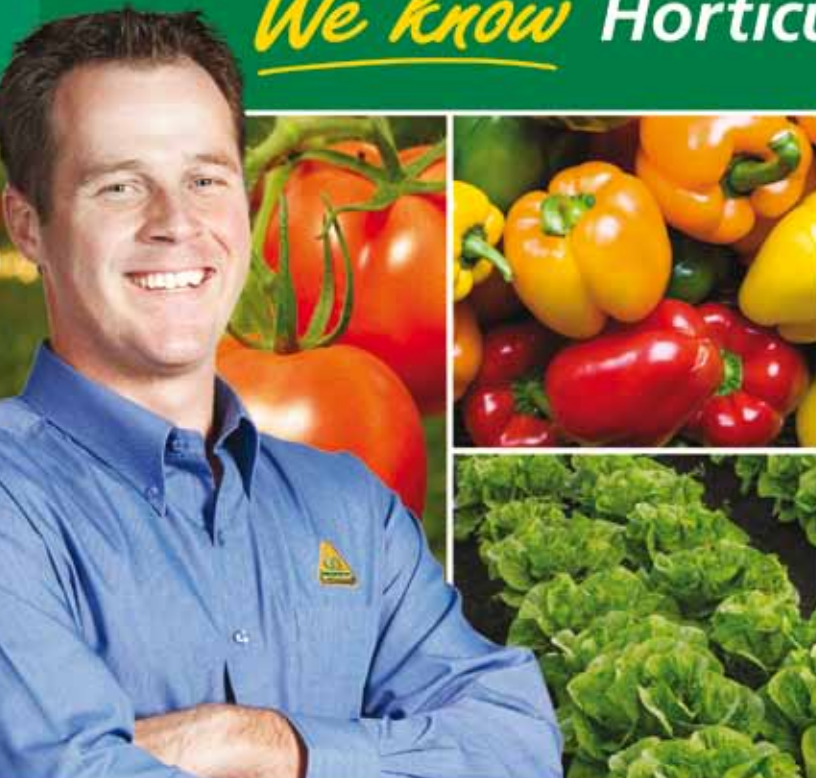
Brassica vegetables, the Diamondback Moth (page 41).

In 'Air into water: a new hope,' Edward Linacre speaks about his revolutionary and award-winning 'Airdrop' irrigation system (page 14). A fascinating young man, Mr Linacre draws much of his inspiration from Australian growers and his

prototype could hold the key to solving the water needs of many in our industry.

Regular features of *Vegetables Australia* include an economic update (page 44), two projects that form part of the Vegetable Industry Development Program (page 22) and a selection of EnviroNews (page 34).

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Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig

A moment with the
Minister - pg 16



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Veggie bites

30%

Approximately 30% of our diet is produced as a result of the activity of pollinators, as reported in a HAL-funded research paper.



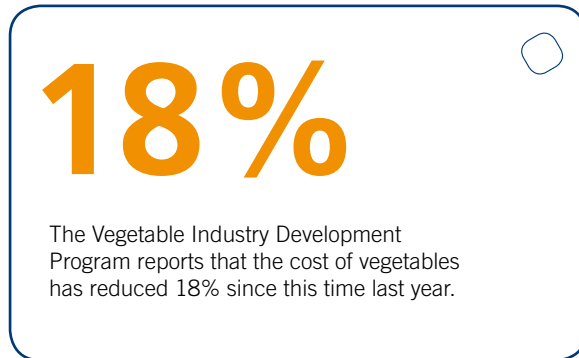
\$29 million

The current domestic retail market value of fresh eggplants purchased by consumers, as recorded in Veginsights.



18%

The Vegetable Industry Development Program reports that the cost of vegetables has reduced 18% since this time last year.



67,511 tonnes

The weight of broccoli produced in 2010/11, as recorded in Veginsights.



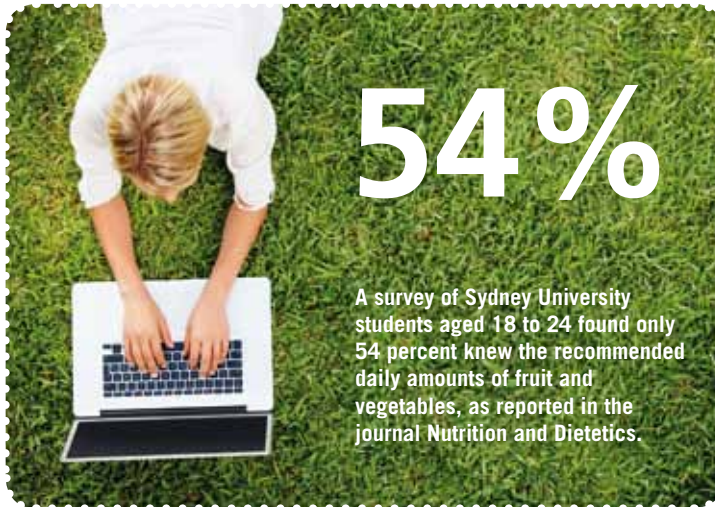
\$1.781 billion

Total retail vegetable sales in the third quarter of 2011 for all fresh, frozen and canned vegetables, as recorded by Freshlogic.



54%

A survey of Sydney University students aged 18 to 24 found only 54 percent knew the recommended daily amounts of fruit and vegetables, as reported in the journal Nutrition and Dietetics.



Veginsights reports that the average household weekly expenditure in the third quarter of 2011 on fresh fruit and vegetables was \$29.75 (up on \$28.10 during last quarter).

\$29.75



\$265 million

The value of vegetables exported from Australia between November 2010 and October 2011, as reported in ABS data.



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The importance of bee-ing earnest

A new report has stressed the importance of exploring alternate vegetable pollination methods.

Native silk bee visiting leek
Photograph by Remko Leijs

Dr. Katja Hogendoorn from the University of Adelaide believes it is imperative to look beyond honeybees as a means of pollinating vegetable crops. "The problem is that we are using honeybees whenever there is a need for pollination for our crops," said Dr Hogendoorn.

"To rely only on honeybees is a risky strategy, [as you should] not rely on a single species. It is not wise... we know that from the potato famine."

The impetus for investigating new sources of pollination comes in part from the threat of the Varroa mite.

The parasitic mite feeds off the blood of honeybees and can rapidly kill entire bee colonies. The destructive effect of the Varroa mite can be charted in international incidents throughout the past 50 years and its introduction to Australia could hold devastating implications. In a 2007 government submission, CSIRO forecasted that the impact of the Varroa mite could cost Australian plant industries between \$21-50 million per year over the next three decades.

Within the recently published paper, *Development of native*

Native nomia bee visiting leek
Photograph by Remko Leijs.



bees as pollinators of vegetable seeds, Dr Hogendoorn and her associates examined various strategies and techniques for pollinating crops in outdoor environments.

The project, funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) using the National

contribute significantly to the density of native bees and their presence on vegetable crops. An instructional leaflet advising farmers on how to achieve such results, entitled *Farming for native bees*, was subsequently produced.

"The application I can see is

need for more research to be undertaken to further improve understandings on how the presence of native bees can be enhanced and maintained. It also recommends greater investigation into the possibility of manipulating emergence times of resin bees to align with crop flowering times.

“ To rely only on honeybees is a risky strategy, [as you should] not rely on a single species. It is not wise ”

Vegetable Levy, voluntary contributions from Rijk Zwaan Australia and matching funds from the Australian Government, focussed particularly on carrot and leek seed pollination.

It sought to establish practical methods by which native bees could be encouraged to pollinate crops in unenclosed locations. Among its findings, the project identified that the provision of appropriately sized wooden nesting blocks, for instance, can

that farmers dedicate or think about their strategies and how they affect native bees, and with that in mind, farm so that native bees can remain present in their crop," said Dr Hogendoorn.

"It doesn't cost much, and it has potentially high value."

Dr Hogendoorn, who has worked with bees her whole life, says that native bee pollination is not restricted to small vegetable farming operations.

The paper encourages the

THE BOTTOM LINE

- New Australian research emphasises the need to look beyond honeybees as a means of pollinating vegetable crops.
- If introduced, the Varroa mite, a parasite of the honeybee, would have a devastating effect on the Australian horticultural industry.
- Farming strategies, such as the provision of wooden nesting blocks, can greatly enhance the presence of native bees.

Project Number: VG08179



Native furrow bee in nest entrance
Photograph by Lea Hannah

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Expressions of interest

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Marketing change

As AUSVEG's National Marketing Manager, Simon Coburn's role takes him to farms and offices around the country, talking to growers and strategic partners to create a more unified vegetable industry.



As a Law graduate with experience in hotel management, Simon Coburn admits that entering the world of horticulture threw up its fair share of surprises, and it didn't take long to debunk many longstanding myths about the industry.

"From those outside, the perception was, and perhaps sometimes still is, that it is a sleepy, staid industry," he says. "All it took was to work a few days to realise how vibrant and exciting the industry can be."

Born in Sydney, Mr Coburn moved to Brisbane at age 10. A gifted athlete, he balanced academic pursuits with sporting interests. During his teens, he was a State-level representative swimmer and a regional-grade runner. Nowadays though, Mr Coburn is more likely to be seen out onsite at a farm, meeting with growers across the country as part of his multi-faceted

role as AUSVEG's National Marketing Manager.

"The only real way to find out what the growers want is to go and actually speak with them. More importantly, to listen to them," says Mr Coburn.

"Part of my role and the role

“ The only real way to find out what the growers want is to go and actually speak with them. More importantly, to listen to them ”

of everyone in the AUSVEG office is to go out and interact with growers on a regular basis and listen to the issues they're facing. Whether it's labour costs, imports, pest and diseases issues, whatever it may be, it's essential to find out how they're struggling and what they need changed."

"By remaining constantly engaged with growers, I am able to relay their needs to AUSVEG's strategic partners, to ensure their products are tailored to best meet the requirements of the Australian horticultural industry," he added.

Maintaining and furthering this symbiotic relationship forms a significant part of Mr Coburn's position at AUSVEG. Not only does he help to inform the organisation's partners of the needs of industry; he also relays all their developments and relevant products back to growers.

"The idea is to structure a mutually beneficial relationship between growers and our partners. In marrying together all aspects of the industry, we provide the opportunity to link growers with the full supply chain and vice-versa."

In addition to forming these key relationships, Mr Coburn adopts a hands on role in the centrepiece event of the AUSVEG calendar, the National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence. As National Marketing Manager, there is perhaps no one who has a greater involvement in the Convention.

"Put simply, it's the largest event of its kind in the industry, and takes a lot of time to put together. There's speaker sessions, a vibrant trade show, as well as exciting social and networking events. One of my main roles is to make sure it's an attractive and worthwhile

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Photograph by Paul Cadenhead

event for those in the industry who chose to participate."

This year's Convention takes place from May 10-12 in Hobart, and Mr Coburn is excited with the way the calendar of events is progressing.

"Obviously Hobart is smaller than Brisbane and we thought that may have an impact on numbers. We had around 1000 people attend the 2011 Convention in Brisbane, but the number of trade show registrations we have received to date for the 2012 trade show has surpassed the figure reached at this time last year and will ultimately be larger than the Brisbane show, suggesting we will once again achieve a substantial number of participants."

"We've just added the stunning Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) to our list of activities, and are thrilled to welcome back former

MasterChef contestant and friend of AUSVEG, Callum Hann, to take part in the celebrity chef demonstration."

Looking ahead, Mr Coburn says there is still so much he hopes to achieve and improve in the industry.

"One of our primary goals is to make sure all segments of the supply chain are covered so that when issues arise, AUSVEG can be involved and proactively seek to address those issues," he says.

"We've formed key partnerships with many sectors of the supply chain, however there are still vital areas that we want to focus on, to provide a comprehensive set of partnerships."

"Once we have all sectors involved, I believe the industry can have a unified voice, and we can effectively link together the whole industry, from growers right through the supply chain."

Air into water: a new hope

An award-winning Australian student may be on the path to solving the agricultural industry's water problems, writes Jeremy Story Carter

In November 2011, 27 year-old industrial designer Edward Linacre received the James Dyson award and a \$15,000 prize for his remarkable 'Airdrop' irrigation system.

The concept harvests moisture from the air and diverts it through a turbine, transferring it to a piping network underground. The process rapidly cools the temperature of the air to mirror that of the soil, causing it to reach 100% humidity, condense and ultimately, produce water. The water is stored in an underground tank and fed into crop roots.

The design has garnered the attention of the international media and attracted a range

of commercial enquiries from around the world. Speaking during an extended interview with *Vegetables Australia*, Mr Linacre hopes that it can continue to be developed domestically.

"I will be aiming to keep it in Australia, to keep it local, to support our industries, to work with farmers, work with irrigation designers and look to keep it as an Australian product," said Mr Linacre. "It's not that simple though... there's been so much international interest. I'm doing the best I can to keep it here, and I'm hoping it can be kept within Australia. But there seems to be such a focus on mining and other areas, where all the funding is going, and

innovation just seems to be left in the dark."

Mr Linacre says he has also received significant interest from growers and farming communities, who have encouraged him to see the design through and become a fully realised product.

"There was an email a couple of days ago that brought it all back," he said. "It wasn't any kind of interest in having an input in the commercialisation of it. It was just simply a farmer from an agricultural community within America, who said 'we're really suffering here so please, realise this product, because we really need it out here.' Things like that are what's going to keep me enthusiastic about

making sure it gets developed and realised."

At present, the design remains merely a prototype and Mr Linacre admits that he is unsure what its ultimate practical application would be for growers.

"I would like it to be able to service entire agricultural systems," he said. "It may be that it does the best it can during times of drought and you would need to hook back in to the mains- I'm just not sure at this point. I would like to see it happen, and out there in agricultural systems, to see people thrive where otherwise they would be suffering in times of drought."

He is, however, staunchly

committed to keeping the design as functional and low maintenance for farmers as possible.

"I intended for it to be a low-tech system, to be able to be maintained and serviced by rural communities so that they don't need a specialised team to come out." said Mr Linacre. "A high-tech, militarised atmospheric water pump isn't appropriate for them- they're looking for something that is perfect for their community."

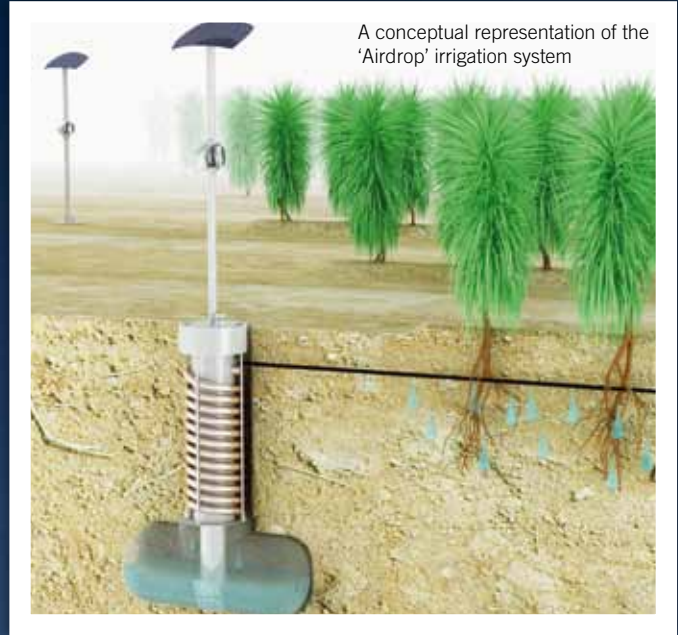
The concept was initially developed during Mr Linacre's Honours' Thesis at Swinburne University. Asked to research a region of Australia that was suffering due to environmental conditions, he chose the Murray-Darling basin and its twelve-year drought. After conducting research and interviews within the region, he says he began to become fully aware of the impact the drought held not only on crops, but lives and livelihoods.

"I was able to get a feel for the response that community

was having to the drought," he said. "I remember giving my dad my first draft to look over and he said 'it's absolutely devastating that this type of information isn't out in the media and isn't understood and more widespread.' That type of research will never leave me."

"A huge thing for me was the increase in farmer suicides, as a result of the fact that the towns were decaying, years of failing crops and mounting debt. I remember reading quotes from farmers in the area, saying they had never seen their friends, grown men, cry - it was absolutely devastating. I can totally understand when you put your life and everything into the soil, into the plants- that's your life, and to see it all in such a dilapidated state, it must be devastating."

For now, Mr Linacre continues to progress through the exhaustive phase of patenting his design and assessing the financial options and implications of his project. Amidst a confronting and almost



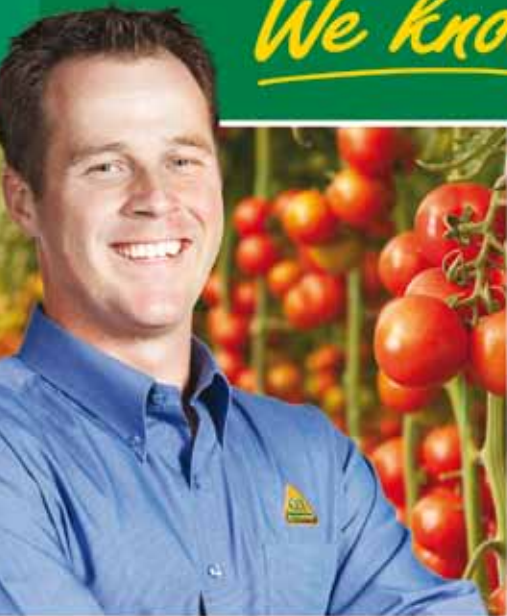
A conceptual representation of the 'Airdrop' irrigation system

overwhelming decision making process, he remains certain of at least one thing.

"I need to continue to work with [Australian farmers]- they are my inspiration, they are the people who know what's

going on and know what I can do to suit it to Australian environmental conditions... I won't be happy or feel satisfied until it's out there doing what it's supposed to do."

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A man with glasses, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a red tie with white polka dots, is smiling and leaning against a large bale of hay. He is standing in a field of tall grass and hay. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

A moment with the Minister

Appointed by Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard MP as the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in September 2010, Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig has now held the position for over 15 months. In this interview the Minister outlines his views on several issues affecting the horticulture industry, writes Caitlin Rodé.

What do you see as the largest threat to the Australian horticulture industry?

There are a number of challenges facing the horticultural industry. These include climate variability, as well as global competition from imported frozen and canned product trade uncertainties.

However, horticulture is a strong sector that is facing these challenges and working to become more productive and focusing on the development of products which consumers will pay a premium for.

The value of Australian vegetable exports, both fresh and processed, increased between 2005-06 and 2009-10 and this is a trend the government wants to see continue.

The government supports this industry and will continue to offer support in a range of ways, including through a strong biosecurity system, support for research and development, and strong efforts to open new markets.

The Gillard Government is working to develop Australia's first National Food Plan to provide a framework for food security in the short, medium and long term. My goal is to see the horticulture industry contribute strongly to the food plan. Many of the issues affecting horticulture, such as processing capability, regulatory burden and the high Australian dollar will be considered as part of this plan. I am also very interested in the operation of the supply chain and interaction between growers, wholesalers and retailers. We all need to make sure this market works in a transparent and fair way. I will be looking at specific proposals which seek to address these things.

What are two goals the Government would like to achieve in the horticulture industry within the next 3 years?

The Government is working to deliver export certification reform for the horticulture industry, which will strengthen our world-class inspection and verification systems and reinforce our international reputation.

There is a need to keep processing factories in Australia viable and these are all important issues for the industry.

Supporting research and development is vital to the future of agriculture. Last financial year the matching payments for rural research and development totalled \$40.46 million for horticulture. I have made sure the Government will not cut these contributions.

With the world population expected to rise by an estimated two billion people within the next 40 years, do you think the general public is aware of how important the Australian vegetable and potato sector is in terms of food sustainability?

Producers need to continue the conversations with consumers and reduce the gap between paddock and plate. It is the role of Australian growers to explain to people where their food comes from and how it is produced. Of course, the Government also plays a role, but together, we need to ensure that people understand how productive our growers are and how capable they are of meeting Australia's food needs.

There is no doubt that Australian agriculture and horticulture are well placed to provide fresh and processed food into Asia. The Prime Minister recently identified this and announced a White Paper on Australia in the Asian Century, which along with our National Food Plan, will help outline the role of Australian producers in Asian food security.

Is it concerning to the Government that the average age of vegetable growers is 53 years old? Is anything being done or could anything be done by government or industry to entice younger people into the industry?

The Gillard Government has a skills focus. One example of this is the Productivity Places Program which provides support for existing workers wanting to gain or upgrade their skills



and for job seekers wishing to enter the workforce. Equipping people with the skills they need supports a strong future for the agriculture industry, but also for our nation.

Engaging with youth is also important for the industry and the Government supports a range of programs that encourage youth participation. The Community Networks and Capacity Building program has provided \$3.6 million under the Next Gen Farmers grants to increase the leadership and representative capacity of young people to enhance their ability to contribute to our agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors. The Government is working

with the Primary Industries Education Foundation and Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture to increase awareness of agricultural careers and educational opportunities.

Co-operation between industry and government is important to ensure that skills and youth participation programs are successful. As well, work needs to be done to build clear pathways for people who want to become involved in this industry. We need to make it clear how people can get involved and appealing for them to do so.

continued over page ►

With the cost of domestic vegetable production increasing and imports on the rise, what actions are the Government taking to support the local industry?

The Gillard Government is committed to Australian agriculture and is working with industry to build a strong and sustainable future.

Current work being done to support the local industry includes maintaining and supporting a strong science-based biosecurity system, reforming our export certification system and improving agvet chemical regulation.

These, along with a commitment to research and development, all help boost the productivity of the sector, which is essential in remaining globally competitive.

Global competitiveness is important and the government

People always say the world is shrinking, often because of increased trade and improved accessibility to out-of-season produce. The fact is, the disconnect between producers and consumers is growing.

Knowing where their food is produced, how it is produced and who it is produced by will make this gap shrink and make people more loyal to domestically grown produce. Australia is also a strong exporter and examining new markets will also provide more opportunities for growers. The Government is working to liberalise trade which will assist in this.

Our strong biosecurity system, our regulation of agvet chemical and research and development commitments also provide Australian producers with a competitive edge.

Australia produces high quality food and our farmers are among the world's most productive.

In 2010-11 Australian food

Fresh produce accounts for only 1.8 per cent of total food and grocery imports into Australia. This is a strength and should be celebrated by fruit and vegetable producers.

Australia continues to export far more food than we import.

Last year Australia exported \$17 billion more in food than we imported which is testament to the high quality of global competitiveness of our produce and producers.

What do you find most challenging about your position as Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry?

Australian producers are some of the most productive in the world, but the challenge is ensuring we remain so into the future. This requires industry and government to work together to tackle a range of areas and invest in research and development. This includes

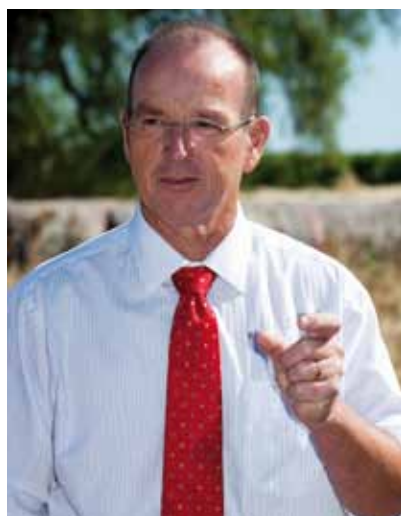
how to do it.

What horticulture growing areas have you managed to visit as Minister?

Since taking on the portfolio a little more than a year ago, I have travelled extensively, including more than 70 visits to rural and regional Australia. These visits are in addition to thousands of face to face meetings, telephone conversations, letters and emails between myself and the many people speaking up for the interests of regional and rural Australians.

Australia produces quality fruit and vegetables and in a wide variety of different climatic zones and operations. As Minister I have travelled to many areas across this country and been able to visit a range of horticulture operations.

In just the past few weeks I have been lucky enough to see the unique mushroom



is also working to liberalise trade to open up new markets and new opportunities for Australian producers and exporters.

Do you think the Australian horticulture industry can remain competitive against foreign produce? How?

There are some things the industry can't help, such as a strong Australian dollar, but in other areas, the industry can take the lead, such as engagement with consumers.

The gap between producers and consumers is the largest it has ever been and industry has a role to play in reconnecting the two.

exports were valued at \$27.9 billion, with food imports valued at \$10.9 billion.

Australia is in continual pursuit of international trade liberalisation. Free trade allows Australian farmers and food processors to export to international markets and, on the flipside, to import goods, services and technology that would otherwise be unavailable or more expensive.

By continuing to innovate and improve productivity, our producers will also maintain a competitive edge that will provide a strong future for the industry.

Nearly all the fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy consumed in Australia are produced by Australian farmers.

looking at improving water efficiency and developing new technology.

What do you find most rewarding about your position?

The people. The people who work within the agricultural sector are passionate about what they do, their produce and their communities. This makes the job a pleasure.

There are people facing challenges, and there are people doing it tough, but the great thing about this sector is people's resilience and their ability to bounce back.

People are committed to facing these challenges and generally have great ideas about

operation in an old railway tunnel in Mittagong, NSW, to see hydroponically produced tomatoes in Virginia, SA, and attend the Citrus Australia conference at Nurioopta, SA.

I also recently had the opportunity to visit apple and pear orchards in Shepparton, and see the innovative steps taken by local producers to increase their productivity.

Throughout the year I have had the opportunity to meet with many from the industry in food bowl areas across Australia and elsewhere. I am looking forward to visiting more regions and operations in coming months.

Already, I'm making plans for 2012, and look forward to continuing to meet with producers and stakeholders.

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Regulating our exports

Australia has an excellent overseas reputation for its quality vegetables, but future expansion of valuable export markets will require a better understanding of international regulatory maximum residue limits (MRL), writes Karen Shaw.

That is the recommendation of a major HAL research project entitled *Development of residue management strategies and action plans for export vegetables*. The project was funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matched funding from the Australian Government.

At present, Australian regulations require growers to use chemicals in order to control pests, diseases and maintain quality. Complying with local conditions does not, however, guarantee compliance with an importing country's residue standards.

It is possible for these countries to reject food imports where residues don't comply—whether through specific domestic legislation, or via the international standards set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, a regulatory body of the United Nations.

Research leader and specialist consultant, Kevin Bodnaruk, warns that inadvertent breaches of the MRL standards can have financially damaging implications, with the contravening vegetables immediately quarantined and destroyed. Figures show that in 2008/2009, vegetable exports alone were worth approximately

\$151 million.

"Vegetable growers and exporters aim to provide high quality produce, free of pests and diseases to customers. To achieve this, chemical controls are often used. An outcome of

More than 50 chemical compounds, for example, have Australian approval for pest and disease control in carrots, and there are 60 listed for lettuces. All of these compounds have individual usage patterns that,

vegetable growers.

The project examined 11 vegetable crops, including beans, beetroot, broccoli, cabbages, capsicums, carrots, cauliflower, celery, leeks, lettuce and sweet corn. It charted the approved chemicals used to control pests and diseases on each individual crop.

"We then worked with industry leaders, growers and exporters to compile a list of our most important export markets, collated a list of maximum residue limits on the 11 vegetables for each country and compared these with the Australian standard," Mr Bodnaruk said.

Most countries followed their own domestic MRLs, and some, such as Singapore and Malaysia, also use the international Codex standard.

"We found consistently great variance between countries in established maximum residue limits," he said.

"The project identified that many currently registered products used for treating vegetables did not have comparable standards listed for many countries, making the provision of specific export guidelines impractical."

"This lack of information could result in advice to growers

“ This study is like an insurance policy for the industry and aims to help protect and improve how we do business overseas ”

this can be pesticide residue on the vegetables at harvest, which, while complying with standards at home, may not necessarily do so abroad," Mr Bodnaruk said.

"Until now, there has been little easy-to-access information about this issue. This study is like an insurance policy for the industry and aims to help protect and improve how we do business overseas," Mr Bodnaruk said.

It remains a complex area.

if used, need to be followed during the growing cycle to comply with Australian residue standards.

While other horticulture industries, such as apples, pears and wine, have published guidance documents for growers on the use of registered products to help ensure compliance for export markets, little information has been compiled that is specific, relevant and targeted at

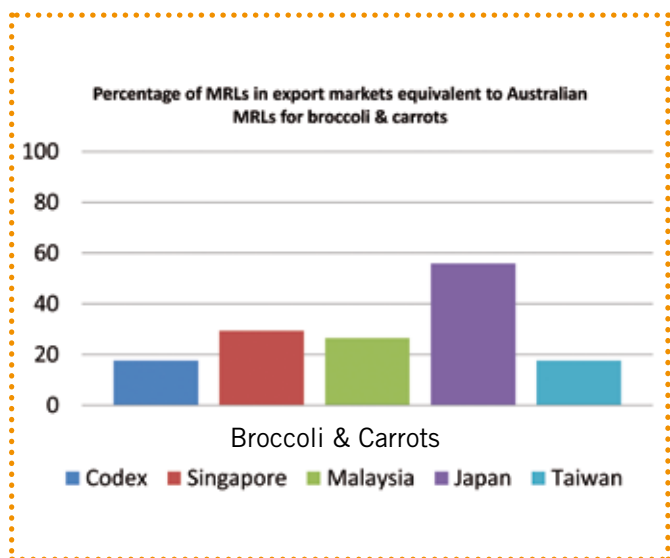
to not use many products, which is untenable in vegetable production because of the need to control pests and diseases," Mr Bodnaruk said.

The project found that the vegetable industry needed to identify those chemicals with a high compliance risk and seek to develop mitigating options. These include funding residue trials, or the pursuit of minor use permit approvals based on standards already established internationally via bodies such as Codex.

The report includes collated MRL data and country comparisons and stands as a benchmark for future vegetable export opportunities.

"For now, the global economic situation has slowed moves to develop new export markets," Mr Bodnaruk said.

The study has been presented as an action plan to vegetable industry leaders and the pesticide minor use program for use when needed.



Mr Bodnaruk believes that before negotiating access to new export markets in future, the Australian government and vegetable industry leaders need to put greater emphasis on understanding MRLs.

"The industry needs to do its homework on the country and its regulations first," he said.

"This means for a particular country, analysing the MRLs for compounds in specific vegetables. Once this is known, it's possible to identify a strategy to work towards ensuring compliance by adjusting farming practices, either by changing spray application times, or using an alternative compound," he said.

Mr Bodnaruk believed the industry should also consider ways in which a coordinated national approach to residue monitoring for vegetables could be developed.

This would provide a measure to identify pesticides that might pose future problems in market access. It would also provide a historical record for importing countries in the event of a potential breach of MRL protocol.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Unwanted pesticide residues in exported Australian vegetables have the potential to damage the excellent reputation of the nation's \$151 million export market.
- The residue content, based on regulatory standards termed maximum residue limits (MRL), varies between nations and means that a country can reject food imports if these don't comply with its domestic standards.
- A HAL study, which benchmarked MRLs for 11 vegetable crops and major export markets, recommends the industry explore further pest and disease management options; and seek to understand a country's MRLs before negotiating an export contract with it.

Find more information:
 Kevin Bodnaruk
 Telephone: (02) 94993833
 Email: akc_con@zip.com.au
 Project number: VG08112



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Planting seeds of thought



A new business case model has sought to provide assistance to growers when purchasing large-scale farming machinery.

Designed by the RM Consulting Group, the case study uses the fictitious acquisition of a lettuce planter as a basis for discussion.

RMCG's Nigel McGuckian hopes it will help to stimulate thought and dialogue among growers.

"It's to get people talking about how they make decisions, and to think about what they include and don't include when they make decisions," said Mr McGuckian. "It's really for people to chew over and

discuss amongst themselves, whether they're in a group of farmers or a farming family, to have a look at that as an example of a decision."

The case forms part of the Innoveg *Talking Business* program as part of the Vegetable Industry Development Program and aims to provide an overview of the potential costs, risks and benefits involved when purchasing new machinery.

The figures and considerations used in the case were informed, in part, through

a series of interviews with growers and field officers.

In addition to the cost of new machinery, reductions in labour outlay and increases in productivity, the business case stresses the importance of considering depreciation and the cost of capital. Even in cases where capital used to buy machinery isn't borrowed and therefore doesn't attract interest, it is necessary to nonetheless consider its broader value as it can no longer be expended on other farming operations.

Rather than being specific to the purchase of lettuce planters, Mr McGuckian says the intention was for growers to apply their own circumstance and figures within the model.

"We are developing tools to help [growers] think about

their own numbers; even if they just read the business case and do their own calculations within that framework," said Mr McGuckian.

"It's called *Talking Business*—that's the whole idea, so let's talk about business and make sure that we're talking about the right things."

The lettuce planter business case will be available through the AUSVEG website.

i For more information:
Nigel McGuckian
Telephone: (03) 9882 2670
Email: nigelm@rmcg.com.au
The InnoVeg sub-program has been funded using the National Vegetable Levy with matching funds from the Australian Government.

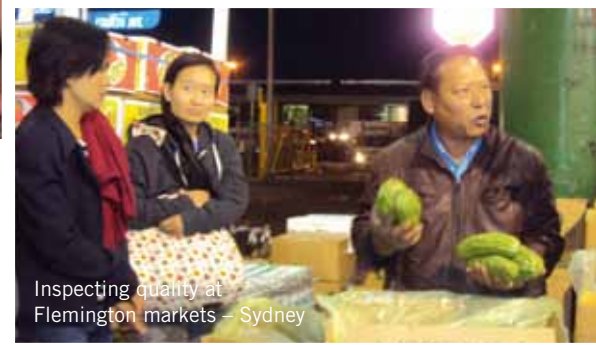
Figure 1: Cost of planting with old and new machinery.

ASSUMPTIONS	OLD LETTUCE PLANTER	NEW LETTUCE PLANTER	CALCULATION	OLD LETTUCE PLANTER	NEW LETTUCE PLANTER
Capital Costs					
Number of machines	2	2	Depreciation	\$8,000	\$10,000
Current value each	\$20,000	\$72,000	Interest/ opportunity cost	\$3,200	\$11,520
Salvage value	\$0	\$20,000	Labour costs	\$183,600	\$111,273
Expected life (years)	5	10	Tractor costs	\$20,400	\$18,545
Interest rate/ opportunity	8.0%	8.0%	Repairs & maintenance	\$10,200	\$18,545
Planting time			Total Cost	\$225,400	\$170,284
Number of plants	6,000,000	6,000,000	Cost per seedling	\$0.04	\$0.03
Planting rate (plants/days)	50,000	55,000	Cost per 1,000 seedlings	\$37.57	\$28.38
Number of days to plant	120	109	Cost per hour	\$221	\$184
Labour costs			Cost per day	\$1,878	\$1,561
Number of staff	6	4			
Hours worked per day	8.5	8.5	Is it profitable?		YES
Staff costs (incl. on costs)	\$30		By how much?		\$55,116
Machinery costs					
Tractor to pull (/hr)	\$20	\$20			
Repairs & maintenance (/hr)	\$20	\$20			

NB: Please refer to the full business case online for a more detailed example of how these numbers were calculated



Good quality okra at the Sydney markets



Inspecting quality at Flemington markets – Sydney

Translating better practices

Growers from non-English speaking backgrounds are at risk of failing to comply with Australian industry standards.

That is the concern of a new Government initiative designed to inform and improve the practices of Language Other Than English (LOTE) growers.

Senior Northern Territory-based Research Officer for Sustainable Production, Stuart Smith, says he has witnessed a lack of proper procedural awareness on the part of some growers.

“The first thing is to get them engaged and make them aware of what the problems actually are,” said Mr Smith.

“They’re sending down veggies and they think it’s okay, but when they send it down to Sydney or Melbourne, it’s not good at all. It is a fairly long supply chain between Sydney and Darwin and a lot can go wrong.”

The program involved growers of predominately Vietnamese and Cambodian backgrounds in the Darwin rural area, while a

similar initiative was undertaken in rural NSW.

An audit was conducted of the growers’ water and spray use, as well as a monitoring of their cool-chain procedures. It was found that inconsistencies in post-harvest cooling procedures were leading to dramatic reductions in the quality and shelf-life of the produce.

“Some of the stuff is not handled very well before it gets on the truck. The growers cool the stuff down, and then there’s a guy who accumulates all the loads from all the little growers into one big load so it can go in the big truck- but his truck’s not refrigerated,” said Mr Smith.

“You can imagine what it’s like up in Darwin in October, it’s pretty hot, so they go from cold to hot to cold; it doesn’t show up [in Darwin], but it shows up in the end.”

In addition to several workshops, the Darwin-based

growers were taken to Sydney markets to open up boxes of their produce at end of their transit. This exercise, says Mr Smith, helped them to become acutely aware of the impact of some of their practices.

While it is the responsibility of the LOTE growers to improve their own procedures and meet industry standards, Mr Smith admits that communication remains a significant impediment.

“There have been some difficulties between the market and the growers, and they get [disappointed] that their stuff’s been rejected or downgraded at the market end,” said Mr Smith.

“But they don’t realise how their practices have affected things at the market end. I think communication is probably the biggest issue there.”

He cites not only language barriers, but also cultural differences between the growers and their market wholesalers.

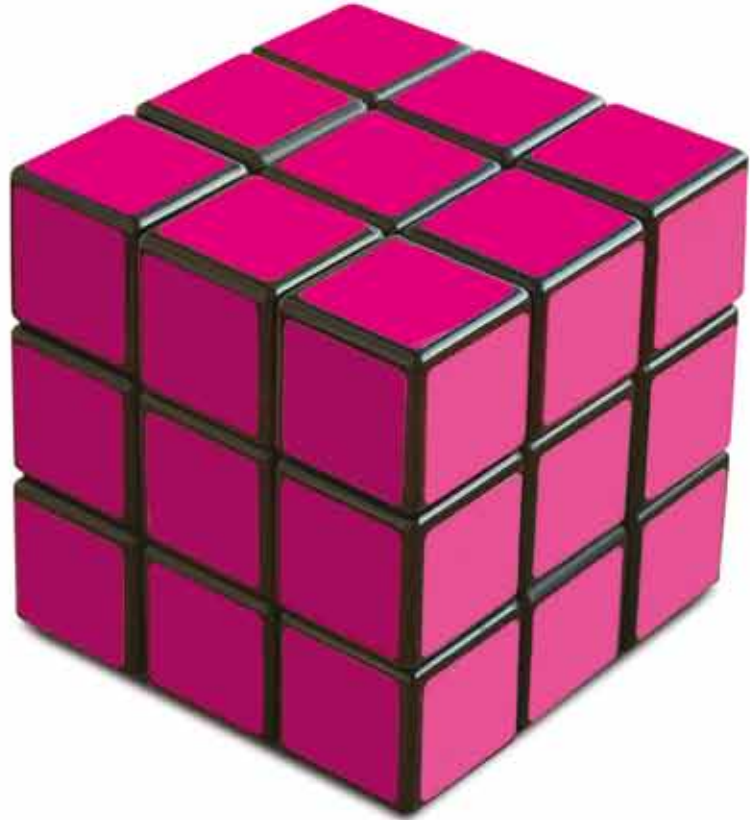
“Some of the wholesalers speak the language of these growers, but there’s some cultural things as well. The Aussie-type wholesaler will say ‘your stuff’s worthless’ and chuck it out. The Vietnamese wholesalers will go a little bit

easier and give them some money, even if they have to chuck it out. So there’s a few cultural differences with managing quality.”

While there was resistance to the recommendations from some older growers, Mr Smith says that the next generation of younger LOTE growers were conducive to modernising their methods. By adopting several relatively simple practices, he hopes the growers can succeed in meeting stringent Australian standards.

“We’ve presented a few different technologies so they can make changes to their own practices, like using hydro-cooling to get heat out of their product quickly on the farm, and then keeping the cool chain intact by having their own little coolers on the back of their utes or the back of little trucks.”

Similar LOTE grower projects will continue to run throughout Australia, some of which are funded through the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP). The VIDP is funding LOTE work in the Northern Territory using the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government.



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Smooth sailing for Pacific pilot

The Australian Government has committed \$21.7 million to a permanent Seasonal Worker Program.

Scheduled for formal introduction on July 1 2012, the announcement follows the success of the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme over the past three years.

It is aimed at providing a supplementary workforce for growers during times of increased seasonal demand.

Through the program, growers can source workers from Pacific regions via approved employers.

In September 2011, the Hon. Prime Minister Julia Gillard expanded the Pilot, inviting Samoa, Nauru, Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands to join Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga and Kiribati as partners of the Scheme.

Speaking to *Vegetables Australia*, Bryony Hackett of Costa Exchange says her experience with the Pilot has been overwhelmingly positive. "It has been really

successful," said Ms Hackett. "If I'm talking to other growers who haven't taken it on, the perception is that it's expensive. It certainly is a couple of dollars more per hour than usual for

“ They have a natural affinity with agriculture. They do it as a way of life, they pick up any jobs very quickly. They have a lovely disposition and I've had absolutely no problem with them whatsoever ”

those people...but we've found the expense to be warranted.”

One of the oft-cited challenges for growers when using local workers is the difficulty of

retaining employees for any significant length of time. Under the program, Pacific-worker visas are approved for 4-6 months, garnering a level of surety for growers when

"Their attendance is magnificent [and] they have a natural affinity with agriculture," said Ms Hackett.

"They work in agriculture to survive, not just to get their weekly wage. They do it as a way of life, they pick up any jobs very quickly. They have a lovely disposition and I've absolutely had no problem with them whatsoever."

Growers interested in taking part in the program can do so via the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website. < www.deewr.gov.au/pswps >

i Find more information contact:
Caitlin Atkinson,
Pacific Seasonal Worker
Pilot Scheme
Telephone: (02) 6240 0691
Email: Caitlin.Atkinson@deewr.gov.au



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Name: Joanna Wren

Age: 26

Location: Karridale, Western Australia

Works: Sunshine Produce

Grows: Tomatoes, Cauliflowers, Pumpkins

Karridale,
Western Australia



Q&A Young grower feature

Rising star

At only 26, Joanna Wren is the co-owner and manager of a Margaret River based farm. Her rapidly attained knowledge and expertise in the industry has also seen her undertake a lecturing role at the South West Institute of Technology. With abounding passion and enthusiasm for the industry, she appears set for a long and successful career in horticulture.



Photographs by Stephen Blakeney



How did you first get involved in the vegetable industry?

My family have grown vegetables in the South West of WA for over 30 years, so I grew up working on the farm. After high school I went away to university for a few years and then decided to come back and work in the family business.

What is your role on the farm?

I have been co-owner of Sunshine Produce for two years now and am involved not only in the day-to-day running of the farm, but also on the business side of things; for example administration and marketing.

Describe your average day on the farm.

We are in the planting stages of the season at the moment, so the tasks are all to do with crop set-up. That involves things like fertilising, setting up irrigation, laying plastic mulch for the tomatoes, planting, pest and weed control and trellising. It is starting to get quite busy now, making sure we stay on schedule.

We grow cauliflowers, tomatoes and pumpkins and we harvest from February to June. The majority of our produce is supplied to the Canning Vale Markets in Perth, but I also have a very keen interest in promoting local food and am always working to expand our local markets in the greater Margaret River region.

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

I find working in the vegetable industry quite exciting and rewarding. It is also great at harvest to be able to see the end product of all your work. I really enjoy the concept of providing fresh, quality food to people. It is hard work but it is a lifestyle choice too – I get to live and work in such a beautiful corner of the world. I've become much more aware of industry-wide issues too and feel passionate about contributing to the sustainability of the horticulture industry.

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

I feel there needs to be an increased awareness about not only the vast range of job roles and skills required in the horticulture industry, but also the lifestyle opportunities that are available. I also see the importance of having clear and relevant training pathways available to young people in horticulture so that they can see where their training is taking them. As well as being a grower, I also work for the South West Institute of Technology in Margaret River as a lecturer. I have particular interest in training options, such as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and traineeships, as



I really see the value and the need for practical, flexible and no-nonsense training for my industry; something I've tried to reflect in my training programs.

Do you think there are any specific challenges to being a young woman in horticulture?

There are a lot of challenges to overcome working in the horticulture industry, but I don't feel any of them are specifically related to being a young woman. I think the image of the horticulture industry is changing and there is such a diverse array of people that are involved in every aspect of the industry. I find people are generally really interested in and supportive of what I am trying to achieve with my business and contribute to my industry.

How have you found the experience of being an AgriFood Skills Australia Ambassador?

I was so thrilled to be selected

as an AgriFood Skills Australia Ambassador. It is such a fantastic chance to represent my industry at a national level and a great opportunity to raise the profile of the agriculture industry in general, and also the training opportunities available. Among other things, as part of my role I will be working with another young ambassador doing school tours throughout Australia, raising awareness amongst young people about career opportunities within our exciting industry.

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

I'm not entirely sure what I would be doing if I wasn't growing vegetables, I would probably still be farming in some context - I love living in the country too much!

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Hopefully still growing vegetables!

Yielding greater results

A research project has helped to boost the economics and growth opportunities of vegetable seed production by improving reliability and quality of yields, writes Gretel Sneath.

The carrot and onion seed industries contribute more than \$10million to the annual value of Australian horticultural production. Supply inconsistencies caused by seasonal crop variations are, however, hindering long term growth in export markets. Research by the Australian vegetable seed industry, the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) and seedPurity Pty Ltd has addressed some of the issues affecting reliability by increasing understanding of yield limitations in hybrid seed crops, testing management strategies to improve pollination of carrots, and conducting best practice demonstration trials in

collaboration with industry.

The project was funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) using the National Vegetable Levy, with voluntary contributions from industry and matched funds from the Australian Government. Survey work was undertaken in the

Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) near Griffith in 2009 and in Southern Tasmania during 2009/10. Although climatic conditions varied considerably, a lack of cross pollination was established as the fundamental basis of variable yields throughout the survey.

Project leader Dr Alistair Gracie attributed two key factors to low rates of cross pollination: poor nicking of hybrid seed parent lines and low rates of honeybee activity within hybrid onion seed crops.

“Factors that contributed to poor honeybee activity included unfavourable weather conditions (2010) and the occurrence of more attractive, alternative forage sources nearby,” said Dr Gracie.

“In the MIA, *Eucalyptus largiflorens* (Black Box) and *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* were identified as important alternative forage sources affecting honeybee activity in hybrid onion seed crops. It is likely that other weedy or

“ The findings have led to improvements in the reliability of hybrid carrot seed production in Australia ”



native forage sources may also compete with onion seed crops for pollinators in the MIA, but the drought conditions during 2009 restricted their abundance and flowering.”

Researchers also discovered that differences in attractiveness of hybrid onion seed parent lines correlated with nectar production within individual sites.

“This work is the first published study to accurately quantify differences in nectar production (standing crop volume) between hybrid seed parent lines and relate these to honeybee foraging preferences,” said Dr Gracie.

“In such circumstances, higher honeybee stocking rates, management strategies aimed at maximising nectar production in low yielding varieties or, where possible, matching of lines on the basis of attractiveness to honeybees may improve pollination.”

The findings have led to improvements in the reliability of hybrid carrot seed production in



Australia and have contributed to international and local recognition of Tasmania as a key seed production region.

“This recognition has driven expansion of the Tasmanian industry from 50Ha/annum to almost 200Ha/annum in the lifetime of the project, with significant opportunities for continued growth,” said Dr

Gracie.

In 2010/11, South Pacific Seeds commenced additional research, building on the work undertaken in this study by developing management strategies to minimise the effects of competing forage sources and increase honeybee activity in hybrid onion seed crops in order to maximise

THE BOTTOM LINE

- The capacity to reliably produce good seed yields is dependent on the successful transfer of viable pollen, with poor pollination creating major limitations in hybrid seed production.
- Breeders and commercial producers should focus on nectar production to maximise attractiveness of seed parent lines to honeybees.
- Pollination rates will be affected by competition for honeybees from alternative forage sources.



For more information:

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HAL R&D Project no. MT08081

pollinator activity. The project has also involved analysis of nectar samples collected from sites in the MIA.



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On tour in the name of cultural exchange

A group of agricultural delegates from Israel have completed a successful visit to one of Victoria's most established farms.

As part of a broader tour of Australia, six members of the Israel Association of Field Crop Growers (IAFCG) visited Gazzola Farms on the Mornington Peninsula, as well as spending a morning at AUSVEG's headquarters in Melbourne.

AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy delivered a presentation to the delegates, where he likened the climatic conditions of Israel to those in Australia.

"AUSVEG welcomes the delegates from Israel here with open arms," said Mr Mulcahy.

"Through our strategic partnership with Netafim and ongoing relationship with the IAFCG, AUSVEG is committed to the exchange of agricultural ideas and information between our two countries."

Netafim Managing Director Mr Levy Schneider, who was also present at the presentation, praised AUSVEG's EnviroVeg Program, believing it to be of significant relevance to his fellow Israeli nationals.

In contrast to the National Vegetable Levy, Israel possesses a voluntary levy contribution scheme. When asked by Mr Mulcahy as to how growers were

encouraged to pay the levy, the Association's General Director Uri Naamati replied, "we have to be good."

On site in Boneo, one hour's drive from Melbourne, Mr Naamati commended Gazzola Farms.

and fellow Directors of the Somerville-based farming business, Colin and Paul Gazzola.

In spite of the vast nature of the operations on display, it was the family grounding of the third-generation farm that left

“ We all see different things. No matter who or how good we are, we can always learn something from someone else ”

"It's a very big business. It's very tidy, very organised, very clean; everybody knows exactly what to do," said Mr Naamati.

The delegates were personally escorted by the farm's former head of operations and newly appointed AUSVEG Director Mr Luis Gazzola, and held discussions with his sons

the biggest impression on Mr Naamati.

"The father is working in the same business as the son; everybody is working in harmony. Everybody trusts everyone else. And I hope for him that his third generation will be in the farming business," said Mr Naamati.

"It's beautiful. It's a good thing, it's a good farm," he added.

With an agility that belied his years, Mr Gazzola spent the day enthusiastically showing off his farm and produce. Whether hauling his van up the side of a steep dam wall or extracting fresh lettuce and celery from the ground and slicing segments for his guests to taste, Mr Gazzola was constantly in motion.

Having travelled to Israel as part of the AUSVEG grower tour in January of 2011, Mr Gazzola emphasised the importance of such cultural exchanges to the vegetable industries of both countries.

"I think [the tours] are very important," he said.

"We all see different things. No matter who or how good we are, we can always learn something from someone else."

Mr Daamati echoed the sentiments of his Australian farming counterpart.

"Whenever you go to a farm, you see something different," he said.

"You get some ideas, there's always something new. If you come to our farm, you will find something as well."

Asked if he had seen anything during his visit to Australia that



Colin Gazzola speaks with the delegates



Luis Gazzola poses for a photograph

could be applied in an Israeli context, Mr Daamati reserved specific praise for the irrigation on the Gazzola farm. "One thing that is very unique that I've never seen in Israel is the permanent irrigation system. We used to move it every year and plough the land and all this kind of stuff. So the permanent irrigation is very nice," he said. "The drainage system is relevant too- although we are

semi-arid in Israel and don't have such a problem." As the delegates were due to depart, several exclaimed at the sight of the farm's sprinklers and requested that Mr Gazzola pose for a photo next to them. "[Mr Damaati] saw the Naan Sprinklers that come from Israel and straight away he said, 'my mum and dad worked in that factory!'" beamed Mr Gazzola.

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Soil solutions

with Rohan Davies



Assessing opportunities for productivity improvements

Rohan Davies, Technical Agronomist - Horticulture, Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, discusses how to assess opportunities to improve productivity using on-farm research.

Question: How do you know whether opportunities for productivity improvements will work in your production system?

Fruit and vegetable growers continue to strive for productivity gains, either by producing more from the same inputs or by producing the same amount using fewer inputs.

Productivity improvements can come from numerous areas. They may be as a result of using new plant varieties, improving the nutrient use efficiency of fertilisers, or increasing farm size to make use of economies of scale.

These are just a few examples of opportunities for productivity improvements, and no doubt there are others you are reading about or keeping a watchful eye on.

When you find an opportunity of interest, you may be able to find some research results from local or international trials. But then, how do you know whether it will work in the same way in your production system?

It is also difficult to know which direction to take. For example, do you work on reducing losses at harvest, or improving nutrient use efficiency?

A good place to start is to look at what you currently do and consider how it can be improved. After that, on-farm trials are a good opportunity to try new ideas without committing your entire crop.

If you were, for example, planning to grow a 50t/ha lettuce crop, you can assess the likely nutrient removal from the crop based on previous research. See below.

Nutrient removal from 50t/ha lettuce crop

	Nitrogen	Phosphorus	Potassium	Sulphur	Calcium	Magnesium
Estimated removal (kg/ha)	103	9	77	4	16	3.6

Source: Nutrient Advantage Advice, 2011

You can also conduct soil testing to determine the levels of nutrients available in the soil, and with this information a budget can be developed to show how much of each nutrient needs to be applied.

Now you have a nutrient budget that will suit your crop's needs.

However, the efficiency of nutrient uptake by crops rarely

approaches 100%. The rule of thumb for nitrogen in most horticultural crops is around 50% nutrient use efficiency in the particular crop fertilised.

You have now identified an opportunity to improve productivity, through improving nutrient use efficiency.

There are numerous approaches to improving nutrient use efficiency. Consider using an ammonium stabiliser on the nitrogen fertiliser as a way to retain more of the nitrogen in the root zone and reduce nitrate losses through leaching and denitrification. Alternatively, consider split application to reduce the risk of losses. The direction you take will depend on a range of factors, such as labour availability, cost of changing practice and your degree of confidence in achieving the desired outcomes.

Consider an on-farm trial to test the opportunity directly on your soils and in your crops.

You can set up on-farm trials to test a wide range of potential productivity improvements. You should, however, consider a few important criteria.

- It is important to replicate the trial areas to reduce the impact of area-to-area variability.
- Keep any variables that you are not comparing the same. For example, the rates of other nutrients, variety and sowing date. Otherwise, you will not be comparing apples with apples.
- It is important to be able to measure yields so that you can compare the outcome. A 5% difference in treatments will not be visible to the eye but can make a difference overall.

Over the past 50 years, the rate of productivity growth in Australian agriculture has averaged a modest 2.5% per annum, according to ABARES. If you are looking for more, consider on-farm trials.

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EnviroVeg Update

The recently announced carbon tax and geopolitical issues such as the instability in the Middle East are combining to put upward pressure on fuel and electricity prices. As an energy-intensive industry, Australian vegetable growers will need to adapt to remain competitive.

The modern grower faces many challenges. Powerful retailers and rising inputs threaten to increase the cost of doing business and impact upon margins. In this modern operating environment, it has become more important than ever for growers to increase the efficiency of their energy use. What was once a purely environmental issue has grown to become one that is critical to

broader operations.

AUSVEG has been conducting the EnviroVeg Program since the early 2000s, and the changes during that time are significant. Environmental principles are increasingly considered central to the competitiveness of the vegetable industry as a means to shield against increasing costs and ensure the long-term health and productivity of the land.

Australian growers are some of the most forward-thinking and technologically adept in the world and are increasingly applying their skills to environmental stewardship. EnviroVeg is the vegetable industry's premier environmental management program, delivered free to all levy paying vegetable growers. The Program's manual contains tips and advice across the full

range of environmental issues facing the modern grower and holds easy to use check lists to monitor and identify issues on-property.

By participating in EnviroVeg, the industry can show its environmental credentials to the Australian community and help combat rising fuel and electricity costs into the future.



Water Conservation

As the southern states of Australia head into summer, EnviroNews examines ways for growers to conserve water.

Irrigation is a major source of water consumption and cost for many Australian growers. Years of drought have raised awareness in the industry of the need to conserve this precious resource. EnviroNews examines some practical ways growers can cut their water consumption.

Checking irrigation systems regularly for leaks can save water wastage if problems are addressed early. Where possible, drip irrigation can be a major water saver for growers if the environment and crop types permit. Modern computerised control systems also allow growers to control the times and length of application.

With an initial investment, soil moisture sensors can be used to provide feedback to the irrigation systems and accurate monitoring to ensure crops are not overwatered.

There is a range of technology available to growers, and while often requiring an initial investment, any systems that help cut water use will benefit both the environment and bottom line over the long term. Growers should note that designing and choosing the right irrigation systems for specific crops and environments is a specialised task, so contacting the Irrigation Association of Australia (www.irrigation.com.au) for information and a list of

certified designers and installers is encouraged.

While there are a number of technological solutions to water management, growers can also save water by ensuring that their current system is maintained, watering is scheduled after dusk to limit evaporation, and crops are monitored for signs of overwatering.

The EnviroVeg Manual details a range of water management tools, tips and checklists to help Australian growers to manage their water usage. To receive your free copy, please contact the EnviroVeg Coordinator Jordan Brooke-Barnett (details on the following page).

Saving energy

With rising fuel costs and a carbon tax in place, energy efficiency is becoming more important for Australian growers.

As an energy intensive industry, Australian growers have the potential to achieve significant savings, particularly with fuel and electricity costs expected to rise in the future. In this edition of EnviroNews, we explore some simple tips for growers to cut down their energy use, potentially saving money in the process.

Fuel saving tips

Saving fuel is as simple as ensuring that your equipment is well-serviced and maintained, which can cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15%. Keeping tires inflated to the manufacturer's specifications is essential and has the potential to increase

mileage by up to 3.3%.

Simple measures such as matching machinery to the size of the job and using smaller and more efficient machinery rather than tractors will help cut the fuel bill. Effective farm planning can also help ensure efficient use of energy by reducing the distances of travel for major processes. This could include positioning packing and machinery sheds at the centre of the property.

Cutting electricity costs

The majority of energy companies now have the ability to charge different electricity usage rates depending on the time of day. Savings can

be generated by planning energy-intensive activities, such as irrigation and cooling of produce, to times when the rates are lowest.

Energy efficiency as a capital investment

Energy efficiency should be viewed as a longer-term investment, rather than as a short-term expense. In some instances the initial capital required is quite large, however, the investment will ultimately pay off in the long-term. Energy efficiency investments are important for Australian growers to future-proof their business by controlling future costs and protecting margins.

Saving energy requires some planning, but it offers real savings and is becoming increasingly important for Australian growers.

EnviroVeg is a great tool for Australian growers to plan and manage their energy use. The Program provides energy-saving tips as well as tools and checklists to manage fuel and electricity use on-property.

i For more information on the EnviroVeg Program Contact: AUSVEG Environment Coordinator
Jordan Brooke-Barnett
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JOHN DEERE

Proving ground

Sustainability and the enduring productivity of their land is a driving force for the Schreurs family. A passion for knowledge and the courage to try new approaches has put the family at the forefront of sustainable vegetable production in Australia, writes Environment Coordinator Jordan Brooke-Barnett.



As founding growers in the EnviroVeg Program, Peter Schreurs and his sons Mark, Darren and Paul view environmental management as being central to their farming practices.

The family maintains a 400 acre property at Devon Meadows, south of Melbourne, employing 60 staff to grow, wash and pack leeks, radicchio, endive and cos lettuce for market. As major Victorian growers, the Schreurs family has long maintained its commitment to setting an example and further developing sustainable practices on site.

“As responsible custodians of this part of Australia, we believe that our farm should remain healthy and productive not only for the next 20 years, but for a hundred years and beyond,” said Peter Schreurs.

“Why we are at this point today, where we are so conscious of sustainability, came from the mid 1970s, when my boys were young. I had a small property and was growing intensively on limited acreage, as I wanted to grow more and was very conscious of maintaining the health of the soil.”

The Schreurs bought their current property in the early

1990s and developed it from scratch, reconditioning cattle land to develop a working vegetable farm. Effective planning was a foundation for ensuring that fuel and other farming inputs could be used efficiently and workflows could be managed to save time.

“The farm was planned with

“ As responsible custodians of this part of Australia, we believe that our farm should remain healthy and productive not only for the next 20 years, but for a hundred years and beyond ”

the dam and packing and washing sheds in the centre of the property to minimise travel,” he said.

“The windbreaks we have planted also prevent erosion and act as a habitat for local wildlife.”

“A lot of what we built here had to be developed from scratch, so we were always conscious of the need to sustainably develop the land and learn from any mistakes we

made along the way.”

As the farm has developed, so have the many techniques and investments the Schreurs have made to their property.

“The farm is my university, and I have learned so much over the years,” he said.

In the late 1990s, a breakout of two-spotted mite sparked

entomologist so we thought we might ask him to help us with the problem,” said Darren Schreurs.

“We asked him what to do and he said it is simple - just don't spray anymore. Apparently our previous spraying was killing the *persimilis* - a natural predator of the two-spotted mite. We were apprehensive and thought that we needed to spray as we had a pest.”

“I wasn't sure about it, so I did a small test at home with some *persimilis* and an aquarium and the results were 100% positive, with the crop mite-free.”

“We are constantly learning and trying new approaches in response to the challenges we face.”

“There was a fungicide which I was using that our entomologist said from initial testing was fine and wouldn't kill ladybirds. When we started using it, we realised that the ladybird numbers were dropping. After further study, he worked out that it sterilised the ladybirds. So we worked out that it was fine for use once or twice, but not regular sprays.”

Despite the challenges of the past decade, Darren Schreurs remains positive about the new approach to pest management.

“For 10 years I haven't

interest in Integrated Pest Management.

“I had seen the approach used in Europe in greenhouses and questioned whether it could be used in open fields. When I saw it being used in an open orchard I gathered as much information and discussed it with my sons.”

“In the year 2000, we had a problem with two-spotted mite in our leek crop. We heard a neighbour was engaging an



sprayed our leeks and had no disease problems."

"Back in 2000 we used a lot more broad spectrum chemicals, but now we use a lot more BTs to control cover crops like the Brassicas. We try and always retain beneficials to prevent resistance build-up."

"A lot of the chemicals we use today are soft, so we rotate them. The good thing is that a lot of the new chemicals on the market are residual, so I can use them knowing that we don't kill the beneficials."

Peter Schreurs agrees. "Chemical companies are starting to realise the need to develop softer and more targeted chemicals for use on properties practicing Integrated Pest Management," he said.

In recent years, the Schreurs' have diverted focus to their soil.

Future plans for the property involve commissioning a custom-engineered disc-based bedformer, which is intended to cause less of a disturbance to the soil than traditional rotary hoes.

"We are currently developing

a bedformer which will do the job without destroying the ecosystem in the soil. Practising minimum tillage makes sure we can keep the soil structure and keep a good environment for micro-organisms in the soil, and use less energy on the farm."

In addition, son Darren is also experimenting with a range of cover crops that work to improve soil structure between crops, as well as varieties such as mustard flower, which act as a natural fumigant for pests.

"We are growing more ground crops like rye corn, which is a good bulky crop, or a biofumigant, such as a mustard, which sweetens the soil and controls the disease. Following that on with leeks we usually get pretty good results."

Environmental stewardship remains an ongoing process for the Schreurs.

"We don't think we'll ever stop. My passion is that other growers can catch on to our sustainability philosophy and realise that these practices are best for the land in the long-term."



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A venomous solution to a Diamondback dilemma

Pesticidal compounds contained within wasp venom may hold the key to fighting one of the vegetable industry's most significant pests.

A new study has investigated the immune suppressive effects contained in the venom of the wasp *Diadegma semiclausum* on the Diamondback moth (DBM), the primary pest of Brassica vegetables in Australia.

The Adelaide-based project was funded by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), using the National Vegetable Levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

In explaining his team's work, project leader Mr Richard Glatz emphasised the impact of the DBM on the local vegetable industry and the difficulties present in combating it.

"Not only is it the key pest in terms of causing damage to the plants, it's also beginning to get resistance to a lot of the chemicals people are using to control it," said Mr Glatz. "It's been a pest for a long time. There's been different chemistry that's come out that is just normal pesticides, so people

have hammered it with this stuff. Most of those compounds we're starting to see resistance turn up [in the DBM]. Not only are they a damaging pest but some of the existing controls are being lost."

In contrast to the approach of most pesticides, the project sought to identify compounds that were specific to immune suppression. Mr Glatz said that when the DBM is parasitised by the *Diadegma semiclausum*, there is no immediately visible

“Not only are they a damaging pest but some of the existing controls are being lost”

effect. Instead, the DBM's larvae continues to pupate until ultimately, a wasp emerges in place of a moth.

"For a long time, people have looked at different compounds from other organisms to attack them," said Mr Glatz. "What we've gone to is parasites that develop inside the DBM. Because they have to do that, they have to get around the immune system. So instead of going for the normal toxic chemicals that basically paralyse the insects, these things don't do that - they want them to survive and just down-regulate their immunity."

The paper, entitled *Identification of immune-suppressors of Diamondback*

Moth, observed that once the DBM was parasitised, it could become more susceptible to other forms of infection. It is thought that the project's findings could ultimately be integrated into a spray for growers.

With the use of pesticides in horticulture becoming more targeted, Mr Glatz believes the application of a more naturally occurring pesticidal compound will be beneficial as it will be more specific to the insect the grower is trying to kill.

"We're hoping by using

specificity. So there are a lot of beneficial insects that could be harmed," said Mr Glatz. "We're thinking there should be less ability for the insects to get around, so we're thinking you wouldn't have to use it as much. And you wouldn't have to use other [pesticides] as much. Basically, there shouldn't have to be an issue in terms of toxicity."

Although the report encourages the need for further research, Mr Glatz admits that the nature of the project is somewhat unique.

"It is our idea in a way, although it's not a new idea in principle," said Mr Glatz. "As far as applying [immune suppressors] to pest management, I suppose it's still quite a new idea. We're not the first people to make it up, but I'm not aware of other [similar] approaches in Australia. It is still in its infancy as an idea."

THE BOTTOM LINE

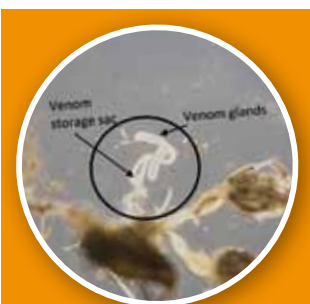
- Australian research team has identified a pesticidal compound in wasp venom that could greatly aid the fight against the Diamondback Moth (DBM).
- The venom has an immune-suppressive effect on the DBM, parasitising it and making it more susceptible to other pesticides.
- The project's leader Richard Glatz hopes the findings could potentially be synthesised into a spray for growers.

• For more information:
 i Richard Glatz
 Telephone: (08) 8303 9539
 Email: Richard.Glatz@sa.gov.au
 Project Number: VG08048

Photograph by
Russ Ottens



Photograph
by Whitney
Cranshaw



Venom sac and gland dissected from the parasitic wasp, *Diadegma semiclausum*.
 Photograph by Dr. Sassan Asgari

Ask the industry

with Scott Mathew

Scott Mathew, Technical Services Lead at Syngenta, discusses the effect of viruses on various production areas around Australia.

Question: How are viruses spread from plant to plant?

Viruses are immobile and rely on other organisms (vectors or carriers) for dispersal. Most viruses that infect vegetables crops are transmitted by the various sap-sucking insects that feed on the plants (thrips, aphids, mealy bugs etc).

A typical virus is generally transmitted only by a single vector type, such as an aphid or a white fly. Insects that generally spread viruses have one thing in common: piercing-sucking mouthparts that include a needle-like stylet. During the feeding process, the insect's saliva mixes with the contents of the plant cell, resulting in the insect acquiring the virus. Therefore, if an insect has acquired virus particles from one plant, it can then deposit them in the next plant it feeds on, which leads to subsequent infection.

Question: I often hear the terms persistent and non-persistent viruses. What do these terms mean?

These terms relate to the length of time an insect takes to acquire and transmit a virus and the length of time the insect remains capable of transmitting the virus. There are two broad categories used when describing the insect transmission of viruses:

- Persistent transmission: the insect needs to feed for several hours, often in food-conducting tissues of plants, to obtain the virus. These can persist within the vector for up to several weeks.
- Non-persistent transmission: the insect needs only very short feeding times, usually from tissues near the surface of leaves, to obtain the virus. The virus is effective immediately but is not persistent within the vector.

Question: How do viruses survive?

Viruses cannot survive outside living host plants or insects, with only a few exceptions. Viruses can survive adverse conditions and for varying intervals between crop cycles in alternative weed hosts, volunteer plants, abandoned crops, infected seeds etc. Persistent viruses also survive in the insect vector.

Question: How can we manage the transmission of viruses?

Once a plant is infected with a virus it cannot be cured. Disease control should, however, be aimed at preventing or delaying the infection of plants. A combination of the following management options can be successfully implemented:



Scott Mathew, Technical Services Lead at Syngenta

Exclusion/avoidance:

- Plant virus-free seed and seedling transplants.
- Grow crops in regions where the disease seldom occurs or during periods when the virus or its vector are at a low level.
- Quarantine or prevent infected plants from coming on to your property.

Keep the level of virus inoculum as low as possible:

- Control weeds and other virus hosts.
- Use appropriate crop protection techniques to keep insect vector numbers as low as possible.
- Remove crop residues as soon as harvest is completed.
- Separate new crops from maturing crops and avoid overlapping crops, especially continuous year-round cropping, where possible.

Protection of the host:

- Plant virus-resistant or virus-tolerant varieties.
- Use highly reflective mulches and oil sprays to deter insects.
- Use barrier crops and bare land to reduce vector activity.
- Use insecticides strategically to protect plants from insects.

For more information on the nozzles and crops that are suited for use in your area, please contact Syngenta Crop Protection.

Ask the industry

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Diverse financial state

The latest annual survey of the Australian vegetable industry undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) reveals that the vegetable industry's financial performance deteriorated in 2009-10, writes Ian James, industry economist and Leader of the Vegetable Industry Development Program's Economic sub-program.

The financial data was collected in interviews with growers from February to August 2011 and published in November 2011. Data relates to overall industry performance, and the financial position of individual growers can vary significantly from industry averages.

While cash receipts on vegetable farms rose, this was due to non-vegetable growing activities. On average, returns from vegetable growing fell, with receipts down (0.8%) and costs up (4.9%). Vegetable growers were caught in a classic cost-price squeeze. Labour costs were restrained but there were large cost increases in a range of overheads, including crop chemicals, administrative expenses, seed, fuel, repairs and maintenance, rates and freight. The relentless upward pressure on costs has been a feature of these surveys since they began in 2007. Vegetable growers have had to push through more product at thin margins to stay abreast of this cost pressure. The result of this rational action by individual growers has led to supply depressing prices undermining grower profitability.

Reflecting the wide diversity of the Australian vegetable industry, the financial position of vegetable growers is also diverse. Some of these diversities from the latest survey are highlighted below.

State variation

There was a marked contrast in financial conditions between the States. On average, NSW growers had the lowest cash incomes due to smaller average cash receipts, reflecting the fact that vegetable farms on average are smaller in NSW. South Australian vegetable growers were the most profitable on a range of financial indicators. The deterioration in the financial

performance of the industry was concentrated in Victoria, where receipts fell significantly from the previous year, and in Western Australia, where a combination of falling receipts and rising costs reduced returns.

Scale variation

As to be expected, receipts and costs were higher the larger the

scale impacts on profitability and that many smaller growers would be financially better off deploying their labour and capital elsewhere.

Production technique variation

There was a significant difference in cost structure between field and undercover growers. Field growers spent

In this year's survey, ABARES was requested to extract data for a specialist vegetable producer paying the vegetable levy and compare their financial performance against vegetables outside the levy. Lettuce growers were chosen and compared to specialist potato growers, who pay a separate levy, and tomato growers, who do not pay a levy. There were significant differences between the three.

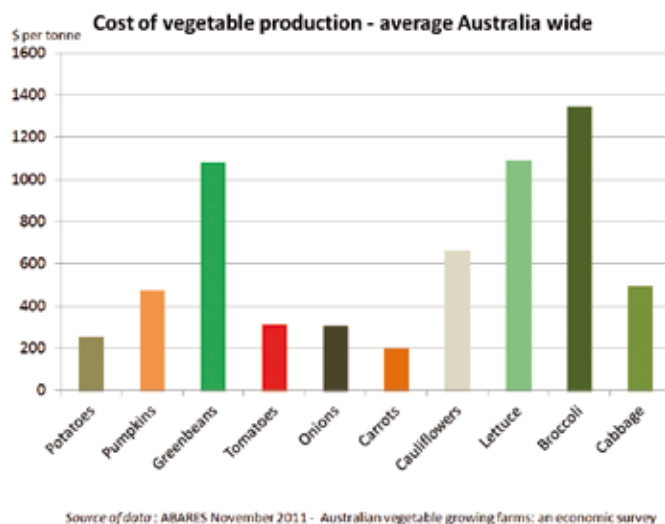
Lettuce growers were more likely to grow other vegetables to counter the risk of monoculture. They had higher levels of debt, perhaps reflecting the investment on farm packaging. Farm cash income was higher at \$207,700, compared to \$203,200 for specialist potato growers and \$134,600 for specialist tomato growers. Their rate of return on equity was higher.

Variation in costs of production

In the survey, vegetable growers were asked to apportion major cost components against the vegetables they produced. There was wide variation between the cash cost of production of major vegetables. Broccoli, lettuce and beans all had cash costs over \$1000 per tonne. All three had much higher labour and fertiliser costs than the other vegetables surveyed. Conversely, root crops, where mechanisation is higher and labour costs lower, had much lower costs of production. Cost of production was lowest for carrots at \$197 per tonne. It is therefore no surprise that Australia's major fresh vegetable export is carrots.

Capital and debt variation

Successful business enterprises have a sound capital base that enables them to raise debt to finance investment to develop and grow the business. The average capital value of



size of the vegetable farm. Farm cash income as a proportion of total cash receipts declined as size increased, indicating thinner margins. Nonetheless, overall rates of return improved as farm size increased. Rates of return on capital were an abysmal 0.2% for growers with vegetable plantings under 5 hectares, rising to a more respectable 5.5% for growers with plantings above 70 hectares. Most smaller growers in 2009-10 could generate positive cash flows, but only 38% recorded business profits (farm cash income + changes in trading stock - depreciation - imputed labour costs), indicating that they failed to earn sufficient returns to adequately compensate for their own labour and family labour employed on farm. These figures suggest that

higher proportions of their total costs on labour, freight, fertiliser, vehicle maintenance and fuel. In contrast, protected crop growers spent higher proportions on packing, chemicals, rates, building maintenance, electricity and land rent. Undercover growers received higher prices for their product, had higher farm equity and lower farm debt than vegetable field growers. Their financial performance was, however, lower than for field producers. Farm cash income averaged \$70,600 for undercover growers compared to \$148,600 for field growers, with rates of return on capital employed of 1.8% compared to 2.8% for field growers.

Specialist producers' variation

Financial performance of vegetable farms, by state, 2009-10

Average per farm							
		NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	TAS
Total cash receipts	\$	366 900	755 900	909 600	800 600	916 400	614 800
Total cash costs	\$	297 200	571 200	783 100	605 000	756 300	474 600
Farm cash income	\$	697 00	184 700	126 400	195 600	160 000	140 200
% of farms with negative farm cash income	%	21	9	30	5	18	19
Buildup in trading stocks	\$	- 4700	9100	- 500	7400	800	- 60
Depreciation	\$	28 900	55 900	47 800	43 300	44 300	48 500
Operator and family imputed labour	\$	58 000	57 500	58 600	57 300	59 400	53 200
Farm business profit	\$	- 22 000	80 500	19 600	102 500	57 100	38 500
% of farms with negative farm business profit	%	80	46	70	29	55	47
Rate of return							
<i>excluding capital appreciation</i>	\$	- 0.2	3.5	2.9	4.5	2.4	2.9
<i>including capital appreciation</i>	\$	0.2	2.0	3.8	8.9	1.6	3.0
Total farm debt at 30 June	\$	209 400	621 400	697 400	424 200	647 900	501 700
Total farm capital at 30 June	\$	1 849 700	3 771 900	3 269 900	3 484 300	4 358 500	3 289 900
Farm equity ratio	%	81	80	79	80	84	84

Source of data : ABARES November 2011 - Australian vegetable growing farms: an economic survey

vegetable farms was \$3.2 million in 2009-10. However, capital values varied across the country, with vegetable farms in NSW the lowest, averaging \$1.8 million, and Western Australia the highest at \$4.4 million. Average farm debt continued to climb to

\$514,100. The most noticeable feature of expenditure on additional capital was a surge in investment by South Australian growers after a number of years of underinvestment, and a marked reduction in investment by Western Australia growers

after a number of years of above average expenditure. It is no coincidence that cash incomes for the year were highest in South Australia, and that Western Australian growers had the most dramatic cut in their farm cash incomes.

Conclusion

The financial data shows marked variations in financial performance and warns against the use of industry data averaging in analysing the Australian vegetable industry.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- A new survey reveals that the vegetable industry's financial performance deteriorated in 2009-10.
- The financial performance of lettuce growers was compared against both potato and tomato growers. Generally, they were shown to possess higher levels of debt.
- The varied findings suggest that the nuanced nature of the vegetable industry makes it difficult to rely on data averaging as a reliable reflection of the industry.

For more information:
 Ian James
 Project leader of the Vegetable Industry Development Program's Economic sub-program.
 Project number: VG08040



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Callum returns for 2012 Convention

The AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence is delighted to welcome back former MasterChef contestant Callum Hann in 2012.

Mr Hann was among the highlights of the 2011 Convention in Brisbane, where he took part in the Celebrity Chef Lunch Entertainment using exclusively Australian produce.

He will once again work with local industries, sourcing fresh vegetables for a cook off against other young members of the Tasmanian restaurant scene.

Mr Hann says he is excited to be involved in the Convention

once more.

"I had a fantastic time meeting people, cooking and exploring the stalls at last year's AUSVEG convention," said Mr Hann.

"I can't wait to be involved in the next event in Hobart!"

Mr Hann is the widely popular contestant from the 2010 TV series of MasterChef, and was recently announced as the face of the 'Burst of Freshness' fruit



and vegetable program.

The Adelaide Produce Market initiative encourages Australian families to integrate larger quantities of fresh produce into their weekly diet.

As part of the program, Mr Hann will appear in several

television commercials, presenting recipes to viewers that promote fresh, local ingredients. The recipes will subsequently be distributed throughout Adelaide-based stores.

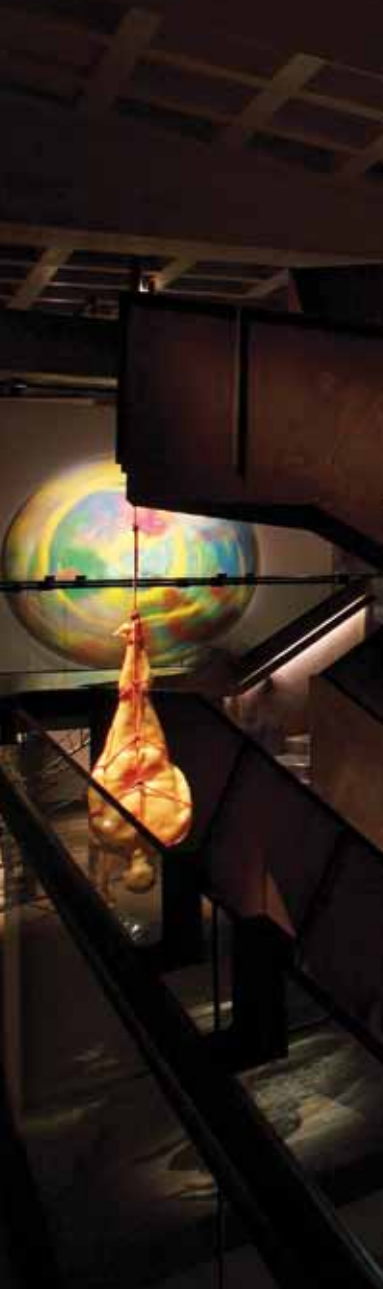
Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	States Covered
PER12397	Alpha-cypermethrin / Onions, Chicory, Leeks, Spring Onions / Red Legged Earth mite, onion thrips	30-Nov-11	30-Nov-14	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER12777	Avatar (indoxacarb) / Asparagus / Garden Weevil	2-Nov-11	30-Sep-16	Valid for WA only
PER13009	Propiconazole / Spinach, Beetroot & Celery / Cercospora, Leaf Spot, Blossom Blight & Anthracnose	2-Nov-11	31-Oct-13	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER13047	Acramite Miticide / Tomatoes, Capsicums & Cucumbers / Two-Spotted Mite	8-Nov-11	30-Sep-13	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER13121	Ridomil Gold 25G (metalaxyl-M) / Parsley / Pythium & Phytophthora	16-Nov-11	30-Nov-16	Valid for all states (other than Vic)
PER13147	Lontrel / Cauliflower / Capeweed and Clover	21-Nov-11	30-Sep-16	Valid for WA only
PER13151	Mouseoff and Rattoff Zinc Phosphide Baits / Sweet Potato / House Mouse and Introduced Rats	14-Dec-11	31-Dec-16	Valid for NSW and Qld only
PER13152	MCPA 250 Selective Herbicide / Rhubarb / Broadleaf weeds	4-Dec-11	30-Sep-16	Valid for all states
PER13153	Regent 200 SC / Sweet Potato / White Fringed Weevil & Wireworm	14-Dec-11	31-Dec-16	NSW, Qld, NT, WA

These permits have had their additional data requirements changed.

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

Inside the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA)
Photograph by:
Leigh Carmichael



Inside the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA)
Photograph by:
Brett Boardman



MONA Pavilions
are located on the edge of the
Derwent River, Tasmania.
Photograph by: Brett Boardman.
Photographs courtesy of
Tourism Tasmania & MONA



MONA added to Convention calendar

AUSVEG is thrilled to announce the addition of the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) to the extensive list of events for the 2012 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence.

MONA is one of the world's most breathtakingly innovative museums, housing an array of progressive art and installations. The museum was officially opened to the public in 2011 by David Walsh, who invested millions of dollars and years of his life into its realisation. In a fresh redesign of the 'women in horticulture' event, participants will be able to take part in a tour of MONA's subversive and thought provoking works. In addition to the tour, there will also be a keynote address from one of the Convention's delegates onsite at the museum, to recognise the role held by

women within horticulture. AUSVEG National Marketing Manager Simon Coburn said MONA was certain to be an interesting and entertaining event for Convention participants. "MONA is at the forefront of progressive art in this country and indeed, the world," said Mr Coburn. "Having visited the museum, I can safely say that those who attend are in for a stunning tour of a world renowned museum that is quickly becoming an international icon." Interest in the Convention has already exceeded that of last year, with delegates already

registering well in advance of the May event. AUSVEG is set to announce more exciting editions to the 2012 National Convention events calendar. The Convention takes place between May 10-12, and with early bird tickets already on sale, growers and industry stakeholders are encouraged to save the date and support the year's biggest horticultural event.

i For more information,
contact AUSVEG on
(03) 9822 0388 or email
convention@ausveg.com.au.

Around the states

Queensland



Vegetables and fruit add health benefits in festive season

As the festive season commences, we hear news that DVD copies of a new film, *Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead*, will be sold in Woolworths' produce section and can be downloaded in iTunes just in time for Christmas. For those looking for a last minute Christmas gift, the movie trailer can be viewed here: www.fatsickandnearlydead.com.

The film by former overweight Australian stockbroker, Joe Cross, promotes healthy eating (or at any rate, drinking). It is an autobiographical account of Cross's trip throughout the United States, during which he slims down by consuming only vegetable and fruit juice and investigates why people are so addicted to fast food.

While Growcom applauds Mr Cross's efforts, it's worth pointing out that fresh vegetables and fruit consumed whole provide the same nutritional benefits – and may provide additional benefits for weight management. Since eating a whole fruit or vegetable takes longer than swigging off a drink, the brain has more time to register what has been consumed. Nutritionists believe this increases the feeling of satiety or being 'full' for longer, cutting down the need for additional snacks between meals.

The festive season is often a time when indulgence is allowed full rein and Growcom encourages Australians to kick off a New Year healthy eating regime early by tucking into plenty of fresh locally grown vegetables and fruit over Christmas.

Vegetables and fruit include tasty and juicy foods that make eating such an enjoyable experience. But as a bonus, summer salad vegetables and fruit provide a welcome burst of nutrition during the festivities and much needed health benefits.

Australian consumers are

fortunate to have such a wide variety of high quality produce to draw upon to add colour and taste to their Christmas tables. Supplementing heavy meals this summer with freshly prepared vegetable and fruit salads and freshly squeezed fruit and vegetables, can give the body a lift and provide an energised start to the new year.

At a time when barely a week goes by without another distressing report on the dangers of obesity, vegetable producers are growing a key part of the solution to the community's health problems.

If Australians resolved to increase their consumption of fruit to just two serves a day and vegetables to five serves a day as their New Year's resolution, it's been estimated we could save \$180 million in the national health system in terms of preventing chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and osteoarthritis.

A handy tool to assess the nutritional content of your Christmas diet and the changes you may need to make for the new year is the Formula for Life website which was created by Growcom (then Queensland

Fruit and Vegetable Growers) on behalf of vegetable, heavy produce and tomato committees for health conscious consumers in 2002.

The website still attracts thousands of 'hits' per month, proving that the information is still relevant for credible, easy to understand nutritional information. Like the Go for 2 and 5 promotional campaign, the aim of the website is to help improve the health and well being of every Australian through healthy nutrition and food selection. Go to www.formulaforlife.com.au for more information.

* Please note that the subject matter within *Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead* regarding crash-dieting is not a health practice supported or endorsed by AUSVEG

Alex Livingstone

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New South Wales



The NSW Farmers Horticulture Committee will have biosecurity and food safety as its priorities for 2012. Biosecurity is a major concern across all horticultural industries in Australia, with farmers reasonably expecting the protocols put in place by Biosecurity Australia to keep Australia free of pests and diseases not present here. Our Horticulture Committee has worked closely alongside Apple and Pear Australia Limited (APAL) this year to ensure our pome fruit industries remain free of Fireblight following the decision to allow New Zealand

(NZ) apples to be exported to Australia. We are now awaiting the release of an import risk analysis for potatoes from NZ. The Committee will support AUSVEG in its call for NZ potatoes not to be allowed entry into Australia as we do not believe there are quarantine measures that can give our potato industry an appropriate level of protection.

The Horticulture Committee is providing input to FSNZ on its review of food safety of horticultural produce in Australia. We are looking to ensure that the focus of any food safety compliance is based on an assessment of risk, and that the commitment the majority of horticultural producers have made to food safety, through participation in food safety and quality programs such as Freshcare, is recognised by FSNZ.

NSW Farmers has recently provided a submission to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing on the better regulation of industrial chemicals. Whilst we wouldn't ordinarily comment on industrial chemicals, the regulation of industrial chemicals has a potentially significant impact on farming businesses and rural communities in regions where coal seam gas and/or other extractive industries are operating. In particular, we have recommended that the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) undertake a risk assessment of the potential for chemicals used in fracking processes to enter the food chain, as a result of land and water contamination.

NSW Farmers is busy planning workshops as part

of the NSW component of the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP). Following the success of the Protected Cropping Workshop in Coffs Harbour in October 2011, a follow-up workshop is planned for February 2012. A workshop for hydroponic lettuce growers in March 2012 will also be one of many workshops in the first half of 2012. Additionally, we are collaborating with NSW DPI and InnoVeg on a project aimed at growers whose first language is not English.

Peter Darley

NSW Farmers' Association
Horticulture Committee
Chairman
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Tasmania



National Food Plan

Perhaps the immediate challenge that we, as farmers, have to address is communicating effectively what we do, and how and why we do it.

Farming is beyond the experience of most people outside agriculture. Yet it is imperative that the community is able to understand our arguments when we are pursuing, for instance, policy initiatives with governments.

I raise this in the context of the Federal Government's National Food Plan discussion paper, on which the TFGA has made a submission; but the issue of effective communication applies across the board.

If most people haven't a clue what we are on about, then we

will be forever behind the eight-ball in achieving change.

Most Australians have an unrealistic notion of producing food in Australia. They either think of the sunburnt farmer in a battered hat, gazing out across crops or stock; or the same farmer surrounded by dust clouds or flooded fields. They take the food they eat – and we produce – for granted. Droughts and floods may come and go but Australians have never gone hungry. We always have plenty of healthy food, available on demand, at reasonable prices – and we export what we don't eat ourselves.

Like most things, it is not quite that simple.

We have a responsibility to the world to produce as much high quality food as we can. To do that, we have to have farms that are viable on triple bottom line measures (economics, environment, social); and we have to have secure markets so that we can make investments in food production that will deliver us commercial returns.

These are the requirements for us to fulfill our role in global food security. In reality, 'food security' is simply a 21st century term for continuing to feed a growing world, whose

population is projected to be more than nine billion by 2050, an increase of 50 per cent.

Australian farmers feed 60 million people each year; only one-third of them here. To keep doing that, we need to have a policy environment that recognises the importance of Australian food production (and Australian farmers) and that delivers a level playing field and commitment of adequate resources.

That involves uniformity and consistency, as much as is possible, of laws, processes, resources and agricultural policies between all tiers of government and all government agencies.

When we develop our own state strategic plan for agriculture, it must also be consistent with these principles.

Interconnected with the framework for a national food plan is the continuing theme of biosecurity. Those who espouse a totally free market – and there are more and more of them – propose that we should remove all quarantine regulations as these are simply barriers to trade. They are clearly out of touch with reality. It is madness to blur the lines, to gloss over the differences between trade

and biosecurity. Biosecurity is not a trade issue. It is a science based approach to keeping out a horde of nasty things that are not already here – for the benefit of all Australians.

Clearly, we need to continue to debate the issues concerning food production in the nation's agricultural forums. The National Farmers Federation suggests that we need to co-ordinate the outcomes in three areas: social, economic and environmental. We fully support this position.

But it is no good preaching to the converted. We have to engage all Australians in the debate about a national food plan. The public has to grasp the importance of what we are seeking to do. To do that, they first have to understand some very basic detail about where their food comes from and how farming operates in Australia.

Jan Davis

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Fax: (03) 6331 4344

Western Australia



Western Australia has again demonstrated it leads Australia in many aspects of the national vegetable industry. Respected Myalup grower, Peter Ivankovich, recently won the prestigious Reg Miller Award at Onions Australia in recognition of his years of service to the national onion industry. This follows the win by fellow Western Australian Sam Calameri of the AUSVEG Grower of the Year award earlier this year.

As a short-term response to

the dimethoate and fenthion issue, Western Australian growers have funded successful trials on the effect of methyl bromide fumigation on the shelf life and appearance of tomatoes. ICA-04 allows access to all states for fruit fumigated by methyl bromide. Testing at four concentrations of gas at four different temperatures allowed in the ICA procedure was done on gourmet round tomatoes, roma tomatoes and cherry tomatoes. All tomatoes fumigated at all temperatures showed no ill effects and demonstrated that when done correctly, fruit quality and colour is maintained, fruit is suitable for sale, and meets market access requirements for all states.

The vegetablesWA marketing strategy is continuing to deliver with the exciting 'Fresh From

WA Farms' campaign that many growers will have seen in the Fresh lift-out from *The West Australian* newspaper. The campaign seeks to lift the value of vegetable sales and profile of our industry within the community by featuring the fresh, seasonal and healthy produce from WA and its grower ambassadors every week until June 2012. The WA Produce Marketing Group involves a range of organisations who are also seeking to promote fruit and vegetable consumption and has been busy in sharing research and ideas and is now moving towards some collaborative projects.

Another market soon to be enjoying more WA grown vegetables is Singapore. NTUC FairPrice Cooperative Ltd signed Memorandums of Understanding with two WA

companies to supply carrots and prospects for other similar deals look promising. This is the first time such contracts have been signed in Australia. Under the agreement, Sumich and Center West Exports will be supplying container loads of carrots to Singapore on a weekly basis for at least two years.

Also enjoying the excellent standard of WA grown vegetables recently was HRH Queen Elizabeth II, with local produce featuring brilliantly at the Royal Banquet and other meals at CHOGM.

Jim Turley

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

Victoria



Over the past year VGA Vic has been very supportive of the Manual Handling project conducted by Andrew Sullivan from Ballarat University and growers have been most cooperative during farm visits organised by our IDOs. This project conducted by the Victorian Farm Centre has been gathering information and assessing solutions to the manual handling issues associated with planting, picking and packing in the vegetable industry.

The project has a clear objective to identify situations that are deemed as hazardous for manual handling operators that would contribute to major injury claims in the

vegetable industry. VGA Vic is a representative of the reference group that is currently reviewing solutions to provide practical outcomes to the problem. One issue recently discussed at VGA Vic Executive Committee was unmanned creeping tractors when planting or harvesting a range of vegetables. This has resulted in a grower meeting to be organised during January 2012 to review this practice and in association with machinery engineers provide positive input and solutions.

A new Food Alliance project is being conducted by Deakin University and funded by Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (Vic Health). One of the aims of the Food Alliance is to identify sustainable food security and healthy eating in Victoria. A resilient fruit and vegetable supply is one of the key areas of advocacy for the Food Alliance project.

VGA Vic has been invited to participate and is providing input and representation at roundtable meetings held in Melbourne.

A recent technology forum conducted through the Vic DPI Horticultural Industry Network (HIN) programme was attended by VGA Vic representatives. The content of the forum is being reviewed by VGA Vic to improve our communication skills. We have been discussing with our younger growers the latest forms of technology to ensure that response to industry issues is improved.

In support of the marketing team from the Melbourne Market Authority (MMA) we attended the annual Harvest Picnic Day held at Werribee Mansion during November. This is a good promotional outlet direct to the consumer. The MMA promotional team of Tiesha Dower and Carolyn Creed prepare samples of fresh fruit and vegetables and provide some intimate knowledge of how one should select and prepare the different dishes of fruit and vegetables. President David Wallace, Past President Luis Gazzola and myself, with the help of our wives, assist where required to promote fresh

produce. This was a very busy day with an enormous crowd of visitors in attendance.

The completion of two grower study tours by our IDOs during this year, one interstate and the other overseas, has proved very successful and we would encourage young growers to make themselves available for future organised industry tours.

The type an accreditation for horticultural training courses is receiving some scrutiny from industry resulting in the State Government conducting a review of Victorian Education and Training in Agriculture. VGA Vic have submitted a proposal and attended a public hearing in relation to training for the vegetable industry in Victoria. The outcome is expected early next year.

Tony Imeson
VGA Victoria
Executive Officer
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Fax: (03) 9687 4723
Email: <contact@vgavic.org.au>

South Australia



Grow SA has released "FarmCard"™ with the first accreditation training scheduled for early in the New Year. FarmCard is an induction program and portable training record system that incorporates a photo ID card and training record database. FarmCard

has been designed to help with the main grower obligations of the new Workplace Health and Safety legislation. FarmCard Accreditation involves a training course that provides employee induction across the industry requirements for Workplace Health and Safety; Quality Assurance; Food Safety and Biosecurity (Farm Hygiene). Where possible the training has been aligned with the requirements of units of competence in the relevant National Training Packages.

Completion of this training greatly reduces growers / packers individual on-site induction requirements and

helps mitigate some of the potential risks for the employer. The program can be tailored to include individual site specific induction processes for large employers. FarmCard also helps manage training records and requirements along with Visa details for international students and offshore workers. After this initial trial it is intended that FarmCard will be released nationally.

The Grow SA website is back in cyberspace at www.growsa.com.au with a brand new look. The website will continue to expand over the next few months to include direct information for growers and

links to other relevant sites and data that could be of interest to the industry. All suggestions on content and appropriate links will be greatly received.

Grow SA Ltd wishes all members and industry stakeholders a safe and happy Christmas along with a prosperous 2012.

Mike Redmond
Chief Executive Officer
Grow SA Ltd
Virginia SA 5120
Phone: (08) 8282 9200
Email: <mike.redmond@growsa.com.au>

Calendar of events

May 2012

10 - 12 May

2012 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence
Wrest Point Casino Hotel, Hobart, Tasmania

For more information: AUSVEG

Phone: (03) 9822 0388 Email: convention@ausveg.com.au



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