

vegetables australia

November/December 2012

**Robert
Hinrichsen**

**Ahead of
the field, 20
years on**

Chris Millis
Glasshouse empire

Mark Geraghty
**New beginnings
for Elders**

Courtney Burger
**Teaming up for
a better future**

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READER SURVEY

1. What sector of the industry do you represent?

- Grower (seed) Grower (fresh) Grower (processed)
 Processor Supply chain Researcher
 Government Industry official
 Other _____

2. Age group?

- 18-24 25-34 35-44
 45-54 55+

3. What crops do you grow?

Would you also like to receive the *Potatoes Australia* magazine?

- Yes No

4. How big is your farm (hectares)? _____

5. Which sections of *Vegetables Australia* are of most interest to you?

- News R&D Articles
 International R&D Young Grower Profiles
 Grower Profiles Feature articles
 Industry Columns Restaurant-Grower features
 New products/Advertisements

6. Are there specific areas of R&D you would like to see more coverage of?

7. Does R&D content in the magazine influence the way you run your business?

- Yes No

8. Would you like to be registered on the AUSVEG website?

- Yes No

9. Are you considering attending the AUSVEG National Convention on the Gold Coast from May 30 - June 1 2013?

- Yes No

10. What is your main source of general news and information (please tick/specify):

- Magazines Newspapers _____
 TV Radio _____
 Internet Other _____

11. What is the biggest challenge you face with your business?

12. What do you consider to be major issues affecting Australia's vegetable industry?

13. How many people read your copy of *Vegetables Australia*?

14. Where do you get your advice from?

- Industry publications Consultants
 Processing company Independent agronomists
 Resellers Government organisations
 Grower groups

15. What type of internet do you have?

- Dial-up ADSL2/2+ None
 Cable Other _____

16. Do you have any comments/suggestions regarding the magazine?

Thank you for your time

Please return your leaflet to AUSVEG. Entries close 30 November 2012.

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vegetables australia

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**FRONT COVER:**

Robert Hinrichsen

Photograph by Seth Mourra



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John Brent

AUSVEG Chairman

As Chairman of AUSVEG, I have gained great satisfaction from seeing AUSVEG's level of influence and effectiveness increase exponentially over the past few years. A large component of this success has been due to the organisation's escalating presence in the media. Through the tireless work of the Communications and Public Affairs Department and the AUSVEG CEO, issues central to the vegetable industry have routinely occupied countless column inches in the nation's newspapers and dominated the airwaves of major radio and television networks. In September alone, AUSVEG was featured in media coverage that reached a potential total cumulative audience of just under nine million people. That is a terrific achievement for a small but extremely dedicated team, however, I do not raise this purely as a means of congratulating the organisation that I am involved with. Within the modern climate

of reactionary politics, the media has rarely been a more powerful tool for communicating widely and effectively applying pressure to governments and organisations in order to seek genuine change. We as an industry need to continue to harness this powerful resource, to ensure that the issues that affect us are communicated to the broader community and our elected representatives in government.

To illustrate this point, in late October, Channel 7's *Today Tonight* program ran an extensive report on the Zebra Chip disease threat posed by the importation of fresh potatoes from New Zealand if a market access request from that country is approved by the government. The piece included details on the rise in processed vegetable imports and the potential risks they pose to growers and the community. The power of these programs cannot be understated. Within the piece, AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy was quoted

extensively on a range of issues. In spite of their national and industry significance, these are subjects that can often be difficult to garner sufficient public concern about and frequently, the farming sector doesn't get the attention or media traction that it deserves. The vegetable industry will continue to positively engage with the media, as its significance in effecting change is imperative.

With the Gold Coast as a stunning backdrop, the AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence will once again serve as the centrepiece on the vegetable industry calendar. The National Awards for Excellence will be opening shortly so I encourage you to begin to think about those around you who would make for fitting candidates. Looking back over the past few months, it has been terrific to see industry leaders such as Frank Ruffo, who was recognised as the 2012 Grower of the Year, and Michael Vorrasi,

who took home the 2012 Young Grower of the Year award, continue to serve as outstanding representatives for the sector. I greatly look forward to what next year's batch of outstanding candidates will contribute to our industry.




John Brent
Chairman
AUSVEG

Richard Mulcahy

AUSVEG Chief Executive Officer

In late October, AUSVEG appeared in Canberra before a Senate Inquiry held by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee over concerns relating to the importation of fresh potatoes from New Zealand. There, as this organisation has done through countless avenues and media appearances over the past year, AUSVEG expressed its grave concern about the very real threat of the Zebra Chip disease entering Australia. Ultimately, it is a risk that is simply too great to take, not just for potato growers, but also for other solanaceous crops like tomatoes and capsicums that may also be affected if there is an incursion of the disease.

Above all else, the inquiry provided vindication that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has questions to answer about

its key conclusions, which we believe are heavily flawed. The detailed submission provided by AUSVEG prior to the inquiry was informed by the latest scientific research, and it underscores just how devastating the impact would be were the Zebra Chip disease to reach Australia. It was in stark contrast to the level of reporting presented by DAFF, who relied on outdated material and information that, at times, served to contradict itself.

AUSVEG will continue to conduct rigorous scrutiny of any decisions that affect vegetable and potato growers in any way, to ensure that their interests are properly and assertively represented.

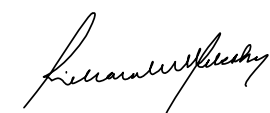
Elsewhere, it is pleasing to see AUSVEG's Design Team Coordinator, Courtney Burger, profiled within this edition of *Vegetables Australia*. Courtney will play a key role in

implementing the new Vegetable Industry Strategic Investment Plan and has been an asset to AUSVEG over the past two years. She is emblematic of the key part that women have in a variety of different roles throughout the vegetable industry, not just on farms, but also in the supply chain and within industry organisations.

As you are reading this magazine, a group of nine female vegetable growers are touring Israel and Italy as part of the inaugural AUSVEG-led women in horticulture grower study tour. It is critical that women are able to adopt a central position in the industry's future and this new grower tour will, along with our regular Women in Horticulture event at the AUSVEG Convention, play an important role in recognising this.

As an organisation, rest

assured that AUSVEG will continue to promote and support the role of women in the industry, not just within AUSVEG, but also in the broader industry.

Richard J Mulcahy
Chief Executive Officer
AUSVEG

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Chris Millis

Industry Advisory Committee member and co-founder of one of the country's largest carrot and onion producers, Robert Hinrichsen, occupies the cover of this edition of *Vegetables Australia*. In a candid interview (page 12), Hinrichsen speaks about the cost of remaining innovative and the need for the vegetable industry to better engage with the public.

In keeping with that theme, R&D news comes in the way of a project that seeks to quantify the benefits of high-vegetable

consumption in achieving weight loss (page 22). While conventional wisdom has always supported this notion, it is significant for the industry to have firm research to present to consumers in order to help boost vegetable consumption. There is also detailed research on the use of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) to help combat the damaging effect of Queensland fruit fly (page 30), as well as an in-depth discussion with Elders' General Manager Strategy, Marketing and Communication, Mark

Geraghty, about two of the company's central initiatives (page 28).

Elsewhere, there are grower profiles in the form of a 'Young grower feature' with David Ashburner, an enthusiastic Zimbabwean-born member of the industry based in Western Australia (pg 20), and Chris Millis from Flavorite, who is interviewed at length in 'Glasshouse empire' (page 40).

'Teaming up for a better future' (page 24) sees AUSVEG Design Team Coordinator, Courtney Burger, speak about

her time with the peak industry body and what the newly formed Design Teams will bring to vegetable growers, while industry economist Ian James offers a detailed examination of the Chinese import threat (page 44). Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene talks about the potential social costs of 'speaking up' in his 'Biosecurity Brief' series (page 19) and there is full coverage of the recent ABC 'Farmer of the Year' awards held in Melbourne (page 16).

CORRECTION:

The September/October 2012 edition of *Vegetables Australia* included a single-page information sheet regarding the National Vegetable Levy. The information sheet stated that the levy rate at the first point of sale is 0.005%, however, it should have been expressed as 0.005 or 0.5%.

TOP SPEED

PROTECTION AGAINST POTATO MOTH



BELT



Robert Hinrichsen

Ahead of the field, 20 years on - pg 12

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Veggie bites

Facts & figures...

38kg

The Guinness World Records have accepted an entry of a 38kg English-grown swede as the world's largest, reports the Daily Mail.

20,000

The estimated number of people who attend the 2012 Calabasas Pumpkin Festival in Southern California. The festival is the largest of its type and this year celebrated its 30th anniversary, reports the Los Angeles Daily News.



20%

The lowest 10% of households by income in the UK have reduced purchases of fruit and vegetables by 20% between 2007 and 2010, as reported by The Guardian.



\$85.9bn

Consumer advocacy group Choice reports that in the coming financial year, Australians are predicted to spend \$85.9bn on groceries.



172.7 grams

The volume of vegetables consumed by Australian men per day, as recorded in The Victorian Health Monitor Food and Nutrition report.

8kg

The world's largest recorded onion was presented at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show by giant vegetable grower Peter Glazebrook. It weighed over 8kg or 18 pounds 1 ounce, reports the BBC.



8.6 million tonnes

The projected vegetable harvest this coming year for Ukraine, as published by the country's Agricultural Policy and Food Ministry.

Bundaberg Gala Dinner a triumph for local produce



Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers have held their glittering annual Gala Dinner, which emphasised the importance of local produce.

As the significance of locally-sourcing produce continues to grow within Australian horticulture, the organisers of the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Gala Dinner, held on Saturday 13 October, made a conscious effort to ensure that issue remained at forefront of the minds of attendees.

Working with David Pugh, owner of Brisbane's acclaimed Restaurant II, the four-course menu for the dinner was created almost entirely from produce sourced in the Wide Bay Burnett region. As a result, 95 per cent of the food served at the dinner was sourced from the local area, including all of the meat and even the colourful centrepieces that adorned the tables of diners.

The effort made by the organisers to celebrate the produce of the Bundaberg region highlighted the genuine sense of community which is evident in the Wide Bay Burnett horticultural industry. One such

example was the announcement of the establishment of a scholarship to honour the memory of a prominent figure in the region's horticulture community, Edwin Tesch, who passed away in June this year. The Edwin Tesch Scholarship will support the development of 2nd year students undertaking a Bachelor of Science specialising in Agriculture and Food Science through CQUniversity.

Attendees were also entertained by comedian Ahn Do, who thrilled the crowd with tales of his inspirational journey from child refugee to successful author and runner-up on Channel Seven's *Dancing with the Stars*.

The 2012 Gala Dinner will long be remembered as a celebration of not only local produce but of local community, and the spirit of a passionate local industry.

Photographs from the evening are available for purchase through rightimage.com.au/



BFVG CEO, Peter Hockings, BFVG Director, David Da Pra and BFVG Life Member George Green.



Table settings with centrepieces featuring local produce.

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Ahead of the field, 20 years on

Two decades of forward thinking has seen Robert Hinrichsen and Kalfresh move to the forefront of carrot and onion production in Queensland, writes Jeremy Story Carter.



“In my heart of hearts, Kalfresh has just been about a bunch of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.”

So says Robert Hinrichsen, 20 years on from when he and his father Barry founded Kalfresh, now one of the country's most significant carrot and onion producers. It is a humble, almost antiquated outlook for the company's Agricultural Director to hold, but if it alludes to a business rooted in the simple and traditional, it shouldn't. Little of what Hinrichsen has been able to achieve would have been possible without a willingness to take risks and an enthusiasm to seek out the new and the innovative. Housed an hour south-west of Brisbane, the company's central Kalbar facility, which also produces green beans and pumpkins, is a modern reflection of years of investment. It is, however, a far cry from Kalfresh's origins in 1992.

“We pretty much started from ground zero, because we didn't

have a packing shed, we didn't have a vegetable business and we built it up,” says Hinrichsen.

The company began as a consolidator for local produce, sourcing from a single carrot grower and brokered predominately through the Brisbane Markets. A friend of the Hinrichsens was charged with the latter stage of the process, and Robert points to their ability to develop and foster a market for their product as a key factor in Kalfresh's rapid growth.

“That was the secret of it; that we had someone driving our market share who was very dedicated and committed,” says Hinrichsen. “That allowed our business to grow at quite a staggering rate.”

Within four years, they were sourcing from four growers who each packed under the Kalfresh brand.

“After four years, we decided that we couldn't do it - just consolidating out of different

continued over page ►



“In my heart of hearts, Kalfresh has just been about a bunch of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.”





sheds. We needed to build a central facility. That was when we built the first Kalfresh shed," says Hinrichsen. "We tried to integrate the latest in technology that we could. Our first shed was built out of concrete and panels - so it was insulated, it was fully drained. 20 years ago, those things were pretty rare."

Soon, the company began introducing further innovative on-site improvements. Among them, an inline hydro-cooler and one of the first length-grading systems in the country. Several years later, following extensive international research, Kalfresh implemented a water-bunkering system, adapted from Belgian technology with an integrated refrigeration system. Such developments have not only heightened the freshness in produce being delivered to consumers, but vastly enhanced the site's efficiency.

"It was a real watershed for us ... after everything is washed and graded, we store it in water bunkering and that becomes sort of like a buffer zone. We can store 90 tonnes of carrots in this thing that is right in the middle of the shed. We were the first in Australia to implement that technology," says Hinrichsen. "That machine has been with us for 8 years, and really has been a game-changer for our business and has made our place very efficient. It was a very large outlay at the time, but... I think stainless steel has gone up 300% since then, so

I would hate to be building it today."

All the same, there's no hiding the volume of investment required to make such improvements.

"Essentially, it has meant that we have been in debt for 20 years," laughs Hinrichsen. "Because that is the other side of it - the capital. It is a capital-intensive business. You always find yourself out there looking for funds, so that you can continue to upgrade and be relevant to the industry. But since the [Global Financial Crisis], getting hold of those funds has been increasing difficult."

While the company's outlays have seemingly paid dividends over time, Hinrichsen readily admits that not all their investments have been quite so shrewd.

"There have been disasters too, don't worry about that. When we were younger and crazier, we would come up with ideas and spend a lot of money developing them and implementing them and ultimately, they were a failure. You can tear up a fair bit of money by trying to be the pioneer all the time."

Yet the ability to invest and take risks in such technology derives from the market Kalfresh has carved out for its brand. Hinrichsen bemoans the oversaturation of growers who invest large amounts of capital on high-end facilities without

first properly establishing a market.

"Too many growers in Australia have gone in with a fist full of money and spent up big on packing sheds and driven production without any marketing support whatsoever. The biggest challenge is growing your market share and keeping abreast of the marketplace. It's very easy to lose money very quickly."

Move conversation beyond the

an industry who has failed to market itself effectively.

"We hear a lot of negative things about our industry from consumers; about how they don't trust the way we use chemicals, they don't trust a whole range of things about our industry. People will automatically link chemicals in the food chain to agriculture, but if they go next door in the processed food aisle, right there on the ingredients is a whole

“ I think reconnecting people from the city back with the country is something we as an industry do very poorly. ”

confines of his own operations at Kalfresh and you will notice a shift in tone from Hinrichsen. While he enthusiastically endorses the benefits of the vegetable industry, he bristles with frustration at its failure to assume a greater presence in the consumer marketplace. He points to the dichotomy between consumer attitudes about fresh and processed produce as a particularly galling example of

list of chemicals that they are putting into their body that they don't even think of as being a threat."

Arresting such attitudes is a complex process, but Hinrichsen pares the consumer climate back to a simple, \$100 example.

"I look at it and go - when somebody walks into a supermarket with \$100, how do we as a fresh produce industry



compete to get as much of that \$100 as we can? Our industry has some great plusses from a health-benefits point of view. There's so much research out there about how eating healthy can lower your cholesterol and your blood-pressure and [help] fight cancer, and it's a great message that we should be putting out there all the time. You can say 'I don't have time to go home and cut up my carrots,' but when you're sitting getting kidney dialysis, you have all the time in the world."

It is no surprise then, given his discontent at the state of the industry and its standing among the Australian public, that Hinrichsen has assumed a role on the Industry Advisory Committee. There, he plays an active role in providing recommendations on the best allocation of funds from the National Vegetable Levy. Elsewhere, Hinrichsen has also been involved in a slightly more grass-roots, though no less important, form of industry development. After prompting from the local Council, Kalfresh welcomed members of the public onto their site for a field day; offering a hands-on look at their facilities and crops and the chance to personally pick and fill bags of carrots. The response, he says, was overwhelming.

"We didn't really know whether we were going to get 5 or 50 people, but we ended up with 150 people. [They] came

from everywhere. There were a lot of people from the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Ipswich and as far away as Caboolture, which is a full two-hour drive from here," says Hinrichsen.

"The kids were stomping around, and so many people said - 'our kids are just town kids and don't know much about farming, and they just loved it.' It was really cool actually; it sort of bridged the country-city divide. There were a lot of questions; people were very interested in what was going on."

Beyond the hum of a field of enthusiastic children and the sizzle of the barbeque he put on for those present, Hinrichsen attaches a greater significance to events such as that field day.

"I think reconnecting people from the city back with the country is something we as an industry do very poorly. We have a very large production centre within one hour of most cities and we don't invite anyone out there. I think it is one area of education that if we took it seriously, could even boost consumption."

All told, Hinrichsen surmises the experience of the past 20 years as "interesting, to say the least." With a deep concern for the industry and an active hand in trying to improve it, Hinrichsen and Kalfresh have certainly achieved extraordinary things, and perhaps might not even be quite so ordinary after all.

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Far flung grain grower wins Farmer of the Year

South Australian grain grower Peter Kuhlmann was among a host of winners at the 2012 Australian Farmer of the Year Awards.

Agricultural industries from around the country gathered in Melbourne for the 2012 Australian Farmer of the Year Awards.

Hosted by ABC Rural, fellow media organisation the Kondinin Group and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation in the opulent surrounds of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, the awards sought to showcase the nation's growers, farmers and producers.

In contrast to the AUSVEG National Awards for Excellence, the Farmer of the Year Awards also recognise those outside of horticulture, in industries such as livestock, dairy and grain.

Among a raft of nominees from a broad range of categories, South Australian grain grower Peter Kuhlmann was declared the 2012 Farmer of the Year.

Farming out of the isolated region of Mudamuckla on the State's Western Eyre Peninsula, Kuhlmann said he was humbled to receive the award.

"I just don't believe it," said

an emotional Kuhlmann. "We have to make an early start to the season and just keep pushing it. I guess that's how we make the numbers work in an area like that... That's how we have to survive out there."

Kuhlmann drew special praise from the evening's emcee, ABC Rural National Editor Leigh Radford, who acknowledged the remote location of the farm.

"This is difficult country where Peter comes from, and hats off to people who farm on or beyond the margins of Goyder's line, as they call it in South Australia," said Radford.

Kuhlmann, who farms over 9,000ha with only two full-time staff, suggested that the famed South Australian surveyor George Goyder had "run out of puff" well before getting to his farm.

Echoing the theme of award winners on the night, Kuhlmann stressed the significance of Research and Development for his business and how it had furthered his operations.

Winners & Nominees

Farmer of the Year

Winner: Peter Kuhlmann, SA
Nominees: Grant Archer, TAS
Rob Egerton-Warburton, WA

Young Farmer of the Year:

Winner: Bindi Murray, WA
Nominees: Jim Maitland, SA
Cambell Lawrie, SA

Farming Woman of the Year:

Winner: Anne Williams, NSW
Nominees: Belinda Hagan, VIC
Fiona George, QLD

Diversification

Farmer of the Year:

Winner: Bernard Brain, TAS
Nominees: Mathew Stott, NSW
Coolda Farming, QLD

Rural Leader of the Year:

Winner: Rob Egerton-Warburton, WA
Nominees: Cheryl McCartie, TAS
Michael Badcock, TAS

Biosecurity

Farmer of the Year (plant):

Winner: Steve Rathjen, SA
Nominees: Rodney Pohlner, VIC
Harry and Greg Schwedes, VIC

Biosecurity

Farmer of the Year (animal):

Winner: Rod Hoare, NSW
Nominees: Robert Reed, WA
Ivan Rogers, WA

Horticultural Grower of the Year:

Winner: Wayne and Leanne Born, QLD
Nominees: Mike Nichol, VIC
Anthony Yewers, WA

Dairy Farmer of the Year:

Winner: Grant Archer, TAS
Nominees: Robert Watson, QLD
Julie Gerber, QLD

Wool Producer of the Year:

Winner: Richard Coole, WA
Nominees: Daryl and Irene Croake, NSW
Don Mudford, NSW

Livestock Producer of the Year:

Winner: David Blackmore, VIC
Nominees: Noel Herbst, QLD
Rupert Phillips, WA

Grain Grower of the Year:

Winner: Peter Kuhlmann, SA
Nominees: David Cox, WA
Ty Kirby, WA





Farmer of the Year winner Peter Kulhmann.



Diversification FOTY Award winners Margo, Bernard and Margaret Brain, Ouse, Tasmania.

Earlier in the evening, Wayne and Leanne Born from Koorelah Farms on the Whitsundays took home the Horticultural Grower of the Year Award for their commitment to adopting innovative on-farm technologies, while renowned Wagyu beef farmer David Blackmore was awarded Livestock Producer of the Year.

In the keenly contested Diversification Farmer of the Year Award, Bernard Brain from Tasmania's Derwent Valley

was recognised for his success in farming across a range of fields. In addition to growing fennel and cabbage for seed export, Brain oversees Merino Wool production, Angus Stud, a vineyard, beef cattle and has just begun producing whiskey.

Speaking to *Vegetables Australia* following the award, Brain said he was surprised to win among a strong field.

"When you read the biographies of all the finalists there, it was a pretty high calibre

crowd. To be considered among them was a bit humbling," said Brain.

With only one other full-time employee to compliment his work and that of his niece, Brain said the farm relied on seasonal and backpacker labour. Asked how he is able to keep abreast of so many competing crops and animals, Brain responds with a shrug.

"You just get in to the rhythm and away you go [laughs]."

He insisted that the farm's

diversity would not, however, be possible without his niece's key hand in operations.

"She came home for a break and caught the farming bug. She's taken over overseeing of the stock side of things and has done pretty well," said Brain. "If I had to look after the stock as well as the crops, I probably wouldn't manage to do everything that I do."

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Marco Mason
Vegetable grower
Werribee, Vic



Biosecurity brief

Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene



This edition of *Vegetables Australia's* recurring biosecurity series sees AUSVEG biosecurity advisor, Dr Kevin Clayton-Greene, discuss the potential social costs of reporting incursions and the need for industry to better safeguard and encourage individuals who identify biosecurity concerns to speak up.

You have spoken elsewhere of the social cost for those who voice concerns surrounding biosecurity. How important is it for people to report incursions and how can government and industry better encourage those who see something to come forward?

It is not something that you can do overnight. We have to realise that we are responsible for our industry. While governments can set in place mechanisms to minimise risk, ultimately, unless something's picked up at the border, most incursions are picked up by members of the public, or producers.

Some things are going to be difficult to eradicate and some are going to be easy. But if we don't report them, we will never eradicate them. If we don't eradicate them, they are going to add cost to the industry. Pretending that they are not going to add cost to the industry is just naive, because it just doesn't work that way. If they weren't a problem then why are they pests?

So there are going to be costs incurred when we have a new

pest or disease. That could be through regulations, it could be through additional costs in growing and production, it could be additional cost in disinfestations, it could be restrictions in market access; any one of those things could happen. Without active intervention, I'm not aware of many, if any, pests or diseases that have eradicated themselves.

Therefore, what we need is a culture that encourages people to speak up when they find a potentially new pest or disease, because it is always better earlier rather than later. Time is critical in eradication. We need to minimise the ramifications for speaking up. But the ramifications for not doing anything are always far greater in the long-term. We need to be more supportive and say 'listen, thanks mate.'

Are there instances where failure to report an issue has held a damaging effect on industry?

We only need to look at how people responded to Potato cyst nematode (PCN) in Australia, where people pretended that there wasn't a problem and

it kept coming back. There's plenty of other instances like that. There are a number of examples in Australia where people who have come forward and brought to attention possible new incursions have then had to endure death threats, their children being abused and other forms of social ostracising. We have to be able to recognise that people who are reporting problems are actually doing everyone a favour and potentially saving industry millions of dollars.

We also have examples in Australia - really good ones - where as a result of people acting early and being on top of things, we have eradicated disease. Papaya fruit fly in North Queensland is one, citrus canker is another. Australia has a relatively good record in eradicating incursions and so it can be done, but it requires real effort. Importantly, time is critical in eradication and like all these things, the earlier they are detected the greater the chance of successful eradication. The social cost of it means that as an industry, we need to be supportive of people that do that, because they are actually acting in the best interests of the industry and the rest of us, even though at times they might be the ones personally affected


and at a personal cost.

What can industry do to help rectify these sorts of concerns and make it easier to speak up?

I don't have an easy answer or solution, but my feelings are that we need to get the issue out there, it needs to be something that starts to be talked about and it needs to be something that industries at a local level and people at a local level are aware of and think about the various sides to that issue.

Getting discussion initiated is a crucial first step, because at the moment, you could talk to a lot of people and they might say 'well if I find something, I'm not going to say anything about it.' So we need to start opening up the discussion about it. It is a bit like other social examples, such as child abuse; people never talked about it 60 years ago, but that doesn't mean to say it wasn't happening. The result has been a significant improvement in our ability to deal with the problem.

To report any biosecurity concerns, contact your local Department of Primary Industries.

 Email: info@ausveg.com.au
Project Number: VG11013



Name: David Ashburner

Age: 27

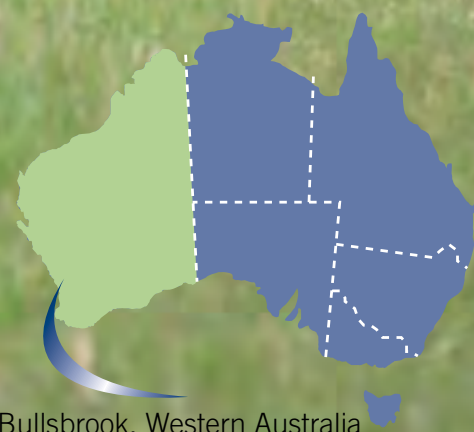
Location: Bullsbrook, Western Australia

Works: Marketing Manager, Farmland Greens

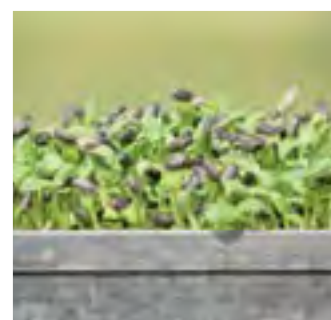
Grows: Sprouts, bean shoots, snow peas

Q&A Young grower feature

Born and raised in Zimbabwe and with a background in marketing and economics, David Ashburner now finds himself immersed in Western Australia's vegetable industry. A burning enthusiasm to innovate and improve now sees Ashburner and Farmland Greens well-placed to continue to grow for many years to come.



Bullsbrook, Western Australia



How did you first get involved in the vegetable industry?

I studied marketing and economics, which started my career in a marketing agency, organising campaigns for a number of major brands. I loved the job but it was highly stressful! A good friend of mine was working on a vegetable farm and said they were looking for a marketing manager. I've always had a passion for farming as this is the way I was bought up. I took the role and needless to say, I've never looked back.

What was it like growing up in Zimbabwe and how are things different living and farming in Australia?

Growing up in Zimbabwe was amazing! I lived on a farm that had been in the family for generations. We lived in a farming community called Raffingora, where everybody was really supportive of each other, sharing growing techniques, ideas and activities. These would involve golf days, boating, fishing competitions and even pantomimes. There was a real bond with all of us in the community. I find this is less so in Australia, probably because neighbours are so far apart and there is a fierce sense of competition.

Describe your average day on the farm.

There is no average day for me;

every day is different. At the moment, I'm getting refrigerators to be placed in major supermarkets with our branding, co-ordinating an in-store tasting campaign and working on our stand at the Perth Royal Show. I'm also developing mini greenhouses that can be placed in letterboxes, which can then be assembled at home. Everything will come as a set including the seeds and simple growing instructions, sent out on a monthly basis. Hopefully we'll be working with Oxfam on this one as part of their 'Growing a Better Future' initiative.

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

I love the vegetable product lines we sell; obviously being in sales this is very important to me. I know we are playing a key role in people's health and wellbeing. I've marketed and sold products in the past that I don't feel as passionate about and it simply doesn't work. You need to love your product.

What are the biggest challenges you face as a grower?

Some of our major product lines, such as bean shoots, are extremely sensitive to any environmental change. Added to this, we have no growers' manual or experts we can phone for advice. Everything is trial and error. Most of our product lines have to be on the shelf in two days or less due to their

highly perishable nature, so our distribution process has to be perfect.

You were part of the recent AUSVEG Young Grower Tour to China, Vietnam and Hong Kong. How was that experience and what did you get out of the tour?

The tour was well-organised and AUSVEG really did a good job looking after us! We had a great group of people and we all learnt a lot from each other. Extremely valuable contacts were made in each country and with the people I travelled with. I found the growing techniques in China and Vietnam to be completely different to anywhere else I've seen. Not having the luxury of owning big pieces of land, farmers have to utilise every square inch and focus on maximum yield. China has to feed their own population which counts for 22 per cent of the world population, [but] only 7 per cent of their land can be used for farming. Truly amazing!

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

I think we need to focus more on exhibitions and conventions to promote the industry. The mines here in WA have huge employment expos which goes a long way in securing jobs. China does a great job when it comes to exhibiting their produce. In fact, they built a huge exhibition centre containing 12 halls solely to promote vegetable produce held during April and May. I know AUSVEG have started doing conventions each year in different parts of Australia. I think this is a good start.

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

I think I'll always be working in the marketing industry, if not for vegetables then who knows. The possibilities are endless.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Hopefully retired on an island somewhere [laughs]. I find it hard to look so far into the future, as there are too many variables. I do have some very solid short-term goals. I aim on being a shareholder and running Farmland Greens, increasing sales by 25 per cent, developing a new product line and gaining three new clients to spread our market share by the end of next year. I guess one thing is certain; I'll be in the vegetable industry for a long time to come.

Weighing up the benefits of high vegetable intake

A new report seeks to quantify the benefits of high vegetable consumption in weight loss, writes Rachel Williams.



Australian vegetable growers will soon be able to use local scientific research to better promote the health benefits of their produce.

With obesity rates tripling in the past 30 years, there is a large consumer demand for foods to assist with weight loss. A diet high in a range of certain vegetables could assist with the loss of 6kg in one year.

That was the key finding of a 12-month research project carried out by 20 Australian scientists on the effects of vegetable consumption on weight loss, in a study funded by HAL, with matched funds from the Australian Government.

The research discovered evidence that could change the way Australians see and eat their veggies, said chief investigator, Professor Linda Tapsell.

"A high vegetable intake does definitely appear to be helpful in achieving weight loss," said Professor Tapsell.

She said that although vegetables have always been considered healthy, there was not a lot of hard evidence to demonstrate their effectiveness in appetite control and weight management.

"Everyone knows veggies are good for you but from a scientific perspective, we needed the hard evidence," she explains. "It is a vague, general statement and we needed to hone in on the how and the why. As food consumption is a central factor in weight management, more detail is required on the effectiveness of dietary strategies to combat obesity, such as those including more vegetables, and perhaps also specific types of vegetables."

The study incorporated a 12-month clinical trial through the University of Wollongong, research into whether some

vegetables are more satisfying than others at the University of Queensland as well as vegetable analysis at Curtin University and Queensland's Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, to determine phytonutrient content

and whether different cooking methods impact on appetite qualities.

Vegetables most commonly chosen by participants in the trial, and examined in other parts of the study, included tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers,

potatoes, sweet potatoes, capsicum and broccoli.

The 120 participants were given either one of two sets of information on a healthy diet, which included being asked to eat five serves of vegetables a day. Statistically, the average



person only eats two or three. All participants were given a personal diet prescription based on the core food groups of vegetables, fruit, grain foods, meat, fish and eggs, milk, cheese and yoghurt. Energy intake was restricted to 80% of estimated energy requirements and diets were modelled to provide 45-50% carbohydrate, 20-25% protein and 25-30% fat.

People who consumed relatively more calories (kilojoules) from vegetables as opposed to other foods, succeeded in losing more weight.

The project has recently completed a milestone stage with a final report to be published at a later date, but Professor Tapsell noted that the mean weight loss was around 6kg over 12 months. She also said that intact vegetables were more fulfilling than vegetables in more processed forms.

"Most people can lose weight in the short-term, it's what happened after a year that

people are interested in," said Professor Tapsell.

"This kind of research helps to keep the vegetable story out there so that people are not complacent about knowing vegetables are good for you. This is about pushing the boundaries of understanding why vegetables are good for you."

Professor Tapsell said she would encourage people to eat vegetables at all meal times, rather than just for a traditional evening meal.

"Because of the different colours, there is an opportunity to be creative and positively engaged with the food you eat. Veggies should be the main emphasis within meals and we can snack on them too. We need twice as many veggies as fruit and we need people to think of them in the context of being included in breakfast, lunch and dinner."

Professor Tapsell hopes the research would encourage

people to avoid fad diets, such as removing potatoes as part of a low carbohydrate diet.

"Cutting out a vegetable group is not necessary and the consequences could be significant," she warned.

"If people really focus on veggies in their diets, a lot of other things are likely to fall into place."

Details of the full research project are being finalised and will be available to all vegetable levy-payers once the final report is published.



THE BOTTOM LINE

New research that details the effects of vegetable consumption on weight loss demonstrates that:

- A diet high in vegetables can lead to a possible weight-reduction of 6kg in one year, according to the results of the study.
- Intact vegetables are more fulfilling than processed forms.
- Individuals should aim for five serves of vegetables per day, instead of the average two to three.



Professor Linda Tapsell
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Telephone: (02) 4221 3152
Email: ltapsell@uow.edu.au
Project Number: VG09037

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Teaming up for a better future

AUSVEG's former Senior Communications Officer Courtney Burger brings her wealth of experience and enthusiasm for food nutrition to the new role of industry Design Team Coordinator.

Photographs by Paul Cadenhead.



A passion for food nutrition and a background in rural affairs served to make a career at AUSVEG an obvious choice for Courtney Burger. As a Brisbane-born, Melbourne-raised student, Miss Burger was granted her school's Dux award for Food Technology, achieving the highest possible score of 50. It was there at the Star of the Sea College in Gardenvale, where she also received the Dux award for Further Mathematics, that she developed both a practical and technical grounding in food and was drawn towards the benefits that could be achieved through healthy eating.

"That food background and particularly, the health aspects of cooking, is what attracted me to a career in the vegetable industry and at AUSVEG," says Miss Burger.

Her enthusiasm for the industry was augmented by a keen interest in rural affairs, after she gained experience as a rural journalist at Prime Television in Wagga Wagga.

"My time in rural media revealed to me just how much pride exists in regional communities," says Miss Burger. "The first story I did was about the Batlow apples, because a cookbook was being launched. It was a huge event - every single community radio and television network and newspaper was there. Just seeing their response and that of the public gave me the bug for rural issues, and that has never left me."

After graduating from RMIT with a Bachelor of Communications degree, Miss Burger first undertook a role at AUSVEG as part of its active

Communications team. Her talents were quickly recognised and she was soon promoted to the position of Senior Communications Officer, where she worked as the deputy to the National Communications Manager. She is, however, quick to acknowledge the assistance and support she received from growers around the country, who helped inform and reinforce her understanding of the industry in the early months.

"Initially, it was a huge learning curve," says Miss Burger. "Coming in relatively fresh, you have to learn from those in the industry; from those who have experience and live and breathe it every day. Growers have such an in-depth knowledge about their industry and the best way to learn is to listen."

She stresses how important

it is for staff at AUSVEG to frequently conduct farm visits and meet with growers, and is grateful for those who give up their time to further educate her and her fellow AUSVEG staff.

"I'm always thankful for any grower who is willing to take time out of their day, have a chat and break down some of the issues that they are facing," says Miss Burger.

"I love going out on farms or down to the markets to speak to growers and producers and see what's happening. Luckily, that's something that's ingrained in the culture at AUSVEG and we are always encouraged to make those sorts of visits wherever possible."

Within her Communications role, Miss Burger also oversaw production of the *Vegetables* publication, in addition to her frequent appearances across

the nation's print, radio and television outlets. She cites one particularly hectic day of media, which involved back-to-back interviews with *Today Tonight* and *A Current Affair* in the space of five minutes, as a highlight.

"It is extremely important that the vegetable industry is represented and heard by the broader public, so when those opportunities crop up, you just have to step up to the plate."

Miss Burger has also been involved as a guest speaker with the Growing Leaders Program, assisting groups of growers on ways to better engage with the media.

"We as an industry have to constantly strive to get our message out there in the best way possible, so it has been great to be involved with helping growers to better utilise the media and the way they interact with it."

A fresh approach

May of this year saw the release of the Vegetable Industry Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), following a comprehensive two-year process of grower and industry consultations around the country. One of the key recommendations developed through that process was the construction of three industry Design Teams, each aligned to a strategic pillar in the SIP: 'Consumer Alignment', 'Market & Value Chain Development' and 'Farm Productivity, Resource Use & Management.' The Design Teams will guide funding for the future of the industry, with the volume of funding attributed to each Design Team weighted according to the

recommendations obtained from growers during the SIP consultation. In order to facilitate that process, the role of Design Team Coordinator was developed, to which Miss Burger was soon appointed.

"The Design Teams are about vegetable growers and industry experts driving research, so that ideas can be properly facilitated to garner real results for growers, to ensure that their key investment is realised to its full potential," says Miss Burger.

"The Design Teams are comprised of individuals of varying age, gender, geography and experience; essentially as broad a cross section of the industry as possible. The majority of members are growers, however, there are also experts from retail and all across the supply chain. We want fresh ideas coming in and to do that, we wanted to mix together industry minds to help give a rounded approach."

Working with an equivalent coordinator at Horticulture Australia Limited, Miss Burger is enthusiastic about the role that each Design Team can play in the future development of the industry.

"The Consumer Alignment pillar is attributed the greatest weighting of funding and is the largest of the three pillars, and this reflects a desire from the industry to move away from historical R&D areas and focus on how to connect with consumers and better understand their needs," she says. "The benefits of vegetable consumption have been well-documented, but through the Consumer Alignment Design Team, we will develop projects that target what triggers consumers to buy



more vegetables; how we as an industry can enhance sales and consumption and turn that into profitability for growers."

"With the Market & Value Chain Development pillar, which is the smallest of the three though not necessarily any less important, there is a strong focus on exports; something that has been identified as a key avenue for the industry to enhance and improve. As it stands, it is a very difficult area for growers, so that Design Team will look to find profitable and sustainable solutions for growers to export their produce."

Elsewhere, the Farm Productivity, Resource Use & Management Design Team, will provide on-farm R&D solutions and technologies for growers to further improve the efficiency and sustainability of their operations. Once each of the Design Teams have developed a core idea for a project, it is put out to tender to the entire network of registered service providers. The service provider who is best able to execute the project is subsequently awarded the project, following

approval from the IAC and HAL. Following a call-out in the latter half of this year for industry service providers, Miss Burger says she is pleased with the breadth and quality of candidates.

"We have had over 120 applications for industry service providers. It has been a really successful process and it is exciting to see such a strong response. It shows people really want to get on board and this will help reinvigorate the industry," she says. "We want to shake it up a bit and make sure the projects growers want are realised."

Within the current challenging climate, Miss Burger stresses the significance of the Design Teams and the need to constantly redevelop and further the industry.

"We have such a unique opportunity on our horticultural landscape, and we really need to utilise its potential. So part of the Design Teams is about recognising and appreciating what we have, but more than that, striving for what we want and need."

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Gold horizons: AUSVEG Convention to convene on the Coast.

One of Australia's favourite tourist destinations will play host to the 2013 AUSVEG National Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence.

Following the overwhelming success of the 2012 AUSVEG Convention in Hobart, the 2013 event will now take place on the Gold Coast.

Offering the enviable triumvirate of sand, sun and sites, the Gold Coast will serve as a stunning backdrop for the industry's flagship event.

Previously due to be held in Adelaide, the event was moved to the sunshine state due to unforeseeable scheduling clashes.

The 2013 Convention will be housed in Jupiters Gold Coast, one of the district's premier hotels and event spaces, from

Thursday 30 May to Saturday 1 June 2013.

Regarded as the entertainment hub of the Gold Coast, Jupiters will provide delegates with both exciting and relaxing surrounds to enjoy the full range of events and activities on offer. It boasts an extensive assortment of bars and restaurants, in addition to a grand theatre showroom and 24-hour casino.

2013 marks a return to the site of the inaugural Convention, held on the Gold Coast in 2010. The ensuing years have seen the AUSVEG Convention grow to become the industry's

foremost event of its type, offering the largest gathering of growers, key industry figures, researchers and supply-chain representatives from across horticulture and a host of related fields.

The Trade Show component will once again house a vast array of exhibitions and displays from some of the industry's leading and most innovative companies.

The full Convention program, which will be released in the coming months, will also take full advantage of the surrounding environment and integrate some of the area's

most exciting and engaging attractions.

Delegates are warmly encouraged to bring their families to enjoy all that the Gold Coast has to offer.

AUSVEG will continue to reveal more details about the 2013 Convention, Trade Show and Awards for Excellence in the coming months.



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Investing in a valuable asset

A comprehensive AUSVEG and HAL conducted survey will seek to unearth the critical skills needs of growers.

An oft repeated saying in business is that 'your people are your most valuable asset.' As part of a project focused on industry development needs in the vegetable industry, AUSVEG has been contracted by Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) to consider the emerging requirements of growers with regards to skills and training in their businesses.

Tasmanian-based consulting firm Macquarie Franklin has been brought in to complete interviews with growers around the country and to survey them in order to report back on the areas of greatest need.

"This comprehensive national consultation with growers will allow both AUSVEG and HAL to better

understand what growers need in terms of skills and training resources and programs," said AUSVEG Manager of Industry Development and Communications, Andrew White. "This will ensure that the relevant investment committees are fully informed about their colleagues' requirements, so that the vegetable industry can confidently invest in future programs focused on training and skills."

Mr White said that the review had been broad ranging and had included all aspects of farm operations including technical, practical, business and information technology needs.

"When the report is finalised towards the end of this year, it will inform future vegetable

industry investment to address skills and training needs using the National Vegetable Levy," said Mr White.

The AUSVEG development project has also been working to improve access to the Knowledge Management R&D database that is accessible on the AUSVEG website, www.ausveg.com.au. Vegetable growers and industry members are encouraged to jump online and register to access the website's R&D database, which now includes a wealth of resources including almost all of the HAL-funded R&D that has been completed over the past decade.

Recent improvements mean that when you login, new research that is most relevant to

the crops you are interested in will be automatically displayed on-screen. Improvements have also been made to make access to the database's search function easier and to display search results in a more user-friendly way, with a greater range of options now available to sort through the results. Registration is free, so visit www.ausveg.com.au now to join and take advantage of this valuable resource.



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MAREEBA	07 4092 1174
STANTHORPE	07 4681 2055
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BACCHUS MARSH	03 5367 3066
MELTON	03 9743 5644
GEELONG NORTH	03 5278 7888
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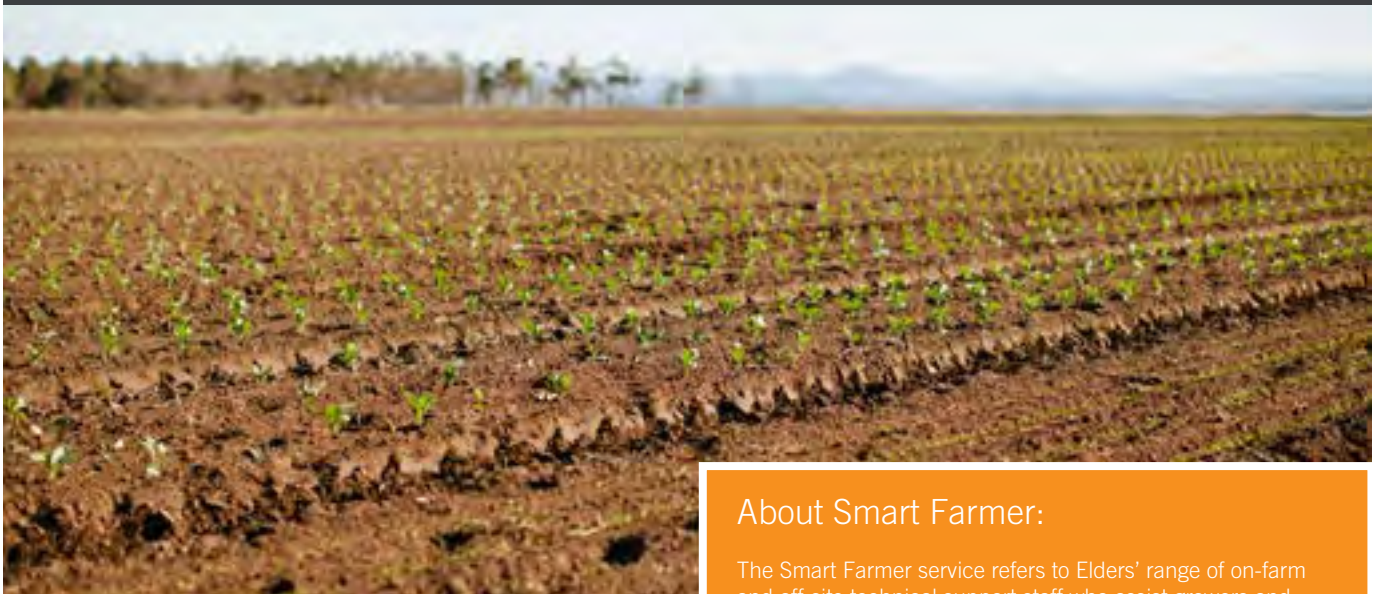


New beginnings for Elders



with Mark Geraghty

Within a turbulent business environment, Elders and their General Manager Strategy, Marketing and Communications, Mark Geraghty, remain committed to servicing growers with innovative concepts and products. Following the launch of a major new marketplace development for Elders, Geraghty took time to speak with *Vegetables Australia* to discuss two of the company's central initiatives.



SMART FARMER

What does Smart Farmer offer growers that other agronomy services do not?

It is really just a comprehensive package of the services that, over the years, we have built up intellectual property in. The whole idea of being in field and in paddock, if you like, [and] looking at the crops and making recommendations based on what they are seeing, as well as having comprehensive production planning capabilities.

So, at the start of the season, sitting down with the client and talking through what their ambitions are and develop a production plan that will achieve those ambitions.

So it is very much geared towards having a regular dialogue with the customer?

Absolutely. Constantly checking, monitoring and making sure that if circumstances change for whatever reason, you are modifying your production plan and reacting to those changed circumstances and getting professional advice in the

About Smart Farmer:

The Smart Farmer service refers to Elders' range of on-farm and off-site technical support staff who assist growers and producers across the extent of their production cycle. The service is aimed at increasing productivity and garnering higher yield and results for growers.

course of doing that.

It seems there is an increasingly digital component to the on-farm services?

Yes there is. We have prepped [Elders' agronomists] with tablet technology and a cloud-based production planning system that allows them to essentially do everything they need to do in the paddock, field, orchard or wherever, without having to go back to the office to do

it. The advent of tablets has meant that it is a much more user-friendly interface than a few years ago, where you had to drag a laptop around. That just means that decisions can be made fast, recommendations can be recorded, there's clear actions for follow-up on behalf of both the producer and the Elders' agronomist. It basically means that nothing is lost in that process and that we can act quickly and decisively, and so can the grower.

AGSURE

Why has it been developed and what will it offer growers?

It has been developed because growers are increasingly using technology to access information and products in a way that they didn't five years ago.

Like the rest of the consumer world, growers are now looking for information and product purchasing online, and we wanted to be at the forefront of satisfying that need.

Did the isolation of many rural growers inform the development of Agsure? Is it a way of better connecting growers, eliminating some of the need to travel?

Convenience and remote access are a key advantage of online services. The reason we have launched it under a different brand name is that it is a fundamentally different proposition to producers and growers. It is designed to meet the needs of people who can plan ahead and who want that proposition of competitive prices, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and not necessarily want the full suite of services that our Elders branch network offers.

I don't expect clients to do all of their purchasing this

way. I expect clients to want to do some of their purchasing this way when it suits them and when it works for them, very much as happens in marketplaces across the world.

But as I said, it is a very different proposition. There's no local relationship, there's no technical service behind this. This is about people who know what they want, have bought the product before and are simply looking for a way to access it in a way that suits them.

So with that distinction between Agsure and Elders, will the latter remain very much committed to that more traditional style of service?

Absolutely. We see absolute markets for both of those strategies. Clients themselves will have different needs at different times. We see this as very much complimentary to the Elders network; not in conflict with it, and that it will suit different growers at different times to shop both ways.

The difference between the two modes of service seems to acknowledge that even within industries, there are always going to be individuals who possess totally different requirements.

One of the key differentiators we

About Agsure:

Launched in mid-October, Agsure is the first Australian online retail space developed by a major rural services supplier. In contrast to other Elders services, the Agsure website offers users a direct mode of purchase without technical advice or interaction with a customer service representative. Through the website, users can order agricultural chemicals and fertilisers, grain and animal health products, which are able to be delivered across Australia.



see is that, given this is a direct to farm model, it may take 3-7 days, depending on the location, for the product to get there from one of our warehouses. Clearly if you need the product today, then you are going to need to shop with our branch network. But if you are planning ahead and making purchases in advance and you know what

you are going to need for an upcoming season, then you have this option to shop online.

I think one of the things that Elders can offer in this way, under the actual brand, is the fact that we understand the freight logistics challenges across the country and work with a lot of transport carriers to service those clients really well.

MARK GERAGHTY

On the skills shortage & the future of Elders

The need to attract more skilled workers to agriculture is a central concern for many in the industry. How do you see that as being achieved and how can Elders be involved in the process?

I would take you back to the Smart Farmer example. People want to work in industries where they have a clear career path. Where companies are seen to be at the forefront of technology and innovation. Where they can add value to their clients, and that is what Smart Farmer is all about. That kind of product option, if you like, that we can now offer our clients, is something that excites graduates who want to come

into the agricultural industry, because they can see that they can provide superior advice that helps a client maximise their profitability at the same time as having a very rewarding and exciting career.

So, is it about marrying that traditional knowledge and skills with more modern technology and approaches?

Absolutely. Farming is a very modern industry in a lot of ways, and there is a perception out there that is not the case with some people. We definitely want to support those growers who are at the forefront of their industries, and that helps us to attract the right staff who also

want to be at the forefront of their industries.

Smart Farmer and Agsure are clearly two key areas for Elders. Will they remain the focus for the company leading into the immediate future?

I don't think we will rest on our laurels. There is a need for constant innovation and they are two examples of innovation. But I would expect Elders to continuously look to innovate and lead in the marketplace. That is very much grounded though, in what our clients need and what their customers need. The fact that they are selling produce to many retailers and processors across Australia and

internationally means that their needs are constantly changing, so I would expect us to always be introducing new products and services to cater for that.

What are you most proud of to have overseen and been involved with during your time at Elders?

I think I would put Smart Farmer at the top of that. Agronomy as a profession has been around for a long time, but tailoring it in a way that allows our clients to access it in combination with modern technology is, for me, just going to give solutions to clients that they just haven't had before. So I think that kind of innovation is what I am most proud about.



Sterilising the threat



A new innovative study has sought to reduce the impact of the damaging Queensland fruit fly, writes Karen Shaw.

New research has found that releasing mature protein-fed sterile Queensland fruit flies (Qfly) *Bactrocera tryoni*, rather than immature flies, not only helps reduce the population of wild Qfly, but because fewer flies are needed, it is therefore more cost efficient.

This finding and other effective sterile release strategies were developed as part of a major research project *Enhancing Emergence and*

Release Methods of the Sterile Insect Technique to Improve Market Access.

The study also established release guidelines for sterile Qfly and found the sterile insect technique (SIT) had the potential to be more widely used, provided detailed operating procedures were followed.

Project leader Dr Olivia Reynolds is a Research Scientist at the Elizabeth Macarthur

Agricultural Institute and is keen to continue building on the groundbreaking research - collated from at least 14 NSW field and laboratory trials since 2007.

Qfly is a major horticultural pest throughout Australia. Adult flies lay eggs in ripe fruit and the larvae feed on the fruit flesh, rendering it unmarketable. Fruit fly exclusion zones (FFEZ) have operated in horticultural production areas in NSW, SA

and VIC.

Based on the distribution of fruit fly in southern parts of Australia though, the VIC and NSW State Governments are considering changes to how fruit fly is managed in these exclusion zones.

The sterile insect technique was introduced in 1991 as a method of biological control. Large numbers of sterile male insects are released into the field, usually in a fruit fly



Queensland fruit flies used in the study.

"It is ideal for time-poor orchardists and farmers who don't have the facilities to allow the emergence of adult flies before release," said Dr Reynolds. "They can leave the container out of the way of equipment such as harvesters. The sterile adults emerge, leading to a steady supply of sterile flies, which assists in suppressing or eradicating local Qfly populations."

An important part of the research was to develop guidelines for optimal pupal loadings and release timings to maximise the effective emergence and flight activity of the sterile adult fruit fly.

Adult release differs in that sterile adult flies are allowed to emerge in a controlled facility before being transported in lidded containers to the paddock. Once the lid is opened, adults are permitted to fly from the container and the remaining pupal debris is removed.

A positive outcome of the research was overcoming misidentification of sterile insects as wild Qflies. Studies showed that by using ideal pupal loadings in release containers and following correct procedures with the practice of dyeing pupae led to excellent dye retention on the sterile adults' ptilinum (an area of the head that the flies are unable to groom). This was validated by blind molecular testing at the

continued over page ▶

exclusion zone, to decrease the possibility of mating between wild flies and the production of viable eggs.

Until this latest research, little had been done to adapt international protocols and to improve the efficiency of release methods of Qfly, despite this being critical to the overall success of the program. The horticultural industry

commissioned the study, which is funded by HAL, the citrus and vegetable industry levies and the Australian Government.

Dr Reynolds believes that with continued research and funding, the sterile insect technique could be offered in areas where the pest is endemic, rather than the main current practice of eradicating outbreaks in exclusion zones

and suppression in surrounding buffer zones.

She explained that in the past, both pupal and adult sterile fruit fly releases were used. Pupal release involved taking pupae into the paddock in a container and allowing the adults to emerge over time, which is largely dependent on climate. Pupal release provides a steady supply of sterile fruit fly.

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Sterile flies being released.

Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute in Menangle, NSW. The project also trialled a technique called chilled adult release. Once emerged and mature, the sterile adults are chilled (so that they are immobile) and packaged into

small easily transportable 350ml containers.

The trials resulted in a prototype device for releasing the immobilised flies.

“We designed an automated and cost effective blower to help release the chilled flies, either

from a slow moving vehicle or stationary position,” said Dr Reynolds. “Once released, they quickly warm up, take flight, and search for a mate.”

She said a significant finding was that releasing mature, as opposed to immature flies, meant fewer sterile flies needed to be released, and they were ready to mate.

“In comparison, immature flies spend time searching for protein (needed to mature), and are likely to suffer higher mortality rates,” she said.

The research shows that with appropriate management, it is possible to have good results in suppressing and eradicating populations of wild Qfly.

To date in Australia, sterile flies have commonly been used for outbreaks in fruit fly exclusion zones.

“Releasing sterile insects has potential in endemic areas, particularly where orchards or urban centres are geographically isolated, or where control is being attempted on an area-wide basis,” said Dr Reynolds.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Major new research has identified three release methods to effectively suppress populations of Qfly. The study also identified:

- That fewer mature sterile flies need to be released to achieve control, compared with immature flies. The technique was also more cost efficient.
- Excellent dye retention by sterile insects to differentiate them from the undyed wild flies.
- A Sterile Insect Technique Strategic Release Plan and expanded Operating Procedures for all methods.
- Research results support the use of SIT not only in pest free areas, but also in areas where Qfly is endemic, which is where the technique was originally intended for use.



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Project Number: MT06049

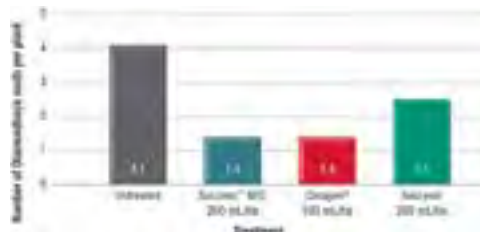
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Soil solutions



with Rohan Davies

Understanding new fertiliser technologies

Technical Agronomist at Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, Rohan Davies, discusses new fertiliser technologies and the potential benefits they can provide for growers.

Growers have been offered several new fertiliser options over recent years, including liquids, urease inhibitors, polymer coated fertilisers and ammonium stabilisers.

In theory, these products are designed to improve the crop's efficiency of nitrogen use by reducing losses from volatilisation, denitrification or leaching and better matching nitrogen availability with plant demand.

Each product varies in its mode of action. For example, coated products may use polymer or sulphur or a combination of the two to encapsulate nutrients for a period of time.

Typically, the nutrient is released through the interaction of water or vapour after application. When vapour penetrates the coating, it condenses on the solid core and dissolves part of it. An internal pressure gradient builds up and the fertiliser is released by diffusion into the surrounding soil.

This means that the plant may only access what has been released from the coated product. Ensuring that the release pattern matches plant requirements is critical with coated products - too slow or too fast and you will negate any potential benefits.

This is quite different to an ammonium stabiliser, which works by disabling the nitrifying bacteria in the soil for a period of time, delaying the conversion of ammonium to nitrate nitrogen. This allows the plant to access ammonium nitrogen at any time, while mitigating the potential for

losses from denitrification and leaching.

When assessing any new fertiliser choice, consider first what you are trying to achieve. Is your aim to reduce volatilisation losses, or leaching and denitrification losses? Is your aim to feed the crop more efficiently and reduce the rate of nitrogen applied? Then look to compare the expected costs and benefits.

Trenkel (2010) highlighted the relative pricing differential between products as follows:

- NPK (1)
- NPK + Ammonium Stabiliser (x1.3-1.6)
- NPK + Slow Release (x4-6), and
- NPK + Control Release (x8-12).

It may be that simple changes in the nutrient source chosen, application method or timing could provide similar results for minimal additional cost when compared with using newer types of fertiliser technology at a similar application rate.

Source: Trenkel, M.E. (2010). 'Slow and Controlled-Release and Stabilized Fertilisers. An Option for Enhancing Nutrient Use Efficiency in Agriculture,' International Fertilizer Industry Association, Paris, France.



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Growers visit a farm in Vietnam.



Growers visit the local Nan Xiahe fruit and vegetable market in China.



Young grower tour participants with Managing Director of E.E. Muirs & Sons, Ian Muir [centre left], and AUSVEG Chairman, John Brent [centre right].



Growers are warmly welcomed at an organic farm in China.

Asian odyssey

With a view to better understanding Asian vegetable markets, nine young growers embarked on a tour in September of China and Vietnam and attended Hong Kong's Asia Fruit Logistica conference. The growers, some of whom had never met another grower their age before, formed new networks and discovered that there may be trade opportunities for premium and niche Australian products in China and Vietnam.

Touching down in the vibrant Chinese city of Shanghai on the night of 30 August, nine young Australian growers began their tour of China, Hong Kong and Vietnam. The 13-day study tour was designed to provide participants with a greater understanding of trade and business opportunities in these growing Asian economies, to compare and contrast production and supply chain practices and explore networking opportunities. The tour was funded by HAL using the National Vegetable Levy, voluntary contributions and matched funds from the Australian Government.

After embarking on a high-speed train that clocked 330km/hr en route north from

Shanghai to begin day two, the group arrived in the city of Weifang, renowned as the largest vegetable production area in China. On the train into the city, growers were instantly amazed by the sheer number of greenhouses. Densely arranged across the entire landscape, the greenhouses engulfed the eye line, often stretching as far as the horizon on both sides of the train tracks. As the group would learn later that day when touring the city, the introduction of greenhouses to the region was hailed by the Chinese back in 1989 as a major innovation; generating the ability to grow certain winter vegetable crops on a year-round basis, and enhancing the productivity and prosperity of the region. The

man who brought greenhouse technology to the area, Mr Wong, is honoured in a museum and is widely recognised by the Chinese as the 'king of vegetables.'

With a population of almost nine million people, Weifang dwarfs Australia's largest cities. Growers visited a national wholesale market in nearby Shouguang. At a massive 3000 acres in size, the national market trades in 300 different vegetable types and has its own hospital, accommodation and sophisticated cool room facilities. The wholesale market cost almost \$2 billion back in 2009 and it turns over \$40 million Yuan per day in peak periods. Dispensing up to 20 million kilograms of vegetables

daily, around 400 wholesalers travel to the market each day after collecting produce directly from farms. Prices are controlled by the government though and negotiation on quality and other factors can only occur between a certain set price range. Cash trade in the market is outlawed and wholesalers must apply for an identification card to even trade. Growers don't attend the market directly, with their produce sold to the wholesaler from within the farm gate.

The tour group next visited the Nan Xiahe fruit and vegetable market, which services the Weifang area. Visiting Nan Xiahe enabled participants to get a first-hand look at the local supply chain practices

of growers and wholesalers in China. In particular, the Australian growers immediately noticed the lack of cool chain facilities compared with the national market. The market also lacked the standards and organisation of Australian markets.

The ensuing days saw the group travel across China to Zhanbei, the second largest vegetable production area in China. The tour group visited two farms in this area, one broccoli, cabbage and lettuce farm and another organic vegetable farm in the Shunyi district that is supported by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science and has a customer list of 500 affluent consumers. The organic produce commands up to double or more of the price of ordinary vegetables. The growers were warmly welcomed at both farms and were able to gain insights into the differing production and supply chain practices. For instance, produce often travelled directly to Shanghai from the first farm, taking five days to get there by truck. On the farm, broccoli

pickers were paid the equivalent of \$10 AUD per day, with the produce transported by donkey to a nearby truck where it would then head to an off-site cool room facility before being taken by the wholesaler to the wholesale markets in Shanghai. This farm alone supplied 20 provinces and farming was undertaken as a cooperative, with 32 different families involved in the production process across 1800 acres for over 60 years. The tour participants noted that whilst production practices appeared quite primitive, the quality of the broccoli heads was amazing and the farmers had the advantage of people power and low labour rates. Farms lacked heavy farming and harvesting equipment but made up for it with labour.

Following a sightseeing rest day in Beijing, one of the most beneficial meetings the group enjoyed was with the Chinese Vegetable Marketing Association, a division of the Chinese Government. The group were warmly received - national flags and all - by President

Dai Zhong Jiu who together with his colleagues, explained that the main opportunities for Australian farmers would be in premium or niche vegetable products, as well as the export of seed and other production technologies.

The officials commented on challenges in the Chinese production process, including the need to condense their supply chains, improve the cool chain, and invest in new farming technologies and techniques.

As the trip passed the half way mark, participants attended the Asia Fruit Logistica trade fair in Hong Kong over two days. More than 53 countries were in attendance at the fair, which included machinery, new technology and networking opportunities, with a range of countries interested in the vegetable and fruit trade. While there was a bias towards trade of fruit products at the fair, growers were able to establish a number of contacts and meet with a range of manufacturers of emerging products, including labelling machines, preservation

and packaging technologies.

The tour culminated in Vietnam, where the tour group explored a number of farms that grew herbs, Asian vegetables and lettuces. Like China, farming in Vietnam is also done cooperatively, however, on a much smaller scale, and pricing in the markets is not controlled, with farmers having the ability to negotiate based on market prices.

Overall, the tour was an exceptional opportunity for participants to network with their fellow young growers, meet new people and establish contacts in the Asian region. While production practices are clearly behind those here in Australia, the opportunities to export premium products are yet to be fully realised and is a key message worthy of consideration.



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Fight the powder:

new fungicide offers cucurbit alternative against Powdery mildew



DuPont has registered a new fungicide to help growers protect against powdery mildew.

Australian Cucurbit growers have a new weapon in the fight against Powdery mildew. Recently released by crop protection organisation DuPont Australia™, Talendo® fungicide offers Cucurbit growers a new defence and alternative mode of action (MOA) for the damaging fungal disease. Speaking to *Vegetables Australia* following the product's release, DuPont Market Development Manager, David Richards said DuPont Talendo fungicide provides a solution for growers that was previously not available for field Cucurbit growers.

"There have been several new products within the cucurbit market in the last few years but some are premixes of existing MOA's, limiting the rotational options for farmers," said Mr Richards. "We realised that there was a need in the market for a new MOA fungicide for Cucurbit growers. When DuPont started trialling Talendo fungicide in viticulture, we realised that it was a great residual product for the prevention of Powdery mildew. Talendo exhibited excellent redistribution, which

aids the protection of fruit and leaves. We realised that Talendo would be a nice fit in the Cucurbit market to provide a competitively priced, premium protection from Powdery mildew and would provide new MOA (Group 13) fungicide to reduce the risk of fungicide resistance."

Extensive trials for the product were conducted locally and in New Zealand, across crops such as zucchini, squash, watermelon and honeydew. Talendo has been registered in Europe specifically for use on wine grapes for the past six years, and was first registered for use on field grown Cucurbits in New Zealand last year. Early commercial applications of the product subsequent to its registration in Australia have already garnered positive results.

"A number of North Queensland growers have had an opportunity to use Talendo in their pumpkin and melon crops since the APVMA registration in August this year," said Mr Richards. "One agronomist has reported that several of her growers have had "super" results with Talendo. The



Untreated Powdery mildew.



DuPont Talendo® fungicide Gumlu Qld (AUE-09-608) 2009 (2x250 mL/ha at 10 day spray interval).

overwhelming feedback is that Talendo will be an excellent new tool in providing protection from Powdery mildew in cucurbits."

The fungicide is able to be applied within an Integrated Pest Management strategy, as it possess minimal impact on most key beneficial insects and has low toxicity towards honeybees, which are vital for pollination of Cucurbits.

"Talendo works by preventing spores infecting tissue and killing spores in the fruiting bodies of any existing disease. This will reduce the spore load and therefore potential for recurrent infections later in the crop," said Mr Richards. "When used as a preventative around flowering, it will protect this critical crop phase and reduce

the potential for infection later in the crop. Talendo can be used for two sequential applications 10-14 days apart, with a maximum third application, after using an alternative mode of action fungicide. Talendo has a one day withholding period in Cucurbits, making it a flexible option in your rotation program."

Mr Richards said Talendo formed part of DuPont's continued emphasis on providing new and innovative on-farm solutions for growers. "It is important that this new chemistry is available to growers for the long term, and there are a number of strategies being implemented to encourage the longevity of the product," said Mr Richards.

Minor-use permits

Permit Number	Permit Description (pesticide/crop/pest)	Date Issued	Expiry Date	Comments
PER13123	Amistar 250SC Fungicide / Brassica Leafy Vegetables, Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Cauliflower & Beans / Specified fungal diseases	02-Feb-12	31-Mar-13	Renewal of previous permit. For use in all states (excl Vic).
PER13155	Dimethoate / Use during suspension - Agricultural uses	06-Oct-11	05-Oct-13	Renewal of previous permit. For use in all states.
PER13158	Dimethoate / Specified Citrus, Tropical Fruit commodities and Hot chilli peppers (post-harvest) / Various Fruit Fly species	06-Oct-11	05-Oct-13	Renewal of previous permit. For use in all states.
PER13170	Dimethoate / Melons including watermelons (post-harvest) / Various Fruit Fly species	13-Oct-11	05-Oct-13	Renewal of previous permit. For use in all states.
PER13254	Dimethoate / Chilli peppers / Queensland and Mediterranean Fruit Fly	02-Feb-12	05-Oct-13	Renewal of previous permit. For use in all states.
PER13290	Dimethoate / Blueberries, bilberries and other vaccinium berries (Vaccinium spp.) / Queensland Fruit Fly and Mediterranean Fruit Fly	02-Feb-12	05-Oct-13	Renewal of previous permit. For use in all states.
PER13553	Prodigy Insecticide (methoxyfenozide) / Almonds / Carob moth	03-Oct-12	30-Sep-15	For use in all states (excl Vic). APVMA require residue data for renewal.

These permits have had their additional data requirements changed.

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



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Assisting Tassie growers with land management developments

New farm planning assistance for Tasmanian growers will assist them to identify and protect natural resources on their properties.



NRM North in Tasmania currently has funding available to assist landholders to implement a range of practical activities on-farm to protect natural resources. The NRM North region covers the Launceston and Scottsdale growing areas and has funds available to assist growers

with property planning and enhancement activities. Eligible activities include fencing to control stock access to remnant vegetation, watercourses and wetlands. Revegetation activities are also eligible in clumps or belts/corridors with native plants to create buffer zones.

Funding also covers wind break plantings, which can help provide protection to crops and prevent issues such as loss of topsoil and spray drift.

Growers from other regions who are interested in funding available in their region should contact their local Natural Resource Management (NRM)

body, as a number of grants to assist with land management are available throughout Australia.



Jo Voller or Scott Shilg
NRM North
Telephone: (03) 6333 7777



A case for change: innovative practices showcased in 'Soils for Life' Program case studies

Case studies show innovative new approaches to land management and the important role of farmers in managing Australia's landscapes.

The 'Soils for Life' Program has released a number of innovative case studies showcasing the innovative land management practices of farmers throughout Australia. The case studies examine regenerative landscape management practices and how they have contributed to the ongoing sustainability of the land.

Each case study reinforces the positive role that farmers can have in ensuring positive land management outcomes throughout Australia.

The 'Soils for Life' Program is run through national policy group Outcomes Australia. Under the chairmanship of former Governor-General of Australia, Major General Michael Jeffery AC AO (Mil) CVO MC (Retd),

the organisation has taken a leadership role in bringing greater consideration of the role of the farmer in national environmental policy debates.



Case studies can be accessed via: soilsforlife.org
Telephone: (03) 9822 0388
Email: info@ausveg.com.au
Website: enviroveg.com

National Water Week puts spotlight on water issues

National Water Week highlights the importance of efficient water use throughout Australia.

National Water Week was held recently between 21 and 27 October as a way of drawing awareness to the water challenges facing Australia throughout the community. A great way for Australian growers to play their part is to participate in initiatives through their local Natural Resource Management bodies. These groups can assist in identifying regional issues involving water management and assist growers to put initiatives in place on their property to combat issues such as erosion, salinity or protection of shared water sources. Additionally, funding may be available to landholders to assist with any works which are undertaken on their properties.

Australian vegetable growers are playing a proactive role in managing important environmental assets throughout Australia, and the assistance of regional groups can help determine possible on-site works which contribute to the water security and quality in the entire region.

Growers should contact their local NRM body for further information on grants and assistance available as these vary by region.



As a starting point, growers can consult the EnviroVeg regional guides, available at www.enviroveg.com, which detail key contacts for major vegetable growing regions in Australia.

Research in the spotlight: innovative approaches to precision irrigation

An innovative research project looks at the application of precision agriculture techniques to irrigation equipment.

Project VG08029 - Design and demonstration of precision agricultural irrigation applied to different vegetable crops.

Field trials have been conducted by the University of Tasmania to demonstrate the potential for use of innovative precision agriculture technology in irrigation. The project involved monitoring

savings and yields on a number of trial crops and sites to measure energy and water savings. As part of the project, a pressure control system for travelling gun irrigators was developed and retrofitted, which showed a reduction in energy and water use of 17-21.8% when trialled. The project shows the potential for precision agricultural technology to be

retrofitted to common irrigation systems and generate significant water savings.



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Glasshouse empire

Chris Millis and Flavorite have married business acumen with environmental sustainability to become one of the leaders in the glasshouse industry.

At the Flavorite production facility in Warragul, Victoria, plans are afoot to secure the ongoing sustainability and ultimately, profitability of the business into the future. As one of Australia's prominent greenhouse producers, the company is constantly scanning both in Australia and abroad for innovative ways to recycle

and improve efficiency to manage their production costs. With inputs such as energy, water and fertiliser making a considerable contribution to production costs, environmental management will be a key consideration in coming years.

"All the costs of production are going up and you have to work out a way to drop them,"

says Farm Manager Chris Millis.

Flavorite is a family-owned business, centred on a vision; to develop a better tasting tomato. It is a vision that saw Melbourne Market stalwarts Mark Millis and Mike Nichol team up in the early 1990s to establish one of the early commercial-scale hydroponic operations in Warragul. In the ensuing years,

the business has continued to grow and now has 15 hectares under glass and 5 hectares under plastic growing truss tomatoes, cherry truss tomatoes, cucumbers and capsicums. Rapid growth in the business has seen the sons of founders Mark and Mike assume key roles in the business.

"We wanted to grow a better



Chris Millis, Farm Manager Flavorite.

tasting tomato than the field grown stuff and knew we couldn't do it outside with the weather conditions," says Chris Millis.

The business, which started with plastic, moved to glass production in 2002, employing international technology from leading Dutch companies. The business of today has come a long way from its humble beginnings to grow to one of the leading protected cropping producers in Australia. Less the traditional farm and more a modern production facility, the glasshouses today are hives of activity with workers picking, pollinating and pruning the endless rows of plants.

Farm Manager Chris Millis is at the centre of the activity each day, overseeing production at the Warragul facility, and environmental management is becoming an increasing concern

for the operation.

"We use natural gas for heating and it is one of our major costs of production," he says.

The natural gas heats pipes of water to in turn, warm the greenhouse. One of the strategies used by Flavorite is a heat buffer, whereby the business burns gas during the day and stores the heat in an insulated steel tank. Stored heat is then used at night as well as using energy screens at night to minimise heat loss through the glass.

"You want Co2 during the day (for plant growth) and use the heat at night," says Millis.

Flavorite tomatoes are available throughout Australia and the business has built a brand that consumers trust. As a highly-visible product in the marketplace, Chris is always concerned with meeting

consumer expectations around chemical use.

"We don't like spraying; our whole philosophy is around sustainability and reducing pesticide use. We have an extensive IPM Program introducing beneficial insects and scouting to minimise spraying."

The biggest problems for Flavorite are whitefly, thrips and caterpillars and there are beneficials available for each pest.

"We only use soft chemicals when we have to spray."

IPM, however, also presents its fair share of challenges.

"It takes a long time to get the balance right. We would love one day to have bumblebees (in the greenhouse). Pollination is a massive cost to our business; we manual pollinate but internationally they all have bumblebees in the greenhouse."

This process would allow better pollination and higher production, but manual pollination requires a highly sophisticated operation.

"You need to have a very good IPM Program in place to have bumblebees," says Millis.

Protected cropping offers benefits of shielding against disease and biosecurity risks apparent in soil, however, Chris Millis sees even greater potential to create thriving systems using IPM techniques.

A benefit of hydroponic operations is the ability to use technology to control water and nutrient dosages to crops, ensuring individual plants receive only the nutrients they require.

"In the greenhouses we are using rockwool (medium), so we have moisture content sensors, scales, drain sensors and infrared cameras to measure





plant temperature, so fertigation is only delivered to the plant when required with the right amount of fertiliser.”

In a large commercial-scale operation, Chris is significantly concerned with ensuring the efficient use of any inputs required for production, as any savings offer a significant competitive advantage. New plans for the greenhouses include a drainwater collection system, which uses UV sterilisation to allow for water to be recycled, minimising waste.

Once the new system is in place, the business will be able to save 30% of water and 30% of fertiliser in their operations.

“If you can sterilise the water and keep the fertiliser then it can be blended with fresh water and topped back up with fertiliser,” he says.

To allow for recycling, Flavorite is currently finalising a 50 megalitre lined dam so that rainwater (with its low sodium content) can be blended with current bore supplies and used by the new system. By the

coming summer, Millis predicts that Flavorite will be recycling 100% of its water.

Waste is also an ongoing concern for the business and Flavorite is trialling a number of innovative ways to cut the business' waste stream.

“We are starting to trial biodegradable plastics [in production], and the idea is that we can turn our waste stream into compost.”

Biodegradable string and clips (used to string up plants) are also being trialled, which can

then be composted.

In a large commercial operation such as Flavorite, efficiency is essential in order to manage the costs of production, while communicating the sustainability is essential to winning the confidence of their customers. In this sense, at Flavorite, principles of environmentally-sustainable practice and business operations go hand-in-hand.



Photographs by Louise Buma.

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How serious is the Chinese threat to Australian vegetable growers?

Industry economist Ian James examines the threat posed by China to Australia's vegetable industry.

With a population over 1.3 billion, everything about China is big. It is a similar story in vegetables. China is the world's largest vegetable producer. It even dominates in vegetables not normally associated with the Chinese diet. Chinese potato production in 2010 was 74,799,084 tonnes. The total volume of the Australian vegetable industry is around 3,400,000 tonnes. The enormity of Chinese production relative to production in Australia is highlighted in Table 1 for key vegetables.

Chinese production has the potential to swamp Australian markets. However, most of China's vegetable production is consumed domestically or processed. Fresh exports as a

percentage of total production are low. In Australia, with the exception of carrots (Australia's largest fresh export) it is a similar story, although the table shows higher export to production ratios compared to China. Western Australia, in particular, has a greater export tendency than other states. The low export propensity of China and Australia is not unique. Most other countries exhibit similar low export ratios for their vegetable industries. Where exports of a particular vegetable are high, it is usually because of niche marketing often associated with counter seasonal opportunities. Australian asparagus and New Zealand pumpkins into Japan are examples.

There are reasons for the low export propensity of fresh vegetables. Distance that can impact on freshness is one, freight cost another, biosecurity issues a third and protective barriers, such as licensing and tariffs, a fourth. The impact of these issues varies from vegetable to vegetable and these factors are more an issue for fresh than processed vegetable exports. Australian vegetable growers may have cause for concern at the growth in trade in a number of frozen and processed vegetables, but may take some comfort in the low propensity to export fresh vegetables out of China.

What is the evidence to date on China's impact on Australian growers?

China is the second largest source country for vegetable imports into Australia. In general, Chinese vegetable products are at the lower end of the price spectrum so the volume or quantity share is likely to be higher. Table 2 shows the value and quantity of all vegetable imports from China with a total value over \$1 million and ranked against the 2011-12 financial year. There were 16 vegetable products in this category. Dried vegetables, which are widely used in a number of other food preparations, was the major product imported in 2011-12. The most notable feature of the table is the strong preponderance of packaged vegetable products (largely canned) and snap frozen vegetables. This should not

be a surprise to any Australian consumer that strolls down the aisles of Australian supermarkets. Only two fresh imports from China make the list - garlic and peas (snow and sugar snap peas). China dominates world production and trade for these two vegetables.

Looking at longer term trends, the value of Chinese imports in 2011-12 was \$95 million, up sharply from 2001-02 when imports totalled only \$35 million. But there has been no movement in China's relative position as a source of imports. A decade ago, China was also the second most important source country for imports. Indeed, last financial year, a mere \$35,000 prevented China being forced back to third position as a source of imports. Nor has China's share of total imports risen dramatically. Last financial year China's share of total imports was 13.9%. In 2001-02, China's share of imports was 12.6%. The most notable change over the decade has been the rise in the relative importance of frozen vegetables. This may reflect better access to freezing facilities in rural China.

The Chinese obsession

In Australia, there is an obsession with anything Chinese. The popular press loves a story on China; Australians should lament the country being swamped with cheap Chinese product, while appreciating that their prosperity is dependent on Chinese economic growth. In the vegetable industry though, the Chinese obsession poses a wider danger.

Table 1 - Production and exports of vegetables 2010

Vegetable	Production(tonnes)	Export(tonnes)	Exports as a % of production
Carrots			
Australia	267,442	73,612	27.5
China	15,899,078	506,988	3.2
Beans			
Australia	28,000	1,403	5
China	152,213,650	4,340	0.03
Cauliflowers & Broccoli			
Australia	70,900	2,935	4.1
China	8,587,842	75,611	0.9
Potatoes			
Australia	1,278,120	36,577	2.9
China	72,973,542	258,683	0.3
Cabbages			
Australia	78,800	787	1
China	32,538,878	378,986	1.16
Lettuce & Chicory			
Australia	166,100	1,116	0.67
China	13,005,000	72,268	0.55

Source of data: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations - FaoStats

Table 2 - Australia Vegetable Imports from China

Code	Unit	Description	Imports 2011-12	
			AUS \$	Quantity
0712	KG	Vegetables, Dried No Added Preparation	15,883,497	4,944,092
071080	KG	Frozen vegetables other than beans, peas, potatoes, other leguminous vegetables, spinach and corn	13,029,544	13,297,049
200290	KG	Tomato Paste	10,851,028	11,765,494
070320	KG	Garlic, Fresh Or Chilled	9,816,250	8,337,576
071090	KG	Frozen Vegetable Mixtures	7,167,814	6,544,136
200310	KG	Prepared Agaricus Mushrooms(packaged)	6,168,342	3,544,174
120991	KG	Vegetable Seeds For Sowing	4,097,647	123,947
070810	KG	Peas, Fresh Or Chilled	4,069,680	1,295,486
200599	KG	Prepared Vegetables and Vegetable mixtures(packaged)	3,458,101	2,366,313
210320	L	Tomato Ketchup And Other Tomato Sauces	2,662,842	3,209,161
200190	KG	Vegetables/Fruit/Nuts Preserved by vinegar	2,333,561	1,257,745
200560	KG	Prepared Asparagus (packaged)	1,984,387	743,369
071022	KG	Frozen Beans	1,912,563	2,010,265
071040	KG	Frozen Corn	1,860,255	1,883,182
071030	KG	Frozen Spinach	1,713,624	1,493,624
200390	KG	Prepared non agaricus mushrooms, fungi and truffles	1,117,519	773,012

Source of Data: Australian Bureau of Statistics/GTIS Global Trade Atlas

Yet the surge in imports engulfing the Australian vegetable industry is not just a Chinese phenomenon. Chinese imports have risen dramatically over the decade and are up \$60 million. But so have imports from a host of other countries. Imports from New Zealand are up \$87 million, from \$68m to \$155m; the USA is up \$59 million, from \$36m to \$95m; Italy is up \$45 million from \$40m to \$85m; and the Netherlands is up \$38 million from \$14m to \$52m. The USA, Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, Belgium, Turkey, Argentina, Chile and South Africa have all been able to increase their share of import penetration of Australian domestic markets.

Clearly, wider market forces than just cheap Chinese product are at work. The pressure from imports is largely confined to frozen and processed vegetables. These are now globalised products and competition between countries to offload surplus vegetable

production is increasing. It is the response to this import surge, rather than blaming cheap Chinese product, that needs to be addressed.

The future import threat from China

Australia is looking to develop the Chinese relationship further and supply more agricultural goods into China. There is the potential for export of vegetables to higher income earners in the major cities. But the markets are not easy, the logistics difficult and the relationships often fickle.

While there are opportunities, China has the potential to harm the Australian vegetable industry. China has already had a desultory impact as a cheap supplier of vegetables in some of Australia's key export markets. A key impact on the Australian vegetable industry will be the Chinese approach towards economic development in rural areas.

China's agriculture policy

will be driven by food security concerns and maintaining political stability in rural China. In the face of rapid urbanisation, China is facing pressure on its food supplies as arable land is eaten up. The Chinese may welcome imports of land extensive agricultural products such as grain and livestock products to economise on land use. However, vegetable growing provides an outlet that is land intensive and surrounding markets with the potential for export. The Chinese are more likely to pursue development of their vegetable industry. Despite rising labour costs and the emergence of labour shortages due to the success of the one child policy, Chinese competition in world vegetable markets may intensify. And if the protracted negotiations between Australia and China over a Free Trade Agreement ever reach conclusion, don't expect many benefits to flow to Australian vegetable growers.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Fears continue to grow surrounding China's short and long-term impact on the Australian vegetable industry.
- Pre packaged vegetables are the most common items imported from China to Australia, with garlic and peas standing as the only highly imported fresh vegetables.
- Clearer country of origin labelling is considered a key factor in arresting the flood of Chinese imports.



Ian James is an economist working in the vegetable industry. There is a wealth of economic information on the vegetable industry and more detail can be found on the AUSVEG website: ausveg.com.au/resources/industrystatistics.htm.
Project Number: VG11038

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Ask the industry



with Scott Mathew

Scott Mathew, Technical Services Lead at Syngenta, discusses the role of pre-emergent herbicides and effective weed management.

Question: I would like to know a little more about pre-emergent herbicides. How do they work?

Pre-emergent herbicides work in a number of ways. They are applied to the soil and then either taken up by the emerging root, shoot, or a combination of both. They control weeds at the early stages of their lifecycle, their activity is generally between when the radical (or root/shoot) emerges from the seed and the cotyledon emerges through the soil.

The specific site of root or shoot uptake varies between each herbicide mode of action group, giving each herbicide mode of action group its own unique weed control attributes.

Simazine (GESATOP), a Group C herbicide, for example is taken up by roots of the developing weed. Atrazine (GESAPRIM) is also a Group C herbicide and is taken up by both the roots and leaf shoots. Both of these Group C herbicides are quickly translocated through the weed and act by inhibiting photosynthesis.

Pendimethalin (Stomp), a Group D herbicide, is taken up by the roots and acts by inhibiting microtubule assembly in the weed.

Some pre-emergent herbicides may also have post-emergent activity through being translocated into the leaf and can be applied to newly emerging weeds.

Question: How can I improve my weed control?

Effective weed management is an essential requirement for reliably achieving high quality produce. By taking a long term view of weed management and adopting an integrated weed management strategy, you can successfully manage those weeds that compete with your crops.

There are three key steps to effectively managing weed issues. These are:

1. Plan your crop rotations.
2. Identify the weeds present on your property or those likely to be in your crop.
3. Develop your weed management strategy.

When developing your weed management strategy, you should remember that there are five general stages in which weed control will be most effective. These are:

1. Pre-planting with knockdown herbicides.
2. Pre-emergent, either before or after planting depending on the herbicide.
3. Early in-crop.
4. Late in-crop.
5. Post-harvest and when the paddock is at fallow stage.

There are several options per stage, depending on your strategy and the density and diversity of the weed population. Please contact your local agronomist for the appropriate herbicide options.

Question: Do pre-emergent herbicides require rainfall or irrigation after their application?

All pre-emergent herbicides in general need either rainfall or irrigation after their application to become 'activated' and available to be taken up by the germinating weed. The time between application and the activation of the herbicide will vary between the mode of action Groups. Some pre-emergent herbicides require activation within a number of days, while some can wait for up to one to two weeks before they need to be activated. If weeds germinate before the herbicide is activated, the uptake of the herbicide may be limited and weed control may be unsatisfactory.

Question: Do all pre-emergent herbicides need to be mechanically incorporated?

No, not all need to be mechanically incorporated; there are some that can be incorporated by either rainfall or irrigation. In general, it is those pre-emergent herbicides that are sensitive to sunlight and need to be mixed into the soil to minimise loss and those that are volatile and can be lost to evaporation, especially from wet soil, that need to be mechanically incorporated.

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



Around the states

Queensland



In a submission on the Federal Government's National Food Plan (Green Paper), Growcom has argued that agricultural production is the foundation of any food system, and thus needs to be the focus of any food plan.

We believe the National Food Plan must concentrate more on developing and supporting a resilient, knowledgeable, sustainable and profitable farm and food sector in Australia. To achieve this, the Government must broaden its focus and show support for innovative, resilient, productive and profitable agricultural systems.

The government can assist the agricultural sector to maintain the food system by:

- Increasing investment in

RD&E to improve innovation and productivity.

- Reducing unnecessary regulation and compliance burden.
- Addressing the multiple factors that lead to low profitability for many industries including the high costs of inputs, especially energy and water, and the market dominance of major retailers.
- Ensuring the security of agricultural land.
- Ensuring access to appropriately skilled and affordable labour.
- Delivering more efficient and resilient regional transport infrastructure.
- Improving the assessment and management of potential biosecurity risks.
- Improving access to export markets.

We continue to argue that Australia is not food secure when it comes to fruit and vegetables.

We have criticised the Federal Government's position on Australia's food security as being simplistic and naive. Imports should not be considered by the government

to be a secure source of food because there are many potential situations (such as conflict, failed production and trade restrictions) that could disrupt this supply.

Australia must take a more long-term and strategic view of food security. The issue of energy security provides a useful analogy; while it would be foolish to argue that Australia should be fully self-sufficient in all energy sources all of the time, it is widely accepted that Australia must maintain the *capacity* to provide its energy needs in times of crisis or conflict. We believe this same logic must be applied to the National Food Plan.

The government argues that market forces will ensure food security. However, we argue:

- Any price signal from increased demand is diluted along the supply chain, and there is no guarantee that growers will benefit from increased retail prices. Experience suggests that the major retailers address supply shortfalls through increased imports that can meet the immediate demand but which

undermines future productive capacity.

• A decline in imports from other countries growing the particular commodity is likely to mean a local shortage if Australia fails to maintain its own productive capacity.

• There is a lag time from planting to harvesting for all crops. In the case of tree fruit, this can be as long as eight years from tree planting to first harvest. Failure to ensure a viable local industry could leave Australia without particular commodities for a considerable time. By the time production has increased, prices may well have declined.

• There is also an assumption that land suitable for the production of an in-demand crop will be available, meeting all of the requirements for suitable soil characteristics, water availability, transport infrastructure and proximity to markets.

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New South Wales



With many local cost pressures facing the horticulture industry, NSW Farmers has been seeking to ensure that Australia's biosecurity remains a competitive advantage for our horticulture members.

NSW Farmers has been supporting AUSVEG's campaign to ensure that decision makers, and the general public, are aware that the risks of Zebra Chip and the tomato-potato psyllid are too great to allow the importation of fresh potatoes from New Zealand. This included making a submission,

which supported AUSVEG's concerns that DAFF had failed to utilise the most current science in its consideration of the proposed imports. NSW Farmers believe that in developing the draft protocols, DAFF has failed to meet the obligations under its own *Import Risk Analysis Handbook*.

Looking at biosecurity at a local level, the NSW Government has announced that it will create *Local Land Services NSW (LLS)*. The new agency will take on the biosecurity, pest control, travelling stock route and natural disaster functions of the LHPA; the natural resource management planning and funding allocation roles of the CMAs; and the advisory services of the DPI. The NSW Government has informed NSW Farmers that one of the advantages of the new structure will be the ability to deliver

services in response to local horticulture biosecurity needs, such as risks from abandoned orchards and vineyards and localised control of fruit fly and other pests.

The recent announcement by the Government to deregulate fruit fly controls in NSW has caused concern in NSW's horticultural industries, particularly within the Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone, which has been established within the Riverina region of NSW. The Government has based its proposed actions on the cost of fruit fly activities, however, with industry providing government with a proposal for the cost sharing of activities in early 2012, NSW Farmers is concerned that the move has been made without an adequate transition process to new arrangements.

The wider impacts of fruit fly have been compounded by the Australian Pesticides and

Veterinary Medicine Authority's proposal to suspend most uses of the chemical fenthion. This is despite its own statement that the current use does not breach the safety margins that protect consumers. Along with dimethoate, which has already been suspended, fenthion has been critical to the control of fruit fly; which has facilitated the trade of fruit and vegetables around Australian and overseas. NSW Farmers is seeking the retention of existing controls as new affordable fruit fly controls are developed.

Peter Darley

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Victoria



Vegetable Growers in Victoria have questioned comments by the State Minister for Agriculture saying that farmers needed to 'start helping themselves.' The use of the generic term 'farmers' by the Minister, indicates a lack of understanding of the diversity of primary producers and the complexity of needs within each sector of the industry. Unlike some manufacturing industries, Victorian vegetable growers have not sought financial assistance and have always taken responsibility for the growing, marketing and selling of their produce. They do not ask for bailouts from government bodies but do ask for recognition as an industry that is critical to maintaining the health of our nation.

The sharp decline in funding for research and development, the departure of many extension officers from a number of Department of Primary

Industries and the exorbitant costs for running a business are strong indicators that the various levels of government are looking to bypass locally grown produce and in the future, rely on overseas imports to feed our communities so as to maintain 'good relationships' with overseas markets.

Discussions are continuing on the topic of Work Safe on Farms but the message to growers is to ensure that all aspects are correct regarding the use of machinery and tractors for both themselves and their employees.

Elsewhere, the law presently states that when engaging workers, it is the grower's responsibility to check the tax file number and immigration status of each person who is employed. However, when we contract through a "Labour Hire Contractor," it is our opinion that it should be the contractor's responsibility and not the grower's.

There have been increases in electricity and LPG costs due to the introduction of the carbon tax. Costs of refrigerator gas are tripling with the carbon price and that's going to hit growers very hard. Refrigeration coolants are classed as synthetic greenhouse gases and this affects everything

that requires to be cooled, especially vegetable growers' cool rooms. The government has put massive taxes on these items saying, "importers of synthetic greenhouse gases will be required to pay an equivalent carbon price base on the carbon price and the global warming potential of each gas relative to Carbon Dioxide." Nobody appears to be aware of this additional cost as it is understood that growers have already received compensation for Carbon Dioxide Taxes.

Information from growers is required to ascertain how the carbon tax has affected your farm business with examples of how it may affect you in the future. VGA Vic can then pursue with the assistance of our peak body AUSVEG on all these issues at all levels of State and Federal Governments.

The 2013 National Vegetable Expo scheduled for Thursday and Friday 2 & 3 May 2013 is well underway with all seed plots allocated and preparation being carried out for vegetable seed planting of a range of varieties later this year. The Prospectus for exhibitors' static sites is now available for organisations to display products and services.

The biennial Vegetable Expo attracts visitors from each State and New Zealand and there is

an expectation that 2013 will be an excellent year for displaying a large number of vegetable varieties, products, services and sharing industry knowledge.

The Annual General Meeting of VGA Vic held on Friday 12 October at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Melbourne returned President David Wallace for another term. Office bearers and the Executive Committee were also elected. The VGA Vic IDO Team, led by Executive Manager Helena Whitman, provided a comprehensive presentation of the projects and events that had been delivered to vegetable growers in Victoria. Several industry guests contributed to the meeting with short presentations covering a wide range of industry involvements.

The dinner presentation was provided by Tina Lamattina, winner of the AUSVEG award for Women in Horticulture, and was the highlight of the evening for all members and guests.

Tony Imeson

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Western Australia



VegetablesWA is very pleased to announce the commencement of Mr Võ Thế Truỳền as our new Vietnamese Field Extension Officer. Approximately one third of Western Australian vegetable growers are Vietnamese, so Truỳền has already made a significant impact in assisting these vegetable growing businesses where their English skills are not strong. Truỳền has an excellent horticultural background, having over 10 years experience managing and working at the Southern Horticultural Research Institute in Vietnam. At this time, he also headed up the Institute's extension team. He obtained

a B.Sc. degree in horticulture in 1987 and subsequently obtained a Masters Degree (horticulture) in India in 1998. We also appreciate Truỳền's expertise in extension and community development after six years of study in this discipline at Massey University, New Zealand. Truỳền can be contacted at truuyen.vo@vegetableswa.com.au or on 0457 457 559.

The vegetablesWA Good Practice project at Carnarvon is continuing to score some big wins. The project hosted a recent visit from Dr Neal Kinsey from the USA, a renowned figure in the field of agronomy, with a wealth of experience in more than 65 countries around the world. More than 60 growers attended a number of field days where Dr Kinsey delivered detailed analysis of soil fertility after reviewing individual farm soil tests. Table grape growers, Vietnamese tomato growers, zucchini, capsicum, stone fruit, mango, and banana growers

actively participated in the field days, taking the opportunity to ask questions, share experiences and plan the next step to improve their yields and nutrient use efficiency.

The results of the vegetablesWA "Fresh from WA Farms" campaign has proven it as an outstanding success in improving consumer attitudes to the key areas that we know make them purchase more WA grown vegetables. The evaluation included a baseline consumer survey before the campaign and a follow-up survey afterwards.

The research showed that the advertisements clearly contributed to a significantly better 'knowledge about' and 'an improved attitude towards' local WA farmers. 40% of the respondents who were aware of the campaign indicated that because of it they now use more produce from WA farmers compared to before the campaign. The campaign also seems to have contributed

to an increased use/buying frequency of fresh vegetables from WA. The campaign has resulted in a significantly improved understanding of 'versatility,' 'health benefits' and 'seasonal availability' of fresh WA vegetables among the respondents and probably among the general Perth community. Verbal responses were overwhelmingly positive.

VegetablesWA is also putting together its policy document for the coming state election, scheduled for March 2013. Any growers wanting to contribute ideas should contact our Policy and Program Manager, John Shannon, on 0488 111 526 or at john.shannon@vegetableswa.com.au.

Jim Turley

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South Australia



A grower recently confronted the Grow SA receptionist with the question, "what do you do with all our levy money?" So, for the point of clarity we thought it worthy of comment in this column. In broad simple terms, the levy is collected by the Federal Government at the first point of sale of your produce. Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) is then responsible for the coordination and management of both industry and publicly-funded R&D (and marketing

in some sectors) projects for Australia's horticultural industries. These industries include fruit, vegetables, nuts, nursery, turf, cut flowers and extractive crops.

HAL invests over \$80 million annually in projects in partnership with the horticulture sector. During the year, HAL runs more than 1200 research and development (and in some sectors, marketing) projects, covering a diversity of topics including: market access, market research, supply chain management, quality assurance, food safety, skills development, industry communication, biotechnology, biosecurity, breeding, plant health, pesticide regulation, agronomy, crop regulation, physiology, irrigation and sustainable practices. These

investments are funded partly by the industry levies collected from growers and partly by public funds.

Growers and other stakeholders are involved in the decision making process as to which projects should be funded for the good of industry through the Industry Advisory Committees (IACs) and Design Teams, with reference to the industry investment plans which have been formulated in consultation with growers. The only way an organisation like Grow SA can access these funds is through being awarded an approved levy funded project.

Former Premier Rob Kerin is leading debate on the formation of an overarching organisation comprising the key State Commodity Organisations to

provide a stronger voice on cross industry issues. Grow SA remains engaged in this process on behalf of the South Australian vegetable industry. The proposed new organisation will have the suggested name of "Primary Producers SA" and will replace the South Australian Farmers Federation. It is intended that PPSA will be made up of six commodity based organisations covering the whole spectrum of agriculture in South Australia.

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Tasmania



Reading a letter to the editor in the *Weekend Australian* magazine recently made me choke on my Weetbix.

The correspondent alleged that Australia's primary producers wallow "in the luxury of taxpayer-funded protectionism" that allows them to "weep over the dashboard of the Range Rover" as they contemplate the pricing policies of Coles and Woolworths, the good guys in the food chain who try to keep prices down for consumers.

I was dismayed to think that

some people might really think farmers are like that, when nothing could be further from the truth. Fortunately, before I had stuck the stamp on the envelope on the scathing reply I'd dashed off, I came across an article by the Australian Farm Institute's Mick Keogh. This review of the level of protectionism, or government support, for farmers in OECD countries gave me the facts to back up my heated response.

The study confirms that government support measures for Australian farmers are the lowest for any developed nation on earth, when expressed as a percentage of national GDP.

If you include funding for research and development (to which farmers must contribute their own matching dollars) and natural disaster assistance, Australia provides the equivalent of a mere 0.16 per cent of GDP as support to agriculture. This is the lowest percentage of any developed nation.

The study then looked at another measure: the

percentage of a farmer's income attributable to government support and assistance. This time, Australian farmers ranked second lowest in the OECD, just behind our Kiwi mates. The figure here is just three per cent; while the average support for farmers across the OECD countries is a massive 18.8 per cent.

Farmers have to deal with the unreasonable expectation that food prices will continue to fall, even when input costs are rising exponentially. They face ever-increasing bureaucracy and regulation by governments. They have to cope with finger-wagging instant experts demanding ever-more restrictive standards which are not required of imported competitor products. Worse still, every day they face dismissive and derogatory attitudes like those expressed by the writer of that letter to the editor.

Instead of appreciating the work that our farmers do to deliver outstanding food and fibre products, Australians generally take their food for

granted. They've never been hungry. They expect to go into a shop any day of the week and be able to purchase any type of food, whether or not it is in season. They expect that produce to be perfect in every way. And, to top it off, they expect that - unlike any other product - their food will continue to decrease in price.

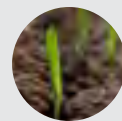
And for years, our farmers have delivered all that in spades. But their capacity to continue to do this is fast running out. Unless we wake up to ourselves, these pressures will drive them out of business.

Bring on a level playing field - before it is too late.

Jan Davis

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