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Hort Innovation Australia R&D project number: VG12053

Project VG12053 focused on fostering leadership in the vegetable industry through the development of communication and decision-making skills.

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Hort Innovation Australia R&D project number: VG12063

Project VG12063 conducted a scoping study to identify issues that affect the economic efficiency of the carrot export industry in Australia.





Growing Leaders 2013-2015 inclusive

Facilitators:

Project VG12053 was completed by Jill Briggs, Managing Director at Rural Training Initiatives.

Introduction

There is a continual need for leadership development in the Australian vegetable industry to encourage young growers to participate and engage with industry organisations.

Australia's only national industry specific leadership program, Growing Leaders (GL), was developed to equip vegetable industry participants with the skills and knowledge to contribute to debate, drive change and address challenges in the Australian vegetable industry.

About the program

Now in its seventh year, GL is a leadership platform delivered by Rural Training Initiatives through funding from Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited.

Delivered over nine days with a focus on experiential learning, the program is suitable for all sectors of the industry including growing, harvesting, processing, extension, exporters, importers and marketing.

Rural Training Initiatives program manager, Jill Briggs, said GL focused on developing skills that participants could apply at three key levels – personal, business and industry.

“Overall, the program's aim is to provide participants with the right tools and understanding to have a positive impact on their own future, the future of their businesses and the future of the Australian vegetable industry as a whole,” she said.

“The content of the program ensures that participants are exposed to effective ways of handling conflict, improved

communication techniques, the management of efficient meetings, high performance team building, change management and media knowledge.

“Participants are also exposed to the wide diversity of the Australian vegetable industry and some of the different issues that the industry is currently facing.”

Annually, the face-to-face program includes 29 skills development workshops, a minimum of 13 industry networking events and a minimum of 10 guest speakers or panel sessions.

Program outcomes

By delivering highly successful outcomes for industry, business and participants, Ms Briggs said the GL 2013-2015 program had comprehensively met its objectives.

This included developing industry leadership confidence, developing leadership skills and abilities in the vegetable industry and encouraging networking and knowledge for positive industry outcomes.

“The GL program over-delivered on its key targets for participant graduation with 42 men and women graduating from across the industry value chain,” Ms Briggs said.

“At a sector level, graduates now have more awareness and understanding of the complexities of the value chain, global markets, policy environment and future issues.

“This knowledge and information will be transferred through the participants' workplaces and sectors, adding additional value if they are also encouraged and provided with the opportunities to share their knowledge.”

Following completion of the program, evaluation forms revealed that participants were extremely supportive of the program and found it to be a key tool for the industry's future development.

They identified that the skills gained by participating in the industry leadership program were different to the skills industry personnel develop in their own business.

Implications for the vegetable industry

Ms Briggs said the benefits to the vegetable industry at a decision-making level were “far-reaching” and had a “very high value.”

“Participants developed the capability, skills and knowledge to understand the challenges of working constructively with industry organisations, committees and boards,” she said.

“At a business level, participants reported applying their newfound knowledge and skills back into their businesses through increased work efficiency and the improvement of management systems.

“They have an improved ability to manage meetings, the tools to undertake consultations and listen to others more effectively, and recognise the value of involving staff at all levels of decision-making.

“At a whole-of-industry level, the benefits include a confident group of individuals who are able to work as a team to achieve



outcomes for the industry.”

In addition to this, Ms Briggs said workplace advancements for participants had included new roles and responsibilities, the transfer to new employment and the advancement of portfolios.

“Having made the investment in the development of the group throughout the program, industry organisations now understand their responsibility to integrate young growers into existing and future decision-making, as well as providing leadership opportunities within and beyond the industry,” she said.

“Following the success of GL 2013-2015, funding has been secured for a further three years of delivery.”

For further information please contact jill@ruraltraininginitiatives.com.au.

Acknowledgements

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THE BOTTOM LINE: VG12053

- The vegetable industry is looking to improve its training and culture.
- Growing Leaders 2013-2015 focused on fostering leadership in the vegetable industry through the development of communication and decision-making skills.
- This knowledge and information can now be transferred through the participants' workplaces and sectors, helping the vegetable industry to face current challenges and reach its full potential in the future.



Improving the efficiency of the carrot export industry



Facilitators:

Project VG12063 was completed by project leader Rachel Lancaster and co-author Peter Gartrell from the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia.

Introduction

Carrots are the most valuable fresh vegetable export in Australia, with 73,064 tonnes of carrots worth \$55.97 million exported in 2013/14.

Generally, the success of the export carrot sector underpins the vitality of the Australian carrot industry, which is why continual improvement within the supply chain is pivotal to maintaining international competitiveness.

To ensure the industry remains competitive into the future, a systematic approach to export carrot industry research, development and extension in Australia is required.

About the project

A scoping study was conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia to identify issues that affect the economic efficiency of the export carrot industry in Australia.

Growers and/or exporters of carrots, as well as associates of the supply chain in Western Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania were contacted for their opinions on issues affecting growth in the industry.

Project co-author Peter Gartrell said the Australian export



carrot industry was one of the most sophisticated and highly mechanised sectors within Australian horticulture.

“However, the production system for export carrots is highly intensive and in many cases resembles a monoculture with a dependence on soil fumigants, which risk becoming unsustainable in the long-term,” he said.

“The purpose of the project was to identify the current issues that are impacting on the industry and scope issues that may impact on the industry in the future, threatening to erode competitiveness.

“The project complements the findings of the Horticulture Innovation Australia project VG13047, where the need to address production issues, such as crop rotation, water-use efficiency and new production areas, were highlighted as part of a strategy to increase carrot exports.”

Issues raised

The information gained from grower interviews identified a number of key areas of concern, including production, post-harvest, quarantine, markets and trade, government and other topics, that did not fit into one of the major groups.

Mr Gartrell said the major issues identified that relate to production included improving the sustainability of the export carrot cropping system.

“Growers highlighted the need for up-to-date information relating to chemical and cultural control options for nematodes and the disease ‘cavity spot’, as well as the implementation of rotational crops,” he said.

“Post-harvest issues included the need to utilise and improve robotics in packing sheds and an investigation into the feasibility of centrally located packing sheds for individual large export businesses.”

Mr Gartrell said issues concerning quarantine, markets and trade included the reduction of inefficiencies in the supply chain in relation to export regulation and requirements.

He said investigation was required to identify clear and consistent applications of quarantine regulations to destination countries.

“There also needs to be improved information availability for growers, exporters and inspection staff on quotas, tariffs and quarantine requirements, as well as the potential use of existing audited quality management systems as an approved substitute for quarantine inspections,” he said.

The study also highlighted government issues relating to the reduction in red tape associated with labour regulations. This included the current and proposed conditions with the employment of short-term visa workers, as well as water and land access to allow industry expansion and conflicting government policies on water use.

Implication for the Australian carrot export industry

Informal surveys of export carrot producers revealed an increase in the number and complexity of issues affecting the overall competitiveness of the industry.

Mr Gartrell said that while there was a strong focus on costs, Australia’s international competitiveness was strongly based on product differentiation.

“Australian production and exporting companies have an outstanding reputation for the reliable supply of high quality, safe carrots backed by audited assurance systems,” he said.

“The value of this scoping study is as an identifier of future research and development activities, with the main impact occurring in the future through the implementation of project recommendations.

“Some of these recommendations can be achieved through further research and development activities, while others require the development of a policy framework to be implemented through appropriate organisations in the vegetable industry.

“Continued improvement in farm productivity, economic efficiency and product differentiation are essential for continued industry expansion.”



THE BOTTOM LINE: VG12063

- This project was a scoping study that identified the issues impacting the cost competitiveness and long-term viability of the carrot export industry.
- It found that a systematic approach to industry research is required to ensure the industry’s overseas competitiveness.
- The key outcomes of this project will be achieved following implementation of the study’s recommendations.

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*Please contact Michelle De’Lisle at AUSVEG on 03 9882 0277 or email michelle.delisle@ausveg.com.au to submit topics for potential inclusion in future editions of **vegenotes**.*

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PO Box 138, Camberwell, Vic, 3124

T: 03 9882 0277 | F: 03 9882 6722

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