

Collaborative Industry Organisations - Queensland - Support to VIDP

Rowena Beveridge
Growcom

Project Number: VG10097

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**Collaborative Industry Organisations – Queensland
Support to Vegetable Industry Development Program**

September 2012

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Vegetable Industry Development Program Final Milestone Report

HAL Project No: VG10097

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Purpose of Report: To outline the delivery of vegetable industry development to QLD and NT

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Table of Contents

Contents	Page No.
Media Summary	2
Introduction	2
Methodology & Activities	3
Technology Transfer Strategy	6
Evaluation/Measurement of Outcomes	8
Discussion	10
Recommendations	12
Acknowledgements	13
Bibliography	13
Appendix A	14

Media Summary

This project was about delivering and supporting the Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP) to industry & growers. This was done through communicating the VIDP sub program products, relaying new and innovative methods as well as delivering VIDP products and services.

Other key aspects were to gather industry feedback for R&D priorities and encourage people to register on the Ausveg website to access the latest in R&D information. Through conducting market focused and competitive business practical activities and useful information the project was able to deliver effective industry development outcomes and information packages to vegetable growers at a state and regional level.

As a result of this program there has been:-

- an increased awareness of R&D outcomes
- more growers actively looking to change their market focus and business models to better meet day to day challenges
- increased capacity within state based industry organisations to develop & deliver education and training services to growers

Growcom believes that the continued support of these key components will improve grower's business models & keep industry informed as to what needs to be delivered. Without such programs, the line of communication breaks down and the target audience fails to benefit from such information.

Introduction

The Vegetable Industry Development Program (VIDP) was originally developed in July 2009 to assist addressing the core issues facing the vegetable industry. These being the deterioration of international trade performance and increasing imports resulting in a flooded domestic market. As opposed to what was previously delivered to the vegetable industry the main focus shifted towards improving product quality and reliability through better grower and supply chain collaboration to gain a competitive edge.

The aim of the program was to assemble outcomes and information from research projects and relevant sources and deliver them as insightful & practical knowledge tools that can be easily applied. This was done by targeting relevant stakeholders through their preferred networks and developing relationships to enable two-way information flow and dialogue between the businesses, industry development service providers and researchers.

The program consists of the following integrated components:-

Knowledge Management (VG09147): In collaboration with AUSVEG communications (VG09161), this program created a central access point for tailored information products, research findings and outputs, information and data. The project delivered a Technical Insights database, which stores all vegetable funded research projects, grower tools and relevant factsheets in an online accessible format.

People Development (VG09145): supported people development activities in the industry with a focus on increasing business performance through learning and skills development and nurturing new industry leaders.

Consumers & Markets (VG09146): sourced, interpreted and packaged information about consumer tastes and preferences, markets and the supply side of the industry.

Economics (VG08040): sourced, analysed and packaged economic information about all aspects of production and the economic environment in which it takes place.

InnoVeg (VG09149): coordinated innovative arrangements with new service providers in the vegetable industry to create and deliver industry development products to their networks.

Collaborative Industry Organisations: Coordinating collaborative arrangements with existing state based industry peak bodies to create and deliver industry development products to their networks.

Integrated Pest Management: supported industry development through the packaging and delivery of best practice integrated pest management technology to industry with a program approach.

The likely implications of this project are better information transfer between industry & growers with improved business sense & market focus. This will in turn impact productivity and hopefully help towards reduction of so many imports.

Methodology & Activities

The Growcom Land and Water team has experienced staff located throughout Queensland to assist horticultural producers manage their land and water assets in order to ensure profitable operations and environmentally sustainable practices.

Under the leadership of Scott Wallace, the Land & Water team works regionally with growers on a range of programs and initiatives including Water for Profit, Reef Rescue and the industry Farm Management Systems (FMS) program. With this in mind, the obvious avenues to achieve the outcomes of the Vegetable Industry Development Program were to utilise the Growcom team as well as related regional grower groups. The key areas in Queensland where vegetables are grown were identified and the relevant people and groups were then informed of the project.

The grower groups that played a key role in the delivery of VIDP articles & program information were:-

Bowen & Gumlu District Grower Association	Denise Kreymborg PO Box 489 Bowen QLD 4805
Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers	Naomi Guppy PO Box 45 Bundaberg QLD 4670
Mareeba District Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association Inc	Joe Moro PO Box 989 Mareeba QLD 4870
Northern Territory Horticultural Association Inc	PO Box 2207 Palmerston Northern Territory 0831

The primary vehicle for the VIDP program in QLD was through the *Vegie Info* newsletter which is inserted into Fruit & Vegetable News monthly magazine and distributed to 700 growers & industry groups throughout the state. In addition to this, both hard and electronic copies were distributed to a range of industry partners as well as displayed on the Growcom website. In total, 19 monthly newsletters were produced and circulated to growers in QLD and the NT.

These newsletters have also been used as handouts at workshops & industry forums. The use of QR codes continue in the newsletter.

Fruit and Vegetable News articles have included:

Title	Date
<i>Freshlogic Consumer Market Research</i>	February 2011
<i>Flood Damage / Carrot Competition</i>	March 2011
<i>Production Costs v Farm Size</i>	April 2011
<i>National Vegetable Convention & VIDP Display</i>	May 2011
<i>Market Research – Vegetable Buying Trends</i>	June 2011
<i>Market Research – Vegetable Consumption</i>	July 2011
<i>Keeping Up With Technology</i>	August 2011
<i>Exploring Conservation Agriculture</i>	September 2011
<i>Value Adding & Selecting the Right Market</i>	October 2011

<i>Soil Management</i>	November 2011
<i>Changing Ways in How we Pay</i>	December/January 2012
<i>Year of the Farmer / Succession Planning</i>	February 2012
<i>VegTool Gross Margin Program</i>	March 2012
<i>LOTE Program (Language Other than English)</i>	April 2012
<i>Freshlogic - Household Buying Trends</i>	May 2012
<i>Assessing Vegetable R&D On-Line</i>	June 2021
<i>Talking Business - RMCG</i>	July 2012
<i>Vegetable Consumption at the Olympic Village</i>	August 2012
<i>VIDP Wrap up & Thankyou</i>	September 2012

Technology Transfer

Following is a table of core activities performed in the project to encourage the uptake of research & development to the target audience.

Activity	Outputs & Outcomes Achieved
Contact maintained with HAL Program Coordinator	Email contacts & updates have been maintained with the Program Coordinator. Unfortunately due to timing, two key teleconferences were missed but minutes & notes were accessed & read.
Keep up-to-date with VIDP program partners	Regular email contact with VIDP partners was made as well as participating in all VIDP CIO sub-program teleconferences. Also distributed electronic newsletters to interested groups & organisations.
Maintain contact with Growcom team members	Growcoms Land & Water team meets every fortnight & all Growcom staff have a monthly teleconference. Program updates were provided at these meetings.
Current industry partners to be forwarded copy of <i>Vegie Info</i>	<i>Vegie Info</i> newsletter has been distributed in both hard and electronic copies to a range of industry recipients.
Identify new industry partners for delivery and information on <i>Vegie Info</i> and wider VIDP products and services	Possible new recipients have been contacted through email invitation & field day discussions. The contact list has been expanded when relevant.
Write input and liaise with the Growcom Communications team on content for the monthly <i>Vegie Info</i>	A four page <i>Vegie Info</i> newsletter is produced each month highlighting new technology & innovation as well as encouraging people to register on the Ausveg website.
Regional workshops and other forums held	<p>Enviroveg workshop at UQ Gatton on 26 November 2010</p> <p>Flood Recovery Grower Shed Meeting at Lowood on 1st March 2011</p> <p>Young Growers Forum at Gatton on 2nd March 2011</p> <p>Flood Recovery Growers Shed Meeting at Mulgowie on 3rd March 2011</p> <p>Flood Recovery Grower Shed Meeting at Ma Ma Creek on 17th March 2011</p> <p>Young Growers Forum at Stanthorpe, 11th April 2011</p> <p>Combined Young Growers forum at Gatton, 17th August 2011</p> <p>Vegetable Grower Seminar, Gatton Research Centre, 8th November 2011</p>

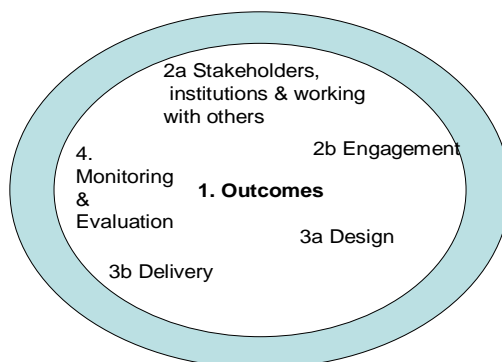
	<p>Stanthorpe Young Growers Forum, 14th December 2011</p> <p>Food Producers Meeting, DERM Toowoomba, 8th February 2012</p> <p>Vegetable Grower Seminar, Gatton Research Centre, 21st February 2012</p> <p>Innovveg Quarterly Teleconference, 1 March 2012</p> <p>VIDP presentation, Growcom Regional Staff, 16th April 2012</p> <p>Vegetable Grower Seminar, Stanthorpe, 16th May 2012</p> <p>Farmfest Field Day, Toowoomba, 5th June 2012</p> <p>Talking Business Seminar, Gatton Research Centre, 13th June 2012</p> <p>LOTE CoP Teleconference, 27th June 2012</p> <p><u>Other distribution activities include:</u></p> <p>Distributed VegTool CD's to growers for use, 1st February 2012</p> <p>Meeting with Gerard Kelly re VegTool in Brisbane 15th February 2012</p> <p>LOTE Translated articles sent to all Growcom staff 14th March 2012</p>
<p>New and innovative methods of delivery used</p>	<p>Year one of the project saw a questionnaire regarding an aspect of consumer research which was sent to growers with the Growcom Annual Report; this was to inform them about the program and gain their attention—best answers were voted on by growers and the winner received a delegate registration to the Ausveg 2011 National Convention.</p> <p>A further questionnaire where growers needed to be more pro-active and research the Ausveg website themselves was not so successful; this lesson has been learnt.</p> <p>Another innovation has been the use of QR codes. These</p>

	<p>Quick Response codes have been developed to link directly to the <i>Vegie Info</i> section of the Growcom website and to the Ausveg website. QR codes commenced in the August 2011 newsletter continue to be used in every issue.</p>
Engaging industry participant registration to the Ausveg website	<p>Promotion to growers of the need to register on the Ausveg website to receive vegetable industry and VIDP publications has been a focus of this project from the beginning.</p> <p>This has been promoted and encouraged in the publication <i>Vegie Info</i> and at all forums & workshops mentioned above.</p>
Feedback to be given to HAL Program Coordinator and other VIDP partners	<p>Teleconferences and emails have been held and input given on the sub CIO program on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11th February 2011 15th April 2011 27th July 2011 - 11th October 2011 - 1st March 2012 - 27th June 2012 <p>Also provided dot points by email for other HAL reporting</p>
Milestone and Performance Reports developed and completed	All developed & completed

Evaluation/Measurement of Outcomes

This project plan will use the framework developed under the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building (CVCB) program. This framework uses a Capacity Building Wheel (shown in the diagram below) as a process for developing up the project and implementing an evaluation program. It is focused on measuring success in a project, and setting up the mechanisms and resources that will allow the project to be carefully evaluated at any stage.

The CVCB concept is based on measuring **outcomes** and the need to answer the question “what has been achieved?” (VG10097Growcom Project Plan Report December 2010)



Performance against KPI's

<p>Increased capacity within state based industry organisations to deliver information and industry development packages to industry participants, regions and groups ensuring they have access to levy funded R & D outcomes.</p>	<p>Four page newsletter developed and distributed every month to 700 growers & industry within QLD. LOTE Factsheets were distributed. AusVeg registration was consistently pushed.</p>
<p>More growers actively adopting market focused industry development packages and evolving their business models to meet new challenges posed by the market.</p>	<p>Information session for growers were organized and growers were always encouraged to register on the AusVeg website for the latest research & development.</p>
<p>A market focused R & D program that is responsive to industry needs identified through growers and Sub Program partners</p>	<p>Interest in sub programs such as LOTE and VegTool were encouraging.</p> <p>VIDP fact sheets have been displayed in the Growcom offices, have been noted in our publications and provided as handouts at workshops and industry forums.</p> <p>A list of the available fact sheets has also been supplied to interested groups.</p>
<p>Industry engagement in providing feedback and input into levy funded R & D priorities for the vegetable industry</p>	<p>Where possible at any grower/field events, opinions are sought from growers about future R & D needs.</p> <p>Feedback from growers and has been noted and recommendation given within the final report.</p>
<p>Increased capacity within state based industry organisations to facilitate product development, education and training services to growers.</p>	<p>Some new methods of engaging growers in the VIDP program were trialled.</p> <p>The first half of the project saw a questionnaire go out regarding consumer research; this was to inform them about the program and gain their attention—best answers were voted on by growers and the winner received a delegate registration to the Ausveg 2011 National Convention.</p> <p>A further questionnaire where growers needed to be more pro-active and research the Ausveg website themselves was not so successful.</p>

	<p>Another innovation has been the use of QR codes; these Quick Response codes have been developed to link <i>directly</i> to the <i>Vegie Info</i> section of the Growcom website and to the Ausveg website.</p> <p>LOTE factsheets were handed out to specific growers groups via relevant regional field staff.</p> <p>VegTool was promoted to growers via email and all Growcom newsletters.</p>
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Discussion

Aims and Objectives

The program was developed to address the core issues facing the vegetable industry and set about delivering support to industry & growers by:

- gathering industry feedback for research & development priorities
- encourage people to register on the Ausveg website to access the latest in research & development
- assemble outcomes and information from research projects and relevant sources
- deliver insightful & practical knowledge to the relevant audience

This was done by targeting relevant stakeholders and developing relationships to enable two-way information flow between the businesses, industry development service providers and researchers.

Evaluation of Possible Constraints

Occasionally there are constraints that affect the uptake of research & technology and this is mostly limited by the general nature of farming. Since commencing this program two years ago, Growcom have found that these limitations have reoccurred. The use of questionnaire is often seen as a direct & fast way of determining needs and painting a picture at the beginning of a project to evaluate the ensuing needs. Two questionnaires were circulated to growers at the beginning of this project. The first being the more successful of the two with a free registration to the Ausveg National Convention awarded as an incentive. The second proved unsuccessful with little participation received. Are farmers tired of questionnaires?

The use of QR Codes was also developed. (A QR Code is a black-and-white barcode that, when scanned by your phone, can open a web link, point to an application in the Market, etc.

<http://www.androidcentral.com/dictionary>)

When scanned this would direct you to the Ausveg website to encourage registration. The use of this technology has been hugely successful in recent years; however the response that we received from our readers was not as overwhelming with only 13 users traced. Traditionally the rural sector can be slower to adopt new technology; however it has been encouraging to see 'grower champions' that lead the way in influencing their peers.

There is an ever increasing demand on farmers to diversify and become even more competitive in the market place. This evidently splits the industry into two categories; some with a more traditional approach and those with a more contemporary view.

As always the weather plays an integral part in any farming operation so it should be noted that during this two year program Queensland experienced a record breaking flood event through the central and southern regions and a tropical cyclone across the northern region.

There was also a change in the Northern Territory with our contact at Northern Territory Horticultural Association leaving mid way through the project and not replaced. A contingency plan was implemented by NTHA to ensure the information continued to flow through their networks.

Suggested procedures and structures to be adopted

Cross collaboration with other Growcom staff as well as other industry bodies provided a great way to utilize speakers & field specialists. Field days, forums and workshops in an informal environment proved to be the most successful way of conveying information. A range of topics can be covered with each individual topic attracting different business needs. From “Talking Business” programs to the latest in succession planning, VegTool or the Languages Other Than English program, each grower leaves the forum unintentionally knowing a bit more.

Growers were always keen to hear about shopping trends & market influences and even topics as diverse as the Olympics Games and how much fruit & vegetable the athlete’s village would consume. Regardless of how distant or applicable the information is, growers find it all relevant as it creates the big picture and allows them to pitch their business where they see fit. This is where building trust and the relationship with a field staff member is the key to communicating valuable and practical information.

As an industry, horticulture in Australia has survived huge adversity. It has had to adapt to meet change in regulation, environmental conditions both regionally & on a world scale as well as the shifting needs of global supply & demand. Like most businesses these influences take up the majority of the growers time and therefore delivery of programs such as these take time. For this reason uptake of information will be steady rather than overwhelming. This is where building trust and the relationship with a field staff member is the key to communicating valuable and practical information.

Advantages of Information Delivery

Positive feedback has been received from growers with regard to the VegieInfo newsletter. Growcom developed this newsletter to summarize the latest in news & information from the Ausveg website. The success of this has been partly due to its incorporation into an already popular magazine as well as the format in which it appears. The power of the written media should never be underestimated when it comes to the regional consumer, as it is when they are sitting at the end of the day that they will pick up an article and digest the content. For this reason alone, traditional modes of communication such as rural newspapers & industry magazines are still prominent medium.

There is definitely more awareness due to the exposure the VIDP program has given to research & development and growers are much more informed of opportunities available to them.

Through continued grower interest in workshops & field days, vegetable R&D news has been disseminated through these avenues with positive feedback. Most growers are very keen to learn about what is new and what they can implement into their farming business.

The involvement with the LOTE (Languages Other Than English) program was well received, particularly in parts of North QLD. The project involved the translation of fact sheets into Vietnamese & Chinese for on farm use. The fact sheets covered a range of topics from pest & disease management to water use/quality & farm layouts and were found to be particularly useful when circulated with CFoC Reef Rescue information. The Growcom field officer in Townsville is now able to liaise with a local Vietnamese group and provide basic agronomic factsheets as well as ask them what their needs are. The LOTE program has also created awareness about unexpected issues. In the Burnett Mary Region it has been recognised that there are a growing number of international backpackers arriving to do seasonal work with no expectation of their working conditions. Unfortunately due to lack of resources there is a complete breakdown of communication and staff turnover has become a huge issue.

Again this highlights the importance of building trust and the relationships that are formed at the ground level are the key to delivery positive & productive outcomes.

Recommendations

1. Continuation to inform growers of research & development is essential. A large percentage of growers want to implement new technology however this tends to be a slow process.
2. Resources such as field staff are critical for one on one involvement. Bulk workshops & field days don't always have the same impact and some growers prefer individual contact.
3. Care needs to be taken in the way R&D news is delivered. Often progress is slowed due to landowners and field staff having to interpret & decipher too much scientific language.
4. Growers need to be given the opportunity to be further educated in research & development so that they can implement ideas onto their farm in a practical & useful way to suit their farm and business needs.
5. Growers need tools to assess their R&D needs. Once this is achieved growers can recognize & address their own risk. This could be built into wider industry programs such as a Farm Management Systems program
6. One size does not fit all when it comes to farm management and can become quite complex. There are significant variations in farming practices and processes, therefore different approaches are needed from region to region and farm to farm.
7. Growers are always keen to implement new & innovative ideas, however do not always have the time or technical capacity to implement. Maybe introductory sheets could be developed by industry?

Growers still prefer to read concise bits of information, usually in hard copy, as opposed to registering & logging onto a website to conduct research. This is slowly changing and needs to be considered when delivery products.

Acknowledgments

This project could not be possible without the ongoing support of the Australian Government via the industry research and development corporation Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL) and is gratefully acknowledged.

The Growcom Land and Water team has helped to play a key delivery role within this project and have been invaluable in the delivery of this project, providing great support and enthusiasm for the goals being achieved.

My thanks also go to former team member Margie Milgate, whom contributed to the successful outcomes of the project by commencing the first half of this project.

Other key Growcom staff members who have contributed to the successful completion of this project include Jim Collings for backup technical and operational support and Chris Walker with media & communications support.

Key Industry people that also need acknowledgement are Alison Anderson, NSW Farmers Assoc (now HAL), Clinton McGrath, QLD DPI & Gerard Kelly, NSW DPI

Also acknowledged are all the growers who have attended meetings, field days, workshops and similar gatherings.

Support has also been provided from Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers (BFVG), Bowen District Growers Association (BDGA) and other local associations.

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Appendix A

Sample of monthly newsletter, VegieInfo



From the Vegie Info Project Manager, Rowena Beveridge

Freshlogic has released its latest quarterly report outlining key trends in the vegetable market.

Following is a breakdown of the different household sectors and shows the average percentage of food (purchased at retail to be prepared at home). It also focuses on different influences within each sector as well as preferred market providers. It is worthy to note that the average weekly spend in Australia on fruit and vegetables is currently \$30.20.

Budgeting Families (families that are financially stretched and time pressured), spend between 78 per cent and 83 per cent of their food budget on food to be prepared at home. They generally plan some shopping to manage money and do top up shops 2-3 times a week. They like greengrocers and often lead an active lifestyle. They are conscious of their food budget and some health factors influence their diet.

Empty Nesters (60 years plus, no children at home) generally have income to eat out often, but prepare and eat most meals at home. They spend

between 78 per cent and 82 per cent of their food budget on food to be prepared at home. They plan shopping and seek out and buy specials, patronising two or three supermarkets. They prefer using greengrocers on the basis of value and are often sensitive to food prices and budgets. They will buy for convenience but are also influenced by health considerations and ethical foods.

Established Families (families with above average income and at least one adult who eats out regularly), spend between 78 per cent and 80 per cent of their food budget on food to be prepared at home. They plan some shopping but mostly do top up shops, patronising one or two supermarkets. They understand and seek ethical foods, they like markets and the greengrocer and will buy for taste.

Singles and Couples with Lower Income (no children) are restricted from eating out and spend between 72 per cent and 75 per cent of their food budget at home. They do not plan much shopping and shop for

convenience and price. They shop at the greengrocer if the price is okay but are constrained by budget and often a busy and active lifestyle. Health considerations have some impact on their food purchases.

Singles and Couples with Higher Incomes (no children) have available discretionary dollars to eat out often and spend only between 56 per cent and 61 per cent of their food budget on food used at home. They do not plan their shopping, are driven by lifestyle, like farmers' markets and ethical foods, use greengrocers when they have time and are frequent 'top up' shoppers. They will buy convenience ready meals however health influences their diet and taste remains important.

To keep up to date with these latest trends and market influences make sure you are registered on the Ausveg website.

Cheers

Rowena Beveridge



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