



Know-how for Horticulture™

**Study tour for
Kangaroo Island seed
potato growers**

Peter McGill
KI Seed Potato Grower
Group

Project Number: PT02039

PT02039

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STUDY TOUR FOR KANGAROO ISLAND (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) SEED POTATO GROWERS

To Victoria and Tasmania

9th to 13th February 2003



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James Brechin
Peter MacGill

Statement: This report is an overview of the Study Tour undertaken by a group of early generation seed potato growers from Kangaroo Island. The objectives of the tour were to:

- To see seed potato production in the traditional areas of Victoria and Tasmania
- For the KI growers to establish personal relationships with experienced seed potato growers that can provide a valuable future resource for information and guidance
- To visit some of the research and development programs in Victoria and Tasmania
- To visit a commercial cool store to guide future development in this regard on KI
- To liaise with ViCSPA and Seed Potatoes Victoria

The funds for this Study Tour were provided by the participants as voluntary contributions with matched funding from Horticulture Australia Ltd. The salary costs for the Tour Leader were provided by Primary Industries & Resources SA. Hosts provided their time as a contribution to this project which was greatly appreciated.

Report Date: February 2003

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MEDIA SUMMARY

Kangaroo Island has a Quarantine Status that prevents the introduction of serious soil-borne diseases. It also has a sparse history of potato production and favourable climate which is conducive to the production of high-health early generation seed potatoes. It is one of the most disease-free areas for seed potato production in Australia.

Seven growers are currently producing seed potatoes on Kangaroo Island and five participants, representing four of these businesses, were involved in this study tour from 9 to 13 February 2003.

The objective of these training visits was to broaden the experience of the Kangaroo Island Seed Potato industry as quickly as possible but the contacts made on these visits will have long-term value also.

The Kangaroo Island Seed Potato growers have undertaken a Strategic Planning process with AgKI and this study tour was completed prior to finalising their plan. The information gained during the visits was therefore influential to the last phase of their planning process.

OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY TOUR

Participants have gained a broader perspective of the Australian potato industry and of the services that exist. They have made useful contacts that will assist their business development. The participants will use this experience in the final stages of their group Strategic Planning which will also be a method for transfer of the findings to non participants of the tour.

THE ITINERARY

Sunday 9 Feb: Travel from Kangaroo Island to Melbourne by air, minibus to Healesville, evening meeting with Seed Potatoes Victoria

Monday 10 February: Morning at IHD Toolangi to see the tissue culture facility and learn about the potato breeding program. Meeting with ViCSPA. Afternoon with growers at Neerim Junction and Warragul to view crops and shed activities. Evening meeting with growers from Thorpedale.

Tuesday 11 February: Morning at IHD Knoxfield to discuss potato diseases, hygiene and diagnostics. Air travel from Melbourne to Launceston, Tasmania and minibus to Ulverstone. Evening tour of Simplot potato processing factory.

Wednesday 12 February: Visits to potato minituber production facility at Stoney Rise, Devonport, potato cool stores and seed cutting business at Latrobe and Dobmac Agricultural Machinery manufacturer at Ulverstone. Visits to seed growers and crops at Wilmot, Riana and Nietta. Evening meeting with seed potato growers.

Thursday 13 February: Inspection of potato harvesters at Landpower, Ulverstone and visit to Harvest Moon seed potato production at Cressy. Return flights from Launceston via Melbourne and Adelaide to Kangaroo Island.

VICTORIA

Seed Potatoes Victoria (SPV)

Contact: Tony Pitt, Executive Officer
PO Box 571, Warragul, VIC 3820
Phone: 03-56223025 Fax: 03-56234596
agchall@sympac.com.au

SPV is a seed potato growers organisation. Tony Pitt gave an overview of the activities of Seed Potatoes Victoria. The main functions being.

- An independent body for review, including contracts, industry costs and returns
- Liaison with government at all levels on issues that impact on the industry
- Produce the Seed Buyers Directory and other technical publications
- Convene regular training workshops

The KI Seed Potato growers will consider making an application to SPV for membership.

Victorian Certified Seed Potato Authority (ViCSPA)

Contact: Keith Blackmore, Manager
PMB1, Healesville, VIC 3777
Phone: 03-59629043 Fax: 03-59629045
kblackmore@vicspa.org.au

ViCSPA are currently contracted by Primary Industries & Resources SA to provide seed potato certification on Kangaroo Island based upon the National Standards. ViCSPA are considering a proposal to take over the total certification role in South Australia. Keith Blackmore gave a presentation on ViCSPA structure, the tolerance levels applicable to diseases at each generation and proposed changes to labelling of seed potatoes.

www.vicspa.org.au

Institute of Horticultural Development – Toolangi

Contacts: Ms Corina Horstra, (minituber and plantlet production)
Graeme Wilson (plant breeder)
1015 Myers Creek Road, Toolangi, VIC 3777
Phone: 03-59571200 Fax: 03-59571210

The group were shown the tissue culture and plantlet/mini-tuber facilities that form the basis of most of the Australian potato industry. An overview of the potato breeding program was presented including details of new variety releases. The future direction of the breeding program was explained.

Institute of Horticultural Development – Knoxfield

Contacts: Dr Dolf de Boer, Plant Pathologist
Dr James Wong, Crop Health Services
IHD Knoxfield, 621 Burwood Hwy, Knoxfield, VIC 3180
Phone: 03-92109222 Fax: 03-98003521

The group specifically requested presentations about rhizoctonia, leaf roll virus and farm hygiene from the comprehensive range of information available from this research group. So far only AG2 strain of rhizoctonia has been identified from Kangaroo Island which is less destructive than the more widespread AG3. Black Dot and Silver Scurf are not yet detected but require future monitoring. Management of aphids will be critical to avoidance of leaf roll virus infection and current monitoring may not be adequate. The group was advised that a publication would soon be available with recommendations for shed disinfection practices.

The diagnostic services and procedures of Crop Health Services were explained.
<http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/agvic/ihd/services/chs-text.htm>

Seed Potato grower visits in Victoria

Contact: David Pike
Neerim Hi-Plains Growers
2890 Main Neerim Rd, Neerim Junction, VIC 3821
Phone: 03-56284216 Fax: 03-56284248



David showed the broad range of varieties that he was growing. Production of the first generation was from transplants and the handling methods were explained. Grading facilities were seen.

Contact: Paul Myers
RMB 5735 Bloomfield Rd, Warragul, VIC 3820
Phone: 03-56268315 Fax: 56267252



Paul demonstrated his production of mainly processing varieties from minitubers and technitubers. Grading facilities and fungicide seed treatment equipment was seen.



TASMANIA

Simplot Australia

Contact: Peter Hardman, Manager Field Services
Simplot Australia, Mason St, Ulverstone, TAS 7315
Phone: 03-64296000

Peter Hardman, Manager Field Services, led a tour of the French-fry processing factory from intake of tubers through to dispatch of frozen product. The new variety Ranger Russet had just arrived for processing the next day. The requirements for seed and the incentive-based contract system of production were outlined.

www.simplot.com.au

Department of Primary Industry, Water & Environment (DPIWE) Tasmania

Contact: Iain Kirkwood, Potato Specialist
DPIWE, PO Box 303, Devonport, TAS 7310
Phone: 03-64217601 Fax: 03-64245142

The tissue culture and minituber production facility at Stoney Rise, Devonport was visited. Iain also coordinated the grower visits in Tasmania for the group.

Cherry Hill Coolstores

Contact: Kevin Langmaid, Director
Cherry Hill Coolstores
Cherry Hill Rd, Latrobe, TAS 7307
Phone: 03-64261590 cherry@southcom.com.au

The procedures for seed handling, cutting, hygiene, wound healing, seed dressing and cool storage were explained. Old and new style stores were inspected.

Dobmac Agricultural Machinery

Contact: Philip Dobson, Managing Director
Dobmac Agricultural Machinery
PO Box 93, Ulverstone, TAS 7315
Phone: 03-64255533 Fax: 03-64255847

Dobmac clasp planters and mobile seed cutting machinery were inspected. Growers attested to the precision that was achieved by the Dobmac equipment.

www.dobmac.com.au

Seed Potato grower visits in Tasmania

Contact: Philip Richards
2761 Wilmot Rd, Wilmot, TAS 7310
Phone: 03-64921085



A Russet Burbank seed potato crop was inspected.

Contact: Keeton Miles
394 Gaunts Rd, Nietta, TAS 7315
Phone: 03-64291260



A range of varieties of several generations, including G1 production from minitubers, were inspected. These were being grown under big gun irrigation on steep slopes.

Contact: Lloyd Langham
Stotts Rd (cnr Addys Rd), Riana, TAS 7316
Phone: 03-64376245

An opportunity was taken to inspect the grading shed at this property.

Contact: Fraser Mearns
Harvest Moon
288 Leith Rd, Forth, TAS 7310
Phone: 03-64282505



An extensive range of PBR protected proprietary varieties were inspected at Cressy under centre pivot irrigation. Techniques for seed handling were discussed.

TOPICS COVERED ON THE STUDY TOUR

- Industry infrastructure and services
- Certification procedures
- Production of G0 generation
- Potato breeding
- Machinery
- Seed handling practices and storage
- Pests and diseases
- Irrigation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The participants wish to express their appreciation to all of the hosts of this Study Tour.

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Iain Kirkwood and Max McKenna are thanked for organising the Tasmanian part of this trip.

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