

**Facilitating the
communication and
development in the
Tasmanian Vegetable
Industry**

Stephen Welsh
Tasmanian Farmers &
Graziers Association

Project Number: VG00070

VG00070

This report is published by Horticulture Australia Ltd to pass on information concerning horticultural research and development undertaken for the vegetable industry.

The research contained in this report was funded by Horticulture Australia Ltd with the financial support of the onion, vegetable and potato industries.

All expressions of opinion are not to be regarded as expressing the opinion of Horticulture Australia Ltd or any authority of the Australian Government.

The Company and the Australian Government accept no responsibility for any of the opinions or the accuracy of the information contained in this report and readers should rely upon their own enquiries in making decisions concerning their own interests.

ISBN 0 7341 1546 6

Published and distributed by:

Horticultural Australia Ltd

Level 1

50 Carrington Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Telephone: (02) 8295 2300

Fax: (02) 8295 2399

E-Mail: horticulture@horticulture.com.au

© Copyright 2007



Know-how for Horticulture™

Project VG 00070: FACILITATING COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE TASMANIAN VEGETABLE INDUSTRY

Milestone 14 – June 2007

Project Objective

The objective of this project is to develop an efficient and effective industry communication network in order to facilitate the exchange of information within the Tasmanian vegetable industry, and to maximise the benefits from industry-driven R&D projects.

Previous Milestone Report

The report for the previous Milestone was submitted in December 2006, and approved by Horticulture Australia Ltd in January.

Milestone 14 Description

- Final report accepted by Horticulture Australia Ltd.

Milestone 14 Criteria

- All necessary reports complying with Horticulture Australia's requirements sent to Horticulture Australia.

The Description and Criteria for this milestone are the legacy of the amended project milestone schedule approved by HAL 31st May 2006, which required the project to conclude at the end of this month. HAL has recently advised (email from Lucy Keatinge, 14th March 2007) that the project will be extended through to February 2008, however at the time of preparation of this report no updated schedule had been received specifying a new Description and Criteria for this milestone.

Actions in Achieving This Milestone

Due to HAL's advice that the project will continue, normal activities consistent with the project's overall goals and objectives have been undertaken during this milestone period. This report summarises these activities.

Summary of Project Activity since Milestone 13

• Industry Development and Support

The highly-publicised Horticulture Code was introduced nationally during this milestone period, and the project's Industry Development Officer organised for a workshop to be run by representatives of the ACCC to explain the Code face to face with local industry representatives. The IDO also assisted many fresh market vegetable growers obtain information about the Code and understand how they could comply with it, and it was pleasing to note that several of the state's major packers and two major wholesale agents also contacted the IDO to seek information about implementing the Code.

Utilising funding from the onion R&D Levy, which the project began receiving in 2006, the IDO has taken over the role of onion industry liaison to the National Residue Survey. A major review of the testing program has now been initiated to ensure the list of chemical products being screened by the NRS is truly reflective of what is being used by growers. Further work has also begun to bring the NRS' activities and outputs closer to the requirements of domestic and overseas quality assurance schemes, potentially saving packers and growers thousands of dollars that are currently lost in duplicated testing.

The IDO continues to Chair the Brassica Futures Group, and during this milestone period he organised and led a major field day for the BFG to demonstrate a number of trials being conducted by the BFG and individual growers. The project also funded a visit from brassica researcher Dr Kristin Stirling from the WA Dept of Agriculture and Food to attend the field day and share information on her brassica R&D trials. The visit has since led to much

stronger collaboration between HAL-funded and industry-funded programs being undertaken on brassica vegetables in both states.

An innovative program introducing young people to the vegetable industry has operated successfully in Tasmania for the past two years, and was once again conducted by the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association in May this year. As in previous years, this project provided valuable sponsorship to the induction program to enable the twenty participants to gain a thorough introduction to the many aspects of the vegetable industry, from the practicalities of production through to the science of R&D and provision of agronomy services.

The project also continued its long-standing support of Tasmania's many vegetable grower discussion groups, with the IDO closely involved with three process potato groups, a Brussels sprouts group, a greenhouse growers group, and the Brassica Futures Group during this milestone period.

• **R&D Issues**

This milestone period saw a major overhaul of the national Vegetable Levy R&D process, with five new Advisory Groups and six new Working Groups replacing the former six Product Groups. The IDO sought input from local industry leaders for suitable candidates for the new grower and 'specialist' positions, then contacted all candidates to explain the new system and encourage their participation, and assisted four candidates prepare and submit applications.

A number of other important R&D-related events and activities were also coordinated by the IDO, including:

- organising and facilitating the Tasmanian leg of the national IPM Pathology Review being managed for HAL by the Victorian Dept of Primary Industries;
- organising the Tasmanian workshop for the Australian Vegetable Industry Development Group's review of industry representative structures;
- organising a two-day industry introduction for HAL's new Industry Services Manager, Lucy Keatinge, including facilitating meetings with leading growers, major processor Simplot Australia, grower / packer / exporter Harvest Moon, R&D providers and TFGA management; plus tours of key growing regions and Forthside Research Station;
- organising and facilitating industry meetings for visiting interstate researchers Kristin Stirling (Ag WA) and Rebecca Jolley (Central Qld Uni).

• **Promotional Activities**

This milestone period saw several important industry development events and activities which were assisted by the IDO and promoted through the project, including:

- the national vegetable industry conference - the IDO attended the conference and gala dinner, and Chaired the Process Potatoes R&D session;
- the Australian Hydroponic and Greenhouse Association conference - the IDO attended the conference and gala dinner, and Chaired two conference sessions;
- promotion of the new Healthy Soils ute guide, and distribution to Tasmanian growers and advisors;
- national surveys distributed to growers for the HAL-funded security-sensitive fertilisers and IPM review projects;
- ongoing updating and provision of the grower database for national mailouts of Vegetables Australia magazine and the revamped VEGEnotes information leaflet series.

• **Chemical Management Issues**

Chemical management issues are one of the most complex areas of agricultural production, and growers and agronomy providers increasingly look to the IDO for assistance in resolving problems and staying abreast of regulatory changes.

During the past six months the IDO publicised eleven new Minor Use Permits and coordinated five new permit requests on behalf of the local industry. Urgent notifications to significant changes to the usage patterns for methomyl and boscalid were also broadcast throughout the industry to ensure growers were made aware of the need to comply with the changes.

The IDO has also been invited to join the new Chemicals Working Group under the revamped Vegetable Levy R&D process.

- **Next Steps for the Project**

The future of this project continues to be uncertain. HAL's offer of another short extension to the project whilst HAL continues its lengthy determination of the future role of 'Industry Development' was reluctantly accepted by the project's Management Committee and we remain concerned that such short-term extensions impact negatively upon the delivery and continuity of the critical role played by this project in the Tasmanian vegetable industry.

Given that the latest extension will see the project end February 2008, the project will continue in its current vein for the next six months and then turn its attention to winding up and preparing the Final Report during January and February 2008.

The Management Committee also requests HAL release the payment of \$20,000 which has been held for the project Final Report which was originally due at this Milestone.

- **Commercial and / or Intellectual Property Issues**

There are no new commercial or IP issues of concern with this project.

- **Other Issues**

The project's Management Committee is keen for HAL to know it continues to actively oversee this project and is committed to ensuring the outstanding service provided by the project to the Tasmanian vegetable industry is maintained. The Committee further notes it has reviewed this report and supports all activities undertaken during this milestone period.

Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Development Project
Management Committee meeting of Friday 22nd June 2007

Work Plan: July 2007 – February 2008

The following information outlines the major activity areas to be focussed on by the IDO from July to December 2007, under the four Key Result Areas contained within the IDO's *Performance Plan and Appraisal*.

Key Result Area One: Communication with industry

Performance Objective: Results from industry funded R&D made available to growers

- Organise and facilitate an industry forum to plan management programs for managing key pests and diseases in the brassica vegetables sector for the coming season, including visits from interstate researchers linked with the Brassica IPM and White Blister R&D projects
- Ongoing distribution of information received from R&D projects in a highly targeted manner to growers, agronomists, researchers and other industry members as appropriate
- Continue rapid dissemination of information on changes to chemical registration and usage patterns, and new / altered Minor Use permits; ensure the industry's needs for Minor Use permits are identified and included in national permit application processes
- Prepare articles and media releases on significant events and other issues within the industry for local, state and national media; provide regular updates of industry activities to media such as ABC Country Hour staff
- Maintain public awareness of upcoming industry events and activities through print and electronic media
- Maintain the project's comprehensive grower database up to date
- Participate in the editorial committee of national publication Potatoes Australia

Key Result Area Two: Facilitation and assistance to the Tasmanian and National R&D processes

Performance Objective: Tasmanian issues recognised and included in the national R&D priorities

- Given the change to the national Vegetable Levy R&D groups and reduction in number of Tasmanian representatives, liaison with the Vegetable and Potato ARACs, DPIW, TFGA and growers will be conducted to determine an effective mechanism to ensure R&D issues and priorities are still able to be raised locally and given due consideration at the national level
- Continue to assist Tasmania's vegetable, potato and onion R&D representatives with their dealings in the national R&D levy processes
- Participate in the new Veg Levy Chemicals Working Group and provide assistance with other R&D groups where required
- Assist the annual ARAC Presentation Day, including provision of sponsorship from the project

Stephen Welsh

Vegetable Industry Development Officer

The Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Development project is facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG, and is funded by the National Vegetable Levy. The Australian Government provides matched funding for all HAL's R&D activities.

Key Result Area Three: Industry representation and coordination

Performance Objective: The interests of the Tasmanian vegetable industry are acknowledged and included in national strategies, plans and reviews

- Assist the implementation of activities contained within the Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan
- Assist the delivery of specific projects including:
 - HAL-funded commercial IPM Service in Tasmania to be overseen by IPM Technologies and TFGA
 - Alternative Business Structures funded by Regional Partnerships program
 - two projects investigating the applicability and practicalities of Controlled Traffic farming systems in vegetables
 - market research and promotion projects funded by the state government
- Continue to liaise with the National Residue Survey in streamlining residue testing in the onion industry, including equivalence with EurepGAP requirements
- Continue to Chair the Brassica Futures Group in improving the cost-competitiveness of the process brassica sector, and oversee the delivery of the HAL-funded BFG projects
- Assist Dept of Education and OPCET to establish an industry reference group to oversee coordination and delivery of training programs to meet the skills and knowledge needs of vegetable growers
- Maintain high levels of awareness of the project and its role in the Tasmanian industry at state and national levels

Key Result Area Four: Project administration

Performance Objective: The IDO project is conducted in a professional manner and all reporting requirements are met

- Continue to work with the Management Committee, HAL and AUSVEG in determining the future role of Industry Development and its applicability to the Tasmanian vegetable industry
- Identify funding options and prepare project applications to deliver strategic benefits to the industry in the area of Industry Development specifically, and other areas as opportunities arise
- Conduct a meeting of the project's Management Committee in December and again in February 2008 to wind up the project
- Present activity reports to meetings of the TFGA Vegetable Council and other committees as appropriate
- Wind up the project in February 2008 and prepare a Final Report for HAL

Stephen Welsh

Vegetable Industry Development Officer

The Tasmanian Vegetable Industry Development project is facilitated by HAL in partnership with AUSVEG, and is funded by the National Vegetable Levy. The Australian Government provides matched funding for all HAL's R&D activities.