

**Facilitating the  
communication and  
development of the  
Vegetable Industry in  
Victoria - Stage 2**

Craig Murdoch  
Vegetable Growers Association of  
Victoria

Project Number: VG03054

## **VG03054**

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 vegetable industry.

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# **Facilitating the Development of the Vegetable Industry in Victoria (Stage 2)**

Katie Fisher  
Craig Murdoch and  
Patrick Ulloa

Vegetable Growers  
Association of Victoria Inc.

Project Number: VG03054

June 2009

## **VG03054 Facilitating the Development of the Vegetable Industry in Victoria**

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

The project was initiated after the vegetable industry identified the problem that the national industry was very fragmented, with little opportunities to effectively share ideas and information between growers.

In order to address this issue it was decided by national and state industry groups to appoint vegetable IDO's to the various states. The position of IDO for the Victorian vegetable industry was first funded in July 1998.

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria Inc. (VGA) manages the project and a management committee was appointed to oversee the activities, and operation of the project.

The research contained in this report was funded by Horticulture Australia Ltd with the financial support of the vegetable industry.

30 June 2009

### **Victorian Vegetable Industry Development Officers (IDO's) :**

Katie Fisher:	Dec 2008 – Jun 2009	presently, AgriHort Services P/L
Craig Murdoch:	Sep 2007– Dec 2008	presently, Biosecurity Victoria
Patrick Ulloa:	Jul 1998 – Jul 2007	presently, Coles Fresh Produce

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Any recommendations contained in this publication do not necessarily represent current HAL policy. No person should act on the basis of the contents of this publication, whether as to matters of fact or opinion or other content, without first obtaining specific, independent professional advice in respect of the matters set out in this publication.”

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## Preface

Victorian Vegetable Growers acknowledge the valued service provided by the Industry Development Officer over the period of this project.

Vegetable growers consider the IDO an integral part of industry development in Victoria and have greatly appreciated the support for this project through Horticulture Australia Ltd and AUSVEG Ltd.

The IDO provided industry communication between grass roots vegetable growers, grower groups, produce commodity delegates and research and development organisations.

The IDO played a critical role in the development of several important industry developments including; environment, green wedge (horticultural reserves), chemical and fertiliser applications, recycled water, training and education.

The IDO has strengthened relationships within the Victorian Vegetable Industry, not only between vegetable growers but with Government and farm supply businesses, communicating the many R&D projects funded by the National vegetable industry levy.

Group meetings held within the State have been well supported and the flow of information has been appreciated by vegetable growers.

Communication across the State of Victoria has been most effective through journal, Website, Email, Fax and Mail, however engaging regional growers through group meetings has proved more difficult. With almost 80% of vegetable growers located on Melbourne's urban fringe, it is regrettable that growers in regional areas, including Gippsland and the Mallee, did not receive the same level of personal visits from the IDO.

The revision of the **Vegetables Victoria Journal** last year received an excellent response from industry. With encouragement from the Victorian IDO, the VGA Executive Committee agreed to upgrade their website. **VegetablesVictoria.com.au** is at the forefront of relevant vegetable information providers, and ranks as one of the most up-to-date sites available to the industry.

Project priorities and industry progress are well documented in the attached milestone reports. The Vic IDO has always been perceived as the ideal independent contact for growers to discuss research issues, not only within the State but also from a national prospective.

One area which appeared not to function effectively for the industry has been the interaction between States in sharing of technical and scientific information that would benefit **all** vegetable growers.

This will have to be approached more effectively, perhaps with regular meetings and stronger focus on the national perspective.

The expected role of the IDO has increased over the years from distributing R&D information to growers. Today, the IDO is seen as a change agent, working with business decision makers and promoting their success with new farming practices and produce marketing structures.

This project has received the strong support of vegetable growers and industry associates and there is a feeling of frustration that the project has been terminated.

Victorian growers have expressed their concerns that without a State based IDO the R&D process cycle may become less effective as levy paying vegetable growers lose engagement in the selection of relevant industry priorities and R&D projects.

Victorian vegetable growers hope the next phase of industry development providers will continue to assist growers and contribute to the future success of the industry.

Tony Imeson  
Executive Officer,  
Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria Inc.

30 June 2009

## Media Summary

In 10 years, Victoria's Vegetable Industry Development Project (IDP) has seen great changes as growers embrace new technologies and become smarter operators within the Vegetable Supply Chain.

Pivotal to the IDP has been the work of the Industry Development Officer (IDO), who has continuously addressed the needs of growers by delivering relevant findings from research and development projects or finding the appropriate resources.

In order to deliver such information to industry, over the past 10 years, the IDOs have created or been involved in the development of a number of invaluable resources and tools which include:

- A Five –Year Victorian Vegetable Industry **Strategic Plan** – a first for the Industry.
- A comprehensive **database** that allows the IDO easy access to contact details.
- State of the art **website** that allows easy access to the latest vegetable industry information.
- Prestigious quarterly journal – **Vegetables Victoria** – that has become the key communication tool for industry news.
- Frequent **workshops** between industry and growers to relay vital R&D findings.
- A strong **relationship** between growers and industry research which has enabled the effective communication of all relevant R&D material by the IDO.

At the forefront of these achievements is the development of the Victorian Vegetable Industry's Strategic Plan, one of the final projects in which the IDO was involved. This is a state-wide plan for the Industry based on **VegVision 2020**. The plan was developed by a Steering Committee consisting of supply chain experts, growers, wholesalers and Government and industry experts. The five key imperatives that were identified as being integral in driving the Victorian Vegetable Industry forward were:

1. Consumers and Markets
2. Competitiveness
3. Information
4. Leadership and Management
5. Resources

One fundamental role of the IDP over the past 10 years has been to earn the **trust and respect** of the Victorian Industry's Growers. This trust and respect means growers use the IDO as an intermediary between research bodies and themselves.



Vital projects, including Integrated Pest Management, Reclaimed Water and Chemical Usage, have all been facilitated through the IDO to growers as a result of this 'relationship'.

In terms of communication, the professional profile of the Victorian Vegetable Industry has been raised through the IDOs' assistance in developing a "new look" website and quarterly industry journal.

The website was rebuilt in 2008 and has become one of the most popular vegetable industry websites in Australia. The success of the "new look" website is shown by its GOOGLE ranking as number one in Australian search results for "Vegetable Growers".

The ever expanding data base has also proved a worthy ally for the IDO in terms of communicating all forms of information to growers – the new website enables growers themselves to update their own information through a specific "password only" section.

There is no doubt that Victorian growers will remember the role of the IDO as pivotal in facilitating vital research and development information to the Industry and as a crucial intermediary between growers and industry research bodies.

Katie Fisher

Victorian Vegetable Industry Development Officer

30 June 2009

## Introduction

The concept of Industry Development Officers (IDO's) was developed by Horticulture Australia in 1998 to improve information sharing within horticultural industries. State based Vegetable IDOs were subsequently employed by Industry Associations across Australia and funded under the Vegetable R&D levy administered by Horticulture Australia Limited.

The IDO provided:

- Industry communication
- Practice change
- Grower engagement
- R&D priorities
- Secretariat services for AusVeg Industry Advisory Groups (IAG) and Production working groups

The IDO project had three main aims:

- ensure growers become part of the R&D decision making process
- provide growers easy access to the results of the R&D program
- assist pro-active growers adopt best practices.

**Patrick Ulloa** held the IDO position for nearly 9 years until July 2007. His successors have been employed on short term contracts to maintain IDO services, and where possible, enhance these services to growers.

The role and expectations of the IDO's have changed as the R&D program itself has changed since 1998.

Expectations have increased beyond simply sharing information between researchers and growers. Today's IDO's are challenged with the front-line task of engaging and persuading business decision makers and publicising their successful adoption of improved practices. This approach is seen as most likely to develop an innovative, adaptable and profitable vegetable industry, well prepared to succeed when facing the challenges ahead.

While building on the foundation work laid by Patrick Ulloa, this report focuses on vegetable industry development in Victoria under his successors, since September 2007. Full details of Patrick's activities are presented in Appendix 1.

Core industry development activities have sought to improve communication between growers, researchers and service providers. In addition to the improvements to the **"Vegetables Victoria"** Journal and Website, the State-wide industry database was also rebuilt to provide the capability to send targeted text messages as well as email, post and fax alerts to each vegetable business.

Other IDO's activities have included:

- identifying grower issues and research priorities,
- R&D project advisory committees, workshops and seminars,
- promoting industry discussion of issues, including chemical use, recycled water use and responsible resource management,
- promoting workforce development (apprenticeships, business skills, leadership training, workplace safety and various short courses) and
- distribution of levy-funded R&D information.

A 2004 baseline evaluation of the project established that the IDO project had achieved all the communications objectives of the original project proposal, (Appendix 5).

The review identified the challenge over the next five years would be to strengthen the collaborative relationships between growers and R&D service providers.

In 2008, a comprehensive national survey and review (VG 06163 - phase 2) concluded that future HAL investment in Research and Industry Development, should focus on Consumers, Markets and Leadership, where the industry can expect greater progress. The Industry Advisory Committee supported the review and recommended that Horticulture Australia commission additional projects to address these findings.

The 1998 project model was designed to improve issues facing levy- paying growers **before the Farm Gate**. The national IDNA review concluded that IDO's - and the Industry Associations that employ them - are not the best means to advance Marketing and Consumer developments occurring after the Farm Gate.

Furthermore, review indicates that the 'State IDO model' is no longer able to service ALL vegetable growers in the State, and this is one factor limiting the pace of industry progress.

A competitive tender process has been undertaken by Horticulture Australia Limited, to select future industry development service providers. The authors hope that the practical skills and learning experiences developed with the vegetable industry through the State based IDO projects, may help contribute to the success of these future ventures.

30 June 2009

## Methods and Activities

The amount of information available to support industry development is constantly growing and changing. The Victorian IDO's have worked to make sense of this information and to distribute relevant material to growers as quickly as possible.

Over the last 2 years, the Victorian IDO's have redesigned the quarterly journal "**Vegetables Victoria**" and redeveloped the "**VegetablesVictoria.com.au**" web site, to provide growers with easy access to the latest vegetable industry information. Regular industry updates and notices of levy funded training opportunities, are distributed to industry through the one-page bulletin "**NOTES**".

### Communications :

The Victorian IDO's have developed and implemented a communication platform: "**Vegetables Victoria**", which is designed to :

- PROMOTE informed discussion of issues of concern to Victorian vegetable growers.
- RECOGNISE industry innovation and success.
- SHOWCASE research funded by the vegetable growers own R&D levy.



VGA publish and distribute information to the vegetable industry through:

- **Vegetables Victoria** - our quarterly association Journal.
- **VegetablesVictoria.com.au** - our popular website which includes an online SQL-database capable of delivering email and SMS text messages direct to 700+ vegetable growers and supply chain business contacts across Victoria.
- **NOTES** - a one page bulletin delivering updates by fax/email/post.

The VGA also publish articles in industry magazines and newspapers including Vegetables Australia, Weekly Times, National Marketplace News and Southern Farmer.

### Vegetables Victoria - Journal:

First published in 1999 as the **Vegelink** newsletter, the quarterly Journal has been the mainstay to raise awareness of R&D activities and to highlight the benefits of the R&D program. This strategy shows growers the successful outcomes of R&D projects funded by their R&D levy.

Industry circulation has steadily increased and today more than 800 people receive a copy of the journal.

Design changes to the Vegelink newsletter were trialled, but seemed inadequate to raise the image of vegetable industry. In February 2008, a professional magazine editor

was engaged to redesign the Journal and reduce the burden of producing the magazine in-house.

In April 2008, a much improved “Vegetable Victoria” magazine was launched as the key communications tool for the Victorian vegetable industry. The new journal presents a visibly professional image of the vegetable industry and highlights the value of levy funded R&D projects. Much positive comment has been received and the voice of the vegetable industry is now taken more seriously.

We have received many positive reviews for the new look of the newsletter and consider it is currently achieves its designed purpose to “raise the professional image of the vegetable industry”.



Direct mail-outs have been another important communication tool whenever there is an issue of general interest. Mail-outs can also be distributed with the quarterly journal. Mail-outs have been distributed on behalf of R&D projects and other service providers including:

- Vegetable/ Management training opportunities
- Brassica Pest & IPM CD-ROMS
- IPM newsletters
- Minor-use permits
- Chemical regulation awareness

## **VegetablesVictoria.com.au - Website:**

The second element of Vegetables Victoria communications platform is a website that also "raises the professional image of our industry".

Web based communication offers low-cost approach to sharing information and its popularity is likely to grow as a one-stop, freely available, information source.

The "Rethink - Reshape and Revitalise" seminar identified the value of raising the public image of the vegetable industry through a new look newsletter and website.

While the number of growers regularly using the Internet is still low, the rate of uptake is increasing rapidly. Certainly most proactive growers are using the Internet to obtain a good proportion of the information they need.

Patrick Ulloa first created the "**VgaVic.org.au**" website in 2004 with the vision of making it the first point of call for growers looking for information. Feedback indicated growers wanted to read about R&D projects and have open access to project findings.

The first attempt was built in-house and professional skills were needed to develop a website to the same standard as the new journal "Vegetables Victoria".

Website design is one of the most rapidly improving fields of endeavour with most sites redeveloped every 6 months. The "**VegetablesVictoria.com.au**" website was professionally rebuilt in July 2008 and has become one of the most popular vegetable industry websites in Australia.

A specification was developed and a web developer was retained to work closely with the IDO to build the new website. The IDO has since added over 100 pages of web content and continues to publish additional information of interest to the vegetable industry.

The new website also preserves much of the work of Victorian vegetable researchers as well as something of the history of vegetable growing in Victoria. Other sections provide more general information on the Environment, Markets and Skills & Training.

The Communications section provides links to past newsletters, fact sheets, and a Enews page. Enews provides short introductions to several themes of interest to Victorian growers. Links are provided to the original source material and additional links to more detailed reports. The stories are written in simple text along with graphics to improve readability.

**vegetables victoria**

Login | Member benefits | Join us

Search

About Us ▾ Environment ▾ Marketing ▾ R & D ▾ Communication ▾ Skills ▾

### Welcome to Vegetables Victoria

The new look website of the Vegetable Growers' Association of Victoria Inc. (VGA-Vic).

We represent all vegetable growers in Victoria, from small crop specialists to general growers and large producers.

Growing vegetables on a commercial scale requires a large investment in people, land, water and equipment and there is always a very real risk of crop failure through a wide range of pests, diseases or adverse weather.

The list of problems confronting growers is endless, however; we will assist you where we can, influencing the people who can make a difference.

We are in the best position to assist Victorian vegetable growers as we are in contact with Government and Industry as rural policies are developed.

### Vegetable Industry Events

- 01/08/2009 - VGA Dinner Dance  
We regret to announce our 2009 Gala Dinner Dance... [Read more](#)
- 24/05/2009 - PMA - Fresh Connections - Sydney Hilton  
"An innovative way to stay connected to the people..." [Read more](#)
- 07/05/2009 - National Vegetable Expo - Werribee  
The National Vegetable Expo Organizing Committee... [Read more](#)
- 04/05/2009 - 2009 Vegetable Industry Conference  
AUSVEG is proud to once again host the Australian... [Read more](#)
- 03/05/2009 - Produce Executive Program - Mt Eliza  
Designed for business owners and managers in... [Read more](#)
- 10/03/2009 - Farm Chemical User Training  
Growers handling agricultural chemicals need to... [Read more](#)

>> [View all events](#)

### Interviews with Victorian vegetable growers

Interviews with Victorian vegetable growers on the intensification of our food production systems post WWII.

Topics range from land and water use, pest control, marketing and the challenge to feed a growing nation. [Read more](#) ...

### Issues & Initiatives

### Weather Stations

### Growers News Online

### Contact us

Your Name:

Your Email:

Message:

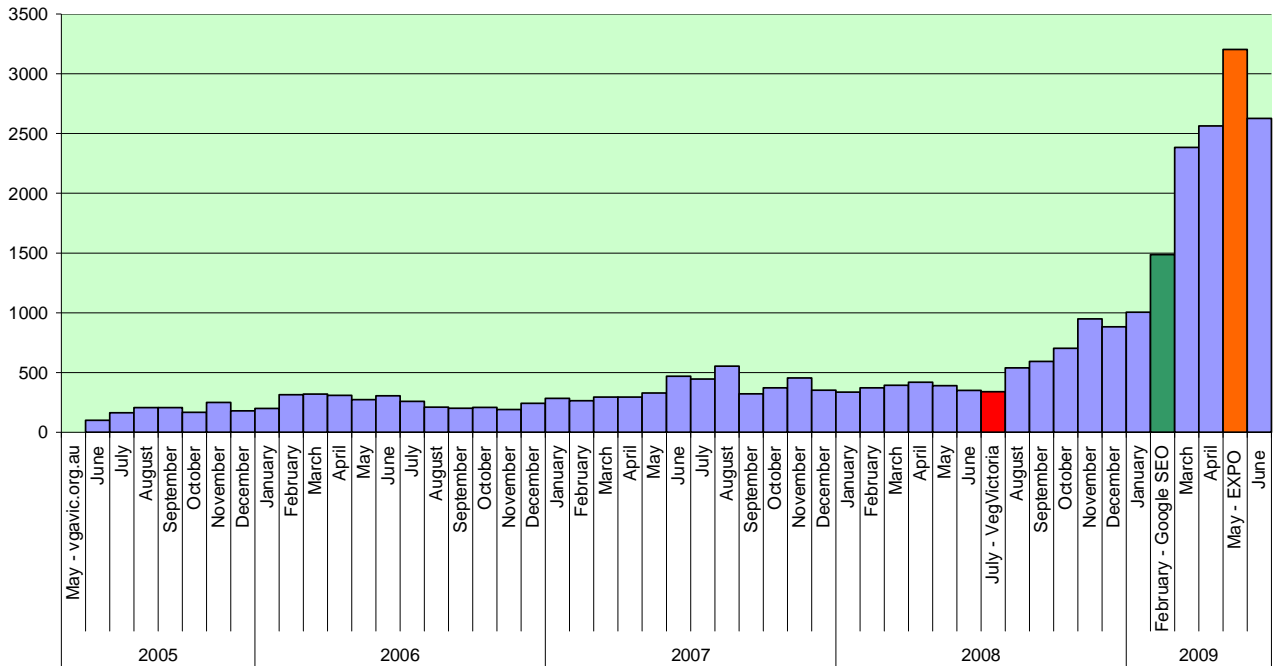
VGA Overview | Strategic Plan | Executive Committee | R & D Delegates | Support Staff | History | Our Associates | Issues & Initiatives | Our Growers On The Web | Vegetable Grower Profiles | Interstate Grower Groups | Member Benefits | Join Us | Contact Us | Environment | Weather | Land & Soil | Water & Recycle | EnviroVeg | Watsons Creek | Pest Management | Find Veg Grower Permits | Marketing | Marketing Outline | Marketing History | Footscray Market | Epping 2011 | Farmers Markets | Exports | R & D | R & D Process | Current Projects | Vegetable Researchers | Publications | Newsletters | e-News | Vege Notes | Vege MOF | Media Releases | Position Statements | Statistics | Useful Publications | Video | Education And Training | Vegetable Associated Certificate Courses | Vegetable Associated Short Courses | Leadership Skills | Business Skills

The material on the website includes:

- Early history of vegetable industry in Victoria,
- Links to key growers and vegetable organisations,
- EnviroVeg, IPM and registered chemical products
- R&D levy process and representatives
- Vegetable researchers and their work
- Indexed links to vegetable fact-sheets
- Industry statistics
- Video interviews with growers and researchers
- Relevant News items and coming Events
- Vegetable skills and training courses
- Local weather details
- Searchable content

The new website went live in July and its great popularity is indicated by #4 world ranked site for 'Vegetable Grower' by the **GOOGLE** search engine.

Website statistics show that Users regularly visit the site from across Australia, clearly interested in the information available through this site.



The website has proved to be a good way to provide useful information to growers in an economical manner.

The web pages are appealing to all those who visit the site and keep viewers informed of any of the latest issues relating to the vegetable industry, both nationally and locally.

The Communications section provides copies of past newsletters, factsheets, and relevant news articles and features.

Sections have also been included for the general public to highlight basic industry statistics and industry accomplishments including IPM and EnviroVeg.

The most popular pages include:

- News articles (e-news)
- Industry Issues and Initiatives
- Vegetable Research project archives
- VIDEO clips linked to "YouTube"

The R&D program has produced many reports and other useful materials of interest to growers and industry service providers over the years. But perhaps the greatest benefit is the convenience of finding most local vegetable R&D information on the one site.

User feedback suggests the new "VegetablesVictoria.com.au" website has exceeded grower's expectations for relevant searchable vegetable industry content.



## Vegetables Victoria – “NOTES”

Being published quarterly, the "Vegetables Victoria" journal is not suited to communicating more immediate or rapidly developing issues. "NOTES" has been developed to provide more frequent updates on current and emerging issues of interest to Victorian growers.

"NOTES" are produced and released as required and can communicate the most immediate or rapidly developing issues to growers. The single page graphic format is quickly produced in-house and faxed / emailed and posted to the website ... daily if required.

### Training:

"NOTES" have promoted training opportunities, coming events and updates on Industry matters of interest.

There are few R&D projects currently funded under the VegVision 2020 leadership imperative beyond study tours and scholarships. The IDO has actively promoted these opportunities as well as business skills training courses.

**Victorian Vegetable Growers Notes**  
29-Dec-08

**An Update for VGA members**

**Developing more Industry Leaders**  
In February 2009 a National program will begin to build the leadership capacity of the Australian vegetable industry. The program is subsidised by HAL and funded through the National Vegetable Levy.

**Registrations close 15 January so hurry and get your application in now!**

The program will help develop your:

- Leadership skills including understanding personalities, managing projects and people, communicating effectively, conflict management, team building, networking and effective meetings.
- Confidence in leading groups at all levels in the industry - workplace, organisation, teams and community groups.

First Residential 24-26 Feb - Devonport  
Second Residential 26-28 May - Melbourne  
Third Residential 18-20 Aug - Canberra

More details are available at:  
<http://www.vgavic.org.au>

Contact: Jill Briggs (m) 0409 455 710  
(b) 02 6035 7284 (e) rti@dragnet.com.au

"Victorian Vegetable Growers Notes" is a publication of the Vegetable Growers' Association of Victoria Inc.  
Mail Box 111, Melbourne Markets  
542 Footscray Road, West Melbourne, Vic, 3003  
Website: [www.vgavic.org.au](http://www.vgavic.org.au)

**Victorian Vegetable Growers Notes**  
9-Jun-09

**Skills for Growth: the Workforce Development Program**

A new Victorian Government initiative will invest \$52 million to position small businesses to succeed as the economy recovers.

**Skills for Growth** offers a great opportunity for small and medium businesses, to increase the skills of their workforce.

The program provides an independent specialist to work with you - free of charge - to identify your strategic business aims and objectives.

The specialist will help you assess the needs of your staff and identify ways to ensure your business has the skills to succeed in these tough times.

Together you will develop a staff training plan that meets your business needs.

**Victorian Skills Pledge**  
In the current economic downturn, it is vital for businesses to focus on developing and retaining skilled employees so they can take advantage of new opportunities as the economy recovers.

The Victorian Skills Pledge is a new approach to drive business improvement through upskilling the workforce. Each enterprise will decide the training that best fits its business needs and how this should be delivered.

Contact:  
John Stapleton, Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development  
Skills Victoria  
9637 2262

Contact:  
Barry Dignam, AgTeam Services  
DPI Knoxfield  
(b) 9210 9360

Extra subsidised training places have also been provided at TAFE institutes, private training providers and Adult and Community Education providers.

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Mail Box 111, Melbourne Markets  
542 Footscray Road, West Melbourne, Vic, 3003  
[www.VegetablesVictoria.com.au](http://www.VegetablesVictoria.com.au)

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(b) 03 9687 4723  
(m) 0414 458 561  
(e) contact@vgavic.org.au

**Victorian Vegetable Growers Notes**  
17-Feb-09

**Farm skills and training**

**Certificate IV in Training & Assessment**  
Train your own staff!  
Recognised training that prepares YOU to deliver training and assessment in YOUR workplace.

Topics covered include:

- Design and develop learning programs
- Plan and organise training
- Group based learning
- Individual learning
- Work-based learning
- Assessing competence

When: 5 days between March & May 2009  
Where: DPI - Knoxfield, 621 Burwood Hwy Melways 73, C1  
Cost: \$1900 GST Free (Vic Gov subsidy)  
For more information please contact:  
**Barry Dignam**  
(b) 9210 9360  
(e) barry.dignam@dpi.vic.gov.au  
(w) [atrain website](http://atrain website)

**Farm chemical user course**  
Those handling agricultural chemicals need to complete this course to apply for an Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP) before using 57 agricultural chemicals.

Your ACUP expires after ten years so make sure your qualification is up to date

Accredited training meets Cert III standard.

This course will help you use farm chemicals safely and effectively. You will also learn of your obligations under Victoria's new chemical regulations.

When: 10 & 11th March 2009, 8:30am - 5:00pm, 2 days  
Where: DPI-Knoxfield, 621 Burwood Hwy Melways 73, C1  
Cost: \$260 GST Free

For more information please contact:  
**Sheridan Williams**  
(b) 9210 9244  
(e) sheridan.j.williams@dpi.vic.gov.au  
(w) [atrain website](http://atrain website)

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On a state-wide level, much IDO time and effort has been invested in promoting vegetable production apprenticeships to prospective students and service providers.

Training is available through several providers including regional TAFE colleges and private institutes keen to formalise linkages with horticultural industries.

The IDO has been able to bring our industry into discussion with Primary Skills Victoria and training providers. Discussions with growers have considered Certificate II training for field workers that can lead to Cert III supervisor training.

Good relationships have been established and the prospects of success are excellent.

### **Contact Database:**

The communication network in Victoria includes vegetable growers, researchers, chemical resellers, consultants, and other businesses interested in the Victorian vegetable industry.

In 1998, this information was based on the State Association membership list, and did not include ALL vegetable growers in Victoria. An expanded list was developed with the help of vegetable researchers. Today, privacy legislation restricts the sharing of personal contact details and organizations must develop their own contact lists.

The contact lists were developed into the 'Horticulture Australia Industry Database' (HAIDB), by Leigh Walters (Potato Industry Communications Manager), to facilitate easy data maintenance and accessibility.

This HAIDB database underwent several revisions but was built in a specialised database program – FILEMAKER PRO that is not commonly available or supported. The HAIDB dataset and was migrated to MS-ACCESS in September 2007.

MS-ACCESS is widely distributed and many USERS will be familiar with common program controls shared across the MS-OFFICE series. The database has been expanded to include: CROPS grown, Emails and Mobile numbers. The USER interface and report structures have been improved in each update.

The detailed information of 700+ growers and many other industry service providers and others in the vegetable industry, is a vast body of information. To use this data effectively, the information is stored in a database so it can be quickly and easily retrieved and maintained.

The Microsoft ACCESS database enables the USER to produce a range of common reports that can be viewed on-screen or exported to MS-EXCEL for printing or other purposes.

Database reports include:

1. Simple mailing lists for magazine distribution houses - Vegetables Australia, Brassica IPM etc.
2. Detailed contact lists for all Victorian growers and Non-growers.

3. Lists of Victorian Growers who produce any of 60+ vegetable crops.
4. Contact details for Vegetable businesses in each production district.
5. Mobile numbers, email and website addresses.

Mailing lists and crop contacts are routinely generated for AUSVEG magazines, and researchers seeking known producers of various crops.

In March 2009, the MS-ACCESS Vegetable industry contact database asset was provided to Horticulture Australia Limited, in fulfillment of the conditions of the project contract.

The "VegetablesVictoria" contact database has now been fully integrated into the "**VegetablesVictoria.com.au**" website. The database currently lists close to 900 vegetable business contacts including growers, suppliers, supply chain businesses researchers and Government officials across Australia.

### **National Vegetable Conference & Expo**

These National events are a valuable opportunity to raise the profile of the vegetable industry. The events were widely promoted in both the national and local press including Good Fruit and Vegetables, The Weekly Times and Southern Farmer.

The National Vegetable Expo Committee (Inc) is on schedule and ready for the opening on May 7-9 2009. The Committee of Management has site plots booked for all key seed suppliers such as Fairbank Seeds, Rijk Zwaan and Bejo Seeds.

**The National Vegetable Expo at Werribee** from May 7-8, 2009, had more than 500 visitors on its first day and overall was a "terrific" success for Victoria's Vegetable Growers' Association.

The event hosted Australia's key seed companies who displayed some of the latest vegetable varieties either on trial or about to be released. Both sponsors and visitors all commended organisers by saying the event was a "must" for the Industry in both trade displays and workshop activities for growers.

The IDO tent promoted many of the key R&D projects both current and completed. The event emphasised the vital relationship that exists between the IDO and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Over the two days, growers visit the IDO tent with queries on projects or specific concerns and the IDO would then assist as much as possible and direct them to the appropriate DPI staff member for additional advice.

The IDO tent also hosted Dr Sandra McDougall, (Industry Leader -Vegetables, NSW DPI), who spoke to growers about improving pest and disease management with IPM systems including spray applications and pest and disease monitoring.

### **Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2009**

The Vegetable Conference held from May 4-6 in Melbourne was a great opportunity to showcase the vegetable industry, raising awareness of the scope and skills of vegetable

producers and suppliers.

The IDO was part of a Steering Committee formed to manage the organisation of the key industry event. The Committee included members of AUSVEG, growers, industry stakeholders and representatives from the VGA. The Committee's main purpose was to design a program relevant to the chosen theme "Growing a Healthier Australia".

The Conference's Program integrated the supply chain, better business practice and research and development topics with the aim of growers going away with not only a thorough understanding of the industry's levy-funded research and development ventures, but better knowledge of global trends, the supply chain and importantly consumer motivations.

The IDO had compiled a promotional DVD that was played throughout the day displaying something of the history and personalities of the local industry.

## **R&D priorities**

Identifying R&D priorities from the Victorian perspective has been a key function of the IDO. At first, the IDO organised annual workshops that brought together growers and vegetable researchers. Follow-up meetings in the major production areas in the State enabled growers to identify the issues that were important to them. A summary of the issues and priorities were then passed on to researchers to prepare R&D project proposals.

This approach was well supported by all participants and generated an expectation that grower issues would be addressed. Regrettably many of the regional proposals were not supported at the National level.

This poor first result damaged the reputation of the fledgling R&D levy, as the time, and effort of growers and researchers, did not lead to on-ground projects.

More importantly, encouraging growers to identify issues had raised expectations that at least some of their issues would be addressed.

This was a poor start to the R&D process which is long remembered. When asked, growers often state that the R&D program does not meet their needs.

In latter years, the IDO invited growers to discuss R&D related matters at a series of regional group meetings. The idea was that these groups would identify, discuss and solve problems affecting local growers. Patrick was only able to identify two existing grower groups:

**The Werribee Young Growers**, meet monthly and are supported of a local DPI Officer and a chemical reseller. The group was essentially a social group who provided an audience for invited speakers. While members wanted to maintain the social character of the group, they were prepared to address some common issues that were important to regional growers.

**The South Eastern Growers**, are a well established group who meet whenever needed to discuss issues of interest. This group was instrumental in the development of the ENVIROVEG project and the South Eastern recycled water scheme. The IDO's have continued to support this proactive group, organising meetings and venues to identify potential R&D work useful to those growers. The group has proved to be the most productive source of R&D issues with several members standing as Victorian R&D delegates.

Establishing **grower groups in other regions** has proved more difficult. Rural and remote growers are often widely dispersed and operate independently. They are not involved in discussion groups other than through their farm suppliers or their produce buyers. A local leadership group (VGA or VFF) may be able to provide the regional cohesion required for successful group activities.

More recently, State issues and priorities have been passed to the national R&D committee to set national priorities for research. Researchers then prepare proposals that address National priorities rather than State or Regional issues.

Today, Industry priorities are sent direct from growers to Horticulture Australia. Project summaries are prepared by HAL staff with the IDO providing secretariat services to the Production Working Groups & Industry Advisory Groups.



In 2008, the IDO prepared a short list of common issues of concern from discussions with individual growers. This list formed the seed material for a select advisory group of 14 vegetable industry leaders held in May 2008. A short list of seven high priority issues was developed and also supported by major levy payers. These priorities were further discussed at the National R&D priority setting forum.

## **R&D project support**

The IDO's have worked closely with vegetable researchers to improve awareness of research findings and identify industry needs for future research and development.

Growers are usually deeply involved in solving their problems. At group meetings many side-issues and symptoms, such as crop diseases, are identified rather than the underlying problems, which could be training related.

**Personal communication** with growers reliably identified important issues that had general application. In most cases, growers felt more comfortable raising issues privately and the occasions were both productive and appreciated..

In recent times, the national R&D system has been modified to support the strategies identified in **VegVision 2020** .

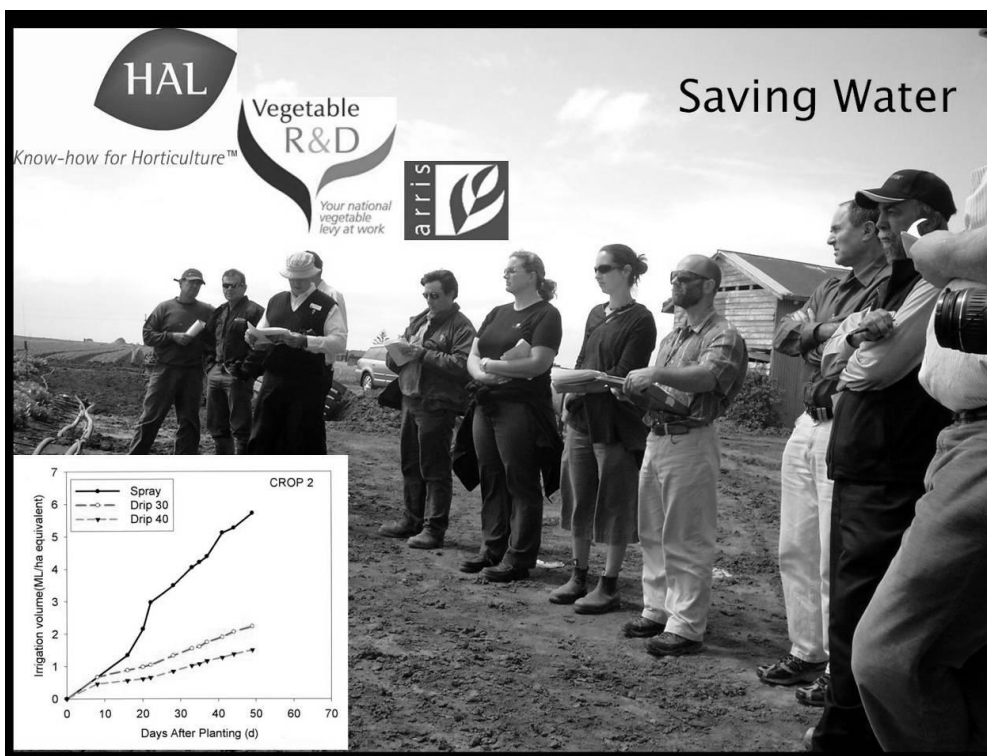
The IDO was able to assist some researchers with their project proposals by aligning their outcomes with the VegVision 2020 strategy as well as seeking the comments, suggestions and support of local growers.

The IDO has introduced interested growers to researchers working with crops including Brassicas, Lettuce, Bunching Vegetables, Celery and Parsnip.

**Seminars** have proved an important tool to distribute information. The IDO's have organised a number of technical seminars to help Victorian growers easily access useful information.

**Field days** have the advantage of bringing the information to a farm where growers can better relate to the information being presented. The IDO's have worked in conjunction with research providers including; DPI-Victoria, ARRIS and IPM Technologies, organising field days for growers. Field days on topical issues, are usually well attended and remembered by growers.

One of the key functions of an IDO is to identify R&D issues that limit the industries capacity to supply quality produce. Growers are seeking solutions to persistent or recurring issues that should be brought under control and share many issues in common.



A R&D levy funded project is comparing the economics of drip & spray irrigation at Werribee South. A field day held at the Robbs Road trial site on 7th February. Those who attended took the opportunity to discuss the trial with researchers and understand more about irrigating lettuce crops over summer.



#### Crop disease forecasting using in-crop weather data and disease modelling

Local growers and district agronomists are keen to develop a network that will alert them to adverse weather conditions which increase the risk of vegetable disease outbreaks.

This technology is only just becoming reliable and so far only been used by researchers.

DPI-Victoria researcher Liz Minchinton valued being able to meet and discuss the development of a HAL project submission to address this priority with growers, agronomists, and equipment/system developers.

## Environment

### Case 1. Robert Premier - Watsons Creek, Somerville, Victoria

The **EnviroVeg** initiative has prepared the vegetable industry well and growers can now reassure the community they strive to leave as small an environmental footprint as possible.

Watsons Creek has a history of nutrient and bacterial troubles which pose a hazard to the Yaringa Marine National Park in Westernport Bay. Melbourne Water has implicated market gardens as contributors to the problem.

The issues facing growers on Watsons Creek are shared with other vegetable producers located on or near waterways across Australia.

Our industry must be able to convince commentators that vegetable growers follow responsible and sustainable management practices which minimize adverse environmental effects.

Following discussions with Helena Whitman (EnviroVeg), the IDO established the Watsons creek grower advisory group to consider the position of vegetable growers on the creek and develop a way forward. The group met with **Dr Daryl Stevens (ARRIS)**, the Australian Coordinator for Recycled Water Use in Horticulture.

A second workshop was held with **Dr Robert Premier (DPI-Victoria)**. Robert has since prepared a project proposal which has since been submitted to Horticulture Australia Limited for consideration.

Local growers valued the opportunity to contribute to Robert's research proposal and many are keen to identify ways they can improve the health of the Creek.

EnviroVeg certified growers on Watsons Creek have reviewed their crop management and drainage systems to protect the creek.

The Plan is for the Vegetable Industry



The IDO has also contributed to discussions at committee meetings of the federally funded "Watsons Creek Integrated Catchment Management Project" .



to facilitate a meeting with local stakeholders where such recommendations will be considered: site walkovers where Market Gardeners can review land management practices; the identification of potential nutrient sources and the installation of drainage pathways and mitigation measures.

## **Case 2. Peter Fisher - Carbon emissions**

Recent public debate on a future Carbon Tax has added to grower concern about the rising costs of supplying food to the community. Though growers may be exempt from a carbon tax ... at least in the short term, their suppliers, processors and transporters are likely to incur additional energy related costs.

The IDO contacted **Peter Fisher (DPI-Vic)**, seeking information that could assist growers understand the carbon intensive aspects of the vegetable supply chain. Peter was pleased to assist as he was in the process of developing a discussion paper on this issue.

Early in September 2008, Peter and his team presented their draft paper to a group of interested growers. The opportunity to discuss these matters greatly assisted the understanding of researchers and growers alike.

Peter Fisher and his team were pleased to be able to 'road test' their discussion papers on a 'Carbon Footprint for the vegetable industry', with interested vegetable growers.

Peters and his team commented that these discussions, and the emails that followed, had helped them appreciate the grower's perspective. Peter believed the discussions had better prepared the researchers to present their work at the Carbon Footprint Workshop in Sydney.

## Building Relationships with State Government

### Chemical Use

Plant Protection Products help growers deliver a quality harvest but detection of unacceptable residues will undermine consumer confidence in vegetables as clean, green and healthy foods and setback our whole industry.

MRL breaches in Victorian vegetable crops continue to decline due in large part to the awareness of crop advisors which is supported by the work of the National minor-use registration program led by Peter DalSanto (AgAware).



MRL workshops conducted in October and November 2007, and again in early 2009, were well received by growers and their crop advisors.

It is significant that these same service providers have continued to keep MRL compliance on the agenda and move their customers away from 'MRL risk' products.

## Strategic planning

At a special meeting of the VGA in February 2008, John Said (FreshSelect) presented a vision of the future of vegetable industry "Rethink - Reshape and Revitalise". The concept sought to develop formal relationships with related organisations to make a constructive contribution to the development of the Victorian vegetable industry. The vision also identified the public image of the vegetable industry should also be improved with a public relations / communications platform including a redesigned newsletter and website.

In March 2008, Jim Turley (Vegetables WA) encouraged the VGA executive to improve relationships with the State Government.

In June 2008, discussions began with DPI-Victoria on the development of a state-wide plan for the vegetable industry based on VegVision 2020. Agreement has been reached on cooperation in the development of such a plan and funds will soon be available. The state-wide planning process will benefit from the recently released '**IDNAP guidelines and tools**' developed by Richard Stevens (Horticulture Australia Limited).



Consultants were commissioned to develop a 5 year Strategic Plan for the Victorian Vegetable Industry.

The project was co-funded by DPI-Farm Services Victoria-Horticulture Manager, Euan Laird, who had helped adapt the VegVision 2020 strategy for the Tasmanian vegetable industry. Euan was able to provide similar input to the development of a plan for the

Victorian vegetable industry. The plan was developed in consultation with industry leaders including Wholesalers and Retailers.

A Steering Committee consisting of supply chain experts including growers, wholesalers and industry experts have now developed a Victorian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan.

The plan supports the VegVision 2020 Industry Plan, developing the same strategies in a Victorian context.

### Victorian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan - 2009

1. Consumers & Markets	2. Competitiveness	3. Information	4. Leadership & Management	5. Resources
1.1 To monitor and respond to consumer lifestyle needs	2.1 Develop a focused and consolidated industry R&D view	3.1 To build industry communication	4.1 Strengthen relationships with industry leaders	5.1 Managing water resources
1.2 To market and promote Victorian vegetables to consumers	2.2 Create a competitive supply chain	3.2 Enhance information use within the industry	4.2 Grower involvement and capacity building	5.2 Understand and adapt to a changing climate
1.3 Education to encourage vegetable consumption as part of healthy eating		3.3 Advisory capacity	4.3 VGI be recognised as a state vegetable industry group	
1.4 Victorian industry review and implement market strategy and information gathering			4.4 Develop stronger, integrated supply chain leadership	

The Victorian Vegetable Industry's first Strategic Plan was signed-off in May 2009 following an extensive review of the Industry's needs by a Steering Committee consisting of supply chain experts including growers, wholesalers and industry experts.

A vital component of the Plan's development was the IDO taking the draft format to a selection of growers across the State for final comment. The aim was to ensure the Plan addressed the key needs of the growers / industry. A take-home message from this exercise was the need for industry to adopt new strategies that embraced the younger generation's growers.

## Weather Stations

A joint project between the VGA and the Victorian DPI has seen the installation of a weather station at Werribee and links to other regional weather forecasting services.

Growers can now access the latest weather data to develop their irrigation schedules. A State Government Grant funded the purchase and installation of an automated weather station and text-messaging service as well as internet access and training in making the best use of the service.



The IDO and DPI-Victoria have worked together to establish an affective communication strategy that will ensure the region's growers are able to fully use the weather stations capabilities.

The "[VegetableVictoria.com.au](http://VegetableVictoria.com.au)" website hosts relevant material for growers interested in using the resource through their mobile phones.

The service delivers a text message to growers every day during the irrigation season

showing daily evaporation losses as well as rainfall, temperature and humidity.

Further weather station enhancements are currently being implemented on the **"VegetablesVictoria.com.au"** website. This will enhance the service available to growers who currently source this information from multiple websites.

### **Biosecurity Victoria – legislation & property ID #'s**

Identification of ALL vegetable growers is a high priority for our industry.

The VGA own and operate a web-based contact database with a far wider than the direct members of the Association. The VGA database lists close to 900 vegetable growers, suppliers and supply chain business contacts across Victoria.

Database information includes, eMail, website and postal addresses, telephone numbers & mobiles as well as which of the 60+ types of vegetables are grown by each business.

Preliminary discussions with DPI-Plant Health Officers, has identified another application of the comprehensive grower contact information available through **"VegetablesVictoria.com.au"** .

Improved capacity to communicate with Victorian vegetable growers on biosecurity and related matters on behalf of DPI Victoria for the purposes identified in the Plant Biosecurity Bill.

Benefits of the **"VegetablesVictoria"** database Include:

- Fast, cost-effective communication of "Emergency Response" information to affected Victorian businesses.
- Accurate, current information on the number and location of Victorian growers and the vegetable crops they grow.
- Capability of targeting information to growers in particular districts or with particular crops.
- Capacity to receive immediate feedback on Biosecurity alerts.

There will be an ongoing need to update contact details, particularly current vegetable crops grown. Unlike permanent plantings such as orchards and vineyards, the high turnover of vegetable crops demands more frequent checks to ensure the contact information is valid.

In common with other primary industries, the number of vegetable growers has been decreasing as retiring farmers are not always being replaced by a younger generation. In many instances, as one business closes its doors, other businesses expand to maintain market supply of fresh vegetables.

## Evaluation

A formal review of the project was undertaken by Cadman Agribusiness Services in 2004 (Appendix 5). The review established a service baseline where the IDO project had achieved all the communications objectives of the original project proposal.

The review found that Patrick Ulloa had been resourceful and professionally competent in his delivery of 'effective communication systems' to Victorian vegetable growers. Growers interviewed believed their investment in the project has been well worthwhile.

The review identified the challenge over the next five years was to strengthen collaborative relationships with other R&D service providers.

In 2008, a National survey & review of IDO service provision was undertaken by InoVact Consulting (VG 06163-Industry Development Needs Assessment-Phase 3).

This review concluded that the State based IDO service delivery model:

**" - was designed to provide generalist services for on-farm productivity improvement. The needs analysis has identified that a set of specialist expertise, with a focus on consumers, markets and the supply chain is required.**

**- was not well equipped to meet the complex communications requirements given the limitations in resources, and**

**- was not contestable and has weak accountability structures because it is grounded in complex industry structures and consultative mechanisms.**

**The previous successes of the industry development model in delivering for the industry, was identified by stakeholders during the needs analysis process and is acknowledged.**

**However, the need for a new approach to meet the needs of today and tomorrow was also a strong theme in stakeholder interviews.**

**This analysis confirms the need for a significant change in the delivery of industry development services."**

In the past, Industry Development services have been delivered by just one Officer. Motivated individuals with expertise and networks across the necessary and varied disciplines, have proven difficult to attract & retain.

The InoVact review (VG 06163), was based on a National survey of vegetable industry decision makers conducted by Taverner Research. The review indicates that the 'State IDO model' is no longer able to service ALL vegetable growers in the State, and this is one factor limiting the pace of industry progress.

A competitive tender process was recommended to select further industry development service providers. The InoVact recommendations were endorsed by the vegetable IAC and are presently being implemented by Horticulture Australia.

We should recognise the increasing expectations of those investing in, and receiving IDO services. Industry Development goes beyond sharing information, it is charged with the front-line task of engaging and persuading decision makers and publicising their adoption of progressive practices.

While appreciating the past success of State based IDO's, a more extensive and collaborative service delivery approach is likely to accelerate the future uptake of improved production practices.

### **The Weekly Times, (20May2009)**

Bacchus Marsh and Gippsland vegetable grower Frank Ruffo said IDOs had "definitely been a useful link".

"They were on call all the time, and if we had a problem they'd chase it up for us," Mr Ruffo said.

"You need someone that understands our problems, more so than going to the Government with a problem."

[http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2009/05/20/79905\\_horticulture.html](http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2009/05/20/79905_horticulture.html)



## Implications

- Personal communication with growers industry service businesses reliably identified important R&D issues. In most cases, growers felt more comfortable raising issues privately.
- IDO's based with State Industry Associations were able to identify relevant issues through regular access to larger growers and industry leaders at industry meetings.
- Surveys and brainstorming sessions were poorly supported by growers and produced only limited results.
- Seminars and Field days generally attracted good audiences provided growers saw them as relevant.
- The issues affecting growers are many and varied and require carefully listening and a series of conversations to build a realistic picture of the underlying problems.
- It is critical to manage growers expectations of the R&D process. The reputation of the R&D levy process was already damaged by 2000 because local proposals were not supported by National advisory groups. Encouraging growers to identify issues had raised expectations that at least some of their issues would be addressed.
- An increasing number of vegetable growers are accessing the Internet for worldwide industry news and information any time 24 hours / 7 days. Given the rising costs of printing and distributing hardcopy publications, it is possible that websites will become the preferred communication medium.
- A local leadership group (VGA or VFF) may be able to provide the regional cohesion required for successful group activities.

## Recommendations

In the past, Industry Development services have been delivered by just one Officer. Motivated individuals with expertise and networks across the many and varied disciplines, have proven difficult to attract & retain.

A recent National survey of vegetable industry decision makers (VG 06163), has indicated the 'State IDO model' is no longer able to service ALL vegetable growers in the State, and this is one factor limiting the pace of industry progress.

While appreciating the past success of State based IDO's, the authors agree that a more extensive and collaborative service delivery approach is likely to accelerate the uptake of improved production practices.

The authors recognise the increasing expectations of those investing in, and receiving IDO services. Expectations have increased beyond simply sharing information between researchers and growers.

Today's IDO's are challenged with the front-line task of engaging and persuading business decision makers and publicising their successful adoption of improved practices. This approach is seen as most likely to develop an innovative, adaptable and profitable vegetable industry, well prepared to succeed when facing the challenges ahead.

Vegetable growers regularly contract the services of accountants, agronomists and other specialists to help them in their business of growing vegetables.

Contractors bring a range of specialised skills and experience into a business and provide a wider range of ideas to increase business productivity.

This TEAM approach would provide a strong network of industry expertise with the capacity to support each other in the provision of services as required.

Additional Industry Development services may be delivered by establishing collaborative arrangements with commercial networks already working with local vegetable growers.

The core task of increasing adoption will begin with local workshops and field days. Well planned events are well supported and remembered by growers.

Feedback from workshop participants will identify decision makers willing to consider new practices. These businesses will be supported to establish trials that will be widely promoted to effect industry wide adoption.

Additional activities to promote adoption could include:

- Study tours - through AusVeg
- Farm walks - IPM/ Organic/ Hydroponic etc.
- Grower awareness & attitude surveys
- Training opportunities - through DPI & other RTO's
- Leadership opportunities - through AusVeg
- Award opportunities - through AusVeg
- Regional 1:1 services to large or isolated growers
- Specific supply chain issue workshops - MRL's, Exports etc.

## Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank:

- State Industry Development Officers including; Alison Anderson, David Ellement, Simon Powell, Melissa Fraser and Roger Orr, for their collaborative support throughout this project.
- HAL staff including; Lucy Keatinge, Richard Stevens, Brad Wells and Kim James, deserve acknowledgment for their assistance in the successful delivery of IDO services to Victorian vegetable growers.
- AusVeg staff including; Jim Thompson (Vegetables Australia), Ian James (economics) and Helena Whitman (EnviroVeg), for their support and encouragement.
- Jim Turley (Vegetables WA) for his inspiring call to build a strong relationship between State Industry Associations and Government.
- John Said (Fresh Select) for sharing his creative vision of a future Victorian vegetable industry, "Rethink - Reshape and Revitalise".
- Past and present Officers of DPI Victoria including; Robert Dimsey, Euan Laird, Slobodan Vujovic, SallyAnn Henderson, Adam Buzza and Mark Hinksman, for assistance with R&D workshops and seminars.
- Vegetable Researchers including; Elizabeth Minchinton, Caroline Donald, Oscar Villalta, Robert Premier, Hoong Pung, Paul Horne and Sandra McDougall, for their skilful presentation of 'grower friendly' R&D project results.
- EE MUIR, ELDERS, BOOMAROO, BEJO, PERACTO and ARRIS, for much needed support and encouragement at industry events and for their contribution to R&D project advisory committee's.
- Members of the VGA Executive Committee.

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**VG 98109**, (October, 2003), '**Facilitating the development of the Vegetable Industry in Victoria**', Patrick Ulloa, for Horticulture Australia Limited.

**VG 06163**, (October, 2008), '**Enhancing the delivery of the R&D services to vegetable industry levy payers- Phase 1,2 & 3**', a series of reports by InoVact Consulting, for Horticulture Australia Limited.

**IDNAP guidelines and tools -(2008)** developed by Horticulture Australia Limited.

## Appendix

1. Milestone reports
2. MRL – workshop notes
3. IDO Strategic Plan 2007
4. R&D priorities 2008
5. Evaluation report – baseline 2004

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## VICTORIAN VEGETABLE IDO

**Project Title** *Facilitating the communication and development of the Vegetable Industry in Victoria – Stage Two*  
**Project No** VG03052  
**Milestone No** 114  
**Due Date** 30th June, 2009

### **Milestone Criteria**

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

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### **Milestone Description**

Project extended till 30 June 2009, final project report on completion.

### **Revised Milestone description:**

Review the industry development plan and make adjustments as needed.

### **Revised Milestone criteria:**

Report on last 3 months activity.

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## **1. Summary of activities undertaken in the past 3 months**

### **Strategic plan for Vegetables Victoria – deliver the plan to selected grower groups for review and comment**

The Victorian Vegetable Industry's first Strategic Plan was signed-off in May 2009 following an extensive review of the Industry's needs by a Steering Committee consisting of supply chain experts including growers, wholesalers and industry experts.

A vital component of the Plan's development was the IDO taking the draft format to a selection of growers across the State for final comment. The aim was to ensure the Plan addressed the key needs of the growers / industry. A take-home message from this exercise was the need for industry to adopt new strategies that embraced the younger generation's growers.

The Plan is consistent with the VegVision 2020 Industry Plan and covers strategies that have a Victorian context.

The project was co-funded by DPI-Farm Services Victoria and the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria.

### **National Vegetable Expo 2009 – assisted with the planning and organizing of the 2009 event at Werribee.**

The two-day National Vegetable Expo at Werribee from May 7-8 had more than 500 visitors on its first day and overall was a "terrific" success for Victoria's Vegetable Growers' Association.

The event hosted Australia's key seed companies who displayed some of the latest vegetable varieties either on trial or about to be released. Both sponsors and visitors all commended organisers by saying the event was a "must" for the Industry in both trade displays and workshop activities for growers.

The VGA had two tents one of which the IDO set-up for growers to visit and learn about the key R&D projects either in progress, or completed. The event only emphasised the vital relationship that exists between the IDO and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Over the two days, growers would report to the VGA IDO tent with queries on projects or specific concerns and the IDO would then assist as much as possible and further direct them to the appropriate DPI staff member for additional advice.

The IDO tent also hosted Dr Sandra McDougall, Industry Leader (Vegetables) at the NSW DPI, who spoke to growers about how to improve pest and disease management with IPM systems such as improving spray application and pest and disease monitoring.

The Expo was widely promoted in both the national and local press such as *Good Fruit and Vegetables*, *The Weekly Times* and *Southern Farmer*.

### **Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2009 – assisted with planning and organizing for the event at the Melbourne Convention Centre.**

The Vegetable Conference held from May 4-6 at Melbourne preceded the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee.

The IDO was part of a Steering Committee formed to manage the organisation of the key industry event. The Committee included members of AUSVEG, growers, industry stakeholders and representatives from the VGA. The Committee's main purpose was to design a program relevant to the chosen theme "Growing a Healthier Australia".

The Conference's Program integrated the supply chain, better business practice and research and development topics with the aim of growers going away with not only a thorough understanding of the industry's levy-funded research and development ventures, but better knowledge of global trends, the supply chain and importantly consumer motivations.

One key message delivered by all speakers at the Conference was that "...the consumer must be the number one focus and they need to be convinced to eat more 'home grown' vegetables".

Sponsorship exceeded the previous conference budget and delegate registrations exceeded 300.

As the Conference was held in Victoria, the VGA also had an Exhibitors' Booth which showcased to both local and interstate growers the benefits of being a member. The IDO had compiled a promotional DVD that was played throughout the day displaying the VGA's vast member benefits. The Conference also offered an excellent opportunity to network with other industry delegates.

### **Western Districts: (Werribee, Bacchus Marsh, Keilor) – FUTURE OF WESTERN IRRIGATION**

One of the main issues to dominate this area is the lack of water and the quality of recycled water being used by Werribee growers. Allocations from the Werribee River are near zero, and the river measures 3000 units of electrical conductivity, saltier than the recycled water which is also high at 2000. Bacchus Marsh growers are now been forced to use town water supply and have stepped up the push to be able to access their own supply of recycled water.

Over the past three months the IDO has been attending a series of workshops that form the basis of a project – *Western Irrigation Futures* (WIF). The Project is led by RMCG Consultants for Business, Communities and Environment and seeks to develop options for the future of the Werribee and Bacchus Marsh irrigation districts.

There is no doubt that the districts both face a challenging future due to pressure from reduced water availability and market competition. Part of the project has involved Southern Rural Water (SRW) establishing a number of workshops – of which the IDO attended – to address key issues which included:

- Determining the technical and commercial issues facing irrigators in each district.
- Considering the future farming systems for both regions that contend with potential water quality and quantity combinations.

All findings from the workshops will be summarised and presented to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and a final decision will be made later this year.

Attendees at the workshops included personnel from the DSE, DPI, SRW local growers, consultants, local council workers and Melbourne Water.

Other issues include the prospect of rezoning, urban subdivision and a future with much reduced vegetable production at Werribee.

### **Weather Station at Werribee**

Werribee growers have readily embraced and adopted the Weather Station project which is a joint initiative between the VGA and the Victorian DPI. The Project allows growers, free of charge, to receive

an SMS message daily at 6am which details information relevant to irrigation scheduling.

A successful workshop held by the IDO, Vic DPI and staff at Werribee Rural Supplies in June, saw up to 20 of the region's growers' listen, learn and ask questions as to its benefits.

The VGA website houses relevant materials about the Weather Station and growers have been sent Farm Notes on how they can use the resource through their mobile phones' SMS service. A website, which is accessed via the VGA's website, is also available to give growers further weather information.

### **Eastern Districts: (Cranbourne, Pearcedale, Somerville) – Watsons Creek update**

A report into the Water Quality of Watsons Creek – a local irrigation source for some growers - has been released and the industry is now preparing its next course of action. The Creek has a history of nutrient and bacterial troubles which pose a hazard to the Yaringa Marine National Park in Westernport Bay. Melbourne Water has implicated market gardens as contributors to the problem so obviously the VGA is working with industry to identify management procedures that can lead to the improvement of the Creek's health.

The Report found that: the Creek had been highly modified from its native condition by urban and agricultural developments; the stream banks had been degraded by stock access and dominated by woody and herbaceous weeds; the Creek was a virtual drain in many parts with extensive erosion from stock and the water quality of the Creek was dominated by stagnant conditions and high nutrient levels.

The Plan is for the Vegetable Industry to facilitate a meeting with local stakeholders where such recommendations will be considered: site walkovers where Market Gardeners can review land management practices; the identification of potential nutrient sources and the installation of drainage pathways and mitigation measures.

### **Chemical update**

The IDO has been involved in meetings to gather information about what it will mean for Victorian vegetable growers when the APVMA take over the regulation of the use of agvet chemicals beyond retail sale.

The IDO also worked with Vic DPI to structure a letter that explained to brassica growers the importance of diligence when spraying. This letter was distributed to all brassica growers in May following concern from DPI about chemical residues on broccoli.

### **Statewide industry newsletter – Autumn and Winter 2009 edition.**

#### **“Vegetables Victoria”**

Both our Autumn and Winter editions of *Vegetables Victoria* have been published with Spring due out towards the end of July. The Autumn edition included an update on the Vegetable Industry's Strategic Plan whilst the Winter edition featured key stories from the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee in May as well as the National Vegetable Conference.

Positive reviews continue to be made in relation to the new look of the newsletter and many growers consider it is achieving its main purpose to "raise the professional image of our industry".

#### **“VGA Notes”**

These Notes continue to be released when required and are able to communicate to growers the more immediate or rapidly developing issues.

The single page graphic format is quickly produced in-house and faxed / emailed ... daily if required.

To date, all issues have been distributed and well received.

### **Website development and maintenance**

The second element of our communications plan which is to develop a website that also serves to "raise the professional image of our industry" is progressing well. In summary, the website is now recognised as

one of the best sources of information for vegetables on the “net”.

The website provides a way to preserve the work of Victorian vegetable researchers as well as something of the history of vegetable growing in Victoria. Other sections provide more general information on the Environment, Markets and Skills & Training.

The market savvy pages are appealing to all those who visit the site and keep viewers informed of any of the latest issues relating to the vegetable industry, either nationally or locally.

The Communications section provides links to past newsletters, factsheets, and an Enews page.

### **Database update and maintenance**

The VGA database continues to be updated and maintained and is an excellent tool that allows us to communicate to growers.

### **2. Next Steps (3 month work plan)**

Not relevant as project has finished.

### **3. Communication/extension activities**

Not relevant as project has finished.

### **4. Commercialization and/or Intellectual Property issues**

Not relevant as project has finished.

### **5. Other Issues**

Not relevant as project has finished.



**Project Title** *Facilitating the communication and development of the Vegetable Industry in Victoria – Stage Two*  
**Project No** VG03052  
**Milestone No** 114  
**Due Date** 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2009

**Milestone Criteria**

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

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**Milestone Description**

Project extended till 30 June 2009, final project report deferred till project completion.

**Revised Milestone description:**

Review the industry development plan and make adjustments as needed.

**Revised Milestone criteria:**

Report on last 3 months activity.

Next 3 months work plan agreed.

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**1. Summary of activities undertaken in the past 3 months**

**Strategic plan for Vegetables Victoria – assist in the development of a state plan to support VegVision 2020.**

A Steering Committee consisting of supply chain experts including growers, wholesalers and industry experts met to discuss the development of a Victorian Vegetable Industry Strategic Plan.

The meeting was facilitated by Ingrid Roth from GHD Hassall who have been commissioned to develop the Plan. The Plan is consistent with the VegVision 2020 Industry Plan and covers strategies that have a Victorian context.

The Plan is now in its draft phase and is been released to industry for discussion and feedback. The project is being co-funded by DPI-Farm Services Victoria and the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria.

**National Vegetable Expo 2009 – assisting with planning and organizing for the 2009 event at Werribee.**

The National Vegetable Expo Committee (Inc) is on schedule and ready for the opening on May 7-9 2009. The Committee of Management has site plots booked for all key seed suppliers such as Fairbank Seeds, Rijk Zwaan and Bejo. The Expo's Technical Advisor, David Milburn has been on hand to assist the seed companies with any issues related to the production of the plots.

Other industry organisations such as the DPI and AUSVEG have also booked sites. The DPI has advised that key researchers in the vegetable industry will be on hand to talk to growers during the two days.

The VGA has organized two sites to be dedicated to the promotion of vegetable production and marketing in Victoria and will also feature Dr Sandra McDougall, Industry Leader (Vegetables) at the NSW DPI, who will discuss her IPM project in lettuce as well as other related topics.

Other Exhibitors have been booked that will feature fertilizers, machinery and irrigation technology.

The Expo has also been widely promoted in both the national and local press such as *Good Fruit and Vegetables* and *The Weekly Times*.

**Australian Vegetable Industry Conference 2009 – assisting with planning and organizing for the event at the Melbourne Convention Centre.**

A Steering Committee has been formed to manage the organisation of the key industry event which runs from 4 – 6 May 2009. The Committee includes members of AUSVEG, growers, industry stakeholders and

representatives from the VGA such as the IDO. The main purpose is for the Committee to design a program relevant to the chosen theme "Growing a Health Australia".

So far, sponsorship has exceeded the previous conference budget and delegate registrations are on track to meet the required 300 needed to cover the event's costs.

The Program has integrated supply chain, better business practice and research and development topics with the aim for growers to go away with not only a thorough understanding of the industry's levy-funded research and development ventures, but better knowledge of global trends, the supply chain and importantly consumer motivations.

#### **Western Districts: (Werribee, Bacchus Marsh, Keilor)**

One of the main issues to dominate this area is the lack of water and the quality of recycled water being used by Werribee growers. Allocations from the Werribee River are near zero, and the river measures 3000 units of electrical conductivity, saltier than the recycled water which is also high at 2000. The wait is now to see what the State Government may do to assist in fixing the quality of the recycled water.

Bacchus growers are now been forced to use town water supply and have stepped up the push to be able to access their own supply of recycled water.

Other issues include the prospect of rezoning, urban subdivision and a future with much reduced vegetable production at Werribee.

#### **Installation of a Weather Station at Werribee**

A joint project between the VGA and the Victorian DPI has seen the installation of a weather station at Werribee.

Growers will soon be able to access the latest weather data that allows them to establish their irrigation schedules. The Project has involved establishing an automatic weather station and SMS Evapotranspiration (ETo) service and then supporting growers in their understanding and use of the service.

The IDO and Vic DPI are working closely together and have established an affective communication strategy that will ensure the region's growers are made aware of the Station. The VGA website will house relevant material and growers will be sent Farm Notes and a DVD on how they can use the resource through their mobile phones SMS service. A website will also be launched that gives growers access to more data.

The aim is to have an SMS sent to growers every day during the irrigation season which will show the daily evaporation loss as well as rainfall, temperature and humidity.

The Weather Station will be officially launched at the National Vegetable Expo in Werribee on May 7.

#### **Eastern Districts: (Cranbourne, Pearcedale, Somerville)**

The vegetable growers on Melbourne's eastern urban boundary who have access to recycled water are using it effectively and have no issue with the level of salt.

Growers outside this scheme are licensed to harvest storm water from local creeks between June and October and therefore must store sufficient water to get them through to the autumn rains.

A submission to extend the water harvesting period to take advantage of summer storm flows is still been considered.

A report into the Water Quality of Watsons Creek – a local irrigation source for some growers - has been released and the industry is now preparing its next course of action. The Creek has a history of nutrient and bacterial troubles which pose a hazard to the Yaringa Marine National Park in Westernport Bay. Melbourne Water has implicated market gardens as contributors to the problem so obviously the VGA is working with industry to identify management procedures that can lead to the improvement of the Creek's health.

The Report found that: the Creek had been highly modified from its native condition by urban and agricultural developments; the stream banks had been degraded by stock access and dominated by

woody and herbaceous weeds; the Creek was a virtual drain in many parts with extensive erosion from stock and the water quality of the Creek was dominated by stagnant conditions and high nutrient levels.

The Plan is for the Vegetable Industry to facilitate a meeting with local stakeholders where such recommendations will be considered: site walkovers where Market Gardeners can review land management practices; the identification of potential nutrient sources and the installation of drainage pathways and mitigation measures.

### **Dr Elizabeth Minchinton - Victorian Department of Primary Industries Plant Pathologist**

Dr Minchinton's work continues to produce promising results for growers. In particular, her research has identified that irrigation scheduling and growing resistant varieties are two ways of combating the destructive fungal disease white blister.

After a year into the project, which aims to Investigate the Economics of Managing white blister, team leader, Dr Minchinton found that the incidence of white blister on broccoli heads could be reduced by 50% if the crop was watered at dawn (4am) compared with evening (8pm).

Watering at dawn ensures leaf wetness coincides with the dew period and consequently reduces the leaf wetness.

Also within the research, two broccoli varieties, Tyson and Booster, have been found to be resistant to white blister with little or no incidence of the disease appearing on the plants when exposed to the spores. During the trial, Dr Minchinton found the two broccoli varieties also did not need fungicide sprays to control the disease.

However, the Tyson variety had a specific time slot of production – October to November - and the Booster was predominantly a winter variety.

### **Chemical update**

The IDO has been involved in meetings to gather information about what it will mean for Victorian vegetable growers when the APVMA take over the regulation of the use of agvet chemicals beyond retail sale.

### **Statewide industry newsletter – Summer 2008 edition.**

#### **“Vegetables Victoria”**

Our Summer 2009 edition was published and distributed early in February. This edition included the Victorian Vegetable Industry's move to develop a strategic plan, the installation of a valuable irrigation resource at Werribee – the Weather Station, a step by step explanation of Veg Vision 2020 and why growers need to understand its role within our industry, the management strategies involved in fighting white blister and why growers should attend the National Vegetable Expo at Werribee.

Positive reviews continue to be made in relation to the new look of the newsletter and many growers consider it is achieving its main purpose to "raise the professional image of our industry".

#### **“VGA Notes”**

These Notes continue to be released when required and are able to communicate to growers the more immediate or rapidly developing issues.

The single page graphic format is quickly produced in-house and faxed / emailed ... daily if required.

To date, all issues have been distributed and well received.

### **Website development and maintenance**

The second element of our communications plan which is to develop a website that also serves to "raise the professional image of our industry" is progressing well.

The website provides a way to preserve the work of Victorian vegetable researchers as well as something of the history of vegetable growing in Victoria. Other sections provide more general information on the Environment, Markets and Skills & Training.

The market savvy pages are appealing to all those who visit the site and keep viewers informed of any of the latest issues relating to the vegetable industry, either nationally or locally.

The Communications section provides links to past newsletters, factsheets, and a Enews page.

### **Database update and maintenance**

The VGA database continues to be updated and maintained. Also the VGA has supplied a state database contact list (attached) as per request by HAL.

### **2. Next Steps (3 month work plan)**

- Strategic plan for Vegetables Victoria – assist in the continual development of the Plan to support VegVision 2020 and help with its distribution to growers for comment.
- Australian Vegetable Conference 2009 – assist with planning and organizing this event in Melbourne as well as help facilitate events at the Conference.
- National Vegetable Expo 2009 – assist with planning and organizing this event at Werribee. Ensure Victorian VGA is well represented.
- Facilitate the discussion of issues central to the future of Victorian vegetable growers.
- Statewide industry newsletters and website.
- Database maintenance.

### **3. Communication/extension activities**

- National Vegetable Expo committee meetings.
- Facilitate the communication / education of Werribee's Weather Station to growers.
- National Vegetable Conference committee meetings.
- Attend the 2009 PMA Fresh Connections Australia / New Zealand Conference on behalf of VGA's Executive Officer.
- Assist with the ongoing development of the Website.
- "Vegetables Victoria" – Autumn edition 30th April 2009.
- "VGA Notes" – as required.

### **4. Commercialization and/or Intellectual Property issues**

There are no known commercial or IP issues of concern.

### **5. Other Issues**

There are no other issues to report at this time.

**Project VG03054: Facilitating the communication and development of the Vegetable Industry in Victoria - Stage 2**

Milestone Report No. 113

31 December 2008

**Milestone description:**

- *Final report accepted by Horticulture Australia Ltd*

**Milestone criteria:**

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

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**Major Variation**

*Project extended till 30 Jun 2009, final project report deferred till project completion.*

**Revised Milestone description:**

- *Review the industry development plan and make adjustments as needed.*

**Revised Milestone Criteria:**

- *Report on last 3 months activity.*
- *Next 3 monthly work plan agreed.*

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**Minor Variations**

Project officer on 6 weeks leave from 30 September till 16 November.

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**1. Summary of activities undertaken in the past 3 months**

- **Strategic plan for Vegetables Victoria – assist in the development of a state plan to support VegVision 2020.**

Luke Jewell, Senior Consultant with GHD Hassall has been commissioned to develop a 5 year Strategic Plan for the Victorian Vegetable Industry. The plan will be consistent with the VegVision 2020 Industry Plan and develop strategies in a Victorian context. Luke was involved with the development of VegVision 2020 and can provide a similar framework for the development of a plan for the Victorian vegetable industry.

This project has been co-funded by DPI-Farm Services Victoria-Horticulture Manager, Euan Laird the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria. The plan will be developed in consultation with industry leaders including Wholesalers, Retailers across the supply chain. We expect the final plan will be launched at the National Vegetable Expo in May 2009.

- **National Vegetable Expo 2009 – assist with planning and organizing for the 2009 event at Werribee.**

The National Vegetable Expo Committee (Inc) has overcome a number of mission critical events to present the event in May 2009. First of these was the withdrawal of Gordon Institute of Technology who had provided machinery, staff and students to help prepare the vegetable trial displays. Machinery had to be purchased from Gordon Institute and contract labour services secured.

Uncertainties with Government lease arrangements for the Expo site and the prospect of no irrigation water have only just been resolved. Sponsors and exhibitors have shown keen interest

in securing display sites at the Expo and the event will be widely promoted.

- **Water – facilitate the discussion of issues central to securing water for Victorian vegetable growers.**

Availability of reliable volumes of crop quality irrigation waters remains the major issue of concern to Victorian vegetable growers.

#### **Western Districts: (Werribee, Bacchus Marsh, Keilor)**

Discussions are underway with DSE-Victoria and a wide range of community groups including the Werribee Ratepayer Association, the Southern Rural Water Irrigators Council and the “No recycled water” group.

The issues go beyond how to make the most from drip irrigation technologies to include the quality, quantity and reliability of irrigation water. Other issues include the prospect of rezoning, urban subdivision and a future with much reduced vegetable production at Werribee.

The ongoing drought has reduced western district dam storage reserves to a mere 8% of capacity. These reserves have been allocated to the Bacchus Marsh district which does not have access to recycled water.

**Quality:** Down river at Werribee, relying on undiluted recycled water has led to some major crop failures as the salinity can often exceed crop tolerance.

**Reliability:** Algal blooms on Boxing Day 2007 closed the Werribee recycled water plant for 4 days. Regrettably, the inability to irrigate during 40°C conditions over this period caused extensive crop failures in the district.

**Quantity:** The daily summer water demand for the Werribee Irrigation Scheme is 120 ML. As recycled water was to be shandied with an equal volume of river water, the recycled water plant was only built to supply 65ML per day. The shortfall has contributed to several business failures in the district.

Despite the good R&D project work by ARRIS on drip irrigation at Werribee, the issues go beyond system delivery efficiency. Water Quality, Quantity, Reliability and a divided community bode ill for the future of Victoria’s most significant vegetable production district.

#### **Eastern Districts: (Cranbourne, Pearcedale, Somerville)**

Many vegetable growers on Melbourne’s eastern urban boundary are grateful to have access to recycled water through the Eastern Irrigation Scheme.

Growers outside this scheme are licensed to harvest storm water from local creeks between June and October and must store sufficient water to get them through to the autumn rains.

A submission to extend the water harvesting period to take advantage of summer storm flows was submitted to the VFF water policy council.

Unfortunately, the VFF is preoccupied with Government discussions on major water issues including the Murray-Darling agreement, the North-South pipeline and the Wonthaggi desalination plant.

Stormwater for horticulture has been overlooked till recently when a senior Victorian Government official picked up the issue. We look forward to further discussion on this issue.

- **R&D project proposals for 2009 – assist with the development and discussion of R&D proposals.**

## **Robert Premier**

A workshop was organised with local vegetable growers at Somerville on the Mornington Peninsula. Robert has prepared a project submission to HAL to study "...the environmental impact of the vegetable industry on Watsons Creek".

Watsons Creek has a history of nutrient and bacterial troubles which pose a hazard to the Yaringa Marine National Park in Westernport Bay. Melbourne Water has implicated market gardens as contributors to the problem.

Local grower valued the opportunity to contribute to Robert's research proposal. Many are ENVIROVEG members and keen to identify ways they can improve the health of Watsons Creek.

## **Liz Minchinton**

Crop disease forecasting using in-crop weather data and disease modelling

Local growers and district agronomists are keen to develop a network that will alert them to adverse weather conditions which increase the risk of vegetable disease outbreaks.

This technology is only just becoming reliable and so far only been used by researchers.

DPI-Victoria researcher Liz Minchinton valued being able to meet and discuss the development of a HAL project submission to address this priority with growers, agronomists, and equipment/system developers.

## **Peter Fisher**

Peter Fisher and his team were pleased to be able to 'road test' their discussion papers on a 'Carbon Footprint for the vegetable industry', with interested vegetable growers.

Peters and his team commented that these discussions and the email discussions that followed helped them appreciate the growers perspective and better prepared them for presenting their work at the Carbon footprint Workshop in Sydney on the 15<sup>th</sup> October.

- **Statewide industry newsletter – Summer 2008 edition.**

## **"Vegetables Victoria"**

Our Spring/Summer edition was published and distributed early in November.

This edition included an introduction to Carbon Emissions and a feature on the commercialisation of "Vital Vegetables" a VC project supported by HAL.

We have received many positive reviews on the new look of the newsletter and consider it is achieving its main purpose to "raise the professional image of our industry".

## **"VGA Notes"**

Being published quarterly, "Vegetables Victoria" is clearly not suited to more immediate or rapidly developing issues.

"VGA Notes" has been developed to provide more frequent updates on current and emerging issues of interest to Victorian growers.

The single page graphic format can be quickly produced in-house and faxed / emailed ... daily if required.

To date, three issues have been distributed and well received. We expect to expand the distribution of "VGA Notes" in 2009.

- **Website content** – develop new sections promoting: IPM, Environment, Research and Skills/Leadership.

A second element of our communications plan is to develop a website which also serves to: "Raise the professional image of our industry".

The website provides a way to preserve the work of Victorian vegetable researchers as well as something of the history of vegetable growing in Victoria. Other sections provide more general information on the Environment, Markets and Skills & Training.

The Communications section provides links to past newsletters, fact sheets, and a Enews page. Enews provides short introductions to several themes of interest to Victorian growers. Links are provided to the original source material and additional links to more detailed reports. The stories are written in simple text with graphics to improve readability.

Web based communication offers low-cost approach to sharing information and its popularity is likely to grow as a one-stop, freely available, information source.

Please take a few moments to view: <http://www.vgavic.org.au>

- **Database maintenance** – update industry contact details including email, mobile and crops grown.

The Victorian Vegetable Contact database has completed beta testing and is performing well. Mailing lists and crop contacts are routinely generated for AUSVEG magazines, and researchers seeking known producers of various crops.

There is an ongoing need to update details, particularly current crops grown. High maintenance could be one reason this level of detail has not been widely adopted by other databases.

Contact details of all Victorian growers will be verified before the database is handed over to Horticulture Australia on 30 March 2009.

## **2. Next Steps (3 month work plan)**

- Strategic plan for Vegetables Victoria – assist in the development of a state plan to support VegVision 2020.
- Australian Vegetable Conference 2009 – assist with planning and organizing this event in Melbourne.
- National Vegetable Expo 2009 – assist with planning and organizing this event at Werribee.
- Facilitate the discussion of issues central to the future of Victorian vegetable growers.
- Statewide industry newsletters and website.
- Database maintenance – verify industry contact details in preparation for handover to HAL in March 2009.

## **3. Communication/extension activities**

- Watsons Creek workshop – Robert Premier development of project submission.
- Carbon footprint workshop & email – Somerville, Peter Fisher discussion papers.
- National Vegetable Expo committee meetings.



- Fertiliser and AgChem “Outlook” workshop held with E.E.Muir & Sons, district agronomists and NUFARM GM. International developments and hedging strategy. 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 08.
- Website – ongoing development of content.
- “Vegetables Victoria” – Spring/Summer edition 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 08
- “VGA Notes” – three issues, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov, 7<sup>th</sup> Dec, 29<sup>th</sup> Dec 08

#### **4. Commercialisation and/or Intellectual Property issues**

There are no known commercial or IP issues of concern.

#### **5. Other Issues**

There are no other issues to report at this time.

**Project VG03054:****Facilitating the communication and development of the Vegetable Industry in Victoria - Stage 2**

Milestone Report No. 112

30 September 2008

***Milestone description:***

- ***Report on last 9 months activity against key performance indicators***
- ***Next 3 months work plan agreed***

***Achievement criteria:***

- ***Report on last 9 months activity against key performance indicators***
- ***Next 3 months work plan agreed***

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**Minor Variations**

1. IDO project extended to 30 Dec 2008
  2. New IDO project proposal has been deferred pending a HAL public tender call for Industry development service providers.
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**Overview**

Successful Industry development depends on accurate and relevant information. There is a massive amount of information available to assist business innovation and improve farm profitability and this information is constantly growing and changing. The national network of Industry Development Officers is working to make sense of this information and to distribute relevant material to growers as quickly as possible.

A redesigned web site and revamped quarterly journal “*Vegetables Victoria*” are among the communication initiatives the Victorian Industry Development Officer has undertaken this year to provide growers with access to the latest information.

Core industry development activities in Victoria this year have centred on facilitating communication between growers, researchers and service providers. In addition to the changes to the web site and journal, the state’s industry database has been updated, allowing for targeted text messaging as well as email, post and fax alerts for specific crops and issues.

Other activities include delivering workshops on levy-funded R&D, identifying industry priorities, promoting apprenticeships, business skills, OH&S and other short courses and the discussion of industry issues including chemical use, irrigation efficiency and responsible natural resource management.

**1. Summary of activities – January to September 2008**2. Planning:

The initial plan endorsed in September 2007, (milestone report #11, Dec 2007), has encouraged significant discussion of the future role of the Victorian Vegetable Growers’

Association (VGA) in developing our industry.

In January, the IDO identified four opportunities where the VGA could make a difference without overlapping the efforts of other industry bodies:

- Training
  - Opportunity to develop Cert II training program for farm hands.
  - Benefits would be realised in improved food safety and OH&S.
  - Potential for those with aptitude to progress to Cert III supervisor level.
- Markets
  - Opportunity to recognise and encourage “Farmers Markets” and promote smaller entrepreneurs building local community capacity.
- Environment
  - Opportunity to build on our ENVIROVEG program and raise the environmental credentials of the vegetable industry in regional forums.
- Water
  - Opportunity to engage with regional water authorities to progress the development of recycled water projects for the vegetable industry.

In February, a special meeting of the VGA was presented with a new business model to ...“Rethink - Reshape and Revitalise” the organisation. Formal relationships were sought with related organisations to make a constructive contribution to the development of the vegetable industry. The public image of the vegetable industry would also be improved by a new look newsletter and website.

In March, visits from officers of Vegetables WA gave the VGA executive a vision of the future and inspired an improvement in relationships with regional authorities including the State Government.

In June, discussions began with DPI-Victoria on the development of a state-wide plan for the vegetable industry based on VegVision 2020. Agreement has been reached on cooperation in the development of such a plan and funds will soon be available. The state-wide planning process will benefit from the recently released ‘IDNAP guidelines and tools’ developed by Horticulture Australia.

### 3. R&D priorities:

One of the key functions of an IDO is to identify R&D issues that limit the growth of industry capacity to supply quality produce. Growers are seeking solutions to persistent or recurring issues that should be brought under control and many share issues in common.

The IDO prepared a short list of common issues of concern from discussions with individual growers. This list formed the seed material for a select advisory group of 14 vegetable industry leaders in May 2008. A short list of seven high priority issues was developed and also supported by major levy payers. These priorities were further discussed in the National R&D priority setting forum.

During October and November, R&D applications that address industry priorities will be submitted to HAL for consideration by the IAC.

### 4. IDO Proposal:

A comprehensive national survey has identified that future HAL investment in Industry Development should focus on Consumers, Markets and Leadership. The industry can expect greater returns from investment in these imperatives.

Clearly, the existing IDO project model has not been able to deliver in these three areas beyond facilitating industry discussion. A competitive tender process will be used to select

further industry development service provider. It is hoped that the practical skills and learning experiences developed with the vegetable industry through the IDO projects will help contribute to the success of this promising endeavor.

Accordingly, the achievement criteria “submit IDO proposal to HAL” has been deferred pending the HAL call for public tenders for provision of industry development services.

#### 5. Chemical Use:

Plant Protection Products help growers deliver a quality harvest but detection of unacceptable residues will undermine consumer confidence in vegetables as clean, green and healthy foods and setback our whole industry.

MRL workshops conducted in October and November 2007 were well received by growers and their crop advisors. It is significant that these same service providers have continued to keep MRL compliance on the agenda and move their customers away from ‘MRL risk’ products.

Discussions with Kevin Bodnaruk and DPI-Victoria late in January identified a National forum for plant protection products and dismissed the need to develop a state based “Residue Options Network”.

MRL breaches in Victorian vegetable crops continue to decline due in large part to the awareness of crop advisors which is supported by the work of the National minor-use registration program led by Peter DalSanto.

#### 6. Training:

Few projects funded under the VegVision 2020 leadership imperative beyond study tours and scholarships. The IDO has actively promoted these opportunities as well as business skills training courses.

On a state-wide level, much IDO time and effort has been invested in promoting vegetable production apprenticeships to prospective students and service providers.

Training is available through several providers including regional TAFE colleges and private institutes keen to formalise linkages with horticultural industries. The IDO has been able to bring our industry into discussion with Primary Skills Victoria and training providers. Discussions have considered cert II training for field workers that can lead on to cert III supervisor training.

Good relationships have been established and the prospects of success are excellent.

#### 7. Industry Journal and Website:

A proposal to improve the existing Victorian vegetable website will be presented to the VGA executive for approval.

The “Rethink - Reshape and Revitalise” process identified the value of raising the public image of the vegetable industry through a new look newsletter and website.

##### Vegetables Victoria - Journal

Design changes to the VEGELINK magazine were seen to be inadequate and in February, the services of a professional magazine editor were sought. This decision removed a considerable burden from the IDO who was doing this work in-house.

In April, “Vegetable Victoria” was published as a key communications tool for Victorian vegetable industry. The journal presents a professional image of the vegetable industry and highlights the value of levy funded R&D. Much positive comment has been

received and the voice of the vegetable industry is now taken more seriously.

#### Vegetables Victoria – Website

The existing VGA website was built in-house and professional skills were needed to develop a website to the same standard as the new journal “Vegetables Victoria”.

A specification was developed and a web developer was retained in February and worked closely with the IDO to build the new website. The IDO developed over 100 pages of web content and continues to publish additional information of interest to the vegetable industry.

The material on the website includes:

- Early history of vegetable industry in Victoria,
- Links to key growers and vegetable organisations,
- EnviroVeg, IPM and protection product registration
- Colourful history of Victorian produce markets
- R&D levy process and representatives
- Vegetable researchers and their work
- Indexed links to vegetable fact-sheets
- Industry statistics
- Video interviews with growers
- Relevant News items and coming Events
- Vegetable skills and training courses
- And much more...

The new website went live in July and its success is shown by its GOOGLE ranking as 1<sup>st</sup> of over 1 million search results for ‘vegetable growers’.

#### 8. Environment:

Our industry must be able to convince commentators that vegetable growers follow responsible and sustainable management practices which minimize adverse environmental effects.

##### Watsons Creek – Somerville, Vic

The IDO has contributed to the federally funded “Watsons Creek Integrated Catchment Management Project” at committee meetings. Watsons Creek has a history of nutrient and bacterial troubles which pose a hazard to the Yaringa Marine National Park in Westernport Bay. Watsons Creek is identified as one of the worst polluted creeks in Victoria and reports have targeted fertilizer run-off from market gardens as the major contributor to the problem.

These allegations need to be challenged on sound technical grounds or acknowledged as risks where alternative practices are being developed or evaluated.

Following discussions with Helena Whitman (ENVIROVEG), the IDO established the Watsons creek grower advisory group to consider the position of vegetable growers on the creek and develop a way forward. The group met with Daryl Stevens (ARRIS), the Australian Coordinator for Recycled Water Use in Horticulture and decided to select a suitable service provider and submit a R&D project application to HAL.

In September, a second meeting considered a draft proposal presented by an environmental scientist. A formal proposal will be submitted to HAL with the October R&D call.

##### Carbon emissions

Recent public debate on a future Carbon Tax has added to grower concern about the rising costs of supplying food to the community. Though growers may be exempt from a carbon tax ... at least in the short term, their suppliers, processors and transporters are likely to incur additional energy related costs.

Accounting for greenhouse emissions is fast becoming an imperative for the vegetable industry. Our intensive food production, storage and distribution systems will surely draw attention.

There is already pressure to identify and quantify emissions and promote a social responsible response that addresses the impact of these emissions the environment.

The IDO contacted Peter Fisher (DPI-Vic) seeking information that could assist growers recognise the carbon intensive aspects of the vegetable supply chain. Perter was pleased to assist as he was in the process of developing a discussion paper on this issue.

Early in September Peter and his team presented their draft paper to a group of interested growers. The opportunity to discuss their thoughts greatly assisted the understanding of researchers and growers alike.

The IDO has joined the project reference panel led by Peter Deuter. This group will assist with the carbon emissions workshop in Sydney on 15<sup>th</sup> October. The workshop will identify research projects for consideration by HAL.

## **2. Next Steps (final 3 month work plan)**

Task list summary:

1. Strategic plan for Vegetables Victoria – assist in the development of a state plan to support VegVision 2020.
2. 2009 National Vegetable Expo – assist with planning and organizing of this event at Werribee.
3. Water – facilitate the discussion of issues central to securing water for Victorian vegetable growers.
4. R&D project proposals for 2009 – assist with the development of R&D proposals.
5. State-wide industry journal “Vegetables Victoria” – Summer edition.
6. New website content – develop additional sections promoting: IPM, Environment, Researchers and Skills/Leadership.
7. Database maintenance – review and update industry contact details including email, mobile and crops grown.

### **3. Other communication/extension activities**

- VG06047 Celery Late Blight feature in Vegelink, Summer 08
- VG02092 Drip Irrigation field day feature in Vegetables Victoria, Autumn 08
- VG07070 Fungal disease predictive models, Vegetables Victoria, Winter 08
- AUSVEG award nominations
- VG07070 Brassica steering committee
- National Vegetable Expo steering committee

### **4. Commercialisation and/or Intellectual Property issues**

There are no known commercial or IP issues of concern.

### **5. Other Issues**

There are no other issues to report at this time.

**Project VG03054: Facilitating the communication  
and development of the Vegetable  
Industry in Victoria - Stage 2**

Milestone Report No. 11

December 2007

***Milestone description:***

- ***Review the industry development plan and make adjustments as needed.***
- ***Complete HAL project application***

***Milestone criteria:***

- ***Industry Development plan updated.***
- ***Project proposal completed.***
- ***Review of 6 months activity.***
- ***Next 6 monthly work plan agreed.***

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**Minor Variations**

1. Patrick Ulloa, Victorian IDO project officer resigned in July 07.  
Craig Murdoch, commenced in September 07 and has been engaged till 30 Sep 08.
2. The IDO project proposal has been drafted and will be completed once the findings of the Industry Development Review are ratified by the vegetable industry.

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**1. Summary of activities over the past 6 months**

- **Planning:**  
The "Strategic Focus for Victoria - 2007" document has been simplified to a 10 point plan to guide activities undertaken by the IDO. The plan was endorsed by the VGA executive in September 2007 (see pg 4).
- **Networking:**  
The IDO has worked to enhance collaboration with related interest groups in Victoria. Discussions have been held with:
  - E.E. MUIR & SONS, and ELDERS VP - vegetable agronomists,
  - DPI-Victoria, researchers and regulators,
  - Gordon Institute of TAFE - vegetable production staff and administrators,
  - Quality and Operations managers at COSTAS-RIVERSIDE (Werribee), COOLIBAH HERBS (Pearcedale), HUSSEY & Co. (Somerville),
  - Mornington Peninsula and Westernport Biosphere Reserve Foundation,
  - Australian Farmers Market Association.
- **R&D:**  
Discussed growers R&D & IDO expectations with 40+ vegetable businesses on-farm. Growers were generally positive about all R&D work pre-farm gate and were keen to discuss past, present and proposed R&D projects relevant to their crops. A common theme was the difficulty in attracting and retaining competent staff, though some businesses have developed effective solutions.
- **Training:**  
Vegetable production training at Werribee is under threat due to low course enrolments.



The IDO has been working with Gordon TAFE staff to raise industry interest in apprenticeships as one way to retain good staff and prepare for future demand.

- Chemical Use:  
The IDO in collaboration with the VFF and DPI-Victoria conducted MRL workshops at Cranbourne and Werribee. One early outcome has been the formation of an MRL action group (Residue Options Network), involving DPI-Victoria, VFF, Peter DalSanto and commercial vegetable agronomists. This group will develop and communicate options to reduce further MRL breaches in vegetable crops.
- Environment:  
The IDO represented local growers on the Watsons Creek catchment management committee. The EnviroVeg initiative has prepared the industry well and growers can reassure the community they strive to leave as small an environmental footprint as possible.
- Mailing list:  
The Victorian mailing list (FileMaker) has been rebuilt in-house as a MS-ACCESS database with improved accessibility, functionality and flexibility. Over 150 duplicate and inactive listings have already been removed and further corrections will follow regional visits in 2008.
- Website:  
The Victorian vegetable website has been updated with new information. The site has several limitations and a new specification has been developed to restructure the site around the 5 pillars of the VegVision 2020 strategy. A contractor has been approached to provide an estimate for updating the site.
- Newsletter:  
The quarterly VegeLink newsletter has adopted the Vegetables WA-AusVeg template to improve readability. Our Spring newsletter was distributed to 600+ vegetable growers and related businesses throughout Victoria. The Summer edition will be sent in January 2008.

## **2. Next Steps (6 month work plan)**

- Planning:  
The existing Industry Development Plan will be brought into line with the AVIDG VegVision 2020 strategy and the findings of the Industry Development Review.
- R&D priorities:  
Current R&D gaps will be sought from all Victorian growers. The IDO will prepare additional R&D suggestions from interviews with major levy payers.
- IDO Proposal:  
An IDO project proposal will be submitted to HAL. At the present time we expect the role will undertake a range of activities that support the strategic directions set by AusVeg, AVIDG and the Industry Development Review.
- Chemical Use:  
In addition to supporting Peter DalSanto with the National minor-use program, the IDO will support the Residue Options Network to reduce MRL breaches in vegetable crops.
- Training:  
The IDO will promote apprenticeships in vegetable production and short courses in business/leadership development.
- Website:  
A proposal to improve the existing Victorian vegetable website will be presented to the VGA executive for approval.

- Environment:  
The IDO will support grower involvement in the Watsons Creek Integrated Catchment Management Project.

### **3. Communication/extension activities**

- 40+ on-farm visits to discuss R&D interests and update contact details.
- MRL awareness workshops conducted at Werribee and Cranbourne.
- Networking to enhance collaboration with related interest groups in Victoria
- Redesigned Vegelink newsletter to improve readability.
- Spring newsletter distributed to 600+ Victorian addresses.
- Organised spinach & silverbeet growers to host MRL field trials for Agrisearch Services P/L.
- Fielded various enquiries from vegetable growers, industry and general public.

### **4. Commercialisation and/or Intellectual Property issues**

There are no known commercial or IP issues of concern.

### **5. Other Issues**

There are no other issues to report at this time.

# Industry Development Plan

## September 2007

### **R&D Program**

**(Maximise the benefits of the R&D program)**

- task 1: Establish an effective network and process to identify, prioritise, and select R&D projects that will benefit Victorian growers.
- task 2: Improve the image of the R&D program amongst Victorian growers
- task 3: Strengthen local R&D base to better service Victorian growers

### **Industry Development**

**(Encourage adoption of good practices  
and increase interaction and cooperation between growers)**

- task 4: Increase participation and representation of women in the industry.
- task 5: Improve adoption of good labour management practices

### **Communication and Info Dissemination**

**(Improve access to useful and relevant information)**

- task 6: Increase adoption of electronic communication tools
- task 7: Maintain a high quality website for the Victorian vegetable industry
- task 8: Improve industry's mailing list
- task 9: Increase face to face contact with growers

### **National Network**

**(Improve links with industry)**

- task 10: Improve working relationships with State and National bodies

**Project VG03054: Vegetable Industry Development Officer  
(Victoria)**

Milestone Report – Dec 2006

*No8: Maintain basic support and advanced services. Survey industry to determine annual R&D priorities. Provide support to national leafy vegetable and domestic market development group.*

*Website updated. Vegelink published and distributed. Other advanced services provided. Action plans for leafy vegetables and market development groups completed.*

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**I. Summary**

**R&D program**

The Vegenote series has been an important means to disseminate results from the industry's R&D program. In conjunction with Ausveg and the national IDO network, discussions were held to determine the future of the series. In the future, the Vegenotes series will be produced by Ausveg. Changes will include a new look reflecting the R&D visual standards.

Critical support was provided to both, RMIT and Victoria University to finetune concept proposals to be presented to the national R&D committee. RMIT is working on a concept to develop a centralised computer based decision support system. It is expected the centralised system will 'house' all relevant models developed by researchers in areas such as irrigation, and pest and disease control. Victoria University is working on a project proposal for desalination of reclaimed and recycled water.

An attempt was also made to work with a private company wanting to do use nanotechnology to improve surface disinfection of vegetables and storage facilities. Due to commercial confidentiality, it was not possible to assist that company as much as it would have been ideal.

The national R&D system went through an important review. The IDO assisted in reviewing the proposed changes and provided technical advice to the VGA regarding the implications of those changes. Due to the changes being implemented at a national level, and the new industry vision document, it was decided not to send an R&D survey to growers during this period to avoid creating expectations that might not be met this year.

The chemical minor use program is an important area of the industry's R&D program. This area of work is also changing from the traditional 'wish list' approach, to a more strategic review of the chemicals to be used by the industry. The IDO worked in conjunction with Peter Dal Santo to determine the chemicals that are most needed by Victorian growers.

Before projects proposals were sent to HAL, the IDO assisted researchers to review their project proposals to make sure they included comments and suggestions from local growers. The IDO also assisted some of those researchers to learn the new computer based program to lodge applications that had been recently adopted by HAL.

The role of the IDO on national committees is still being determined, therefore action plans for the leafy vegetables and market development groups have not been prepared.

**Industry Development**

Due to a grower's request, the IDO investigated the technique called 'Aquaponics.' Aquaponics is the combinations of aquaculture and hydroponics for a more sustainable production of fish and hydroponic vegetables. The IDO attended a seminar on this topic where a number of international researchers explained how this technology has been successfully adopted in different countries. Also, the IDO attended a field day. The field day was video taped and a DVD distributed among interested growers and industry people.

Another request from a grower initiated an investigation on the soil disinfection equipment called 'Cultivit.' The

system uses hot air to disinfect the soil, and it seems to be an effective piece of equipment. Unfortunately, after making contact with the manufacturer in Holland, it was clear that the cost of the equipment was too high.

## **Industry Support and Representation**

A program of farm visits has been commenced. Several growers have been visited on farm to find out about their needs, but mainly to establish a good rapport with the IDO and facilitate future communication.

As requested by the management committee, a DVD is currently being prepared to capture some of the retired or retiring growers to keep some of their wisdom for the benefit of growers now and in the future.

## **National Network**

The IDO has continued its support to the Vegetable Australia magazine by providing an updated list of Victorian industry people to the magazine distribution company. The same support was provided to the national effort by mailing the 'Vision 2020' brochure.

An article was provided for the Ausveg annual report as well as samples of materials from the IDO project to be included in the industry's R&D website.

The IDO reviewed and provided feedback on the National Communication Strategy.

### **2. *Next steps***

The personal visits to growers will continue. More assistance will be given to Victorian R&D delegates to make sure they are well prepared to explain Victorian projects that are worth supporting. An investigation will be carried out to determine a way to increase computer use within the industry. Special attention will be given to disseminating information about farm labour management.

### **3. *Communication/extension activities***

- Provided database contact details for the distribution of Vegetables Australia magazine
- Two issues of the Vegelink newsletter published and distributed
- 5 articles sent to GF & V as part of the 'vegetable platter' section
- Lettuce aphid DVD sent to a number of growers
- Updated website
- Vegelink online sent to this list at least once a month
- Sent technology transfer products as requested by industry people
- Completed and distributed DVD 'Recycled water for vegetable irrigation'
- Completed and distributed DVD 'Aquaponics Field Day'
- New technology transfer products added to R&D Shop
- Electronic version of Vegelink now available online

**Project VG03054: Vegetable Industry Development Officer  
(Victoria)**

**Milestone Report – June 2006**

*No7: Maintain basic support and advanced services. Ensure Victorian R&D delegates are briefed before the national meeting. Provide support to national leafy vegetable and domestic market development group.*

*Website updated. Vegelink published and distributed. Other advanced services provided. Victorian delegates briefed before national meeting. Action plan activities reviewed.*

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**I. Summary**

**R&D program**

The IDO has been working closely with researchers promoting IPM to vegetable growers. A field day was organised to demonstrate the effectiveness of following IPM practices to control lettuce aphid. People that attended were able to see that beneficial insects were capable of fully controlling lettuce aphid. A DVD was produced during the field day, and was widely distributed among industry people that were not able to attend.

The IDO has been critical in providing contact details to researchers wanting to work with growers in different projects. Some of the growers that have been contacted to participate in research projects include snow pea, Asian vegetables, and broccoli.

Victorian commodity delegates were supported during this round of R&D proposal review. Summaries were completed and provided to delegates before the meetings in Sydney and Brisbane.

An effort is being made to identify other organisations that may be able to conduct research and development work for the industry. A number of Victorian universities that include agriculture related courses have been identified. Links are currently being established with Deakin, RMIT, and Victoria Universities.

As part of the search of technologies that could have practical applications in the vegetable industry, the IDO met Qld researchers working on computer modelling. Those researchers are working on broad acre crops with no irrigation. Some modifications would be required to apply this technology in our industry.

DPI Victoria is keen to find opportunities to co-invest with the vegetable industry in effective R&D programs. The IDO met Mrs Ragini Wheatcroft from DPI to discuss how issues identified by growers may be included in R&D programs.

**Industry Issues**

Pressure from the public to improve environmental performance continues to be an important issue. The IDO met Anja Steiner (DPI) to discuss environmental issues in relation to Mornington Peninsula.

Another important issue affecting Victorian vegetable growers is the potential relocation of the Melbourne Market to Epping. The IDO assisted during the workshops organised to discuss how the move to Epping may affect growers and market users.

**National Network**

The IDO assisted the new Ausveg CEO meet a number of representatives of the Victorian industry. A tour was organised, and the IDO took the CEO personally to meet local growers.

An important industry initiative this year was the National Vegetable Industry Conference. The IDO assisted during the organisation of the event, and then it took part conducting the Market development sessions during the

conference.

## **Industry Development**

A number of growers have shown interest in software for vegetable production. First, the IDO contacted a company called GrowData to determine if their software was what the growers needed. Their program was not fully developed yet, so another company (Wireless farmer) was identified that was able to demonstrate more advanced features.

The IDO prepared a survey to determine the industry development issues affecting Victorian growers. About 50 growers responded the survey and the results were collated by the IDO.

The IDO also attended soil biology workshop and prepared a series of articles to promote this topic among vegetable growers. Soil biology is one of the areas growers have identified as priority for industry development.

Following suggestions from some industry leaders, a meeting for vegetable industry ladies was organised. A presentation was given by Marilyn Lanyon from Simply Green Tomatoes to demonstrate some lessons in vegetable value adding. A DVD was produced to highlight some of the lessons presented by Marilyn.

### **2. *Next steps***

There seems to be more interest in application of advanced technology such as different produce disinfection approaches and replacement of fungicides. The IDO will be looking closely at some of the technologies available and see if growers are willing to collaborate to develop and adopt those technologies.

### **3. *Communication/extension activities***

- Provided database contact details for the distribution of Vegetables Australia magazine
- Visited group of Vietnamese growers in Lara, and added their contact details to database
- Sent CD with information about broccoli mechanical harvester to Werribee growers
- Distributed a number of DVDs to promote the safe use of ATVs on farms
- Two issues of the Vegelink newsletter published and distributed
- 5 articles sent to GF & V as part of the 'vegetable platter' section
- Lettuce aphid DVD sent to a number of growers
- Participated of the Septoria on celery workshop
- Updated website
- Prepared package with R&D materials to show to growers
- Organised mail outs: Brassica newsletter, clubroot information, industry conference registration form
- Participated of parsnip project management committee meeting
- Assisted with industry tour by Chilean vegetable industry delegation
- 100 growers are now using email. Vegelink online sent to this list at least once a month

**Project VG03054: Vegetable Industry Development Officer  
(Victoria)**

**Milestone Report – December 2005**

*No6: Maintain basic support and advanced services. Survey industry to determine annual R&D priorities. Complete actions plans for leafy vegetable and domestic market development groups.*

*Website updated. Vegelink published and distributed. Other advanced services provided. Action plans for leafy vegetables and market development groups completed.*

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**1. Summary**

**R&D program**

Identifying grower priorities should be the main priority of the national R&D program. As part of the effort to identify these priorities, the IDO designed and sent an R&D survey to all growers in Victoria. Despite the length of the survey (6 pages) around 50 responses were received. The survey responses were collated and analysed to determine the areas of R&D that were more important to growers.

The summarised results of the survey were used to discuss potential R&D projects with Victorian researchers. It was expected that the IDO would work with local researchers to prepare a number of proposals based on Victorian grower requests. Unfortunately, some information from HAL caused researchers to disregard the results of the survey, and they did not send R&D proposals.

The national commodity R&D groups have been practically inactive during the last 6 months, and there are no signs that actions plans for the different commodity groups will be required at all. The national R&D program is suffering from a lack of clear direction, and this has a direct impact on the ability of the IDO to strengthen the R&D base in Victoria.

The lettuce aphid was a major concern for Victorian growers. Fortunately, due to the good preparation of most growers, the aphid has not caused the level of damage seen in New Zealand and Tasmania. As part of the effort to provide control measures for baby leaf lettuce growers, a trial was organised to test coated seed instead of the drenching method. Seeds were coated in Holland, and then re-imported to test them under local conditions.

**Industry Issues**

The IDO has provided support by organising a State representative for the young grower tour to NZ. He has also organised and assisted consultants working on the Industry Partnership program, and the review of the mechanical harvest needs of the industry.

The industry also needed some support to assess strategies for the transfer of the Enviroveg program to Ausveg. A draft document for a licence agreement was prepared to assist in the transition.

**IDO Network**

The IDO has continued to provide articles for the vegetable platter published by Good Fruit and Vegetables.



## **Other**

Work plans for the IDO project have been prepared and approved by the IDO management committee to direct the work conducted by the IDO.

### **2. *Next steps***

It is still very unclear if a formal system will be developed to direct the industry's R&D program. The effectiveness of the IDO to promote the R&D program is being seriously affected due to the lack of structure at a national level, and the obvious attempt to undermine the participation of more growers in the decision making process. Unless the participation of State representatives is clarified, it is hard to see what serious work can be done to promote the R&D program. Despite this, the IDO will continue to work in conjunction with local researcher on the few projects being run in Victoria.

The push for information dissemination through DVDs, website, and electronic newsletters will be maintained.

It is hoped that two Winhort groups will be set up this year.

### **3. *Communication/extension activities***

- A monthly article was sent to Good Fruit and Vegetables as part of the IDO network initiative, the Vegetable Platter.
- The Victorian Vegelink was published quarterly
- The VGA website and 'The R&D Shop' was updated monthly.
- A number of growers were visited individually each month
- A monthly report is presented to the VGA's executive committee
- Sent R&D info dissemination material as requested by growers
- Participated of lettuce processors meeting
- Prepared data file for delivery of Australian Vegetable Magazine
- Participated of seminar on Intellectual Property Rights for plant breeders
- Participated of Industry Partnership workshop
- Participated of Brassica road show (Cranbourne, Werribee, Bairnsdale)
- Visited Vietnamese growers in Lara (now included in database)
- Organised telephone survey to update database
- Mail outs organised for Vegenotes, and Brassica newsletter

**Project VG03054: Vegetable Industry Development Officer  
(Victoria)**

**Milestone Report – June 2005**

*No5: Maintain basic support services. Add services identified in the communication plan review. Ensure Victorian R&D delegates are briefed before the national meeting. Provide support to national leafy vegetable and domestic market development group.*

*Website updated. Vegelink published and distributed. Victorian delegates briefed before national meeting. Investment plans for leafy vegetable and domestic market development groups completed*

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**1. Summary**

**R&D program**

Assisting the State R&D commodity delegates is one of the main priorities of the IDO position during this period. All R&D project proposals were reviewed, summarised, and then presented to our commodity delegates. Together with the State delegates, the IDO attended the national meeting in Sydney to discuss all project proposals and to determine which projects would be supported by the industry. The IDO kept notes of the comments expressed by both, the leafy vegetable group, and the domestic market development.

The IDO requested funds to work with both, the leafy vegetables, and domestic market development groups, but the national industry decided that this is not a priority at the moment. Investment plans for these groups will have to be postponed until the national industry decides that this is a priority once again.

The IDO has been working more closely with some of the R&D projects being carried out in Victoria. He has participated in workshops and field days of the Septoria in Celery and the parsley projects. Also, the IDO has been in contact with researchers working on the gene technology for Brassica crops. The IDO has been in touch with other project committees such as IPM and lettuce aphid.

The IDO has continued to search for better ways to address the R&D needs of growers in the State. He developed an R&D survey based on the work conducted by the California research board. The survey was tested with a number of local growers and will be the basis of the survey used to request R&D suggestions during the next period.

The national industry is currently discussing different options for the national R&D process. The Victorian IDO has met industry representatives to discuss the proposed changes and has produced flowcharts for easy comparison of the options presented.

**Industry Issues**

The IDO has been asked to assist the industry in collecting information to address some important issues. He collected State information to request renewal of the permit for Confidor in Lettuce. He has also discussed the impact of the relocation of the Melbourne market. It is possible that a project proposal will be presented by the State to identify the impact on the industry of the planned relocation. The IDO has also been available to support the industry's environmental program (Enviroveg).

**IDO Network**

Changes at the national level have placed the IDO network under unusual pressure. To address some of the issues that negatively impact the industry, the IDO network worked together to produce a document summarising the issues affecting the network. This document was discussed with representatives of the national industry and it is hoped that eventually they will be resolved. On a positive note, the Victorian IDO has continued to provide articles for the vegetable platter published by Good Fruit and Vegetables.

## **Other**

Work plans for the IDO project have been prepared and approved by the IDO management committee to direct the work conducted by the IDO.

### **2. *Next steps***

The work plan for the next 6 months will concentrate on three major areas. The first area will be the development and use of a much more extensive survey to determine R&D needs in the State. The second area will be the trial of DVDs as a dissemination information tool. It is expected that DVDs will be an excellent tool to promote the benefits of the industry's R&D program. The third area will be an attempt to form a Winhort group in the Western side of Melbourne.

### **3. *Communication/extension activities***

- A monthly article was sent to Good Fruit and Vegetables as part of the IDO network initiative, the Vegetable Platter.
- The Victorian Vegelink was published quarterly
- The VGA website and 'The R&D Shop' was updated monthly.
- A number of growers were visited individually each month
- A monthly report is presented to the VGA's executive committee
- Met monthly with the National Vegetable Expo committee
- Sent R&D info dissemination material as requested by growers
- Organised and conducted the R&D seminar series during National Vegetable Expo
- Assisted as chairperson of QA session at the Lettuce conference
- Produced DVD to show cabbage harvester
- Produced DVD to show lettuce harvester
- In conjunction with DPI, organised and carried out soil biology seminar
- Wrote an articles explaining the use of microbiological tests in horticulture (will be published later)

**Project VG03054: Vegetable Industry Development Officer  
(Victoria)**

**Milestone Report – Dec 2004**

*No4: Maintain basic support services to all vegetable growers in the State. Review communication plan based on survey of pro-active growers. Establish a Victorian model for the State R&D Advisory committee. Survey industry to determine R&D priorities.*

*Website updated. Vegelink published and distributed. State R&D survey and workshop conducted..*

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**1. Summary**

**Website updated.**

Some industry people argue that the number of growers regularly using the Internet is still low. Yet, it is clear that the rate of adoption is increasing rapidly. It is quite possible that within three years, most proactive growers are going to be using the Internet to obtain a good proportion of the information they need.

As growers become used to access information through the Internet, their expectations naturally increase. The VGA's website needs to keep pace with raising expectations to make sure this important communication tool remains relevant to the growers we serve. On the other hand, we must also work within a budget to provide the industry with real value for money. That is why the strategy followed has been to allow the State IDO to experiment with the site to achieve the right combination of appearance, content, and interaction with users.

The latest update has produced a site with an improved appearance and much more relevant information. Special sections have also been included for the general public to highlight basic industry statistics and grower accomplishments such as adoption of IPM and Enviroveg. The list of relevant industry links is also growing rapidly.

The strategy is to make incremental changes and see how growers respond to the site. This strategy has allowed the IDO to keep the cost of development under control. As more sophisticated interactive features are added to the site, the project will have to spend a bit more, but in the end the IDO feels confident the low cost option chosen will provide good value for money to Victorian growers.

**State R&D survey and workshop conducted**

A survey was sent to all Victorian growers to give them an opportunity to highlight the areas of R&D that they felt were more important at this stage. The responses were collated and then discussed by a combined group of State R&D delegates and researchers.

The finetuned priorities were summarised and then taken to the national R&D meeting where they were shared with the national commodity group. (See summary attached)

## 2. *Next steps*

General support for the industry will continue with the maintenance of services such as Vegelink, Vegenotes, Website, and the R&D Shop. State R&D delegates will be briefed and supported before the national R&D meeting. A number of growers will be interviewed to better identified R&D priorities for the state. A seminar series will be organised for the National Vegetable Expo (Werribee).

## 3. *Communication/extension activities*

- A monthly article was sent to Good Fruit and Vegetables as part of the IDO network initiative, the Vegetable Platter.
- The Victorian Vegelink was published quarterly
- The VGA website and 'The R&D Shop' was updated monthly
- Mail outs were organised for the IPM Brassica project quarterly
- A number of growers were visited individually each month
- A monthly report is presented to the VGA's executive committee
- Met monthly with the National Vegetable Expo committee

**Project VG03054: Vegetable Industry Development Officer  
(Victoria)**

**Milestone Report – June 2004**

*No3: Maintain basic support services to all vegetable growers in the State. Identify and survey pro-active growers to determine the best way the IDO can add value to their businesses and the industry.*

*VGA website and R&D Shop established. Vegelink published and distributed. Pro-active survey completed and analysed.*

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**1. Summary**

**VGA website and R&D Shop established**

As part of the information dissemination effort, the Victorian Vegetable IDO has developed a section within the VGA's website to display a number of technology transfer material currently available to the industry.

It was decided that the best way to display the products was to use a shopping cart similar to the one used in commercial websites. This will make it easier for growers to select the products they want. They just need to click the 'add to shopping cart' button for each product they want. Once the shopping cart contains all the products needed, the grower can print out the page with all the products to be requested and fax or mail the form to the Victorian IDO. The IDO then collects all the products requested and mail them to the grower. Requests from other States are accepted, but those requests are passed on to the relevant State IDO.

Most products displayed are free of charge to levy payers. However, some products require payment. In these cases, the grower must send a cheque made to cover the costs of obtaining the products requested. Growers are only charged the cost of the products and the VGA does not make any profits.

The main benefit for the Victorian growers is the convenience of finding most R&D products displayed in one location and the ability to create a list of wanted products just by selecting and clicking with the computer mouse. At the moment, the R&D Shop is offering CD-ROMs, manuals, and fact sheets with excellent current technical information.

The R&D Shop can be viewed by login on to [www.vgavic.org.au](http://www.vgavic.org.au)

**Advanced growers survey completed**

With the assistance of other IDOs and a number of vegetable growers, a three-stage process was identified to describe the progress path followed by most vegetable growers. Four growers that met the criteria were selected to discuss how to improve the services offered by the IDO project to advanced growers. The result of the interviews and the conclusions drawn are attached.

## 2. *Next steps*

General support for the industry will continue with the maintenance of services such as Vegelink, Vegenotes, Website, and the R&D Shop. The conclusions from the advanced grower survey will be used to modify the six monthly IDO plan. The work plan will be presented to the management committee for approval and then the new services will be provided to the industry.

## 3. *Communication/extension activities*

- A monthly article was sent to Good Fruit and Vegetables as part of the IDO network initiative, the Vegetable Platter.
- The Victorian Vegelink was published quarterly
- The VGA website and 'The R&D Shop' was updated monthly
- Mail outs were organised for the IPM Brassica project quarterly
- A number of growers were visited individually each month
- A monthly report is presented to the VGA's executive committee
- Met monthly with the National Vegetable Expo committee
- Organised seminars in conjunction with Vegecheque program from DPI

**Project VG03054: Vegetable Industry Development Officer  
(Victoria)**

Milestone Report – Dec 2003

*No2: Review Activities conducted by the previous project and prepare a new industry development plan.*

*Review of activities of previous project completed. New industry development plan completed.*

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1. *Summary*

**Project review**

A formal review of the project was commissioned to Cadman Agribusiness Services. A copy of the project review is included with this milestone report. The review concluded that the IDO project has achieved all the communications objectives and milestone established in the original project proposal. It was found that Patrick Ulloa has been resourceful and professionally competent in his delivery of 'effective communication systems' to Victorian vegetable growers. Growers interviewed were of the belief that their investment in the project has been well worthwhile. On the other hand, it was also noted that over the next five years, it will be important for the IDO communications role to concentrate on building stronger collaborative relationships with public sector R&D providers, as well as other private sector providers. In general, it was the view of Cadman Agribusiness Services that the vegetable industry in Victoria has benefited substantially from establishing the IDO project in Victoria.

**New industry development plan**

Based on the experienced acquired during the previous years, and refined by the review conducted by Cadman Agribusiness Services, a new industry development plan has been developed. The plan has a stronger focus on more proactive growers, maintaining the support for all growers. A copy of the of the new plan is included with this milestone report.

2. *Next steps*

General support for the industry will continue with the maintenance of services such as Vegelink, Vegenotes, Website, and the R&D Shop. A survey will also be carried out to identify more proactive growers and to find out how to better service this segment of the industry. An assessment of how to better establish a Victorian R&D advisory committee will be carried out. A request to change IDO milestones to better reflect the new Victorian Industry Development Plan will be sent to HAL.

3. *Communication/extension activities*

The specific communication/extension activities are recorded in the completed work plan attached to this report





## Maximum Residue Limits Workshop Notes



Plant Protection Products help growers deliver a quality harvest but reports of unacceptable residues will undermine consumer confidence in vegetables as clean, green and healthy foods.

### **The consequences of MRL failure will affect ALL growers.**

Since 1987, the Victorian Government (DPI) has reported on residues in Victorian produce. Whole cartons of vegetables are tested from those offered for sale at Melbourne Markets at Footscray. All unacceptable residues are investigated to ensure agricultural chemicals continue to be used according to good agricultural practice.

The published results for the past 5 years are summarised in the attached table. Please review the MRL history for each of the vegetable crops you grow.

Our industry needs to better understand the risks and consequences of residue failures and show domestic and export markets that Victorian produce does meet MRL's.

MRL workshops were held at Cranbourne on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct and at Werribee on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2007.

Speakers included:

- Peter Cochrane (VGA) – Setting the scene
- David Rumbold (DPI) – MRL's : the how, why and what if ?
- Karl Riedel & Aaron Spalding (E.E. Muir & Sons) – Choosing the right product
- Brad Wells (HAL) – Minor use approvals
- Brendan May (QA) – Market expectations

Some of the main points included:

- MRL failures can close a foreign market to other Victorian exporters.
- MRL testing by importing countries is already very high ...and increasing !
- Some new products only registered for "major" crops.
- Some crops (herbs etc) have very few registered products available.
- In Victoria, residues of unregistered products must be below the limit of detection.
- Stickers and wetters influence the effective application rate and withholding period.
- Safe withholding periods vary with oil content of the crop and its stage of growth.
- Lag between APVMA permit and FSANZ approval is for food safety assessment.
- Product selection and application is a complex process, some use a crop consultant.
- HAL invest in permit applications for "minor" crops ~\$900,000 p.a.
- S7 products WILL be deregistered ... need to develop alternative pest controls.
- Your QA system demonstrates produce traceability and show each crops history.
- Consequences to ALL growers for MRL failures in the marketplace.

Copies of these presentations are also attached.

Craig Murdoch                      3 Dec 07  
Vegetable IDO – Victoria

Tel: 9687 4707 (b) 0429 990 553 (m)

# IDO-Vic Project

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## Strategic Focus for 2007

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Prepared by Patrick Ulloa

## Main Project Areas:

- R&D Program
- Industry Development
- Communication and Info Dissemination
- National Network

# R&D Program

<u>Overall Goal:</u>	To maximise the benefits of the R&D program
<u>Goal 1:</u>	Establish an effective network and process to identify, prioritise, and select R&D projects that will benefit Victorian growers.
Objective 1.1	Establish a network of relevant industry representatives interested in maximising the benefits of the R&D program (R&D delegates, R&D service providers, VGA representatives, IDO)
Objective 1.2	Design a process to collect issues and ideas that may be included in the R&D program
Objective 1.3	Ensure high attendance of Victorian representatives to national R&D meetings. Organise other representatives in case some delegates are not able to attend.
Objective 1.4	Ensure an acceptable number of Victorian growers apply to be part of the national committee
Objective 1.5	Meet with R&D delegates prior to national meetings to discuss which projects are more likely to provide benefits
<u>Goal 2:</u>	Improve the image of the R&D program amongst Victorian growers
Objective 2.1	Highlight the importance of R&D delegates by including a section with their comments on Vegelink
Objective 2.2	Identify recent and current projects relevant to Victorian growers. Use Vegelink to highlight results from these projects. When appropriate, produce DVDs to highlight projects. Request that these projects be fully described in the industry's R&D website. Highlight these projects during grower visits.
<u>Goal 3:</u>	Strengthen local R&D base to better service Victorian growers
Objective 3.1	Continue to develop links with Universities. Find out what research areas they are targeting.
Objective 3.2	Increase interaction with Victorian researchers. Help them highlight their projects using Vegelink, DVDs, and other means as appropriate.
Objective 3.3	Present researchers Bio on Vegelink. Also write articles describing research organisations (e.g. DPI, Peracto, Universities, etc)
Objective 3.4	Participate as member of management committee of Victorian projects

# Industry Development

<u>Overall Goal:</u>	To encourage adoption of good practices and increase interaction and cooperation between growers
<u>Goal 1:</u>	Increase participation and representation of ladies within the industry.
Objective 1.1	Send industry development survey and determine if the result is different to the one responded by male farmers
Objective 1.2	Organise 2 dinner/lunch seminars during the year
<u>Goal 2:</u>	Improve adoption of good labour management practices
Objective 2.1	Conduct a study on Performance Appraisal of managers in the vegetable industry
Objective 2.2	Prepare a DVD to promote the Negotiated Performance Appraisal method within the industry
Objective 2.3	Write articles to promote good labour management practices

# Communication and Info Dissemination

<u>Overall Goal:</u>	To improve access to useful and relevant information
<u>Goal 1:</u>	Increase adoption of electronic communication tools
Objective 1.1	Test alphabetical keyboards to determine if they improve typing speed. Obtain data to assess how satisfied growers are using an alphabetical keyboard.
Objective 1.2	If test of alphabetical keyboard is successful, facilitate the purchase and installation of the new keyboard for interested growers.
Objective 1.3	Test software and hardware to conduct online meetings (e.g. Breeze meetings)
<u>Goal 2:</u>	Maintain a high quality website for the Victorian vegetable industry
Objective 2.1	Review a number of industry websites and determine the type of information they provide
Objective 2.2	Decide what changes would be required to further improve the VGA's website
Objective 2.3	Determine how to measure visits to website. Obtain periodical reports on website use.
Objective 2.4	Include video clips promoting industry documentaries and message from the president.
<u>Goal 3:</u>	Improve industry's mailing list
Objective 3.1	Contact chemical resellers to determine if our list has missing growers
<u>Goal 4:</u>	Increase face to face contact with growers
Objective 4.1	Meet at least 10 growers each quarter. Whenever possible, use farm visit survey.
<u>Goal 5:</u>	Provide access to relevant information

Objective 5.1	Produce 4 DVDs during the year. Determine if a designed full colour cover would be appropriate.
Objective 5.2	Present DVD series at the Werribee Expo
Objective 5.3	Send Vegelink online at least monthly
Objective 5.4	Show a number of growers how to use the industry's R&D website
Objective 5.5	Publish Vegelink quarterly. Develop a list with potential new sections for the newsletter. Include a section on advancements and innovations.
Objective 5.6	Put together an updated list of industry newsletters and make it available to the industry.

## National Network

<u>Overall Goal:</u>	To improve links with national industry
<u>Goal 1:</u>	Improve working relationships with national bodies
Objective 1.1	Meet Ausveg staff quarterly
Objective 1.2	Contact HAL representative at least quarterly
Objective 1.3	Assist during industry conference

## Priorities for R&D Investment – 2008

**ITEM 1. Forwarded by: Vegetable Grower’s Association of Victoria Inc.**

<b>Links most closely to VegVision 2020 Imperative No. 5 - Visionary Leadership &amp; People</b>
<b>Development</b>
<p><b>The issue that needs to be addressed:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>LABOUR recruitment and retention of skilled staff</b></p>
<p><b>The outcome we are seeking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people attracted to a career in the vegetable industry</li> <li>• Skilled tractor operators &amp; leading hands stay within the vegetable industry</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project to address this priority could have the following features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with school career advisors</li> <li>• Identify career paths within the vegetable industry both on and off farm and publish example case studies</li> <li>• Training ‘business critical’ operators to certificate 3 &amp; 4 level, with option to progress further.</li> <li>• On-Farm training must be in the persons own language</li> <li>• Competencies verified by growers / industry not solely by the training assessor</li> </ul>

**ITEM 2. Forwarded by: Vegetable Grower’s Association of Victoria Inc.**

<b>Links most closely to VegVision 2020 Imperative No. 4 - Advancing Information Systems</b>
<p><b>The issue that needs to be addressed:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Forecasting of vegetable disease risks – district alerts - POSSIBLE VC PROPOSAL</b></p>
<p><b>The outcome we are seeking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert growers of adverse weather conditions which increase the risk of vegetable disease outbreaks.     Similar to existing frost and botrytis warnings for viticulture and orchardists.</li> <li>• Apply disease forecasting technologies already developed and verified by HAL researchers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Project to address this priority could have the following features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local wireless network of weather stations in vulnerable crops</li> <li>• Integrated disease modeling software (already available)</li> <li>• Agronomist to issue alerts to growers of increased disease risk</li> </ul> <p>Note: Commercial agronomists and chemical companies are willing to support this concept as a scoping</p>

study.

**ITEM 3. Forwarded by: Vegetable Grower's Association of Victoria Inc.**

**Links most closely to VegVision 2020 Imperative No. 3 - Competitive production & supply chain**

**The issue that needs to be addressed:**

**Environmental effects of vegetable production on 'sensitive' waterways**

**The outcome we are seeking:**

- Credible study of the environmental effects of actual nutrient, chemical and recycled water discharges from vegetable farms to 'sensitive waterways' (including marine national parks)
- Demonstrate to local community action groups and statutory authorities that growers are concerned about possible off-site effects and actively improving their production practices.
- Develop detailed practical solutions for our ENVIROVEG audit program.

**Project to address this priority could have the following features:**

- Trustworthy report of investigations into current management practices and analysis of significant farm discharges, (similar to work undertaken by the QLD sugar cane industry)
- Build on HAL funded work with fowl manure (WA) and reclaimed / recycled water (SA & Vic)
- Recommendations for on-farm improvement based on sound technical information.

**ITEM 4. Forwarded by: Vegetable Grower's Association of Victoria Inc.**

**Links most closely to VegVision 2020 Imperative No. 4 - Advancing Information Systems**

**The issue that needs to be addressed:**

**Recognition of 'tamper-evident' QA systems as an alternative to crop residue testing**

Affordable computer packages are now available which automate the collection and reporting of farm chemical use on every vegetable planting. These systems identify registered product use / with-holding periods and also log any changes to the original records - 'tamper-evident'.

**The outcome we are seeking:**

- A credible, independent assessment of the capability and security of 'tamper-evident' computerized crop management records (farm chemicals).
- Auditors and major buyers agree to accept 'tamper-evident' QA records as an alternative to residue testing.

**Project to address this priority could have the following features:**

- Training and accreditation of farm operators in the best use of 'tamper-evident' QA systems.
- Early engagement of QA auditor groups and QA staff from major buyers.
- Involvement of QA auditors and major buyers on the projects advisory committee's.

note: Auditors of farms with these QA systems have voiced their support for this concept.

**ITEM 5. Forwarded by: Vegetable Grower's Association of Victoria Inc.**

**Links most closely to VegVision 2020 Imperative No. 3 - Competitive production & supply chain**

**The issue that needs to be addressed:**

**Food Safety –Chlorine-free Sanitisers  
- POSSIBLE VC PROPOSAL**

**The outcome we are seeking:**

- Reliable, safe, affordable alternative to Chlorine based sanitisers which are difficult to dose accurately.
- Independent assessment of claims of food grade sanitisers, including Periacetic acid, Nylate, Peroxide, Ozone, etc, compared with Chlorine.
- A residue-free alternative sanitiser that can be reliably used without adverse OH&S or environmental risks.

**Project to address this priority could have the following features:**

- A credible review and evaluation of the relative effectiveness of new and existing food sanitation systems for assuring the microbiological safety of different crops across Australia.

Note: Equipment / chemical suppliers conduct trials with their own products but not alternatives.

**ITEM 6. Forwarded by: Vegetable Grower's Association of Victoria Inc.**

**Links most closely to VegVision 2020 Imperative No. 3 - Competitive production & supply chain**

**The issue that needs to be addressed:**

**Grasses and shrubs to support beneficial insect populations - Biorefuges**

An identified gap in insect-IPM programs which is limits their year-round effectiveness.

**The outcome we are seeking:**

- Planting windrows of suitable grasses and shrubs to support large numbers of beneficial insects, year round.

**Project to address this priority could have the following features:**

- Extension of successful HAL project VG06014 (SARDI) to other states.
- Build confidence in the ability of IPM systems to manage pests year round.



**ITEM 7. Forwarded by: Vegetable Grower's Association of Victoria Inc.**

**Links most closely to VegVision 2020 Imperative No. 3 - Competitive production & supply chain**

**The issue that needs to be addressed:**

**Drip irrigation on variable soil types**

Several growers at Werribee have tried drip irrigation with recycled water but all report crop uniformity problems. This is believed to be due to different soil wetting patterns as their soils which can vary from heavy clay to clay loam

**The outcome we are seeking:**

- Ability to successfully drip irrigate lettuce & brassicas crops on soils with variable wetting characteristics

**Project to address this priority could have the following features:**

- Field trials and demonstrations similar to HAL funded trial delivered in Werribee by ARRIS in 2008, which evaluated the cost benefits of SDI systems.
- Independent assessment, not led by an irrigation company.
- Gather and assess the experiences from individual growers using recycled water at Werribee

# PROJECT EVALUATION

## Review of Effectiveness of Communications Systems

Vegetable Industry Development Officer: Victoria

VG98109

1 July 1998 to 30 June 2003

Report prepared by...

Ralph Cadman

January 2004



Horticulture Australia

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## INTRODUCTION

The following review is an evaluation of the *'effectiveness of communications systems'* utilised in the delivery of technology transfer information to Victorian vegetable growers and key industry collaborators involved in research and development (R&D) and technology transfer, from July 1998 to June 2003. The review has been undertaken to satisfy the requirements of Horticulture Australia Limited that project milestones described in Section 9 of the Vegetable Industry Development Officer - Victoria Project (VG98109) have been achieved.

Cadman Agribusiness Services Pty Ltd undertook the review in January 2004. It involved reviewing final reports on project outputs and interviewing a range of growers and industry stakeholders about their views and perceptions of the *'effectiveness of communications systems'*. A range of industry stakeholders were interviewed, including: ten vegetable growers, three public sector researchers, five public sector extension (technology transfer officers), three private sector research agronomists and one other Industry Development Officer (IDO).

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The project was initiated after the vegetable industry identified the problem that the national industry was very fragmented, with little opportunities to effectively share ideas and information between growers. In order to address this issue it was decided by national and state industry groups to appoint vegetable IDO's to the various states. The position of IDO for the Victorian vegetable industry was first funded in July 1998, with Patrick Ulloa being appointed to the position.

The position is funded jointly by grower levy funds (AusVeg) and the Commonwealth (through HRDC, now HA Ltd). The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) through the Vegetable Growers Association (VGA) manages the project. A management committee was appointed to oversee the activities, operation and management of the project.

## MAIN ROLE OF THE VICTORIAN VEGETABLE IDO

- Act as industry learning facilitator
- Act as a knowledge broker by identifying industry issues, and R&D and information needs
- Determine the best means to make information available to growers
- Act as a bridge between grassroots growers and grower groups, commodity committee delegates and R&D personnel.

## RESPONSIBILITIES - GOALS - OBJECTIVES

*The Victorian IDO was expected to address the following five major responsibilities and associated goals and objectives in the job. All of which have a significant communications components.*

1. Information gathering...

The IDO should identify, collate, and document information about industry issues, and R&D needs.

*Goals:*

- To give growers more opportunities to raise issues affecting their survival
- To have easier access to relevant developments outside the industry that may have an impact on growers

*Objectives:*

- To attend industry meetings to identify issues affecting regional growers
- To formally survey growers in the industry to identify issues and priorities
- To visit some growers to identify issues and priorities
- To read relevant publications and attend seminars to keep abreast of developments

2. Establishment and maintenance of a communication network...

The IDO develops and maintains a database that should include: stakeholders (growers, product and service suppliers, research and development), production statistics, and other areas of special interest.

*Goals:*

- To improve the access to contact details of all levy payers, R&D personnel, services providers, and other industry stakeholders

*Objectives:*

- To periodically survey industry to maintain database updated

3. The Industry R&D Program...

The IDO assist in maximising the benefits of the industry R&D program. At a national level, the Victorian IDO provides support for the leafy vegetable group.

*Goals:*

- To increase the participation of regional growers in setting R&D priorities
- To better assist Victorian product members
- To improve communication with researchers
- To better assist the national leafy vegetables commodity group

*Objectives:*

- To prepare a schedule of meetings for regional growers to discuss R&D and info needs
- To formalise regional R&D advisory committees
- To periodically meet Victorian delegates to discuss R&D issues and needs
- To pass on issues and comments from grass root growers to delegates
- To pass on issues and comments from other States to delegates
- To periodically meet with researchers to assess R&D project progress
- To periodically survey national leafy vegetable group to improve the effectiveness of group

#### 4. Industry Groups...

The work of the IDO is enhanced when he works with groups of growers. Regional grower groups are encouraged and supported by the IDO. The assistance may include helping with organising meetings and activities. More importantly, the IDO can help regional groups to organise themselves and create an appropriate structure and work plan.

##### *Goals:*

- To increase grower participation through regional grower groups

##### *Objectives:*

- To assist the establishment and maintenance of at least four regional grower groups
- To periodically meet with regional grower groups to identify issues and their needs
- To assist growers obtain funding for R&D projects as required

#### 5. The IDO Network...

The IDO work is enhanced by activities of national relevance. The IDO should actively participate with other Vegetable IDOs in those activities or initiatives of national industry value.

##### *Goals:*

- To increase collaboration with other IDOs for the benefit of the industry

##### *Objectives:*

- To periodically meet with IDOs to discuss issues of national significance
- To carry out specific tasks in collaborative work with IDOs.

#### 6. Dissemination of Information...

Dissemination of useful information is one of the keys to the success of the IDO program. Most growers expect to be able to access useful information as a result of the R&D investment. An important element of the information dissemination program is the establishment of a Technology Resource Centre.

Other means of information dissemination are the 'VegeLI NK' newsletter, the industry Website, and the IDO email messages. The IDO actively encourage the dissemination of R&D results by helping organise workshops, seminars, field days, and technical tours.

##### *Goals:*

- To improve access to useful and relevant information

##### *Objectives:*

- To create and maintain an excellent Technology Resource Centre for Victorian Vegetable Growers
- To periodically publish and distribute the 'VegeLI NK' industry publication
- To periodically organise R&D/technical forums for regional growers
- To maintain the industry website
- To periodically organise seminars, field days, and technical tours
- To periodically send relevant email notices to growers

## PROJECT ACTIVITY FRAMEWORK

The industry in which the project is delivered, represents a diverse range of vegetable commodity groups such as carrots, lettuce, bunching lines, celery, brassicas, asparagus, capsicums, cucumbers and Asian vegetables, produced in six main production areas of the state: South-East Melbourne, Werribee, Melton/Moorabool, East Gippsland, Mildura/Swan Hill, and the Goulburn Valley. In Victoria, there are over 600 vegetable growers, who are supported by a wide range of service providers from the agricultural machinery, farm and chemical supply, agronomy, technical support, consultancy and research and development sectors. Commodity groups that are not supported by the I DO project are: mushrooms, onions, melons, hydroponics vegetables, processed tomatoes and potatoes; some of which are supported by other national R&D levy funds, or by state government marketing order levy schemes.

The Victorian industry has historically been made up of mainly small to medium sized family farming operations, producing vegetables in a range of climatic areas, from the mainly winter-spring production regions of north western Victoria, to the summer-autumn production regions of the south. Over the last ten years, the industry has been changing as aging, small growers have begun retiring from the industry. The industry, while producing much the same volume of produce as thirty years ago, is fundamentally changing with fewer, larger and more specialised farms; where economies of scale are used as a critical management tool to maintain and cut production, distribution and marketing costs. Larger farms have the capacity and capabilities of meeting the ever changing demands of supermarkets, who are looking to concentrate procurement on fewer, larger, higher volume, year-round supply operations. With larger farm size has come the linking of supply operations to specialist supply chain companies who have special supply agreements with the large national supermarket and independent retail chains.

The main issues that have been recently occupying the attention of the vegetable growing industry have been issues of: produce quality, food safety, the cost-price squeeze, the market dominance of the supermarket chains, environmental management, drought, water supply, 'the right to farm', and peri-urban rural land zoning issues.

## SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

Since the establishment of the I DO position in Victoria five years ago, growers and representatives of industry have whole-heartedly supported the appointment of Patrick Ulloa to the position of I DO. Industry generally agrees that the position of I DO has helped it mature, grow in confidence and work more closely together as a unified group on issues of mutual importance.

On reviewing reports on the outcomes and achievements associated with the milestones relating to the *'effectiveness of communications systems'* and through feedback from key project stakeholders, it is clear the main milestones (Section 9) settled on by the Management Committee and growers have been broadly met.

## TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER METHODS

Initially the technology transfer goals and objectives of the project were strongly biased towards developing electronic communications tools as a way of facilitating the rapid introduction and transfer of new technology to growers. However, it became clear to the IDO and the management committee early in the project that these objectives were far too ambitious and the emphasis on the delivery of technology transfer using information technology systems was renegotiated with industry and HAL to reflect a more realistic and achievable timetable for the introduction of this technology.

According to stakeholders, the key outcomes of the project have addressed the immediate needs of Victorian vegetable growers. Some examples of achievements that have demonstrated the *'effectiveness of communication systems'* are as follows.

### *Printed Material:*

*Analysis by Patrick of grower communication preferences indicated that one-to-one, individual verbal communication was still the most important. However, because this means of communication was impractical with over 600 growers spread across Victoria. The second most important communications tool, the printed medium, was found to be the most effective means of communicating and disseminating information to growers. The most important printed medium being the 'VegeLINK' Newsletter, which is distributed to more than 800 people on a quarterly basis. Over 16 issues were produced over the initial five-year life of the IDO project. All stakeholders generally acknowledged the newsletter as an important tool, for receiving technical R&D information. In acknowledgement of the success of 'VegeLINK', the national IDO network are preparing to launch a national newsletter called 'Vegetotes' aimed at disseminating technical information to a wider national audience.*

*The IDO Network have effectively combined their resources to contribute articles for the 'Vegetable Platter' column of the monthly, nationally distributed Good Fruit and Vegetable magazine. Article cover what is happening in the national IDO program.*

*Mail outs have been another important form of printed material that have been effectively used by Patrick to conduct surveys, provide warnings and crop alerts, provide advice, and to address issues of immediate concern to industry, such as:*

- A survey wish-list of chemicals for Crop Protection Approvals
- Western flower thrip outbreaks
- Slug control project
- Melbourne University's apprenticeship program
- Brassica Video
- Lettuce I PM manual
- Food Safety manual
- I PM newsletter
- CPA newsletter

### *Data Collection:*

In order to effectively communicate with all industry stakeholders, it was critical to identify the audience that Patrick was required to communicate with. To achieve this,



Patrick was responsible for compiling and maintaining an extensive database of industry contacts based on the program developed by the Leigh Walters, the Potato Industry Communications Manager. Over 550 active vegetable growers and approximately 300 industry support people have been listed. This database has become a vital tool for contacting people and transmitting information.

*Working, Planning & Liaison Groups:*

The use of special groups has been effectively used by Patrick as a two-way communication tool, involving groups as a way of disseminating information, getting feedback and using group participation for determining research priorities, identifying critical industry issues and engaging in group problem solving. Three programs where these interaction have proved successful having been in developing the 'Enviroveg' program, investigating processing options for East Gippsland growers, and developing a successful research proposal to address problems associated with the Victorian Government's new 'Green Wedge' legislation.

*R&D Priority Setting:*

The Victorian I DO has developed a simplified one page summary format for R&D proposals submitted to Victorian commodity groups for their approval. This has proved to be a very successful way of summarising and translating complicated research applications in to simple layman's language. This exercise has required excellent negotiating skills on Patrick's behalf for collaborating with R&D personnel in order to produce simplified summary documents, as well as good technical communication skills in guiding commodity groups through these applications.

*R&D Groups:*

Patrick has used his personal communication and networking skills to assist R&D personal in Victoria to better understand the technical needs and priorities of industry, as well as ways to improve dissemination of R&D information to growers. However, issues do exist concerning researchers and technology transfer agents understanding and perceptions of the role of the I DO. It is the opinion of the consultant that emphasis needs to be placed on resolving these communications issues over the next few years of the I DO project.

*Locality Groups:*

Regional growers groups at Werribee (including the Werribee Young Growers) and the South-East Growers' Network have all expressed their strong support of the I DO position and the improved technical outcomes that have been achieved as a result of this appointment. Werribee and South-East Metropolitan growers make up over 50 per cent of the Victorian vegetable industry serviced by the I DO. Growers in East Gippsland have also received significant support from the I DO, particular with the Lindenow vegetable processing project.

Important technology transfer outputs that have been associated with the position that were identified by grower stakeholders are: the importance of the I DO's industry advocacy role on recycled water matters (Werribee and Cranbourne), the Lindenow vegetable processing project, fast tracking research to address white blister disease in broccoli, lettuce tip burn and diamond back moth problems.

#### *Field Days & Seminars:*

Two important field days that were identified by growers were held on recycled water and bunching vegetables. The recycled water field day proved to be timely and appropriate, as it was held in advanced of irrigation water restrictions that were imposed by irrigation authorities in Werribee, late in December 2003. These field days have been instrumental in paving the way for industry-wide adoption of the use of this water source in both the South-East Melbourne and Werribee regions of Victoria in early 2004.

Patrick Ulloa has used field days as an important technology transfer tool. By running field days on growers' own properties, he has been able to address sensitive technical issues and achieve better adoption of controversial new ideas.

The following seminars were also arranged to address the expressed needs of growers requiring more information on: genetic engineering, recycled water, basic computing skills and opportunities for vegetable processing.

#### *Tours:*

The use of grower tours have long been recognised as a very effective ways of getting growers away from their properties and out of their comfort zones. Tours are an effective way of allowing them to see new technology, and discuss and contemplate new ideas with other likeminded growers.

One tours was arranged for the 'Werribee Young Growers' to New Zealand with other Australian growers to look at the latest developments in the NZ vegetable industry. And a second visit was made to Virginia, South Australia to look at the production of vegetables using recycled water. This visit helped stimulated broad interest in the use of recycled water, and has made the acceptance of this technology much easier.

#### *National IDO Network:*

Regular meetings of state vegetable IDO's has offered an excellent opportunity for IDO's to network and share techniques and experiences concerning effective transfer of information to growers. The networking experience has been a good opportunity for IDO's to meet with R&D staff at interstate location to view at first hand, research results. Further opportunities exist for the group to collaborate and coordinate the development of nation-wide research priorities in the future.

Feedback from growers, the management committee and IDO's, indicates that at these meetings IDO's tend to promote and reflect state biases on issues such as R&D and other priorities. Efforts need to be made to determine what is at the bottom of these concerns, with greater efforts made to address national issues, as well as high priority problems at a state level.

#### *Electronic Information:*

Early in the project there was a considerable emphasis on trying to improve the efficiency of delivery of information using the internet. The use of this information technology was quickly understood to not be appropriate to the needs and the level of computer skills of

many Victorian vegetable growers. This approach to technology delivery was wisely, temporarily shelved and is only now being gradually introduced in the form of a VGA internet website. At present, the website is in the early stages of construction. Growers are already anticipating the use of the website as a link to research databases and other sources of information.

Patrick advises that the general use of email has also been slow to be taken up by growers. However, he has noticed that the use of this technology has been gradually increasing in recent years. As a result, Patrick is gradually increasing the use of email to send out monthly messages.

*Technology Resource Centre:*

In order to keep abreast with the latest national and overseas technical and industry developments information concerning vegetables. A technical resource centre or library is presently being established at the convenient central location of the VGA office at the Melbourne Market. This will be an ideal venue for growers wishing to view latest Australian and overseas research reports (paid for by grower levies and HAL).

#### STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Cadman Agribusiness Services interviewed two main groups of stakeholders to get feedback on the *'effectiveness of communications'* of the I DO position. The groups interviewed were:

- a) Growers and industry representatives
- b) R&D and technology transfer officers (public and private and sector providers).

It is notable that all growers spoke in positive terms about the I DO project and the professionalism of its chief facilitator, Patrick Ulloa.

Although there was general consensus about the importance of the I DO's role from all stakeholders. There was a definite division of opinions between grower/industry groups and R&D groups about the effectiveness of communications.

In considering these comments it should be read that neither groups' views are right or wrong; and the following comments are based on the specific understanding, experiences and perceptions that each group had of the I DO role.

The following comments provide a snapshot of the views of these two groups relating to performance, associated issues, and future directions for communications in the Victorian I DO project.

*Performance (growers & industry):*

- The communications role has achieved all expectations
- The industry investment is well worth it
- The communications role is working well for growers
- An excellent job
- A good professional communicator

- A well planned and coordinated program
- Good communications links between commodity groups
- A good grower advocate and industry ambassador
- 'VegeLINK' Newsletter is a good medium for presenting R&D results
- Limited success of R&D funding applications – affecting industry

*Performance (public & private sector R&D providers):*

- The I DO communications role has worked well for growers
- Provided good support on steering committees
- 'VegeLINK' Newsletter is a good medium for presenting R&D results
- The 'Enviroveg' program was a successful activity
- Effectiveness of communications was rated between 40 and 60%
- Communications of industry issues and R&D priorities not very effective
- Communications working well for growers but not the R&D sector
- The relationship between R&D providers and the I DO could be closer
- Some of this group prefer to work with interstate I DO's
- The relationship appears to be competitive rather than collaborative
- The role appears to be reactive rather than proactive

*Issues (growers & industry):*

- A challenge to get information to growers who do not want to use it
- Hard to motivate growers to change or use new technology
- Too much information – information overload
- Only want information that is pertinent to their immediate needs
- Few growers participate in programs
- Poor attendance at meetings by growers outside metropolitan area
- More than 50% of growers are in metropolitan area
- Growing importance of hydroponic and greenhouse vegetable production
- I DO job subject to industry politics
- Industry needs a higher public profile
- Limited national R&D budget
- DPI -Victoria's R&D budgets are too high, causing it to miss out on funding
- DPI -Victoria R&D applications are still not reflecting industry needs
- DPI -Victoria's policy and program managers have different priorities and agendas to industry

*Issues (public & private sector R&D providers):*

- Most groups still feel they do not understand the role of the I DO
- Retail providers of information (rural farm suppliers) want to be informed of industry issues and priorities
- Retail providers wish to access R&D funds
- DPI -Victoria's - poor R&D success rate – 3 projects out of 15 (2002-2003)
- Feel that there is a communications gap between DPI -Victoria and I DO
- Due to perceived communications issues – DPI -Victoria working independently on grower projects
- DPI -Victoria wishes to establish a collaborative relationship with I DO

- Growers are more focused on short-term problems – not strategic R&D needs and issues

*Future Directions (growers & industry):*

- I DO role has given the industry more confidence and independence
- The continuation of the I DO role is critical to the future success of Victorian vegetable industry
- Growers are highly supportive of the I DO performance and achievements
- International competitiveness is critical for industry success – would like more overseas tours
- Focus on greater market transparency of buyers (wholesale and retail)
- Need for increased public profile for industry
- Increase collaboration with hydroponic and greenhouse vegetable sector
- More work needed on minor-crop chemicals
- Growers would like more communication with national I DO's group
- Need for a common national role statement for I DO program
- Need for improved collaboration with DPI -Victoria

*Future Directions (public & private sector R&D providers):*

- Wish to learn more about the I DO role
- DPI -Victoria wishes to build a stronger collaborative relationship with the I DO
- Work more closely with private providers of R&D and technology transfer (private and retail providers)
- Improve success rate for R&D funding in Victoria
- A more balanced mix of tactical (short-term) and strategic (long-term) R&D
- Increased collaboration with hydroponic and greenhouse vegetable sector

## CONSULTANTS OBSERVATIONS & COMMENTS

Growers were very happy with the communications support they have had from the I DO. While R&D groups generally felt that they were not getting sufficient feedback on growers issues or adequate information about their R&D needs.

R&D groups were aware that what they saw as grower priorities were not seen by growers and industry research committees as accurately reflecting grower needs. Researchers expressed frustration at not being able to successfully articulate what they were offering growers in their research funding applications. What they were asking for was more consultations and assistance from the I DO in tailoring their applications to satisfy the needs of growers and industry.

Other researchers recognised the changing needs of industry for instant information, and the provision of more responsive, short-term R&D work to satisfy immediate on-farm problems. Some R&D stakeholders also understood that to satisfy these demands, growers are looking increasingly for support from more responsive private service providers, as opposed to traditional public sector information and R&D sources.

The consultant has no real concerns about what may be perceived as negative responses

from R&D groups about communications. What was at play here was differences in the perceptions of the role of the I DO position. R&D groups had expectations that the I DO would spend much more time working with them; while the reality was that the I DO's main priority was the provision of a wide range of communication services to Victorian vegetable grower groups.

However, it is the consultant's belief that more efforts need to be put into increasing the I DO's involvement with R&D groups, because in the long run, it will be the growers who will gain from closer collaboration between the I DO and the R&D sector. A number of stakeholders spoke about the successful collaboration model in South Australia where the I DO, industry and researchers have worked closely to secure millions of dollars of R&D funding for priority projects.

Another group that came to the attention of the consultant was the group referred to as 'retail information' providers. This group represents the farm and agricultural chemical supply sector. This is a very active group that provides one-to-one advice on a daily basis to vegetable growers across Victoria. It is this group that is capable of satisfy growers needs for immediate information and short-term R&D services. One group of companies alone has approximately 50 agronomists available on any one day, to assist growers across the state. Senior managers of these companies expressed a desire for greater collaboration and feedback on grower issues and R&D priorities.

Some growers expressed the wish to get more feedback from interstate I DO's on developments in other states. It appears that more effort could also be put into communicating information from I DO network meetings to industry. This may be able to be achieved through the new 'Vegenotes' newsletter.

The other observation that was made by the consultant was that grower and industry respondents did not have strong views on industry research and information priorities. This left the consultant to assume that either they did not have major problems, or their needs were of an individual, adhoc and immediate nature, becoming important only when issues and problems cropped up.

## CONCLUSIONS

This project has achieved all the '*communications*' objectives and milestones decided on by the I DO Committee of Management in their five-year strategy plan for the Victorian I DO position.

The first five years of the project were obviously planned to meet the immediate needs of a fragmented industry keen to establish a workable long-term framework for the delivery of '*effective communications*' outcomes.

Not all the issues that have been dealt with over this period have been of a research or technical nature. While activities such as the Green Wedge and recycled water communications initiatives could actually be categorised as industry policy initiatives, commitments to these activities by the I DO can easily be justified, as critical to the long-term viability of the industry.

Patrick Ulloa has been resourceful and professionally competent in his delivery of *'effective communications systems'* to Victorian vegetable growers. His choice of various communications techniques and tools have been very effective, and his judgement on what is appropriate to the skills and needs of industry have been vindicated in his decision to slowly and gradually introduce new electronic information systems to the industry eg web based information transfer.

Growers interviewed were of the belief that their investment in the project has been well worthwhile.

As a result, the industry has gained confidence in its ability to lobby government and appreciate bigger picture issues that impact on industry. The appointment of this fulltime, paid position to the industry has help provide professional analysis and advocacy capabilities for R&D planning and priority setting. This has helped reduce the industries dependence for assistance in interpreting R&D applications by traditional R&D providers such as DPI -Victoria.

I ndustry commodity groups have also been able to acquire a better understanding of research priority setting and as result have gained confidence in evaluating and identifying quality research applications that fit the needs of their industry.

Over the next five years it will be important for the I DO communications role to concentrate on building stronger collaborative relationships with public sector R&D providers (DPI -Victoria and universities), as well as other private sector providers. More effective collaboration between the various state I DO's should also be a priority. Cooperation at this level should lead to more nationally focused R&D projects and better use of limited research funds.

It is the view of Cadman Agribusiness Services that the vegetable industry in Victoria has benefited substantially from the introduction of improved and '*effective communications systems*' which have been a direct result of establishing the I DO project in Victoria.

Yours sincerely,



Ralph Cadman  
Director  
**CADMAN AGRIBUSINESS SERVICES PTY LTD**