

**Communicating R&D
outcomes through
Vegetables Australia
magazine**

Lisa Maguire
AUSVEG Ltd

Project Number: VG04086

VG04086

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Know-how for Horticulture™



VG04086

Communicating R&D outcomes through Vegetables Australia magazine

Lisa Maguire, Communications Director
AUSVEG Ltd

May 2006



Know-how for Horticulture™



VG04086

Communicating R&D outcomes through Vegetables Australia magazine

The purpose of this final report is to communicate the successful delivery of project VG04086, *Communicating R&D outcomes through Vegetables Australia magazine*.

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- National Vegetable Levy
- HAL
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Media Summary

Vegetables Australia is a 56-page, full colour bi-monthly magazine mailed directly to Australian vegetable growers, researchers and other key members of the vegetable industry.

Launched in July 2005, Vegetables Australia was initiated as the key vehicle for the dissemination of information on the Vegetable R&D program, as identified in the Vegetable Industry Communication Strategy 2005-2008. Six issues have now been published and mailed to growers.

Vegetables Australia magazine is the key print communication tool for the vegetable industry. The magazine concept was developed in accordance with the National Vegetable Industry Communications strategy, which identified that a bi-monthly magazine, sent direct to growers, was a fundamental tool for effective communication of outcomes for the industry R&D program. This was supported by a national telephone survey of vegetable growers, conducted as part of the Industry Communications Audit, which found that 91% of growers were in favour of the magazine.

Concept development of the magazine was undertaken by the Project Leader, Lisa Maguire, Communications Manager. All concepts were approved by the Vegetable IAC and AUSVEG Board prior to commencement. To manage the production of the magazine a part-time Editor was employed and advertising services were outsourced to the company Hyde Media.

Objectives

The objectives of this project were to:

- Effectively communicate outcomes of the Vegetable R&D programs to National Vegetable Levy Payers
- Provide growers with information about their R&D investment through the National Vegetable Levy
- Provide an effective, direct vehicle for communication of industry-specific information to growers
- Assist in improving recognition of the R&D program, as outlined in the National Vegetable Industry Communications Strategy, and raise the profile of the industry within non-growing audiences.
- Assist in driving traffic to the Levy Payers website

Results

- Feedback was sought through two mechanisms: focus groups and a readership survey distributed in the magazine
- Readers indicated a high level of acceptance of the magazine, and a high level of interest in the R&D component of the publication (77% of survey respondents nominated R&D findings as their favourite magazine section)
- Survey results also indicated 69% recognition of the Vegetable R&D Program and National Vegetable Levy.

Methodology

Audience

The primary audience for Vegetables Australia magazine was Australian vegetable growers. Secondary audiences for the publication include industry bodies, supply chain partners, government representatives, research providers and prospective advertisers.

The design and style of the publication reflects the diversity of these audiences, and serves to address the needs of each of these audiences.

Editorial/article collection

Vegetables Australia is managed on a day-to-day basis by an in-house editor. A part-time editor (0.8 EFT) was appointed in April 2005, and was involved in most stages of concept development, committee coordination and editorial planning in conjunction with the project leader.

In May 2005, an editorial committee was formed. The members of this committee are:

Figaro Natoli, WA grower
John Mundy, SA grower
Anthony Brandsema, Tasmanian grower
Glenn Abbott, QLD grower
Therese Schreurs, Victorian grower
David Chung, NSW grower
Alison Anderson, NSW Industry Development Officer
Jonathan Eccles, Industry Development Manager, AUSVEG
Lisa Maguire, Project Leader & Communications Manager, AUSVEG
Youna Angevin-Castro, Editor, AUSVEG

The inclusion of growers on the editorial committee was integral to the success of the magazine, as these committee members were able to discuss and develop key overarching themes and editorial direction of Vegetables Australia magazine, as well as identify the key R&D priorities to be covered throughout the duration of the project.

Editorial plans were developed by the magazine editor, and R&D stories were selected according to a range of criteria. These included:

- Relevance to target audience
- Timeliness of information and project outcomes
- Adherence to 85% R&D quota required from each issue of the magazine

R&D projects selected for inclusion in Vegetables Australia were commissioned to freelance journalists. This was important to the success of the magazine, as it enabled the magazine to maintain a fresh voice. Articles written directly by researchers were avoided, as it was feared that these would be too technical for the target reader, and difficult to commission with consistency and reliability.

Journalists were instructed to work closely with researchers in developing the stories, and to actively seek out examples of growers who had successfully implemented the research on farm as case studies. To ensure technical accuracy, a sign-off form was developed, whereby participating researchers were asked to check all articles pertaining to their research for technical accuracy.

All articles were edited for consistency of style and voice by the magazine editor.

Across the 12-month duration of the project (6 issues), Vegetables Australia has reported on 66 separate R&D projects funded through HAL. A full list of projects is outlined in the table below.

Table 2. A list of HAL-funded R&D projects covered in the first six issues of Vegetables Australia are listed below:

Project number	Article title	Issue published
VG02040	‘Small pest ignites IPM interest Australia wide’	July 2005
VG03057	‘New study joins the dots on cucurbit virus diseases’	July 2005
VG00084	‘Future of beetroot industry calls for creative strategies’	July 2005
VG00087	‘Australian exports have a bright future in Japan’	July 2005
VG01087	‘Vegetable nematodes surrender in richer soils’	July 2005
VX01006	‘Protecting our friendly biologicals from sunburn’	July 2005
VX00028	Greenhouse cultivation with a spin on the future’	July 2005
HG01045	‘Methyl bromide alternatives for glasshouse industries’	July 2005
HG01005	‘Communicating methyl bromide changes’	July 2005
VG04062	‘Whirl-wind tour with beetroot excellence in mind’	July 2005
VG00026	‘Managing pests by the book’	September 2005
VG05075	‘Young vegetable growers visit New Zealand’	September 2005
VG00006	‘Chicken manure – separating the myth from the fact’	September 2005
VG02020	‘Fungus identified at root of capsicum disease’	September 2005
VG02087	‘Building plant immunity – the chitosan story’	September 2005
VG04001	‘Lifting the veil on broccolini buyers’	September 2005
VG02119	‘Working with nature to produce disease free carrots’	September 2005
VG01095	‘Designer carrots, made to order’	September 2005
Vital Vegetables	‘De-coding the vital secrets of vegetables’	September 2005
VX01033	‘No-till soil process a winner for growers’	September 2005
HG03049	‘FutureWater: facilitating a vision’	September 2005
VG04013	‘White blister (<i>Albugo candida</i>)’	September 2005
VG03094	‘New brand give identity to R&D’	November 2005
AH04027	‘Positioning horticulture to compete in a globalised environment’	November 2005
AH04020	‘Estimating the gross value of horticulture’	November 2005
HG02038	‘Study to boost export chances for growers’	November 2005
VG01078	‘Sweetcorn management service a winner in NSW’	November 2005
VG00081	‘Greenhouse cucumber industry shows thirst for knowledge’	November 2005
VG02115	‘Disease research continues despite drought’	November 2005
VG03003	‘Treating lettuce disease on the spot’	November 2005
VG05081	‘Declining carrot exports a threat to industry’	November 2005
VG02113	‘Broccoli branching a side issue in Tasmania’	November 2005
VG01010	‘Sweetpotato growers to benefit from agronomy study’	November 2005
HG02092	‘Maximising our liquid resources’	November 2005
VG05050	‘The million dollar pest: Silverleaf whitefly’	November 2005
VG03094	‘Embracing diversity in the vegetable industry’ ‘Chinese community holds firm roots in Sydney Basin’	January 2006
VG04059	‘New on-farm diagnostic test set to battle clubroot’	January 2006

VG03085	‘Bilingual support a success for Vietnamese growers’	January 2006
VG04031	‘Asian vegetables – getting the name right’	January 2006
HG05036	‘Keeping it fresh’	January 2006
HG04006	‘National fruit and veg campaign looks to bearing fruit for producers’	January 2006
AH01028	‘New booklet answers grower questions on biotechnology’	January 2006
VG01043	‘Mosaic virus solutions look to the future’	January 2006
VG01042	‘Major research breakthroughs for vegetable brassicas’	January 2006
VG04025	‘Solution found for parsley root rot’	January 2006
VG04017	‘Natural pest control shows promise for brassica growers’	January 2006
VG05079	Various conference articles	March 2006 / May 2006
VG03092	‘Improving the already popular salad mixes’	March 2006
VG05060	‘The sky’s the limit with Precision Agriculture’	March 2006
VG03086	‘Asian greens may offer more than just great flavour’	March 2006
VG05069	‘European hydroponics – what Australia can expect of the future’	March 2006
VG04015	‘Clean, fresh water: a sweet memory? Not if we get it right for the future.’	March 2006
VG04067	‘IPM – the way forward against lettuce aphid’	March 2006
HG04022	‘New transport monitoring system keeps freshness on track’	March 2006
VG03074	‘A positive solution for poultry litter’	March 2006
VG02114	‘How sweet it is’	March 2006
VG04086	‘Vegetables Australia receives welcome support from readers’	May 2006
VG01014	‘Sweeter future planned for corn exports’	May 2006
VG02030	‘Bean there, done that’	May 2006
VG04021	‘Getting to the root of things: disease control in seeds and seedlings’	May 2006
VG04020	‘Time for a sea change’	May 2006
VG04018	‘Boosting fertiliser efficiency for transplanted vegetables’	May 2006
VG04068	‘Confidor – the final solution?’	May 2006
HG02097	‘Sadly, it’s not enough just to produce the best vegetables...’	May 2006
VG04026	‘Leaf diseases in the spotlight’	May 2006
VG03088	Enviroveg program articles	Each issue
VG03102	Various Economics articles	Each issue

R&D articles published by Vegetables Australia are made available to levy payers via the AUSVEG levy payers website – www.ausveg.com.au/levy-payers/login.cfm . Each article published in Vegetables Australia serves to promote this website by listing the web address at the end of each article.

This website is made available to all registered levy payers, but is password-protected from non-levy paying readers. This mechanism for archiving not only allows ongoing access to the articles, but also allows readers to download supporting material from the research, as provided by research providers. This may include downloadable final reports, research papers and images.

Advertising

As a means of securing the long-term future of the publication, it was decided that the project would need to solicit advertising as a means of additional funding. However, due to the nature of the publication as an industry publication (as opposed to a commercial publication), it should only ever be anticipated that advertising would provide supplementary funds, and should not expect to become self-sufficient.

In April 2005, the project engaged the services of Hyde Media to manage the sale of advertising in Vegetables Australia. Feedback from advertisers indicated that the publication is well liked, and a number of advertisers have committed to Vegetables Australia as part of their regular advertising campaigns.

These included:

- Nufarm
- Dupont
- Bayer
- Dow Agrosciences
- Seminis
- South Pacific Seeds
- Syngenta
- Terranova Seeds
- Vin Rowe
- Viscount Plastics
- Incitec Pivot

While it is anticipated that advertising revenue will demonstrate modest growth over time, it is important to recognise that agricultural advertising is seasonal, and fluctuations in advertising revenue are common. This would make it unrealistic to expect complete cost recovery for the production of the magazine in the longer term.

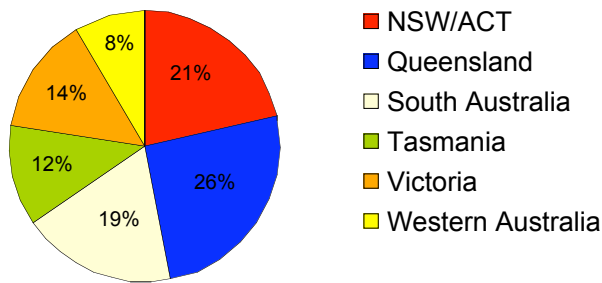
Distribution

Distribution of Vegetables Australia was achieved through two main avenues.

The primary distribution method for the magazine was via direct mail to readers. The direct mailing database consisted of 6048 recipients (as at May 2006), which could be broken down state-by-state as follows:

	NSW/ACT	Queensland	South Australia	Tasmania	Victoria	Western Australia	TOTAL
Total recipients	1292	1543	1130	728	844	511	6048
Percentage	21.36%	25.51%	18.68%	12.04%	13.96%	8.45%	100%

Distribution of Vegetables Australia via direct mail to each Australian state



Grower mailing data was obtained and maintained through the assistance of state-based Industry Development Officers (IDOs), in conjunction with the Vegetable Industry Associations in each state. This data was provided directly to the mailing house prior to each mail out, and was maintained by the IDO network.

Other industry databases (eg. Research providers, industry representatives, potential advertisers, supply chain networks) were collated by AUSVEG Ltd, and updated data was regularly sent to the mail house prior to each mail out.

While a central mailing database would be the optimal scenario for the effective distribution of Vegetables Australia to levy-paying growers, this was not achievable due to industry structures, and privacy issues. This would also have required additional resourcing to source and maintain the data, which was not factored into the project budget.

The second avenue for distribution of Vegetables Australia was via bulk delivery of the magazine to various key industry collection points. This included providing bulk numbers of magazines to:

- State associations
- Industry events (such as conferences and tradeshow)
- IDO network
- Advertising representative

Budget summary

An outline of the budget is outlined below.

Description	Amount (\$)
Expenses	
Concept development	15,000.00
Printing	114,344.00
Editorial	55,139.00
Design	65,820.00
Distribution	73,120.00
Salaries & Overheads	109,583.00
Advertising management	35,900.00
Marketing and promotion (not yet spent)	15,000.00
Website development (not yet spent)	10,000.00
Total expenses	493,906.00
Income	
HAL contribution	481,517.00
Advertising revenue	88,359.00

The main expenses for this project related to the ongoing production and distribution of the magazine on a bimonthly basis.

Now that the publication is established, and has developed a solid readership, it is anticipated that a promotional campaign can be initiated to continue growth of readership and advertising into the future. This would also include the development of a Vegetables Australia web page through the existing AUSVEG Industry website. These funds have not yet been spent, and are expected to be implemented over the next 12 months.

Evaluation and measurement of outcomes

The success of this project was very much dependent upon the acceptance of the publication by growers.

Feedback was solicited from growers by two main approaches:

- Focus groups
- Readership survey

Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted in each state, through the IDO network. The purpose of this exercise was to obtain qualitative feedback from growers, and to ascertain the success of the magazine in targeting the primary audience.

The focus groups were conducted in November 2005, and IDOs were instructed to gather small groups of up to 10 growers, and guide a facilitated discussion about all aspects of the publication, including design, language, frequency of distribution, and general feedback about the magazine.

Comments were collated by the IDOs, and returned to the Editor for evaluation.

Initial feedback from these groups was very positive.

Readership survey

A broad readership survey was distributed to all readers in January 2006. This was included in the January issue of the magazine, and featured a reply-paid questionnaire to be returned to the Editor. (Refer to Appendix 1)

The purpose of the survey was to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from readers. Unlike the focus groups, which targeted only growers, the readership survey also included feedback from non-growing readers, and provided a more rounded industry perspective on the role of the publication within the Australian vegetable industry.

Key Survey Results:

- Response rate
 - 183 responses
 - 67% growers
 - 33% other (including researchers, advertisers, industry representatives)
 - Overall response rate approximately 3% of total distribution list

- Age of readers

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
3%	7%	34%	31%	25%

- Location of readers

NSW	WA	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC
13%	18%	39%	10%	24%	17%

- Time spent reading each issue

0-15 min	15-30 min	30-45 min	45-60 min	60+ min
5%	21%	24%	28%	23%

- What do you do with your copy?

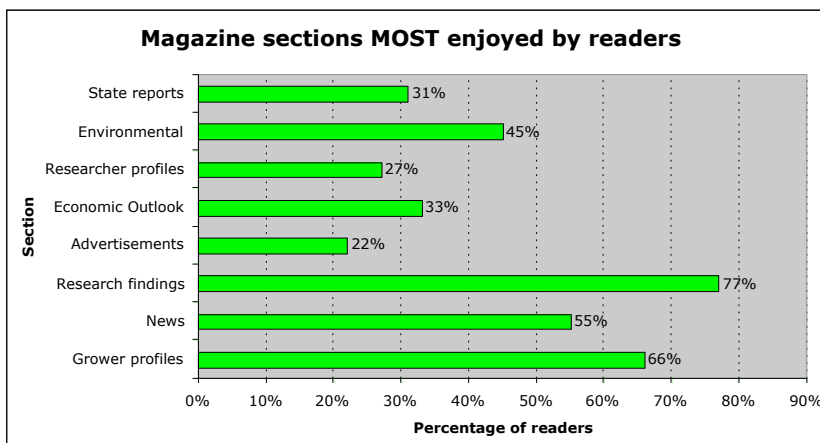
Keep it	Give to grower	Give to non-grower	Throw it out
73%	12%	5%	10%

- How often would you like to receive the magazine?

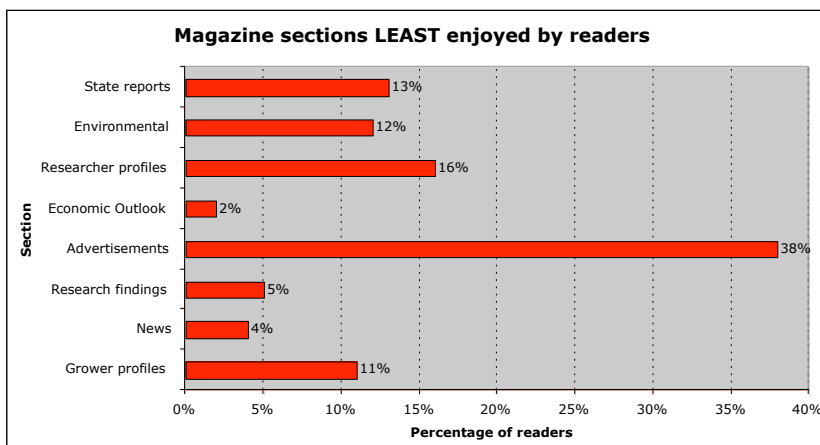
Same	More often	Less often	Don't care
90%	7.5%	1.5%	1%

- How many people reader your copy of Vegetables Australia?
Average no. of readers per issue = 2.4 people
Extrapolated across entire mailout = 2.4 x 6000
= 14,400 people per issue

- Identify segments you most enjoy reading:



- Identify segments you least enjoy reading



- Are you aware that the magazine is partially funded through the National Vegetable Levy?
Yes - 69% No - 31%

Grower comments:

- “It’s always good to have more info and updates in our business of horticulture.”
- “I find it a very well put together and interesting magazine.”
- “Excellent mag – keep up the good work”
- “Keep up the great work – especially the vegetable research results.”
- “It is a good magazine, but don’t fill it up with adverts, otherwise you will spoil it”
- “Good round up of the important issues/news”
- “I find the magazine excellent reading. Many thanks.”
- “Let us (the primary producer) keep talking, communicating, sharing info and build a better/bigger organisation with a strong voice and opinions.”
- “Keep the magazine going – information is the way of the future.”
- “We would like it in English and Chinese (translated for us). We like reading all the articles.”
- “Great magazine.”
- “Send me more!”

Comments from other readers:

- “Good initiative.”
- “Great Industry read – keep it up.”
- A very informative publication helping to keep the vege industry informed of the latest news.”

Discussion

While the results of the feedback programs indicate that there is strong support and acceptance of Vegetables Australia as the primary communication tool for the industry, there are some limitations as to what can be achieved as a result of its distribution.

- Uptake of R&D

While Vegetables Australia can actively report on R&D outcomes and direct readers to suitable resources relating to R&D projects, the publication cannot be held responsible for the acceptance or uptake of R&D by growers. Where possible, the magazine aims to showcase examples of growers who have worked cooperatively with researchers on R&D projects, however it is unrealistic to expect Vegetables Australia to become a vehicle for measuring R&D uptake and implementation.

- Thorough distribution to all levy paying growers

As discussed earlier in this paper, the distribution of Vegetables Australia is dependent on the accuracy of data provided by the State Associations, through the IDO network. This means that inclusion on the mailing database is dependent on growers being members of their State industry association. In some states this is highly representative of the growing community, however in other states, low membership to the state associations means that many growers are not represented on the mailing database. It is hoped that with time, these gaps in the database can be filled, and that the magazine's readership will continue to grow.

- Reliance on advertising

As an industry publication, the editorial principles of Vegetables Australia are quite different to some of its commercial competitors. As such, it is unrealistic to expect the magazine to ever become fully self-sufficient. To do so would require a drastic re-evaluation of the nature of the editorial, and a change in key priority areas for the publication. It is believed that to do this would compromise the integrity of the magazine. As the response to Vegetables Australia is currently very positive, it is believed that levy payers would be supportive of maintaining a certain level of levy funding in order to maintain the currently quality of the publication.

Recommendations

Based on the project feedback, it is evident that there is strong support for the continuing investment in Vegetables Australia magazine through the National Vegetable Levy. It is on this basis that the following recommendations are made:

- That Vegetables Australia continue to be used as the primary vehicle for communicating with Australian vegetable growers on outcomes of the vegetable R&D program.
- That a central database be developed and maintained to ensure consistent and accurate distribution to the intended audience.
- That Vegetables Australia continue to be supported through the National Vegetable Levy as an industry publication, supported by supplementary income derived from advertising.
- That Vegetables Australia embark on a promotional program to increase awareness amongst growers, industry representatives and potential advertisers.

Acknowledgements

AUSVEG would like to acknowledge the following for their contributions:

- Editorial Committee:
 - Figaro Natoli, WA grower
 - John Mundy, SA grower
 - Anthony Brandsema, Tasmanian grower
 - Glenn Abbott, QLD grower
 - Therese Schreurs, Victorian grower
 - David Chung, NSW grower
 - Alison Anderson, NSW Industry Development Officer
 - Jonathan Eccles, Industry Development Manager, AUSVEG
 - Lisa Maguire, Project Leader & Communications Manager, AUSVEG
 - Youna Angevin-Castro, Editor, AUSVEG

- State Associations
 - Victorian Vegetable Growers Association
 - Vegetables WA
 - Virginia Horticulture Centre
 - New South Wales Farmers' Association
 - Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
 - Growcom

- Industry Development Officers
 - Alison Anderson, NSW
 - Jack Milbank, QLD
 - David Ellement, WA
 - Stephen Welsh, TAS
 - Craig Feutrill, SA
 - Patrick Ulloa, VIC

- A special thank you also to former AUSVEG CEO Euan Laird.

Appendix 1 – Readership Survey



Know-how for Horticulture™



Vegetables Australia Reader Survey Issue 1.4 Jan/Feb 2006

WIN an Apple iPod (valued at \$449) or a \$300 Harvey Norman Gift Voucher!

Return this survey to AUSVEG before **Friday 24th February**, to go in the draw to win either an iPod (1st prize) or a \$300 Harvey Norman Gift Voucher. To be eligible to enter the draw you must fill in your details below, and return your survey by the due date.

Name: _____ Company: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Contact phone number: _____ Email: _____

Please tick here if you do not wish to be added to our database.

1. Are you a:

- Grower
- Researcher
- Industry representative
- Advertiser
- Other: _____

2. Age group:

- 18 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54
- 55+

3. Crop (please identify your main crop)

4. Which state do you live in?

- New South Wales
- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia

5. How many issues of Vegetables Australia have you received?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

6. How much time do you spend reading Vegetables Australia?

- 0 – 15 minutes
- 15 – 30 minutes
- 30 – 45 minutes
- 45 – 60 minutes
- More than 60 minutes

7. What do you do with your copy of the magazine when you've finished with it?

- Keep it
- Give it to another grower
- Give it to a non-grower
- Throw it away

8. On average, how many people read your copy of Vegetables Australia?

9. Which stories do you most enjoy reading?

- Grower profiles
- News
- Research findings
- Advertisements
- Economic Outlook
- Researcher profiles
- Environmental articles
- State reports
- Other: _____

10. Which stories do you least enjoy reading?

- Grower profiles
- News
- Research findings
- Advertisements
- Researcher profiles
- Environmental articles
- State reports
- Other: _____

11. Do you have any suggestions for new sections/features to the magazine?

12. Vegetables Australia is currently distributed every two months.

- Would you like to receive it:
- More often
 - Less often
 - Keep it the same
 - Don't care

13. What kind of advertising interests you?

- Farm machinery
- Packaging products
- Finance services
- Seed products
- Crop protection products
- Irrigation products
- Farm management products
- Other: _____

14. Are you aware that Vegetables Australia magazine is partially funded through the National Vegetable Levy?

- Yes
- No

15. Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for your time.